

OMAN

دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 283
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

2010000387405

20

AN EYE THAT NEVER PUTS ITSELF DOWN

IN BRIEF

7,719 MARRIAGES TO FOREIGNERS; 1,226 DIVORCES IN 3 YEARS

FORUM DISCUSSES
DECENTRALISATION,
DEVELOPMENT

The deliberations of the Governors’ Forum, attended by the Governors of the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates, alongside the Chairmen of Muscat Municipality and Dhofar Municipality, commenced at Dhofar Municipality headquarters in Salalah. The forum is convened as part of ongoing efforts to enhance institutional cooperation and integration among governorates, facilitate the exchange of expertise, experiences and successful practices in administrative and developmental spheres. It aims to foster synergy of efforts, complementarity of roles and elevation of performance and achievement standards. These efforts are aligned with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and are designed to support the comprehensive and sustainable development agenda. **DETAILS ON P3**

STAR ‘SUHAIL’ MARKS
THE END OF INTENSE
SUMMER HEAT



The appearance serves as a fixed time marker, which Omanis have relied upon to organise their agricultural and maritime activities. — **ONA**

Astronomy enthusiasts and stargazers in the Sultanate of Oman have their eyes fixed on the southeastern horizon as it’s already time for the star Canopus (locally known as Suhail) to appear in the sky, marking the end of intense summer heat. Wisal bint Salem al Hinaï, Head of the Community Outreach Committee at the Oman Society of Astronomy and Space, said that Canopus, also known astronomically as Suhail, is approximately 313 light-years from planet Earth. It is the second-brightest star in the sky and is characterised by a yellowish-white colour. She noted that its appearance in the second half of August serves as a fixed time marker, which Omanis have relied upon to organise their agricultural and maritime activities. It also marks the end of extreme heat and the beginning of a gradual change in the nighttime weather. She noted that the appearance of the Suhail star does not necessarily mean it has a direct effect on temperatures or weather changes. — **ONA**

YOUSEF BIN SALEM AL HABSI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

Data obtained from the Supreme Judiciary Council indicates a growing Omanis getting married to foreigners. The total number of Omanis who married foreigners reached 7,719 over the past three years, including 640 Omani women who married non-Omani men. The period from October 29, 2023, to June 30, 2026, saw approximately 1,226 divorces among Omanis married to foreigners, averaging roughly one divorce for every six



The total number of Omanis who married foreigners reached 7,719 over the past three years, including 640 Omani women who married non-Omani men. **Picture for illustrative purpose only**

marriages. Said bin Rashid al Maktoumi, Head of the Family Counselling at the Department of Family Guidance and Counselling at the Ministry of Social Development, says that the ministry views divorce rates as important social indicators that require continuous monitoring and analysis. The analysis should not only examine the statistics but also study the causes and circumstances involving each case, which contributes to developing preventative and therapeutic programmes that support family stability. **TURN TO P2**

Sanctions threatened by
‘desperate’ US will fail: Iran

IRAN’S foreign minister dismissed the threat of new US sanctions as a sign of desperation on Sunday and said the expected new measures would fail to defeat Tehran.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is due to hold a press conference at 2 pm EDT (1800 GMT) on Monday, has threatened to impose “the toughest sanctions in history” on Iran.

Describing what he said were “repetitive scenarios”, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said in a video posted on Telegram: “The fact that they (US leaders) have moved on from military operations ... to bring up the same old plans shows that they are desperate.”

He said Washington must speak to Iran respectfully to find “a solution based on justice and honour.”

“We have never been afraid. All of their actions - whether blockades or other military moves they have made - have failed, and this new issue of theirs will fail as well,” he said.

US President Donald Trump has warned of economic consequences against any country that provides “any type of lifeline to Iran” and Bessent has urged cooperation with Washington by China, which buys more than 80 per cent of Iran’s shipped oil, according to 2025 data from analytics firm Kpler. China has urged diplomacy. — **Reuters**

ISRAELI STRIKES KILL 3, INCLUDING A CHILD



Palestinians gather at the site following an Israeli strike, carried out after the military warned Palestinian residents to evacuate the area of Maghazi, in the central Gaza Strip, on Sunday. — **AFP**

Israeli strikes in the central Gaza Strip killed three people on Sunday, including a child, rescuers said, while the Israeli military said it had targeted a “terrorist” in one strike.

An air strike killed two people in the town of Al Zawayda, including a four-year-old child named Muhammad Abdel Salam Taha, according to the civil defence rescue service, which operates under Hamas authority.

“The two martyrs as well as several wounded were taken to Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah,” also in the central Gaza, the civil defence said. Another Israeli strike killed one person in the Nuseirat refugee camp.

The Israeli military said that it had “targeted a terrorist” in one of the strikes, and said it would provide further details later. An October ceasefire has reduced

but not halted violence in Gaza. Israeli operations in Gaza have killed 1,286 people since the ceasefire came into effect, according to Gaza’s health ministry, which also operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

The Israeli army has reported five deaths in its ranks over the same period, as well as one civilian contractor. — **AFP**

Salalah Eye adds new dimension to Khareef tourism

SALALAH: Salalah Eye represents a new addition to the tourism and entertainment experience ecosystem in Dhofar Governorate, coinciding with the Khareef 2026 season. The attraction offers a panoramic experience allowing visitors to view the sea, plains and mountains from an elevation of 55 metres, situated at Al Haffah Beach in the Wilayat of Salalah. The project harmoniously combines a prime coastal location with a modern entertainment experience, set against the backdrop of the governorate’s distinctive natural assets during the Khareef

season — when clouds and mist form, and mountains and plains don their verdant greenery, offering visitors ever-changing vistas from a unique perspective. The Ferris wheel comprises 30 enclosed, air-conditioned cabins, each accommodating up to six persons, ensuring a comfortable viewing experience for families and individuals alike. The panoramic glass facades provide sweeping views of the surrounding landscape throughout the wheel’s rotation, encompassing the Arabian Sea, the coastal strip, Salalah city and the mountainous areas.



The project harmoniously combines a prime coastal location with a modern entertainment experience. — **ONA**

Eng Khalid bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, Executive Director of the Salalah Eye project, stated that the initiative introduces a new tourism and entertainment experience to Dhofar Governorate, capitalising on the natural and climatic attributes that distinguish Salalah during the Khareef season. He noted that the project’s location on Al Haffah Beach enables visitors to combine recreational enjoyment with coastal views in a single destination. He said that the wheel stands at 55 metres in height and features 30 enclosed, air-conditioned cabins, each with a capacity of

six persons. A complete rotation takes between 12 and 15 minutes, offering a 360-degree panoramic view encompassing the Arabian Sea, the coastal strip and the natural landscape of Salalah city. He added that Al Haffah Beach was selected as the project site due to its tourism significance, vibrant atmosphere, high visitor footfall and its strategic position that enables the delivery of an experience combining sea, city and natural scenery. He affirmed that the project represents an enhancement to the diversity of tourism and entertainment options available to visitors to the governorate. — **ONA**

OMAN



burjeel
hospital
By Burjeel Holdings

  **24399777**
burjeelhospitaloman.com



Unlock Your Mobility.

Choose Excellence in Spine Care.

Dr. Harshavardhan Hegde
Sr. Consultant - Orthopedic & Spine Surgery
Burjeel Hospital, Muscat

Renowned Visiting Consultant from India

Available On
29th August 2026



MOH 334/1873/2025

SHORT TAKES

7,719 MARRIAGES TO FOREIGNERS; 1,226 DIVORCES IN 3 YEARS

FROM PAGE 1

He explained that the Family Guidance and Counselling Department implements specialised programmes that aim at enhancing marital compatibility and family cohesion as well as developing communication and marital disputes management. Among the most prominent of these is the Life Companion initiative, a year-round marital counselling programme offered in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The programme, delivered by qualified specialists, targets those planning to get married as well as newlyweds. The department also provides early intervention counselling services to prevent disputes from reaching the point of divorce, thus enhancing the chances of a lasting marriage whenever possible and safe for both parties.

He noted that the awareness and family guidance programmes cover a range of topics including picking a spouse, building realistic expectations for married life, family dialogue and communication skills, marital disputes management, mutual rights and responsibilities, family budget management and positive parenting.

He added that the programmes place particular emphasis on raising awareness about the importance of respecting cultural and social differences in cases of marriage to someone of a different nationality, enhancing adaptation and understanding skills between spouses to achieve family stability. The ministry also provides individual counselling services for those who need to discuss private matters through the electronic services portal and the unified call centre (1555), or by visiting the social development departments in the governorates where specialists provide family counselling services.

BAN ON SALE OF 21 TYPES OF USED AUTO SPARE PARTS

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) issued a decision regulating the trade and use of used vehicle spare parts. The decision applies to workshops, repair and maintenance centres, vehicle body repair, as well as stores selling used vehicle spare parts.

The decision bans the sale and trade of 21 types of used vehicle spare parts. As per the decision, suppliers are required to provide a warranty for used vehicle spare parts sold or installed.

Ministry weighs reflective bands for camels to curb road accidents

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) is considering making reflective bands compulsory for free-roaming camels in Dhofar to reduce road accidents, particularly at night when the animals are difficult for motorists to spot.

The move comes amid concerns over collisions involving stray camels, which can pose a serious hazard on unlit highways and desert roads. The risk is particularly pronounced during the Khareef season, when traffic increases in Dhofar.

A Ministry spokesperson told the Observer that the proposal to require camel owners to place luminous or reflective bands around their animals' necks or legs would be welcomed as a road-safety measure.

"We will consider making reflective bands compulsory for stray or free-roaming camels which wander onto the roads, jeopardising human lives," the spokesperson said.

"The advantage of the bands is that they catch vehicle headlights at night on desert roads, giving drivers critical seconds to brake and preventing deadly vehicle-animal collisions," he said.

NCSI data recorded 57 vehicle accidents caused by collisions with stray camels in 2022, resulting in 17 deaths and 58 serious injuries. Fatalities rose by 39 per cent from the previous year, when 11 people were killed and 45 injured in similar collisions.

Dhofar records around 20 vehicle accidents involving stray camels each year, according to the available statistics, making it one of the governorates most affected by such



Reflective bands are relatively inexpensive and easy to install.

incidents. The issue has also resulted in fatalities in recent years. In March 2025, three Omani citizens were killed in two separate collisions with stray camels in Al Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate and Ibra in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

In September 2025, two Royal Oman Police officers were killed and two others injured when their patrol vehicle collided with a stray camel in Maqshan, Dhofar. Other factors contributing to road accidents include driver fatigue and reckless driving, according to the statistics.

The proposed reflective-band measure follows similar awareness initiatives in Oman. Al Sharqiyah South Governorate has urged camel owners to keep their animals in designated enclosures and avoid allowing them to roam unattended. Owners have also been encouraged to use identification devices and

reflective or luminous straps to improve the visibility of camels, particularly at night.

If introduced, the proposed measure would require owners to attach lightweight, reflective markers to camels' saddles, harnesses or bodies. The ministry's Animal Welfare Department would provide guidance on suitable reflectors and their safe use.

Reflective bands are relatively inexpensive, easy to install and designed to improve visibility without harming the animals, potentially giving motorists more time to react when camels stray onto roads.

The proposal reflects growing efforts to strengthen road safety and promote greater accountability among animal owners, particularly in areas where camel movements intersect with major roads.

Russian documentary film could boost Dhofar tourism

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 23

DOCUMENTARY film-making can give Dhofar's frankincense heritage a lasting international presence by connecting its landscapes with the history, people and science behind one of Oman's oldest global trading stories, a senior Ministry of Information official has said.

Speaking exclusively to Observer ahead of the unveiling of a preview of RT's documentary Land of Frankincense, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Shaashai, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Information in Dhofar Governorate, said documentary storytelling can leave an impression long after a conventional promotional campaign has ended.

"A documentary film is different from advertising. An advertisement promotes something for a specific period, but producing a film of this quality and professionalism undoubtedly provides another form of tourism promotion," he said.

Al Shaashai said the film introduces international audiences to sites associated with millennia-old frankincense trade while placing them within the broader story of Oman's historical links.

He said viewers who discover these places through a documentary may be encouraged to experience them in person, particularly those with an interest in history, archaeology and cultural heritage.

The Land of Frankincense was inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 2000. Its four components — Wadi Dawkah, Shisr/ Wubar, Khor Rori and Al Baleed — illustrate different stages of the production and distribution of frankincense.

Unesco describes the trade as one of the most important commercial activities of the ancient and medieval worlds, with Dhofar's ports, caravan routes and frankincense-growing areas providing evidence of an extensive trading network.



The preview of RT's documentary Land of Frankincense was unveiled in Salalah, highlighting Oman's rich frankincense heritage against the backdrop of ties between Oman and Russia. — **Picutres by Saad Al Baraami**



Documentary storytelling can carry Oman's ancient frankincense heritage to international audiences long after conventional campaigns end, says Dr Mohammed al Shaashai

The documentary looks beyond archaeology, bringing Dhofar's wider natural landscape — including its green mountains, wadis and Wadi Darbat — into the story.

"The story becomes more meaningful to the viewer when the landscape is connected to a narrative, and at the centre of that narrative is the Omani people," Al Shaashai said.

Directed by Karim Naguib, the documentary was filmed in Wadi Darbat, Taqah and Wadi Dawkah and explores frankincense from historical, cultural and scientific perspectives. It also features Omani practitioners and Russian researchers examining the resource and continuing scientific interest in its properties and potential applications.

Al Shaashai said the scientific dimension adds another layer to the film, taking frankincense beyond its historical and cultural associations and linking it to contemporary

research and potential commercial value.

Work on the Wadi Dawkah Visitor Centre had reached about 30 per cent by August, with completion expected in July 2027. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism says the project aims to enhance the visitor experience, encourage longer stays and create tourism and economic opportunities while supporting conservation of the frankincense landscape.

Visitor numbers highlight the continuing appeal of these sites. The Land of Frankincense received 155,795 visitors in 2024, according to statistics from the Directorate-General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar. The RT documentary also comes amid expanding tourism and cultural links between Oman and Russia. Russian visitors to Oman increased from 44,618 in 2024 to 86,273 in 2025, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. Oman was also the official partner at the Moscow International Travel and Tourism Exhibition in March 2026, as the ministry strengthened its focus on the Russian market.

Cultural ties have also deepened. In September 2025, the National Museum of Oman and Russia's State Hermitage Museum signed an agreement to establish the Hermitage-Sultanate of Oman Centre in Dhofar as a permanent platform for joint cultural and educational initiatives.

SHORT TAKES



The projects are part of the ministry’s efforts to enhance traffic safety.

AL WUSTA ROAD PROJECTS EXCEED 120 MILLION

HAIMA: The total cost of road maintenance and construction projects being implemented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in Al Wusta Governorate has exceeded RO 120 million.

The projects are part of the ministry’s efforts to develop the road network, improve its efficiency and enhance traffic safety.

Asphalt road maintenance works are ongoing across the governorate at a cost of approximately RO 6.004 million, covering a total length of 1,244 kilometres. The works aim to maintain the efficiency of the road network and improve safety for road users.

In the construction sector, the ministry is continuing work on the project to complete a 58-kilometre section of Sultan Said bin Taimur Road north of Haima, at a cost of RO 44 million. The project is scheduled for completion within 24 months.

Work is also progressing on Phase Three of the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road project, covering 124.5 kilometres at a cost of RO 70 million. The project has reached 23 per cent completion and is scheduled to be completed within three years.

The projects form part of the ministry’s plans to develop and enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the road network in Al Wusta, improve connectivity between its wilayats, support economic and development activities, facilitate transport and mobility, and enhance road safety and traffic flow. — ONA

CPA SEIZES 571 NON-COMPLIANT SCHOOL PRODUCTS

MUSCAT: As part of regulatory efforts accompanying the ‘Back to School’ campaign, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) seized 571 non-compliant school products in Muscat Governorate and took the necessary legal measures.

The seized items included 81 school bags, 23 folders, 21 pens, 440 stickers designed for Crocs footwear and six water bottles.

The CPA is intensifying market inspections during the back-to-school season to ensure commercial establishments comply with regulations and requirements governing the market and to protect consumers.

WORKSHOP DISCUSSES NATIONAL WASTE STRATEGY

SALALAH: A workshop to discuss the draft national strategy for integrated waste management began in Salalah. Representatives of government units and the waste management sector are taking part in the two-day workshop, which is organised by the Environment Authority.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. The workshop aims to review the status quo of the waste management sector, the challenges involved and future scopes for growth, in



The workshop reviewed the master plan for waste management.

addition to reviewing the master plan for waste management as a road map for developing the sector.

The waste management strategy seeks to build a sustainable

national system that protects the environment and safeguards public health, besides supporting investment and innovation, raising the level of governance and institutional integration and consolidating the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to relevant international environmental agreements. The strategy focuses on developing an integrated national framework for managing various types of waste, based on the outcome of an assessment of the waste sector. This envisages developing the necessary policies, legislation and executive

programmes and upgrading the waste management system in a manner that gradually leads to a circular economy.

The strategic approaches also include enhancing the efficiency of the institutional and operational structure, defining roles and responsibilities of the parties concerned, enabling partnerships with the private sector and society, encouraging investment in projects of recycling of resources and adopting innovative and sustainable technologies and solutions in various stages of waste management. — ONA

GOVERNORS FORUM SEEKS DECENTRALISATION PLANS

THE DELIBERATIONS of the Governors’ Forum, attended by the Governors of the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates, alongside the Chairmen of Muscat Municipality and Dhofar Municipality, commenced at Dhofar Municipality headquarters in Salalah.

The Forum is convened as part of ongoing efforts to enhance institutional cooperation and integration among governorates, facilitate the exchange of expertise, experiences and successful practices in administrative and developmental spheres.



HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, delivered the welcome address.

It comes to foster synergy of efforts, complementarity of roles and elevation of performance and achievement standards. These efforts are aligned with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and are designed to support the comprehensive and sustainable development agenda.

In his welcome address, HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, emphasised that the forum represents a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and perspectives, as well as drawing upon the diverse experiences of the various governorates.

He noted that the distinct characteristics, resources and challenges of each governorate constitute a source of mutual learning and experiential integration.

His Highness affirmed that the current phase calls for a transition from reviewing past accomplishments to charting future aspirations, while enhancing the

A key agenda for the Governor’s Forum is the deliberation on a proposal to reform the decentralisation framework developed by a joint team of governorate representatives over the preceding period

capacity of governorates to shape development policy and efficiently leverage their resources and comparative advantages.

He highlighted that one of the key agenda items for this year’s forum is the deliberation on a proposal to reform the decentralisation framework in the Sultanate of Oman, developed by a joint team of governorate representatives over the preceding period.

The objective is to come up with a more mature and practical vision that accurately reflects the needs of the governorates and reinforces integration among them.

The forum featured the presentation of several working papers and briefings, including a paper on “His Majesty the Sultan’s Award for Governorate

Development,” delivered by Eng Mohammed bin Saif al Amri, Director-General of Governorate Affairs at the Ministry of Interior. His presentation addressed the award’s objectives and its role in stimulating positive competition and raising the standards of developmental performance and achievement.

Additionally, Dr Saud bin Mohammed al Farsi, Adviser to the Governor of Dhofar, delivered a presentation on perspectives regarding administrative and economic decentralisation in the governorates, encompassing a number of proposals and visions related to strengthening the governorate framework and empowering it to manage local development while optimising the utilisation of its resources. — ONA

ROP warns buyers of risks from imported used vehicles

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

Buying an imported vehicle may appear attractive because of its lower price, but buyers could face hidden risks ranging from accident and flood damage to registration problems and unexpected repair costs, authorities and specialists have warned.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has cautioned buyers that some imported vehicles may not meet the safety and durability standards required for use on Oman’s roads.

“Many second-hand vehicles brought from abroad have been hidden victims of serious road accidents, fires, or water damage caused by floods, hurricanes and wadis,” the ROP said.

The authority warned that severely damaged or unserviceable vehicles can pose serious traffic safety and environmental risks and

may cost more to dispose of than their actual value.

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has also urged consumers planning to buy imported vehicles to verify the vehicle’s history and ensure that all terms and conditions are clearly documented before making any payment.

The warning follows a recent case registered in Al Suwaiq involving a consumer who purchased a flood-damaged vehicle from an import company. The vehicle could not be registered with the ROP, contrary to the terms agreed in the contract.

The dispute was later resolved amicably, with the sale cancelled and the consumer receiving a full refund.

Vehicle dealer Jamsheed Tannadamkunnath advised buyers to obtain the vehicle identification number (VIN) before making payment and check its history



ROP has cautioned buyers that some imported vehicles may not meet the safety and durability standards required for use on Oman’s roads.

through services such as Carfax or AutoCheck, as well as records from the vehicle’s country of origin.

“Buyers should check for accidents, flood damage and salvage titles, as many imported vehicles from the US and Japan have been affected by floods and hurricanes,” he said. Warning signs can include

rust, water lines, mud inside door panels, a musty smell and corroded electrical connectors. Buyers should also compare the mileage shown on the vehicle’s history report with the odometer to identify possible tampering.

The vehicle must also meet Oman’s legal and registration requirements and pass the ROP inspection. Flood-damaged or structurally compromised vehicles may fail inspection and become impossible to register.

Buyers are advised to consider the following before purchasing an imported vehicle:

Check specifications: Ensure the vehicle meets applicable GCC requirements for climate, air-conditioning and emissions. Some vehicles built for other markets may require costly modifications.

Check eligibility: Confirm the vehicle meets the current age and import requirements applicable in

Oman before placing an order.

Calculate all costs: Buyers should account for customs duties, VAT, shipping, registration and any modification costs when comparing the final price with locally available vehicles. Get everything in writing: The contract should clearly state the vehicle’s make, model, year, colour, mileage, specifications, delivery date and accident or flood history.

Avoid full advance payment: Payments should, where possible, be linked to agreed stages of the transaction rather than paying the entire amount upfront.

Verify the company: Buyers should check that the importer is properly licensed and has a verifiable business address.

Check the warranty: Consumers should establish what warranty is offered and who will provide after-sales service in Oman, particularly when the vehicle does not have local dealer support.



WHERE DHO FAR’S COAST COMES ALIVE

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

ALONG the coastline of Dhofar Governorate, Al Dahariz beachfront has emerged as a popular seaside destination, combining the beauty of the coast with modern recreational facilities. It attracts visitors and families not only for a day out but also as a regular destination during the Khareef Dhofar Season.

A seaside promenade runs along the beachfront, offering panoramic views of the Arabian Sea.

Cafes, seating areas and open spaces provide visitors with opportunities to relax, enjoy the scenery and spend time with family and friends in a pleasant setting.

Jaafar bin Mohammed Al Fadl, a visitor from Saudi Arabia on his first trip to Dhofar during the Khareef season, praised the beach and its facilities.

“The atmosphere is really beautiful, and the beach is amazing and clean. The place is busy and suitable for sitting, and everything is available,” he said.

For Saif bin Al Luhaimir al Daraie of the UAE, visiting Al Dahariz Beach has become an annual tradition.

“We are here today at Al Dahariz Beach, and honestly, I visit this place every year for all its natural qualities and its cafes. I recommend that every visitor come and see this place,” he said.

Beyond leisure and relaxation, Al Dahariz beachfront also serves as a venue for sporting and cultural activities.

During the Khareef Dhofar Season, the beachfront recently hosted the Omani Traditional Games Season

2026, bringing together clubs from Dhofar Governorate for three days of competitions that showcased traditional Omani games as part of the country’s cultural and sporting heritage.

The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Tariq bin Khalid al Hinai, Wali of Taqah, adding a cultural dimension to the beachfront’s growing role as a community and tourism destination.

With its sea views, family-friendly facilities, cafes and seasonal events, Al Dahariz beachfront reflects how Oman’s coastal destinations can combine natural beauty with recreation and cultural experiences. Its appeal lies not only in the landscape but also in the variety of activities and experiences that keep visitors returning.



”

The atmosphere is really beautiful, and the beach is amazing and clean. Mashallah, the place is busy and suitable for sitting, and everything is available.

JAA FAR BIN MOHAMMED AL FADL
A first-time visitor to Dhofar from Saudi Arabia

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

OMAN'S 1ST EXCHANGE

ESTD SINCE 1920

WINNER OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED BRAND 2025

FAST TRANSFER

SECURE & RELIABLE

WORLDWIDE NETWORK

Transfer money worldwide instantly via Western Union using the PK Remit mobile app.

RECEIVING COUNTRY

Western Union

PK REMIT

SCAN & DOWNLOAD PK REMIT APP NOW

GET IT ON Google Play

Download on the App Store

Western Union

SHORT TAKES



Experts in children’s literature and psychology have called for a renewed approach.

EXPERTS: CHILDREN’S LITERATURE MUST EVOLVE WITH THE DIGITAL AGE

MUSCAT: Children’s literature is no longer simply a source of entertainment, but a vital tool for shaping young minds, strengthening language and identity, and supporting children’s emotional well-being, specialists say.

Experts in children’s literature and psychology have called for a renewed approach that combines Arab cultural authenticity with contemporary ideas and digital technology, creating stories that can engage children while helping them become confident readers and creators.

Dr Noura bint Salem al Khalili, a specialist in children’s literature, said Arabic is the first vessel through which a child’s personality, culture and identity are formed.

“Language is not just a tool for communication, but the first effective tool for shaping identity, building human values and consolidating its features,” she said.

She stressed the need for closer cooperation among writers, families and educational institutions to ensure that Arabic is presented to children as a living part of their daily lives rather than merely a school subject.

Children’s literature, she said, can help transform language learning into a practical experience by encouraging children to read, discuss and rewrite stories and use vocabulary in real-life contexts.

Dr Iman bint Hamad al Muqbal, a specialist in child psychotherapy, said Oman’s children’s literature has made positive strides, particularly in promoting national identity, preserving Arabic and reflecting the Omani environment and values.

However, she said children’s literature should also be viewed as an educational and psychological tool.

Storytelling and narrative therapy can help children understand and express emotions and cope with fear, sadness, anger, loss, bullying and family changes, she said.

She called for stories addressing issues such as anxiety, trauma, family separation, illness, disability and emotional management in language appropriate to children’s developmental stages.

Al Muqbal also stressed that cultural identity and global experiences can complement each other. Stories should allow children to see their own environment and heritage while developing critical thinking, imagination, emotional intelligence and psychological resilience.

Iraqi specialist Dr Zainab Abdul Mahdi highlighted the growing influence of the digital world, arguing that books and screens should not be viewed as rivals.

Instead, she said, digital technology should be used to bring Arabic stories and cultural heritage to life and encourage children to become content creators rather than passive consumers. – **ONA**

Heavy litter poses threat to Dhofar’s wild landscapes

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
SALALAH, AUGUST 23

AS THE Khareef Dhofar Season continues to attract thousands of visitors, the growing problem of waste being abandoned in wilderness areas is raising concerns over its impact on the governorate’s fragile environment and wildlife.

Picnicking and camping are among the defining experiences of the Khareef season, when the cool, misty weather draws residents and visitors to green pastures, wadis and coastal areas. With Dhofar covering a vast area, many visitors seek secluded spots to enjoy the outdoors.

The concern, however, begins when they leave. Ahmed al Mahrouqi, a resident of Taqah, recently came across waste abandoned by picnickers in an open area.

“Leaving trash behind is not just an eyesore; it is also dangerous to grazing animals. They could fall sick after consuming the materials,” he said.

He urged visitors to take their waste to designated garbage containers rather than leaving it in the wilderness.

Continuous efforts are being made by the Environment Protection Team, in coordination with Dhofar Municipality and the Royal Oman Police, to curb environmentally harmful practices during the monsoon season.

The authorities have received



Dealing with rubbish abandoned in remote wilderness areas remains a greater challenge.

Continuous efforts are being made by the Environment Protection Team, in coordination with Dhofar Municipality and the ROP, to curb environmentally harmful practices during the monsoon season

156 reports concerning overflowing waste containers. However, dealing with rubbish abandoned in remote wilderness areas remains a greater challenge.

“We can enjoy the beautiful nature, but we should also be considerate of the animals. You see goats that are thin with big stomachs. Plastic abandoned in open areas can also be consumed by camels. It remains in their stomachs and can eventually prove fatal, leaving the animals unhealthy,” Ahmed said.

The World Economic Forum has warned that plastic ingestion affects more than 180 species of marine and terrestrial animals, posing a serious threat to biodiversity. Wildlife can consume plastic as a result of sensory confusion, leading to severe

biological consequences.

Experts say ingestion of plastic can cause intestinal blockages, starvation and chemical poisoning in animals.

For Ahmed, a veteran adventurer known for crossing deserts with his camels, the underlying issue is human behaviour.

“Many people have talked and written about it, but nobody is listening,” he said.

The Plastic Soup Foundation has also highlighted the dangers of plastic waste to camels, noting that land-based litter can accumulate in their stomachs and form hardened masses, potentially causing starvation and death.

The question remains whether tourists and campers can help address the problem themselves.

Authorities have provided designated waste containers, but environmental protection ultimately depends on visitors using them and taking responsibility for the waste they generate.

The Environment Authority said the Environment Protectors Team in Dhofar, in coordination with Dhofar Municipality and the Royal Oman Police, has removed 3,914 vehicles from green spaces, dealt with 89 stranded or stuck vehicles and closed 250 unauthorised or blocked locations.

As Dhofar’s green season continues, authorities and environmental advocates are urging visitors to enjoy the governorate’s natural beauty without leaving behind a lasting footprint of waste.

EFFORTS STEP UP TO PROTECT GREEN COVER



Environment Authority teams are continuing field awareness efforts across Dhofar during the Khareef season, urging visitors to protect green areas and natural vegetation and help preserve the governorate’s fragile landscapes.

Omani crafts forum highlights heritage, creativity in Salalah

SALALAH: The Omani Crafts Forum, held under the theme ‘Identity and Extension’, concluded, bringing together around 40 craftsmen, craft projects and suppliers of traditional craft tools and materials.

Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality, the forum was held as part of the Dhofar Autumn Festival 2026.

The closing programme featured live demonstrations showcasing traditional Omani crafts, along with presentations on techniques for developing craft products to meet market needs while

preserving their heritage character and authentic Omani identity.

Visitors interacted with craftsmen and participating projects and learned about the tools, raw materials and techniques used in traditional crafts. The activities aimed to promote Omani craft heritage, support craft entrepreneurs, expand marketing opportunities and contribute to the sustainability and intergenerational transmission of traditional skills.

Participants and visitors described the forum as an important platform for showcasing authentic Omani crafts and highlighting the skills of local craftsmen. They stressed that traditional crafts



The Omani Crafts Forum aims to promote Omani craft heritage and support craft entrepreneurs.

form an important part of Oman’s cultural identity and called for continued forums and exhibitions to support artisans and strengthen the presence of Omani crafts in the cultural and tourism sectors.



Faiza bint Ahmed al Mahrazi, a pottery artisan and founder of Majan Pottery, said her project had evolved from voluntary family-supported work into a venture that exports its products abroad.

The pottery uses specialised clay and designs inspired by the Omani environment, with some pieces taking around 10 days to complete.

Yahya bin Mohammed al Maskari, founder of the Royal Mandous Foundation for Antiques and Gifts, said his participation aimed to introduce visitors to traditional products, build connections with craftsmen and promote Omani handicrafts among government and private institutions.

His work includes Omani mandous chests, wooden products and sand art.

He said maintaining precision in handcrafted details and preserving the uniqueness of products were

among the main challenges facing artisans. Amjad bin Khalifa al Shakaili, a silversmith, craftsman and designer and founder of the Swartz brand, said his passion for Omani silverware began with an interest in the intricate details of traditional daggers, swords and jewellery.

He said his hobby gradually developed into specialised craftsmanship through field learning and close observation of traditional techniques. One of the main challenges, he noted, was balancing the precision and manual techniques of authentic Omani crafts with modern market demands, including production speed and marketing. — **ONA**

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Tunisian coast guards try to stop migrants during their attempt to cross the sea. — Reuters file photo

Tunisia coast guards recover eleven bodies of migrants

TUNIS: Tunisian coast guard forces recovered the bodies of eleven Tunisian migrants whose boat sank at the weekend en route to Italy, while the search continued for six others still missing, a National Guard spokesperson said on Sunday. Coast guard, military and civil protection teams, backed by two helicopters, continued to search for the missing migrants.

The boat, which set off early on Thursday with 15 mostly young people on board, sank off the Tunisian coast this weekend, and so far only one person had been rescued, the head of a migrant rights group said on Saturday. Among those on board were seven members of the same family and a man with his pregnant wife, the head of the Tunisian Observatory for Human Rights said. The sole survivor said he had been adrift at sea for 48 hours before being rescued by a commercial vessel.

All of the migrants were from the Ben Guerdane area in southeastern Tunisia, and dozens of young people gathered late on Saturday in the town near the Libyan border to demand that search operations be accelerated. — Reuters

DR Congo, M23 fighters agree road map for peace talks



Members of the M23 rebel group ride on their vehicles in North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. — Reuters file photo

GENEVA: The Democratic Republic of Congo and the M23 armed group have agreed on a road map for peace talks, according to a joint statement published on Sunday by Switzerland after hosting negotiations. The eastern DRC has been riven by decades of conflict, with multiple armed groups fighting over its mineral-rich territory, including the M23, which seized swathes of the region last year.

The two sides signed a US-brokered peace agreement late last year in the Qatari capital Doha, but fighting has continued. Following a new round of talks held in Switzerland last week, the two sides and their mediators said they had staked out a path forward.

“The Parties developed a road map setting out sequenced steps and timelines for negotiations under the Doha Framework Agreement, and committed to flexibility and creativity within the existing structure” of that agreement, the statement said. “They reaffirmed their commitment to pursue negotiations towards comprehensive peace and conflict resolution through the implementation of the Framework Agreement,” it added. — AFP



Charred vehicles are seen at the Bongor Subdistrict Administrative Organisation office in Ra-ngae district in the southern Thai province of Narathiwat. — AFP

DOZENS OF ATTACKS RAGE ACROSS THAILAND’S SOUTH

DOZENS OF coordinated arson and incendiary attacks across Thailand’s insurgency-hit south late on Saturday left at least three people wounded and government property burned, the military said. Multiple local government offices and several vehicles were damaged or destroyed in the 51 attacks, according to a journalist and the military’s Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC).

Firefighters worked to extinguish burning tyres left in the middle of a road and flames inside a 7-Eleven convenience store on Saturday night, while police officers stopped motorists for security checks, footage from local broadcaster Thai PBS showed. “Multiple coordinated incidents aimed at creating unrest occurred in various locations across the southern border provinces” from around 8:00 pm to midnight on Saturday, ISOC said in a statement.

Most were in Narathiwat province, where three civilians were wounded and an overnight curfew

Firefighters worked to extinguish burning tyres left in the middle of a road and flames inside a 7-Eleven convenience store Saturday night, while police officers stopped motorists for security checks. Authorities were investigating sites of the attacks, including a local government office and telecommunications towers and electrical poles

was imposed, while other attacks occurred in neighbouring Yala and Pattani provinces, authorities said. Since 2004, a low-level conflict has simmered in the southernmost provinces of Buddhist-majority Thailand, killing more than 7,000 people.

No group has claimed responsibility for Saturday’s attacks. Two women, aged 45 and 46, and a 21-year-old man were hurt in a roadside bombing in Narathiwat, provincial officials said in a statement. All three were hospitalised and in stable condition. The national railway operator temporarily suspended part of a route in Narathiwat after officials found damage on the tracks “caused by a disruptive bombing incident last night”, ISOC said.

Narathiwat Governor Boonchuay Homyamyen told local media that authorities were investigating sites of the attacks on Sunday, including a local government office and telecommunications towers and electrical poles. The Narathiwat military command earlier announced a curfew from Saturday

night until 6:00 am on Sunday. A vehicle was stolen from the office of a subdistrict administrative organisation in Narathiwat during one of the attacks that left the building in flames, ISOC said. The burned-out pickup truck was later found abandoned on a road.

At a municipal office in Pattani province damaged in another attack, army commander for the southern region Norathip Poinok said on Sunday that the assailants had aimed to destroy the building and undermine public trust in the state. “We had intelligence reports for about two months that there would be attacks on local offices,” he told reporters, adding that the military had issued warnings to security agencies but did not know when and where the assaults would occur.

Insurgents in the deep south regularly carry out attacks on security officials and government property, including ahead of visits by officials to the region. Last month, assailants killed five soldiers in a shooting and bomb attack at a checkpoint in Narathiwat. — AFP



ISRAELI STRIKES IN GAZA KILL 3, INCLUDING A CHILD

GAZA: Two Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip on Sunday killed at least three people, including a 4-year-old boy, and wounded seven others, Palestinian health officials said. One of the strikes hit a building in Zawayda town in the centre of the enclave and followed a warning by the Israeli army for the owners of the property to leave the area, residents said.

Medics said flying debris and shrapnel that spread for dozens of metres around had wounded at least six people, including the 4-year-old, Mohammad Abdel-Salam Taha, who was later pronounced dead at hospital. “There is no ceasefire, there is nothing,” said Abu Ahmed, a displaced Palestinian who was sheltering close to the building, which the air strike reduced to a pile of mangled steel and concrete. “We want solutions, we want to live in peace,” he said. The second air strike took place in the nearby Nuseirat refugee camp, the health officials said.

More than 1,280 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect last October, according to Gazan health officials, while the Israeli military says four Israeli soldiers have been killed. — Reuters

FIGHTING BLAZES

Fire in Nevada grows to over 10,500 acres



A fast-moving brush fire on a hillside in Northern Nevada, just outside Reno, has grown to over 10,500 acres as of Saturday evening. The Hawk fire grew to 10,523 acres. Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo declared a state of emergency in Washoe County due to the fire. “The Hawk Fire is a very dynamic incident for us as it’s being driven by the winds,” Richard Edwards, chief of Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue in Washoe County, said. — Reuters

VIOLENT SHAKING

Japan 5.9 earthquake injures dozens



A magnitude 5.9 earthquake struck near Tokyo early on Sunday, injuring at least 37 people and disrupting travel in the bustling megacity. The quake caused violent shaking in the Japanese capital and its surrounding areas, prompting the nation’s warning systems to sound public announcements and sirens in the streets and light up smartphones with notices in affected areas. The quake struck the southern part of the Ibaraki Prefecture near Tokyo at 2:00 am. — AFP

SIGNIFICANT ABDUCTIONS

Tuareg fighters release 22 Mali soldiers



Tuareg militants on Sunday freed 22 Mali government troops, some held for more than three years, adding to a steady flow of releases in recent weeks, according to security and ruling junta sources. Tuareg fighters and their allies took dozens of soldiers prisoner when they launched coordinated attacks across the West African nation in April and July. Sources said that two former Wagner Russian paramilitaries captured two years ago had also been let go. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Pope Leo XIV leads a mass in the port of Rimini during a pastoral visit. — AFP

POPE CALLS FOR MORE EFFORTS TO STOP EBOLA IN DR CONGO

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV called on the international community on Sunday to help contain the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which health officials warn is spreading exponentially. “In my prayers I often remember the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially because of the spread of the Ebola epidemic, which unfortunately is causing many victims,” said the pope following his Angelus prayer in St Peter’s Square. “I encourage a response from the international community that also involves local communities in efforts to save many human lives,” added the pope, who visited Africa in April. The deadliest Ebola outbreak in the DRC’s history has already killed thousands of people, hitting regions in the north and east where the presence of the state is weak, health infrastructure is largely lacking and numerous armed groups have sown decades of violence. Leo also expressed his closeness to those in the Central African Republic “who mourn the victims of the collapse that occurred in a mine in Zamboye”. “May the Lord welcome all those who lost their lives, and support efforts to guarantee the safety and legality of mining sites,” said the pope. — AFP

DROWNINGS SURGE PAST 300 IN FRANCE



France has recorded more than 300 drownings this summer, up sharply from last year, a minister said on Sunday, linking the surge to the heatwaves that have swept Europe. The 301 drownings since June 19 are an increase of 14 per cent from the summer of 2025, Sports and Youth Minister Marina Ferrari said. She called it a “sad toll”, saying the increase was “in line with the repeated heatwaves” that have hit many European countries — a phenomenon experts say is driven by human-caused climate change. “Lots of people have sought to hit the water, with risky behaviour,” she added. “Many deadly accidents have occurred in areas that are not authorised or supervised for swimming.” — AFP

SWEDEN REMANDS SCHOOL ATTACK SUSPECT IN CUSTODY

STOCKHOLM: Swedish prosecutors said on Sunday that an 18-year-old man arrested during a fatal sword attack at a high school had been remanded in custody on charges of murder and attempted murder. The alleged attacker entered the Brinell school in the small town of Fagersta on Friday afternoon, just days after its students had returned from summer break. He was shot and arrested by police at the scene. “The 18-year-old man who was arrested on suspicion of murder and

attempted murder in Fagersta on August 21 was remanded in custody on Sunday by the Vastmanland District Court, on probable cause suspected of the offences,” the Swedish prosecution authority said in a statement. It added that the investigation was “in an early and intensive phase”. Police on Saturday identified the one fatality in the attack as a 17-year-old girl. Three boys were also wounded, two of them seriously. The school was still cordoned off on Sunday,

according to public broadcaster SVT. Local police chief Tommy Alriksson told reporters that investigators were seeking a motive. “We are looking into several leads... We are trying, of course, to remain as open-minded as possible,” Alriksson said. The perpetrator had a previous assault conviction and wore a helmet and carried a sword — reminiscent of a 2015 school attack in Trollhattan in which a 21-year-old killed three people in a racially motivated attack. — AFP

Canada retaliates as trade war with US escalates

CANADIAN Prime Minister Mark Carney announced retaliatory tariffs on the United States on Saturday, after walking away from a “bad deal” on trade in a deepening rift between the longtime allies. Negotiations between the neighbouring countries broke down on Friday in Washington, putting into force new 50-per cent US tariffs impacting about \$20 billion worth of goods, or 5.5 per cent of Canadian exports to the United States.

Impacted products range from hockey sticks to cement. “You’re at war when you get attacked. We got attacked,” Carney said. US President Donald Trump hit back at Canada on Sunday, saying, “Canada wants the benefits of being a State, without being one!!!” “They have also charged our great farmers, for many years, massive amounts of Tariffs. No more!!!” Trump added in a post on Truth Social. New Canadian tariffs will notably target the US steel and dairy industries and take effect on September 8. More details would come next week, Carney said.

Trump had previously said Washington “should be able to have a deal with Canada,” citing his “good relationship” with Carney. But on Saturday, Canada’s prime minister said Trump set conditions that were ultimately unacceptable even though earlier talks had been positive. “In recent days, the United States proposed new terms that were uneconomic, unfair and undermined the net benefits for Canada, and called into question the reliability of any deal,” Carney said in Ottawa. “We cannot accept what they’ve offered, and we will not give what they’ve asked.”

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told the New York Times on Saturday that the US had offered to reduce its tariffs on steel,



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks at a press conference in Ottawa. — AFP

US President Donald Trump hit back at Canada on Sunday, saying, “Canada wants the benefits of being a State, without being one!!!” “They have also charged our great farmers, for many years, massive amounts of Tariffs. No more!!!”

aluminium and autos, as well as eliminate a recently imposed tariff on Canadian lumber. Greer said those measures would have given Canada “the most preferential treatment of any trading partner,” according to the Times.

Greer told Fox News on Saturday that Washington was “moving forward with measures that respond to Canadian retaliation.” He said no new talks were planned with Canadian negotiators. A senior US official characterised this week’s talks in Washington as candid and not acrimonious.

Canada has been seeking relief from Trump’s tariffs on autos, steel and aluminium, which have battered the country’s economy, forced job losses and strained what was once an iron-clad trade relationship.

The White House had alleged “discriminatory treatment” by Canada against US automobile and dairy products in introducing the duties. They were originally set to take effect on Wednesday, before Trump issued a three-day reprieve citing progress in talks.

Carney said one reason the deal collapsed was US negotiators at the 11th hour introducing restrictions on Canadian trade deals with other countries. US negotiators also made unacceptable “threats” to the French language and “Quebec culture,” he said, referring to the French-speaking province in eastern Canada.

The escalating trade war was met with anger by Democratic lawmakers and governors from border states including Minnesota, New York and Washington, who blamed Trump for triggering chaos that will raise costs on US businesses and families. “Needlessly picking fights with our allies and raising prices here at home. That’s Trump’s economic policy in a nutshell,” New York Governor Kathy Hochul posted on X.

Beyond the latest tariffs, the US and Canada still have to agree on revisions to the North American free trade agreement, USMCA, which Trump declined to renew in its current form. Trump’s threats to make Canada the 51st US state have also antagonised Canadians.

Carney has repeatedly said relations with the US have been forever altered, and that Canada must reduce reliance on its southern neighbour, which currently accounts for roughly 70 per cent of Canadian exports. “We’ve been under no illusions.

We recognised from the start that America has changed,” Carney said on Saturday. “We recognise that sometimes, its signature was written in pencil.” Carney spoke with provincial leaders to outline next steps. One of them, Ontario Premier Doug Ford, said Canadians must remain united. Trump “can’t be trusted, simple as that,” Ford told reporters. “President Trump is the type of person who would steal your lunch money.” — AFP

Zelensky rejects call for vote, says would ‘split’ wartime Ukraine

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky said in remarks made public on Sunday that it would be too dangerous for Ukraine to hold an election while it fights Russia, after a call by his former defence minister to organise a vote. Ukraine has suspended elections under martial law, a measure still widely supported by the population as the country focuses on fighting off the Russian war launched in 2022. The Ukrainian leader has previously faced calls both from Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump to stage a vote, even as Moscow rains down missiles and drones across the country on a daily basis. “I believe that in a war like this, elections as such are a huge risk. Elections

right now are a tsunami for the country that will split Ukraine,” Zelensky said. “If we want to destroy the country, then we can move in the direction of elections during these times of war,” added the 48-year-old. He made the comments on Saturday in a briefing with journalists. Kyiv has been engulfed in a political crisis over the summer, triggered when Zelensky fired popular defence minister Mykhailo Fedorov. Thousands took to the streets to demand his reinstatement, while Fedorov issued blistering attacks against the army’s top brass. The row forced Zelensky to sack his commander-in-chief. Then days ago, the ousted Fedorov made a surprise call to find a way to organise elections. He did not state explicitly that he wanted



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky stands in front of the Ukrainian guard of honour parade as he attends a ceremony marking the National Flag Day of Ukraine in Kyiv. — AFP

to challenge Zelensky, but the shock move made even some of his supporters distance themselves. Experts have cited a flurry of obstacles to staging elections. They include how soldiers,

millions of Ukrainian refugees and people from occupied territories would cast their ballots, as well as the threat of both interference and physical attacks from Russia. Only 15 per cent of

Ukrainians believe elections should be held before the end of hostilities, according to an opinion poll. Zelensky, while having faced increasing pockets of criticism domestically as the war drags on, is still largely popular. Zelensky hit out at his potential rival with numerous jabs during the briefing. “I believe he is going himself — or is being pushed — toward wrong things,” Zelensky said of Fedorov. The former minister was a prominent backer of the drone warfare strategy that has come to dominate Ukraine’s war with Russia, and had pushed for army reforms — winning support among the public. But openly calling for an election is a risky bet and could have knocked his standing.

Fedorov’s team confirmed on Sunday that he plans to visit the United States soon — a trip likely to revive speculation about whether he is positioning himself as a rival to Zelensky. The domestic row comes amid an escalation in the war. Moscow has intensified its strikes, using hard-to-intercept ballistic missiles that expose Ukraine’s air defence shortfall. Ukraine, meanwhile, has accelerated its own campaign of long-range strikes on Russian energy and logistics sites — including oil refineries and retail warehouses. Zelensky said deliveries of crucial interceptor missiles for US Patriot air defence systems — which can shoot down Russia’s ballistic missiles — had halved since 2023. — AFP

OPINION

AI boom sparks rush to buy and scan old books



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

AN OTHERWISE quiet summer season when news is sparse, the literary world erupted with concerns about what was happening to used books, even some single-edition rare ones.

The story itself is a cloak-and-dagger one. Booksellers in Britain and the US noted a spike in sales of various books in their inventory which had not moved for years. Suddenly, sales rose dramatically, but it was not clear who the buyers were.

Further research showed that they were going into warehouses associated with AI companies.

The way that AI software uses real-world data to train itself has already been discussed. Tailors, for example, are filmed wearing cameras on their foreheads so that the complete process of cutting and stitching fabric from scratch is recorded for AI use at a later stage.

Books are making a similar journey – individual books are being bought, torn from their spines and scanned at an industrial scale. This is, of course, to make it possible for the software to digest huge amounts of data in the form of language, information, even plot and character intricacies from literature written hundreds of years ago.

The AI would then categorise such data for

future consumption.

Evidence for this emerged through an investigation by journalist Emanuel Maiberg, who inserted an electronic tag into an order of books and found that the box had landed at an Amazon warehouse.

The explanation for this industrial-scale scanning of old books, which are only available in print form, is quite simple. AI has already used all the digitally available data.

According to those who work in these areas, this leads to ‘model collapse’, meaning that AI training on repetitive existing data will make the product worse, not better than what has so far existed.

AI thus needs more content. And what is available is the printed word – books going back centuries, in different languages. Each book is unique, talks to a distinct time and place, to a unique culture and a specific audience.

AI seeks to bring it all together under one umbrella – or one computer tab.

In fact, the rush is now to acquire and scan books published before 2022 to ensure that there is no AI interference in those books.

Because this is a new phenomenon, the ethics around such activity are unclear. There are copyright laws that could be infringed with living authors, or those with functioning

estates which are still in control of the original material. But that is not true for texts written 200 years ago.

Technically and legally, once a book is bought, the owner can do anything with it, including tearing it apart and later shredding it. This is exactly what seems to be happening to physical books. But the larger questions are only just beginning to be asked.

For example, if all literature is now ‘owned’ by a large private multinational company, what do human thought, originality and creativity actually mean?

If knowledge is under the control of the few, all writing will ultimately be part of a larger muddle of words with nothing unique to merit it.

Literary writing has also become a commodity, in this case. The individuality of writers will be erased if AI models learn from their stories and styles and churn out dozens of books within the time that it takes to write one thoughtful book. This will then lead to serious trust issues as readers no longer know what is human and what is machine-made.

There could be solutions to these immediate and long-term concerns. But those would only be possible if books are still being valued for themselves and not as a commodity to be digitalised.

The rush is now to acquire and scan books published before 2022 to ensure that there is no AI interference in those books

MEGHAN FACES DIFFICULT RETURN TO THE UK

MARIE HEUCLIN

Prince Harry’s wife, Meghan, faces a tough challenge in re-assimilating to life in the UK, where she remains deeply unpopular, while managing uneasy ties with the royal family.

Through bombshell interviews and tell-all documentaries, the 45-year-old former American actor has never hidden how difficult she found things after her fairytale wedding to Harry in 2018.

And both she and Harry have complained about her treatment by the British media, which Harry told a court this year made her life “an absolute misery”.

“I think there are more questions sort of over her and how she re-adapts to life back in the United Kingdom” than about Harry, said historian Ed Owens.

How she will cope “is difficult to answer at this stage because you know she’s tried successively over the last six years to reinvent her public image to relaunch her brand”, he added.

Deeply attached to his charitable work and keen for his children to build closer ties with his family, King Charles III’s younger son has retained strong ties to Britain.

But for Meghan, things appear more complicated. What will she do away from her sunny Californian base where she is clearly more at home?

Their surprise move back to the UK - six years after quitting their royal duties - has in part come about because Meghan, who starred in the US show “Suits”, is in talks to join Netflix’s UK-filmed series “The Gentlemen”, according to British media.

The comedy-drama, whose second season is due to be released in September, follows a duke who becomes a drug baron.

Experts believe Meghan is likely to focus primarily on family life, particularly her children Archie, seven, and Lilibet, five.

In past interviews, she has acknowledged that she enjoys doing the daily school run.

The two kids have already been enrolled at a British school and the couple have reportedly chosen a new home.

In the United States, however, her prospects appeared to have dimmed following the end of her Netflix deal for her lifestyle and cookery show “With Love, Meghan”.

A film made late last year is set to be released soon in which she has a brief cameo appearance playing herself. During a trip to Australia, she made a guest appearance on an episode of “MasterChef Australia”. — AFP

Ukraine marks 35 years, highlights Oman ties

ON AUGUST 24, 2026, Ukraine celebrates the 35th anniversary of its independence. This date marked the beginning of a new chapter in the development of modern Ukrainian statehood and set the course for Ukraine’s further development as a sovereign and independent state.

On August 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine. On December 1, 1991, Ukraine’s independence was confirmed by the results of the nationwide referendum.

Ukraine’s subsequent international recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations with countries around the world laid the foundation for its active participation in international political, economic and humanitarian cooperation.

Over the past thirty-five years, Ukraine has built modern state institutions, expanded its international partnerships and strengthened its role in international cooperation. Despite ongoing security challenges, Ukraine continues to implement reforms, maintain economic resilience and remain committed to the principles of international law, peace and sustainable development.

Ukraine and the Sultanate of Oman have maintained diplomatic relations since May 19, 1992. Since then, cooperation between the two countries has steadily developed on the basis of mutual respect, sovereign equality and the principles of international law.

The Honorary Consulate of Ukraine in Muscat, which has been operating since 2009 under the leadership of the Honorary Consul of Ukraine, Hani Jumaan Ashour al Rajab, plays an important role in advancing bilateral relations.



TIMUR RIDVANOV

The writer is Charge d’Affairs of Ukraine to the Sultanate of Oman

Its activities contribute to the development of trade and economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and stronger ties between Ukraine and the Sultanate of Oman.

The opening of the Embassy of Ukraine in Muscat in October 2024 marked the beginning of a new chapter in Ukrainian-Omani relations. In July 2025, the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Sultanate of Oman was appointed, representing an important step in the development of bilateral cooperation.

Over the past year, the Ukrainian-Omani political dialogue has intensified significantly. In 2026, the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine and the Sultanate of Oman held two meetings and three telephone conversations. A meeting was also held between the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine and the Foreign Minister of the Sultanate of Oman.

In March 2026, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Ukraine, Maitha bint Saif al Mahrouqi, presented copies of her credentials to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. On July 30, 2026, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky received her credentials during an official ceremony in Kyiv.

At the same time, the legal framework for bilateral cooperation has been expanded, while new initiatives have been launched in healthcare, education, energy, trade, investment, culture and innovation. Engagement between businesses, as well as scientific, medical and cultural institutions of the two countries, has also intensified.

Trade and economic cooperation continue to demonstrate positive momentum. In 2025, bilateral trade amounted to \$138.26 million. During the first half of 2026, it reached \$73.76 million, confirming the

steady development of economic ties between Ukraine and the Sultanate of Oman.

Ukraine regards the Sultanate of Oman as an important partner in the Gulf region and is interested in further expanding bilateral cooperation. Promising areas include investment, trade, transport and logistics, food security, digital transformation, renewable energy, healthcare, education, science and innovation.

Ukraine highly values its constructive engagement with the Sultanate of Oman and is confident that the continued development of bilateral relations serves the interests of both countries and their peoples. With confidence in the further strengthening of this partnership, Ukraine and the Sultanate of Oman continue to advance their bilateral relations, which have every prerequisite for long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation.

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of Ukraine’s independence, the Embassy of Ukraine in the Sultanate of Oman expresses its sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman, and, in particular, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, as well as to international partners, the Ukrainian community in the Sultanate of Oman and all those who contribute to the development of the Ukrainian-Omani partnership, for their valuable contribution to strengthening bilateral relations, mutual understanding and cooperation.

The Embassy of Ukraine wishes the friendly people of the Sultanate of Oman peace, well-being and prosperity, and all citizens of Ukraine, both at home and abroad, peace, unity, resilience and new achievements.

Humanity must be more than a ceremony



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and
communications
professional

THERE is a strange contradiction in the way the world observes World Humanitarian Day, falling on August 19. For one day, we pause to speak of compassion, dignity and solidarity. We honour those who carry food, medicine and hope into dangerous places and remember humanitarian workers who have lost their lives serving people they may never have met.

But, while the world celebrates humanity, millions remain unsafe. Somewhere, a child goes to sleep hungry, a family shelters in a tent after losing its home, and a mother listens to war outside her door, wondering whether her family will survive the night.

Perhaps, then, the most important question the world should remember is not simply how we can help, but why the world remains so inhumane if humanity matters so much!

The World Humanitarian Day was established by the United Nations to honour humanitarian workers and others who have died serving people affected by war, disaster and crisis. This day commemorates the 2003 bombing of the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, which killed 22 people, including UN humanitarian personnel. They were not there to fight a war, but to help people caught in one. They believed that another person's life was worth saving simply because they were human.

That belief survives today in the doctor

treating the wounded, the volunteer distributing food, the aid worker travelling dangerous roads and the stranger opening a door to someone who has lost everything. These people remind us that humanity has not disappeared.

We feed the hungry without always asking why they are hungry. We shelter families without asking who destroyed their homes. We treat the wounded while wars continue to create more victims. We praise humanitarian workers for their courage while accepting the conditions that force them to risk their lives.

Humanitarian action can respond to an emergency, but it cannot by itself end the war, rebuild the destroyed home, or prevent the next attack. The world must have the courage not only to treat the consequences of suffering, but also to challenge its causes.

We do not suffer from a shortage of speeches about humanity. We suffer from a shortage of humanity in action. Some crises receive immediate attention while others remain forgotten. Pain does not become less painful because it happens far away.

A grieving mother does not grieve less because her story never reaches international television. A refugee does not lose dignity when crossing a border. Humanity cannot have a geography. It cannot belong only to those who look like us, speak like us, or live near us.

Humanity is a responsibility to protect life before crisis strikes, to speak when silence is easier, and to see people before we see statistics

Perhaps even more dangerous is our growing familiarity with suffering.

Another bombing becomes another headline; another refugee crisis becomes another statistic; another starving population becomes another appeal for donations. We watch, react and move on. But those suffering cannot simply move on. Every statistic is a person, every number has a name, every displaced family once had a home, and every child caught in war had dreams before the war arrived.

The world humanitarianism should seek is one where children know classrooms better than bomb shelters, families do not have to learn the language of displacement, hospitals can focus on healing, hunger is never used as a weapon, and humanitarian workers can deliver aid without risking their lives.

Humanity cannot be a ceremony or a speech delivered once a year. It is a responsibility to protect life before crisis strikes, to speak when silence is easier, and to see people before we see statistics.

Probably, the greatest tribute to those who died serving humanity is not simply to remember that they gave their lives, but to ask why they had to. The true measure of humanity is not how generously we respond after the world has failed someone. It is whether we have the courage to build a world that does not keep failing them.

ARCTIC SHIPPING A DAUNTING PROSPECT

MYRIAM RIVET

With Gulf turmoil slashing Suez Canal traffic, shipping firms are tempted to try the Arctic for quicker trips between Europe and Asia - but commercial prospects are unlikely to match countries' strategic ambitions for the North Pole.

Container ships from China and South Korea aim to transit the Northern Sea Route in Russian territorial waters in the coming weeks, testing its viability as climate change keeps the passage free of ice longer each year.

Industry experts remain sceptical, saying that even if more vessels start going through, the bulk of global shipping will remain along established lines for the foreseeable future.

Many operators now avoid the passage and send ships instead around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope, vastly prolonging the journey between Asia and Europe and driving up fuel costs and emissions.

By contrast, the Northern Sea Route (NSR) could cut the distance by 30 to 40 per cent compared to using the Suez Canal, and by nearly half from going around the southern tip of Africa, the credit insurance group Coface said in April.

But what looks good on spreadsheets ignores daunting constraints.

"The Arctic link can only be seasonal, from August to October," said Paul Tournet, director of the Higher Institute of Maritime Economics (ISEMAR) in Saint-Nazaire, France.

"And you need ice-class ships, which cost more," he said. That rules out Supramax and other hulking container ships that make up a major share of global traffic, since they can offer hugely competitive rates.

By contrast, the capacity of the Chinese container ship 'Dubai Tower' that embarked on the NSR from Ningbo to Europe this month is one-tenth the size, said Jerome de Ricqlès, a sea freight specialist at Upply, a French-based transport management firm.

Most container ships using the NSR need to be escorted by Russia's fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers. Last year, a record 23 vessels made the passage, up from 15 in 2024, according to a recent study by insurance group Allianz Commercial.

That's fewer than the number using the Suez Canal each day.

Even with conflicts in the Middle East, some 35 ships a day transited the Egyptian canal in the first half of this year, down from more than 50 a day before the Ansar Allah started their attacks in 2023.

According to Coface, just 3.5 per cent of the current traffic between East Asia, northern Europe and North America could actually shift to Arctic routes.

Looking out to 2030, viability "remains extremely limited and mainly only concerns raw materials", Eve Barre, an economist who piloted the Coface study, said in a statement.

Even so, the NSR could attract bulk liquid vessels carrying oil and liquefied natural gas, which could see their costs slashed by 45 to 50 per cent in some cases, the study found. — AFP

Why societies do not all live in the same time

"THE CONDITIONS of the world and of nations do not remain upon a single course. They vary with days and ages, passing from one state to another." ~ Ibn Khaldun

Countries are racing to deploy artificial intelligence across education, government and the economy. They buy the same models, hire the same companies and publish similar strategies, then expect similar results.

Yet a state can acquire an AI model in months; it cannot acquire reliable data, skilled employees, public trust or an administration capable of redesigning work at the same speed. The tool is the same. Why does its impact vary so greatly between societies?

Part of the answer may lie in a dimension we routinely neglect: time. I do not mean the time measured by a clock or printed at the top of an official document. I mean the time within things: the time a structure requires to take shape, and the time it will require to change. What happens to our understanding of societies if we treat time as an internal dimension of their institutions and ideas, rather than merely as a framework in which events are arranged?

For the purposes of analysis, time is a relationship we discern through change, not an independent substance we can observe. We do not see time. We see the sun move, hands turn around a clock, bodies age and things pass from one condition to another. Without change, one moment could not be distinguished from the next.

This raises a corresponding question: can a social structure be understood from its present appearance alone?

When we describe a society, we speak of its state, economy, universities, laws and ideas of justice and authority. We tend to view these as objects laid out on a single plane. We place one constitution beside another, one university beside another, and one election beside another, then assume that similarity of form indicates similarity of substance.



HAMED S
AL GHAITHI

The writer is an Omani evolutionary biologist, translator and editor

But a structure does not exist only in space. It also exists in time. It emerged through a long process and bears the marks of the path it travelled, the obstacles it met, the interests it established and the ideas that gave it meaning. If space tells us where an institution is, time tells us what is inside it.

Two universities may resemble each other in their buildings, degrees and regulations. Yet one may be the product of a long history of scholarly autonomy; the other may have been created principally to expand education and staff the state. Two laws may contain nearly identical provisions, yet one follows a social transformation that secured recognition of its underlying principle, while the other precedes the society expected to put that principle into practice. The form is the same, but the time accumulated within it is different. Its function and effects will differ too.

Nor do all structures within a society move at the same speed. There is the time of the event: a decision is announced, a government changes, a crisis erupts. There is the time of extended change: demographic shifts, economic cycles and the movement of skills and interests. Then there is the time of structures formed over generations: the state, education, political culture and the distribution of wealth.

Technology may change within months, law over years and institutions over decades. Habits and ideas about authority and knowledge may take generations. A system may die in legislation yet survive in practice. A law may be born in the official gazette long before it is born in social relations.

This is why the effects of artificial intelligence will not be determined by the power of the model alone. They will depend on whether the surrounding institutions can reorganise education, work and administration around it. Two states may acquire the same technology on the same day and obtain very different results because they have not introduced it into the same social time.

This does not mean that one society lives in the past and another

in the future, as though all societies travelled along a single road. A society's technology may move rapidly while its laws change slowly. Its economy may be integrated into the world's newest networks while its relations of authority preserve older forms. The pace may vary further across classes, regions and institutions. A society does not inhabit one time; several times coexist within it.

When an institution moves from one society to another, the history that formed it does not necessarily travel with it. Citizenship, the state, the university and the market are not definitions that escaped from books. They are outcomes of particular conflicts, needs and historical paths. The error deepens when the path that produced an institution is presented as universal, so that its different operation elsewhere is attributed to backwardness rather than to a different structure and history.

Failure to see this produces an error of understanding, followed by an error of policy. If policymakers assume that an institutional form carries within itself the conditions required for it to work, they will mistake creating an institution for creating its function, passing a law for changing behaviour, and acquiring technology for acquiring capability.

They see what has happened, but not the time required for an event to become a structure, a structure to become a practice, and a practice to alter how people understand themselves.

It is equally mistaken to explain a long movement through a short event. A crisis that appears sudden may be the culmination of an accumulation we failed to notice. A system that looks stable may have lost the forces that sustained it long ago. Conversely, strategies and decisions may proliferate without altering the structure that keeps reproducing the same outcomes. A great deal of activity does not necessarily produce change. A wheel can spin without gripping the ground.

This is where time becomes indispensable to the observer, historian and policymaker. It is not enough to ask what happened.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Hamood al Busaidi in action during the Open A competition at the 32nd Abu Dhabi International Chess Festival, where he climbed to 13th place after seven rounds.

AL BUSAIDI CLIMBS TO 13TH AFTER CHESS UPSET IN ABU DHABI

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

Oman national chess team player Hamood al Busaidi continued his impressive campaign at the 32nd Abu Dhabi International Chess Festival, producing another major upset in the seventh round of the Open A competition to move into 13th place in the overall standings.

The Omani Candidate Master defeated Azerbaijan's FIDE Master Mahammad Baghirov, the tournament's third seed and rated 2,253, to secure his third consecutive victory and raise his tally to five points from seven rounds. The result saw Al Busaidi, who entered the competition as the 45th seed with a FIDE rating of 1,934, climb from 22nd position after six rounds to 13th. His performance rating also rose to 2,125, underlining the strong level he has displayed against a field featuring several internationally titled and higher-rated players.

Al Busaidi delivered a composed performance against Baghirov, maintaining his concentration throughout the encounter and making the most of his opportunities to overcome an opponent rated more than 300 points above him.

The victory extended an impressive winning run that began in the fifth round. Al Busaidi defeated the UAE's Ahmed Almheiri Sultan, rated 1,790, before overcoming UAE Woman FIDE Master Anoud Eisa Mohamed, rated 1,804, in the sixth round. He then followed those successes with his victory over Baghirov.

The three successive wins marked a strong response from the Omani after two defeats earlier in the tournament. Al Busaidi opened his campaign with a victory over the UAE's Abdulaziz Aidarous Mera, before losing in the second round to top seed and Philippine International Master Richilieu Salcedo III, rated 2,298.

He returned to winning ways in round three against Russia's Aleksey Chernyshev, but suffered his second defeat in the fourth round against UAE International Master Ibrahim Sultan, rated 2,165. Since then, Al Busaidi has produced three consecutive victories to move firmly into contention for a place among the leading players.

Eighth-round test
Al Busaidi now faces another important challenge in the eighth round when he takes on Uzbekistan's Islombek Xusanov, rated 2,109. Both players enter the encounter with five points, adding further importance to the contest as they seek to strengthen their positions heading into the final round.

With only two rounds remaining, Al Busaidi is within reach of the top 10 and will be looking to maintain the momentum built during his three-match winning streak.

The Open A competition features 133 players and is contested over nine rounds under the Swiss system as part of the Abu Dhabi International Chess Festival, which runs from August 15 to 24 at the Radisson Blu Hotel & Resort, Abu Dhabi Corniche.

Active Oman Challenge draws 2,649 participants

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

THE SECOND edition of Active Oman Challenge concluded after days of sporting and recreational competitions that attracted 2,649 participants across different age groups, with winners from the various championships honoured during the closing ceremony.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Harib bin Numair al Said, bringing the curtain down on an edition that featured strong participation across a wide range of activities hosted at Active Oman.

The men's go-karting championship attracted 484 participants, while more than 473 took part in the shooting challenge. The Active Oman International Open Chess Championship drew more than 400 players, while 400 competed in the Fifa tournament. More than 350 participants featured in the Jackaroo competition, over 320 contested the card games championship, more than 150 entered the Survival Challenge and 36 competed in billiards.

Ahmed bin Said al Harrasi, Operations Manager at Active Oman, said the event had gone beyond being a collection of tournaments, creating a platform that brought together a passion for sport, the spirit of competition and the enjoyment of participation.

He said the turnout reflected the growing interest in sporting and recreational initiatives in Oman, while also giving first-time participants and emerging talents an opportunity to test themselves and showcase their abilities.

Al Harrasi added that the success of the challenge should not be measured only by participation figures, but also by its contribution towards creating a more active community, encouraging young people to pursue their interests and providing wider opportunities for talent to emerge.

He also highlighted the strong participation of families and women, while stressing the importance of maintaining partnerships with sponsors, supporters and institutions to ensure the continued growth of such initiatives. Bank Muscat was the Gold Sponsor of the second edition.



Billiards champion Hasan bin Nabil bin Ahmed al Musawi

The closing ceremony also saw winners crowned across the different competitions.

In the Card Games Championship, Yaqoub al Zadjali's team claimed first place, followed by Muhanna al Habsi's team and Hamoud al Hadhrami's team.

In the Active Oman International Open Chess Championship, Abdullah al Qudaimi topped the overall standings, ahead of Medhat Magdy and Basheer al Qudaimi. Satheeskumar Vardan Hari finished fourth and Abdul Rahman al Zadjali fifth.

The men's Jackaroo Championship was won by Sulaiman al Salmi's team, ahead of Saif al Jardani's team and Abdulrahman al Asmi's team, while the women's title went to Amal al Balushi's team, followed

by Tuqa al Hasani's team and Asala Bait Mahout's team.

In the men's go-karting championship, Salman al Azri claimed first place, with Ammar al Falahi second and Mohammed al Khalidi third. The women's karting competition was won by Widad al Harthi, ahead of Dunia al Buraiki and Hajar al Jufaili.

Hasan al Musawi secured the billiards title, followed by Hamza al Owaidi and Fahad al Maqbali.

In the women's shooting competition, Hadeel al Harbi finished first, ahead of Aisha Ahmed and Aseel al Salmi, while Al Khattab al Hinai won the men's title, with Ahmed al Maskari second and Sanad al Salmi third. The children's shooting competition saw Ahmed al Rashidi win the 6-10 years category, while Mohammed al Hinai claimed the 11-15 years title.

In the Fifa tournament on PS5, Firas al Aghbari took first place, followed by Fahr al Kindi and Hudhaifa al Amri.

The Survival Challenge was won by Malik al Hinai, with Aya al Alawi second and Ayham al Balushi third.

Billiards champion Hasan al Musawi said the title carried special significance after a two-year absence from the game, adding that the victory had given him renewed motivation to return to competition at a stronger level.

IHF backs Salalah for 2028 Beach Handball World meet

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

The International Handball Federation IHF has highlighted the exceptional natural and climatic advantages of Salalah as key factors behind Oman's successful bid to host the 2028 IHF Beach Handball World Championship for men and women.

According to the IHF, the distinctive atmosphere of Salalah and the wider Dhofar Governorate during the Khareef season in July played an important role in strengthening Oman's hosting credentials. The city's natural surroundings, combined with modern infrastructure, diverse accommodation options and transport facilities, provide favourable conditions for staging a major international sporting event.

Salalah will host the championship from July 3 to 8, marking another significant milestone for Omani sport and



Salalah will host the 2028 IHF Beach Handball World championship from July 3 to 8.

reinforcing Oman's growing reputation as a destination capable of organising major international events.

The IHF also noted that the World Championship will return to Oman after it previously hosted the event in 2012 at the Al Musannah Sports City. The Salalah edition will be the third Beach Handball World Championship to be staged in Asia, following the 2024 edition in the People's Republic of China, reflecting the sport's

expanding global reach and growing popularity.

Preparations for the tournament will include the development of four competition courts and two additional courts for training and warm-up sessions. The main venue will have a capacity of approximately 2,000 spectators, providing an appropriate setting for fans and participating national teams.

High-quality white sand sourced from the coastal areas

of Dhofar will also be used for the courts to ensure the best possible playing conditions and meet the technical standards required by the International Handball Federation.

As part of its early preparations for the 2028 World Championship, and reflecting the strong partnership and mutual confidence between the Oman Handball Association and the IHF, Oman will also host the finals of the IHF Beach Handball Global Tour in 2026 and 2027.

Hosting these events is expected to provide valuable organisational and technical experience for Omani officials and further strengthen the country's readiness for the World Championship in 2028.

Beyond the sporting significance of the event, the championship is expected to enhance Oman's presence on the international sporting map while promoting Dhofar and Salalah as distinctive sports and tourism destinations.

SHORTTAKES



Oman Aquatics Federation has officially announced the signing of the renowned Algerian coach, Mohamed Bouguerra.

OMAN APPOINTS ALGERIAN COACH AS SWIMMING HEAD COACH

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

In a strategic move aimed at strengthening the technical staff and elevating the preparation and development levels of swimmers, the Oman Aquatics Federation has officially announced the signing of the renowned Algerian coach, Mohamed Bouguerra, to take over as the Head Coach of the national swimming teams.

The President of the Oman Aquatics Federation , Dr Awadh al Ojaili, confirmed that the federation carefully reviewed the portfolio and selection file for the head coach position, emphasised that the association has complete confidence in Coach Bouguerra’s high technical level and expertise, noting that he previously served as the head coach of the Algerian national swimming team, where he achieved commendable results during his tenure.

This agreement comes within the framework of the federation ‘s ongoing strategy to provide an integrated training environment that ensures raising the readiness of Omani swimmers to represent the Sultanate of Oman honourably across various regional and international arenas. Coach Mohamed Bouguerra boasts an extensive background and rich technical expertise in the field of sports coaching, bringing profound experience in preparing and developing swimmers physically and technically for diverse competitive challenges.

Worth noting, Coach Bouguerra is supported in his assigned duties by a group of dedicated national coaches who work alongside him to implement training programs effectively. Furthermore, his mission is fully backed by the National Teams and Coaches Committee, which provides comprehensive logistical support to ensure the successful execution of his training plans and future objectives.

Commenting on this milestone, Dr al Ojaili highlighted that recruiting a coaching expertise of Coach Bouguerra’s caliber reflects the federation ‘s unwavering commitment to advancing Oman’s swimming ecosystem and enhancing the technical capabilities of its athletes, wishing the entire technical staff and the national teams every success in achieving their desired goals and future commitments.



A group photo of the winning contestants in the championship.

Al Ittihad crowned Khareef Dhofar karate champions

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

AL ITTIHAD Sports Club were crowned champions of the third khareef Dhofar Open Karate Championship 2026 after topping the overall standings at the conclusion of two days of competition in Salalah.

Organised by the Oman Karate Committee in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality, the championship was held on August 21 and 22 as part of the khareef Dhofar 2026 programme, more than 160 athletes, representing 14 clubs, academies and karate centres from across Oman, took part.

Competitors contested kata and kumite events across various age groups and weight categories under the rules adopted by the organising committee and the World Karate Federation, the competition featured strong contests and promising technical performances.

Al Nasr Sports Club finished runners-up, while Shotokan Karate Centre secured third place in the overall team standings.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Tariq bin Khalid al Hinai, Wali of Taqah, in the presence of officials, sports personalities, coaches, referees, athletes and supporters.

The patron presented medals to the leading competitors and trophies to the top three teams, while participating clubs, academies, centres and supporting organisations were also recognised.



A shot of the competition at the 3rd Khareef Dhofar Open Karate Championship in the Wilayat of Salalah.

Dr Faisal bin Hamad al Maawali, President of the Oman Karate Committee and General Supervisor of the championship, described the tournament as an organisational and technical success, saying the strong turnout demonstrated the continued growth of karate in Oman.

Al Maawali stressed the committee’s commitment to expanding opportunities for athletes, discovering emerging talent and providing regular competition, also highlighted the sporting, tourism and community value of staging the event during the khareef dhofar Dhofar season.

Dr Sadiq bin Mohammed al Issa, Secretary of the Oman Karate Committee and Chairman of the organising committee, attributed the event’s success to close cooperation among the organising teams, government bodies, private-sector supporters, clubs, academies and karate centres. He noted that the return of the championship after several years was an important step towards establishing it as a regular event and strengthening karate’s presence across Oman.

The first edition was held in 2016, followed by the second in 2017, before the tournament returned this year. The committee said it will continue developing athletes, coaches and referees while identifying promising talents for the national teams. The committee is also preparing to stage the 15th Oman Karate Championship in Muscat as part of its efforts to strengthen the sport’s development and competitive structure.

Khareef Dhofar Bowling Championship 2026 draws 92 bowlers

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

The Khareef Dhofar Bowling Championship 2026 got underway on Sunday with the participation of 92 bowlers, bringing together Omani players and a number of competitors from Arab countries.

Organised by the Oman Bowling Committee with the support of the Khareef Dhofar Season, the championship runs from August 23 to 28 and features two competitions the Open Championship and the Local Championship for players from Dhofar Governorate.

The Open Championship launched the action on Sunday, while the Local Championship is scheduled to begin on Monday, August 24. The competitions are expected to produce strong contests, with attractive cash prizes allocated for the top finishers in both categories.

The championship has become one of the bowling events associated with the Khareef season in Dhofar, with the Oman Bowling Committee continuing its cooperation with the organisers to provide competitive opportunities for players and further promote the sport in the governorate.

Ahead of the competition, several participants trained at the venue to familiarise themselves with the lane oil pattern selected for the championship in accordance with international technical regulations.

Members of the national teams’ technical and administrative staff are also attending the championship, contributing to the technical supervision of the competition while assessing players who could be considered for national team selection ahead of upcoming international assignments.

Ayman al Jahdhami, Secretary



Bowlers in action during the opening day of the Khareef Dhofar Bowling Championship 2026 in Salalah.

of the Oman Bowling Committee, welcomed the return of the championship to the committee’s

competition calendar after it was not held last year.

“We are pleased to see this championship return to the committee’s calendar. It is an important competition, particularly for players from Dhofar Governorate, where there is strong interest in bowling and good competition among local players,” Al Jahdhami said.

He added that one of the committee’s objectives is to expand the presence of bowling in Dhofar and provide more competitive opportunities for players in the governorate.

Al Jahdhami thanked the organisers of the Khareef Dhofar Season for their continued support, stressing that the championship represents an important platform for both local bowlers and participants in the Open competition.

“The championship has attracted

good participation and includes a number of leading national team players, as well as bowlers who have achieved strong results in domestic competitions organised by the committee,” he said.

Al Jahdhami added that valuable cash prizes have been allocated for the leading positions in both the Local and Open Championships, providing further incentive for participants during the six-day event.

He also pointed to the active domestic bowling programme during the current season, with the Oman Bowling Committee having already staged several competitions. More local and open tournaments are planned for the coming period, including events supported by private-sector partners, as the committee continues its efforts to broaden participation and raise the competitive level of the sport across Oman.

SPORTS



Manchester City's Josko Gvardiol celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

MANCHESTER CITY made a winning start to life without Pep Guardiola as late goals from Marc Guehi and Josko Gvardiol snatched a dramatic 2-1 victory against Bournemouth on Sunday in Enzo Maresca's first Premier League game as the Spaniard's replacement.

Marcus Tavernier's first half goal put Bournemouth ahead at the Etihad Stadium before City staged a pulsating fightback in the final minutes.

Marc Guehi headed City's equaliser with six minutes left before Gvardiol stroked in the stoppage-time winner.

Guardiola won 20 trophies, including six Premier League titles, during a glorious decade with City.

His reign started with a late win at home to Sunderland in 2016 and Maresca will hope his own narrow victory serves as the prelude to an equally successful spell.

Maresca insists he can replicate Guardiola's trophy haul if he is given time to handle the "big changes" at the club.

City's lacklustre 3-0 defeat against Arsenal in last weekend's Community Shield raised questions about their ability to keep pace with the Premier League champions this season.

For much of their top-flight opener, City were again short of inspiration in attack and cohesion at the back.

But they found a way to dig out a result that allowed Maresca to breathe a sigh of relief.

It is a time of major upheaval at City, with Rodri, Bernardo Silva, John Stones, Nathan Ake and Tijjani Reijnders all leaving and Savinho set to join Tottenham.

England midfielder Elliot Anderson has been Maresca's only major signing and he was unimpressive before hobbling off in the second half.

City are set to sign teenage Morocco midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille in a deal worth £86 million (\$117 million), according to reports on Sunday.

But more new recruits will be needed if City are to close the gap on Arsenal.

Maresca wasted little time emulating one aspect of Guardiola's reign as he unveiled a curious starting line-up.

The Italian picked six players who could be classed as defenders, with England centre-back Guehi deployed in midfield and Nico O'Reilly moved from his usual role on the left to a position closer to Erling Haaland in attack.

Haaland shed his long blond hair on the eve of the new season, describing his close-cropped look as "new season, new trim".

MARESCA
MAKES
WINNING
START
WITH

MAN CITY
AFTER DRAMATIC
FIGHTBACK



The City striker, who starred for Norway at the World Cup, might have looked sharp, but his finishing was rusty when he somehow prodded wide from close-range after O'Reilly's cross presented him with a golden opportunity.

City were punished by an incisive counter from Bournemouth in the 26th minute.

Evanilson's perfectly weighted cross fizzed across the penalty area as City defenders Ruben Dias and Abdukodir Khusanov stood statuesque, allowing Tavernier time and space to stroke a composed finish past Gianluigi Donnarumma from six yards.

City forwards Phil Foden and Antoine Semenyo struggled to link up effectively with Haaland, whose glancing header was clawed away by Djordje Petrovic.

Guehi should have equalised immediately after the interval from Foden's corner, but he surpassed Haaland's woeful first half miss with an even worse header from virtually on the line.

Moans from supporters underwhelmed by Maresca's style of play were a constant soundtrack to his time at Chelsea.

It must have alarmed City's hierarchy to hear similar complaints from the stands before Maresca had even completed 90 minutes in charge.

But Maresca made the critical decision to send on French playmaker Rayan Cherki and the move changed the course of the match.

It was Cherki's corner that arrowed towards Guehi in the 84th minute, presenting the defender with a chance that he headed past Petrovic in clinical fashion.

And in stoppage-time, Cherki slipped a deft pass through the heart of the Bournemouth defence for Gvardiol to slot home as Maresca punched the air in delight. — AFP



BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES

OMAN POSITIONS ITSELF AS ‘SWITZERLAND OF AI’ WITH BALANCED, OPEN APPROACH

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

Oman is positioning itself as the “Switzerland of AI”, seeking to build a reputation for neutrality, political stability and a balanced approach to artificial intelligence as it develops an ecosystem spanning infrastructure, AI models and governance.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and

Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, said Oman was drawing on its longstanding tradition of neutrality and openness to develop an approach that takes lessons from different AI regulatory and development models around the world.

“We want to be the Switzerland of AI at all layers, starting from the infrastructure layer to the model layer and the governance layer”, Dr Al Shaithani said in a recent interview with the Regulating AI podcast at the AI for Good Summit in Geneva.

He said the United States was more market-driven, the European Union more user-centric, while China represented a different approach. Oman, he said, was seeking a hybrid model that incorporated the best lessons from each.

“We are banking on this in the AI age to come up

with a moderate and balanced approach towards AI”, he said.

A key pillar of this positioning is Oman’s ambition to become a hub for green AI infrastructure. Dr Al Shaithani highlighted the country’s strategic location, multiple submarine cable connections, political neutrality and abundance of renewable energy resources as competitive advantages for hosting AI data centres and high-performance computing infrastructure.

The Digital Triangle, comprising three digital hubs or availability zones, is among the flagship initiatives supporting this ambition.

The hubs are being developed to accommodate green AI data centres and high-speed computing clusters, with readiness across technology, regulation, investment and workforce requirements.

Dr Al Shaithani said the project could place Oman on the global AI map, particularly at the compute layer, where the country believes it has distinctive advantages.

Oman is also seeking to develop the human capital required to support its AI ambitions.

Through the national Makeen upskilling initiative, around 11,000 people have been trained over the past three years through more than 150 programmes covering AI, cloud computing, video game development, full-stack development and technology product management.

The initiative is now entering its second phase, reflecting the need for continuous reskilling as technology evolves rapidly, he said.

Governance represents another central element of Oman’s “Switzerland of AI” proposition. Dr Al Shaithani said Oman was seeking to encourage AI innovation while establishing safeguards to ensure its responsible use.

The Sultanate of Oman has published a Safe and Ethical AI Use Policy and updated existing legislation, including cybercrime and IT transaction laws, to address emerging AI-related issues.

“We want AI to flourish, but at the same time we are putting in place guidelines and guardrails to help the development of AI in a responsible manner”, he added.



We want to be the Switzerland of AI at all layers, starting from the infrastructure layer to the model layer and the governance layer

DR ALI BIN AMER AL SHAITHANI
Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology

Gas drives Oman’s Q1 gains; spending up 31%

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

OMAN INCREASED development spending by nearly a third in the first quarter of 2026 while keeping the state budget close to balance, as higher gas, oil and current revenues lifted government income faster than expenditure.

Development expenditure rose 31 per cent year-on-year to RO 334 million in the three months to the end of March, while the budget recorded a deficit of RO 25 million, down from RO 136 million in the corresponding period of 2025, according to preliminary Ministry of Finance figures.

Total public revenue increased 13 per cent to RO 2.985 billion from RO 2.635 billion a year earlier. Expenditure rose at a slower pace of 9 per cent, reaching RO3.010 billion compared with RO 2.771 billion.

A closer look at the revenue mix shows that gas, rather than oil, provided the largest incremental contribution to the improvement.

Net gas revenue rose 36 per cent to RO 593 million from RO 436 million, an increase of RO 157 million. That represented about 45 per cent of the RO 350 million year-on-year increase in total government revenue, according to an Observer calculation based on the ministry’s figures.

Net oil revenue increased at a more moderate 5 per cent to RO 1.535 billion from RO 1.468 billion, adding about RO 67 million. Current revenue rose 13 per cent to RO 817 million, up RO 92 million from a year earlier.

The figures underline the continuing importance of hydrocarbons to Oman’s public finances, but also show that movements within the hydrocarbon



Net gas revenue rose 36 per cent to RO 593 million from RO 436 million, an increase of RO 157 million.

Net oil revenue increased at a more moderate 5 per cent to RO 1.535 billion from RO 1.468 billion, adding about RO 67 million. Current revenue rose 13 per cent to RO 817 million, up RO 92 million from a year earlier.

revenue base can differ significantly between oil and gas.

The average realised oil price was about \$64 a barrel during the first quarter, with average production at approximately 1.025 million barrels per day.

That realised price was above the \$60-a-barrel assumption used to prepare Oman’s 2026 state budget. The government has budgeted annual revenue of RO 11.447 billion against expenditure of RO 11.977 billion, leaving a planned deficit of RO 530 million for the year.

On the expenditure side, current spending remained the largest component, rising 8 per cent to RO 2.119 billion from RO 1.967 billion a year earlier.

Development expenditure increased to RO 334 million from RO 254 million and reached 26 per cent of the RO 1.3 billion allocated for development spending during the full year. The ministry’s definition includes expenditure on development projects as w

Contributions and other expenditure, by contrast, fell 15 per cent to RO417 million from

RO 490 million. Government expenditure during the quarter included RO154 million for the social protection system, RO 80 million for the electricity sector and RO17 million for support for petroleum products. A further RO 75 million was transferred to the provision for debt repayment.

Spending on social and basic sectors totalled RO 1.233 billion during the first quarter, equivalent to about 41 per cent of overall government expenditure based on the published figures.

The fiscal data also provide an indication of the flow of government payments into the domestic economy.

The Ministry of Finance said more than RO 362 million in private-sector dues were paid during the first quarter for claims submitted through the government financial system with completed documentation. It said fully documented private-sector claims are settled within an average of five working days.

Public debt stood at about RO 14.5 billion at the end of March, unchanged from the level recorded at the end of 2025. It was, however, around 2 per cent higher than the RO14.3 billion recorded at the end of the first quarter of last year.

The ministry attributed the year-on-year increase to financing requirements alongside measures to develop the domestic debt market and manage obligations falling due during the year.

The first-quarter outcome gives Oman a relatively narrow fiscal gap at the start of the year, but it should not be extrapolated directly into a full-year result. Oil-price movements, the timing of hydrocarbon revenue collection and the pace of expenditure through the remaining quarters will determine the final balance.

Oman’s R&D spending reaches ~~189.4~~ 189.4m

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

The results of the 2025 Omani Research and Development Pilot Survey, published in 2026, revealed that total spending on research and development (R&D) activities reached RO 189.42 million, equivalent to 0.48 per cent of GDP at constant prices.

This indicates the growing contribution of knowledge and innovation to the national economy.

According to the survey results, conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), 35,539 employees were involved in R&D pilot activities.

The private sector accounted for 46 per cent of total spending, compared to 31 per cent for the government sector and 23 per cent for the higher education sector.

The importance of research and development spending lies in supporting the transition to a knowledge-based economy by translating research findings into new applications, products and processes. This enhances productivity



Data showed that 42 per cent of all R&D employees were in the private sector.

and competitiveness and strengthens the ability of economic sectors to keep pace with scientific and technological advancements.

Data showed that 42 per cent of all R&D employees were in the private sector, while researchers comprised 51 per cent of the total workforce in this field. The number of full-time employees reached

11,695, including 8,694 males and 3,001 females.

According to financial indicators, spending on R&D constituted 0.45 per cent of GDP at current prices in 2025, reflecting the significant resources allocated by economic sectors, government institutions and educational institutions towards knowledge and

innovation development. The survey covered three main sectors: the business sector, the government sector and the higher education sector, aiming to measure the size of human resources, spending and funding sources for experimental R&D activities.

Economically, these indicators reflect the importance of increasing investment in R&D to raise local added value and diversify growth sources, especially as the Sultanate of Oman moves towards building a more knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy within the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The 0.48 per cent GDP spending figure remains a key indicator for measuring the development of national spending on innovation relative to the size of the economy.

The survey was based on a sample of 1,632 institutions with a confidence level of 95 per cent and a margin of statistical error of ±2.4 per cent, while the number of responding institutions was 1,069, with a response rate of 65.5 per cent.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Bank Muscat supports Oman’s growing cricket community.

BANK MUSCAT STRENGTHENS ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OMAN CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is strengthening its partnership with the Oman Cricket Association, reaffirming the Bank’s commitment to supporting sporting, social and cultural initiatives.

The move reflects the Bank’s belief that sport serves as an effective bridge for cultural and social engagement across the various segments of society.

This partnership carries particular significance amidst the growing popularity cricket has enjoyed in the Sultanate of Oman in recent years.

Bank Muscat’s support helps create an enabling environment for the sport’s development and keeps pace with the steady growth it is witnessing, reinforcing the Bank’s position as a key partner in the ongoing development of Oman’s sports sector.

Bank Muscat is committed to serving as a catalyst for initiatives that contribute to growth and progress across various sectors in the Sultanate of Oman, with a particular focus on empowering young people and nurturing their sporting talents.

In this regard, the Bank provides ongoing support for a number of sporting activities and tournaments across different governorates as part of its social responsibility programmes, alongside its broader involvement in community initiatives that strengthen the model of successful collaboration between the public and private sectors.

On the banking services front, Bank Muscat plays an important role in advancing financial inclusion in the Sultanate of Oman through a range of innovative services and products, developed in line with global trends in the sector.

These modern services have helped make banking more accessible, including money transfer services available through an extensive network of channels such as Mobile Banking and Internet Banking, which have in turn seen strong uptake given the time and effort they save while meeting customers’ expectations and needs.

The Bank will continue to build on its successful track record in this sector by focusing on innovation to deliver the best possible services to its customers and enhance their banking experience.

LEXUS IS 350: CRAFTED FOR EXHILARATION

THE Lexus IS 350 is engineered to make every drive genuinely exhilarating, combining dynamic performance with the luxury and refinement expected from Lexus. As part of the “Crafted Beyond Measure..

Perfection that Counts” campaign, owning the IS 350 now comes with even greater value.

Customers can enjoy a 5-year or a 50,000 km service package, along with one-year vehicle registration and NUQHBAH Loyalty Points worth RO 100. Complementing these benefits is the IS 350’s front-engine, rear-wheel-drive configuration, sharp handling and driver-focused cockpit, delivering precise, responsive performance that makes every journey engaging.

PRECISION WHERE IT COUNTS
At the core of the IS 350 is an Electric Power Steering system with a variable gear rack, enabling accurate, confident handling through corners and intersections while staying planted and stable on the highway.

An Adaptive Variable Suspension system works alongside it, smoothing out road imperfections without softening the connected, responsive feel that defines the drive. Lexus Safety System+ adds a layer of confidence for everyday and long-distance driving, while Lexus Teammate Advanced Drive brings enhanced assistance for highway journeys.

A BOLD, ATHLETIC STANCE
The IS 350’s exterior is unmistakably sporty, with a low, wide stance that gives it a



Where precision meets performance. The Lexus IS 350 delivers sharp handling, advanced technology and refined comfort for a truly engaging drive.

planted, powerful presence on the road.

The F SPORT variant sharpens this further with a distinctive rear spoiler for improved aerodynamics and 19-inch lightweight alloy wheels. Buyers can choose from eight exterior colours, including the striking Neutrino Gray, a metallic-infused light gray shade with a dynamic finish.

A COCKPIT BUILT AROUND THE DRIVER
Inside, a 12.3-inch centre display and a matching 12.3-inch TFT LCD instrument cluster put every piece of information

exactly where the driver needs it, clear and easy to read at a glance.

Premium touches like the “Forged Bamboo” trim on the console and start switch bezel add a distinctive shading effect, while the Prominence interior colour option injects a bold, energetic accent into the cabin.

Combining precise engineering, advanced safety technology and a driver-first cabin, the IS 350 stands as one of the most engaging sedans in its class — built for those who value performance as much as comfort.

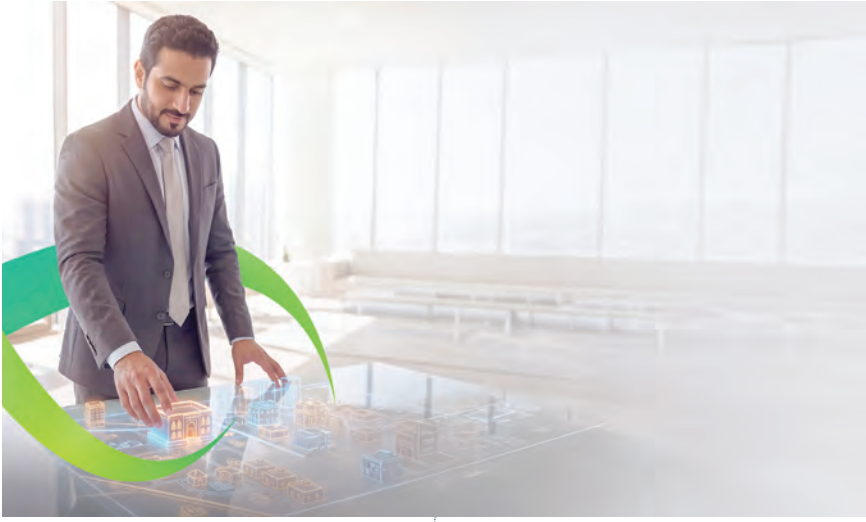
BankDhofar expands expat homeownership

BankDhofar is widening access to property ownership in Oman with competitive housing finance solutions designed to enable both resident and non-resident expatriates to purchase homes and investment properties in eligible Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) and other premium developments across the Sultanate of Oman.

Under its Housing Loan for Expatriates, BankDhofar offers financing of up to RO 350,000, with interest rates starting from 4.15%, for eligible properties in ITC projects registered with the bank and approved by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for sale to non-Omanis.

The facility can finance up to 70% of the property’s value, with repayment periods extending to 20 years, making ownership more accessible to expatriates seeking to establish a long-term stake in Oman.

The financing covers a broad spectrum of residential



BankDhofar expands housing finance for eligible expatriates with rates starting at 4.15%.

options, including apartments, condominiums, villas and other qualifying residential units, giving customers the flexibility to select properties that match their lifestyle, investment objectives and financial capacity. The bank

has also expanded its real-estate financing proposition to include properties under construction and off-plan projects through arrangements with developers of integrated residential communities. The initiative comes as Oman

accelerates the development of a new generation of integrated, lifestyle-oriented communities combining residential, tourism, leisure and commercial facilities. Established ITCs such as Al Mouj Muscat, Muscat Hills and Jabal Sifah, alongside major developments including AIDA and emerging master-planned communities, are expanding the range of high-quality properties available to eligible non-Omani buyers.

At the same time, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is advancing a pipeline of integrated urban and residential developments aimed at creating more livable communities, attracting investment and supporting sustainable urban growth. Together, these initiatives are reshaping Oman’s real-estate landscape and creating new avenues for individuals and investors to participate in the country’s long-term development.

Sohar International supports women-owned SMEs

In line with its commitment to strengthening Oman’s SME ecosystem and advancing women’s entrepreneurship, Sohar International has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Lahunna Oman to support the development of women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Sultanate of Oman.

The MoU was signed by Dr Mazin bin Mahmood al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International; and Shatha bint Salim al Maskari, Founder of Lahunna Oman, marking a strategic collaboration focused on equipping Omani women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and capabilities



Sohar International partners with Lahunna Oman to support women-owned SMEs through the Siraj programme.

needed to take their businesses forward.

Under the collaboration, Sohar International will support Lahunna Oman’s Siraj SME Mentorship Programme as Main Partner.

The 22-week initiative is designed for established Omani women-owned businesses seeking to advance to their next stage of growth through structured mentorship, enhanced financial understanding, practical business guidance and access to relevant markets and networks.

Commenting on the bank’s involvement, Dr Mazin bin Mahmood al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International, said, “Financial literacy is not simply

about understanding numbers; it is a practical business capability that shapes the quality of decisions made within an enterprise. For SMEs, this understanding provides a more reliable basis for evaluating opportunities and planning expansion.”

“Women-owned enterprises already make a meaningful contribution to Oman’s economy and their continued development requires sustained engagement. Our participation in the mentorship programme is grounded in this perspective and in recognition of the role the SME sector plays in employment creation and the economic diversification envisioned under Oman Vision 2040”.

SHORTTAKES



FSA issues new rules to enhance insurance loss assessment and protect policyholders.

FSA ISSUES REGULATION ON INSURANCE LOSS ASSESSMENT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued the Regulation Governing Insurance Loss Assessment and Estimation Activities pursuant to Decision No (E/12/2026), with the aim of regulating professional practices related to risk assessment and loss estimation, enhancing the efficiency and quality of insurance services; and strengthening the protection of policyholders’ rights, while reinforcing the principles of transparency, fairness and impartiality in loss assessment and the settlement of insurance claims.

The regulation forms part of the FSA’s efforts to regulate professions and activities supporting the insurance sector in accordance with clear professional and technical standards. It seeks to enhance the reliability of insurance assessment and loss estimation activities and improve the quality of technical reports used by insurance and reinsurance companies in assessing risks and claims and making decisions related to insurance coverage and compensation.

It establishes an integrated regulatory framework for conducting insurance risk assessments prior to the conclusion of insurance contracts and estimating losses arising from insured risks.

It sets out the technical and professional requirements to be met by licensed entities, as well as the rules governing their activities and obligations towards insurance companies and policyholders, ensuring that such activities are conducted efficiently, independently and impartially.

Nama Water advances sustainable water strategy

AMIDST accelerating global shifts driven by climate change and the growing imperative to safeguard natural resources, water is increasingly emerging as a strategic resource closely linked to economic resilience, urban stability, sustainable growth and community wellbeing.

Against this backdrop, Nama Water Services (NWS) is advancing a new operating model that brings water, sustainability and technology closer together by embedding Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into its operations and corporate decision-making.

The approach is designed to support the transition towards a more efficient, resilient and sustainable water sector, while keeping pace with global trends that increasingly connect the management of critical infrastructure with climate priorities, economic development and long-term sustainability.

The company’s sustainability strategy is aligned with the Global Reporting Initiative standards. NWS is also implementing a phased roadmap extending to 2027, focused on developing frameworks and policies, strengthening operational integration and driving continuous improvement, with the longer-term objective of enhancing the company’s readiness for internationally recognised sustainability and governance ratings.

Eng Ahmed bin Rashid al Khamisi, Chief Executive Officer of Business Assurance and Excellence, said water could no longer be viewed merely as an operational resource.

“Water has become a strategic resource directly linked to



Nama Water Services integrates ESG across operations.



ENG AHMED
BIN RASHID
AL KHAMISI

Executive Officer of
Business Assurance
and Excellence.

economic resilience, sustainable cities and community wellbeing. Against this backdrop, Nama Water Services continues to integrate ESG principles across its operations and strategic decision-making, strengthening its future readiness and supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040”, he said.

“For NWS, these principles represent an integrated approach to resource management and the creation of sustainable value for society, the economy and the environment.

Sustainability is a day-to-day practice whose impact is felt today while extending its benefits to future generations”.

Al Khamisi said innovation remains central to the company’s sustainability journey, with NWS increasingly leveraging data, artificial intelligence and advanced technologies across its operations.

“As part of our approach to harnessing innovation for sustainability, we are developing a more intelligent operating

ecosystem powered by data and artificial intelligence, while deploying advanced technologies across our operations. This reflects a vision that sees water as a long-term investment in a more secure and resilient future”, he said.

“As digital solutions expand across our operations, data is becoming a key driver of decision-making and more efficient resource management, strengthening operational resilience, enhancing infrastructure readiness and enabling the company to anticipate and respond to future challenges more effectively”.

NWS has also developed and launched a Sustainable Finance Framework, one of the company’s key initiatives supporting its broader sustainability ambitions.

The framework enables the company to access sustainable financing instruments, including green, blue and social bonds and sukuk, to support projects that generate positive environmental and social outcomes and create sustainable economic and developmental value.

Al Khamisi said NWS is among the first companies under the Oman Investment Authority to develop an integrated Sustainable Finance Framework, strengthening its position within Oman’s and the region’s evolving sustainable finance landscape and supporting its ability to attract sustainability-linked investment.

“This direction is aligned with our long-term vision, which looks beyond infrastructure projects themselves.

We see these investments as long-term commitments to resource security, sustainable cities and community wellbeing, while strengthening water security and safeguarding the continuity of essential services for future generations”, he added.

Stranded ships raise fears of marine bioinvasion

NAJAH AL RIYAMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 23

More than 1,500 ships stranded around the Strait of Hormuz could pose an unexpected environmental threat, with scientists warning that prolonged periods at anchor may allow marine organisms to colonise vessel hulls before being transported to ports around the world.

Researchers say the unusually large concentration of stationary vessels could create the conditions for a marine bioinvasion “super-spreader” event once normal shipping movements resume.

The concern centres on biofouling, the accumulation of marine organisms on submerged surfaces. Bacteria and algae are



File picture of ships stranded in the Strait of Hormuz. — Reuters

often the first to settle, followed by larger organisms such as barnacles and mussels. While biofouling is a normal challenge for the shipping industry, vessels remaining stationary for weeks or months provide more favourable conditions

for marine communities to develop.

An international team of 24 marine scientists has examined the potential ecological consequences of the disruption.

Their research, published in the journal Biological Invasions, warns that organisms accumulating on stationary ships could eventually travel thousands of kilometres when vessels return to their normal routes.

The timing adds to the concern, as many ships have remained stationary during warmer months when marine organisms can grow and reproduce rapidly.

Researchers say significant biological growth can begin within a relatively short period. Vessels remaining stationary for several

weeks may therefore require assessment and potentially further measures to manage biofouling before returning to international waters.

For Oman, the issue is particularly relevant. The Sultanate of Oman sits immediately outside the Strait of Hormuz, with its coastline extending along the Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea. These waters support diverse marine ecosystems while also forming part of major international shipping routes connecting the Gulf with the Indian Ocean and markets further afield.

The environmental risk emerges when ships begin moving again.

Marine organisms attached to hulls can survive long-distance journeys and be released or

reproduce in destination waters. If conditions are favourable, introduced species can establish populations and compete with native marine life.

Without the predators and environmental controls found in their original habitats, some can spread quickly.

One organism highlighted by researchers is the Asian green mussel. Native to parts of the Indo-Pacific and present in Gulf waters, the species has already appeared far beyond its natural range.

Once established, invasive mussels can compete with native shellfish and accumulate on marine infrastructure. This means the consequences of biological invasions are not limited to biodiversity.

CAPITAL RAISE

Alibaba to sell \$10bn for AI spending



China’s Alibaba said on Sunday it plans to sell \$10.2 billion in a share placement to fund artificial intelligence-related development.

A deal by the Chinese e-commerce and cloud computing giant would mark the largest-ever primary follow-on offering by a Hong Kong-listed company.

It would rank as the world’s third-largest primary follow-on share sale this year after offerings from Alphabet and Intel. — Reuters

WEF CHIEF

ECB chief Lagarde ‘ready to serve’ WEF



Christine Lagarde, chief of the European Central Bank, could take over the presidency of the World Economic Forum at some point in 2027, Swiss newspaper NZZ reported on Sunday.

At a board meeting near Geneva this week, Lagarde was reportedly described as a “putative candidate” to lead the organisation behind the annual Davos gathering of political and business leaders.

— Reuters

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Vatican plans solar and agriculture plant



The Vatican will build a roughly €100 million (\$117 million) renewable energy plant that could power the Holy See within two years via a system combining solar power and agriculture, sources involved in discussions on the project said.

The agrivoltaic plant is expected to have a capacity of 80 to 90 megawatts, making it one of Italy’s largest such installations, the sources added.

— Reuters

From diplomatic trust to investment: Oman’s advantage



MATVII
DIADKOV

The writer is
Founder — Bitmedia
Labs

WHEN regional tensions rise, most markets become harder for investors to read. Oman often becomes easier.

The recent negotiations over navigation through the Strait of Hormuz have again shown why. At a time of serious regional tension, Oman remains able to maintain dialogue across political divisions and help keep practical channels open.

This matters beyond foreign policy. Investors rarely see political trust on a balance sheet, but for projects built over 10, 20 or 30 years, it can matter more than a temporary tax incentive.

A company developing an industrial facility, logistics terminal or regional headquarters is not making a decision for the next quarter. It needs confidence that contracts, partnerships and access to markets will remain reliable when political conditions change.

British energy company bp offers a practical example of long-term investment in Oman. The company signed a production-sharing agreement for Block 61 in 2007 and the project now supplies around one-third of the country’s gas demand. In 2025, bp’s spending through its Oman operations reached \$478 million, including \$294 million in local procurement, 90 per cent of it with Omani-registered companies.

This shows how international capital can support both strategic infrastructure and local business capacity when backed by stable, long-term partnerships.

Most countries compete for investment through incentives. They offer lower taxes, industrial land, funding support or faster licensing. These tools matter, but competitors can copy them. Trust built through decades of consistent international relations is much harder to reproduce.

Oman has maintained working

relationships across the GCC, Iran, India, China, Europe and the United States without tying its economic future to only one political bloc.

That position becomes more valuable as sanctions, trade restrictions, technology competition and supply-chain disruptions divide the global economy.

Recent developments show how this diplomatic position can gain economic depth.

In July, Oman and the European Union signed an agreement to establish a permanent EU mission in Muscat.

Its mandate extends beyond political dialogue into technology, energy, logistics, banking, minerals, infrastructure, training; and food, water, energy and maritime security.

The important point is not simply that another diplomatic office will open. The mission creates a permanent institutional channel through which political cooperation can support business relationships, investment projects and long-term coordination.

The new Omani-Jordanian investment company tells a similar story. The Oman Investment Authority and Jordan’s Social Security Investment Fund established the equally owned company with capital of \$100 million. It will invest across telecommunications, IT, food security, pharmaceuticals, energy, mining, tourism and logistics.

This is economic diplomacy in practical form. A long-standing political relationship has developed into a shared capital structure with defined sectors, governance and investment goals.

These are not isolated diplomatic announcements. Together, they show how Oman’s international relationships can create permanent institutions, shared investment vehicles and practical channels for capital.

Oman’s foreign direct investment stock reached \$78.78 billion by the end of the second quarter of 2025, up 12.8 per cent from the previous year. FDI inflows during the same period totalled \$8.84 billion.

The broader investment data supports the same direction.

Oman’s foreign direct investment stock reached \$78.78 billion by the end of the second quarter of 2025, up 12.8 per cent from the previous year. FDI inflows during the same period totalled \$8.84 billion.

Many factors contributed to this growth, including infrastructure, regulation, energy resources and economic zones. Diplomatic stability does not explain it alone. But it forms part of the environment in which long-term capital decides where to enter and where to stay.

The Gulf investment conversation often focuses on scale, speed and visibility. Oman competes differently. Its advantage is not that it is the loudest market, but that it can remain predictable when the surrounding environment becomes difficult to predict.

That matters most for projects requiring large commitments and long timeframes. It also supports Oman’s potential as a regional base for companies operating between the Gulf, South Asia and East Africa.

Trust, however, cannot replace execution. Investors still need clear regulation, efficient licensing, reliable contract enforcement, access to talent and practical conditions for regional operations. Diplomatic credibility can open the door.

The quality of the business environment determines whether capital enters, expands and stays.

Oman’s diplomatic reputation has taken decades to build. In a more fragmented global economy, its value is becoming easier to see.

Infrastructure attracts attention and incentives bring companies to the table. But for investments designed to last for decades, confidence that relationships, rules and commitments will continue to hold may become one of Oman’s most durable advantages.

SOLAR PROVIDES VITAL COVER FOR HUNGARY’S POWER SYSTEM

GAVIN MAGUIRE

Record solar output is helping to shield Hungary’s power system from the worst effects of the forced cutbacks at the country’s only nuclear power plant, demonstrating that renewables can provide a critical layer of resilience in power systems.

Hungary’s Paks nuclear plant — which generates nearly half of the country’s electricity — was forced to drastically lower output this month following a drop in water levels on the Danube River, which is the plant’s main source of cooling water. Output from the Paks reactors so far in August is down by more than 80% from July’s average, data from LSEG showed, placing heavy strain on the East European economy’s power grid.

However, thanks to record-high output from solar farms that is up nearly 20% year-over-year in August, total power output is down less than 3% compared to average.

The solar contribution is preventing blackouts while reducing both electricity imports and fossil fuels that would otherwise make up the nuclear shortfall.

The episode is highlighting how renewable energy has become a way to increase reliability as well as a source of clean power, giving electricity systems a crucial buffer when conventional generators are forced to cut output.

The Paks reactor is one of several European nuclear plants that have been affected by drought and heatwaves this year.

The Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant, which provides around 35% of Bulgaria’s electricity needs, has also been forced to cut capacity, while several reactors in France — Europe’s top nuclear power producer — have also had to reduce generation as cooling water became scarce.

The Paks plant in Hungary faced a critical situation earlier this month as water levels on the Danube plumbed historic lows of less than 1 foot (30 cm) in areas near Budapest, according to data from LSEG.

However, emergency engineering work to boost river levels near the plant helped avert a complete reactor shutdown and as of Wednesday two turbines continued to operate at the plant.

That nearly 82% plunge in production would normally trigger massive Hungarian electricity imports as well as steep increases at Hungarian power plants that burn gas and coal. — Reuters

WHY THE WORLD STILL NEEDS WALL STREET

INVESTORS have no shortage of reasons to diversify away from the United States. America’s public debt is rising, political polarisation is deepening, trade policy has become unpredictable, the rule of law is now in doubt and financial sanctions have encouraged other governments to seek alternatives to the dollar. Yet there has been no great exodus from US markets.

The dollar still accounted for 56.8 per cent of allocated foreign-exchange reserves at the end of 2025 and was used in 89.2 per cent of all foreign-exchange trades surveyed by the Bank for International Settlements.

These figures are usually explained by America’s economic size, legal protections, innovative companies, deep capital markets and the network effects created by the dollar’s roles in trade, credit, payments and reserves. But the main constraint is hiding in plain sight:

Even if the world wanted to move several trillion dollars out of the US, where would the money go? The problem is not a shortage of promising economies or assets. It is that other financial systems have only so much capacity to receive a large and rapid reallocation without destabilising themselves.

We can think of this system-wide financial absorptive capacity as a market’s ability to receive, price, hedge and settle enormous capital flows without causing extreme movements in asset prices, yields, or exchange rates. Absorptive capacity depends not only on the volume of securities available, but also on exchanges, banks,



JORGE
ARBACHE

The writer is
Professor of
Economics at
the University of
Brasilia and senior
economist at the
World Bank.

A pension fund can sell US Treasuries and buy European bonds; a central bank can add gold or another currency to its reserves

dealers, clearinghouses, custodians, regulators, courts, auditors, lawyers, data providers and central-bank backstops.

This distinction matters because diversification is usually considered from the viewpoint of an individual investor.

A pension fund can sell US Treasuries and buy European bonds; a central bank can add gold or another currency to its reserves. Such moves are straightforward at the margin. But what happens when thousands of large institutions try to do the same thing at the same time?

Prices in destination markets would surge, yields would fall and currencies would appreciate. High-quality bonds of suitable maturity would become scarce, hedging costs would rise and prudential or benchmark limits would start to bind.

Markets that look deep in normal times might prove shallow in the face of exceptional inflows. What is sensible for one investor might be impossible for all investors together. To assume otherwise is to commit a classic fallacy of composition.

This is where the US has a formidable advantage. In July 2026, the US Treasury market had \$31.5 trillion of securities outstanding and an average daily trading volume above \$1.2 trillion.

Treasuries are not merely investments but liquid stores of value, collateral, pricing benchmarks and instruments for meeting regulatory requirements.

Surrounding them is an unmatched institutional infrastructure that can price, finance, hedge and settle huge transactions. Investors value the ability to exit quickly almost as much as the promise of repayment.

Now consider the alternatives. Europe has sophisticated institutions and vast savings, but its capital markets remain fragmented and it lacks a common safe asset comparable in scale to US Treasuries.

Similarly, China has an enormous bond market, but capital controls, managed convertibility, state influence and uncertainty about investor rights limit its ability to absorb global portfolios freely.

And emerging markets face an even sharper tradeoff: large inflows can cause their currencies to appreciate, inflate asset prices and undermine the returns that attracted investors in the first place.

These constraints help to explain why geopolitical multipolarity is advancing faster than financial multipolarity. Production and trade can be redirected comparatively quickly, whereas financial ecosystems are cumulative.

Scale attracts issuers, investors and intermediaries; their presence then creates liquidity and that liquidity attracts still more activity. The dollar’s centrality is sustained not only by incumbency or confidence, but also by a constructed comparative advantage.

Still, that advantage is not an immutable law. It can be eroded by fiscal irresponsibility, attacks on institutional independence, arbitrary sanctions, recurrent market disruptions and fears of governmental corruption.

The volatility that followed US tariff announcements in April 2025 showed that investors may hedge their dollar exposure rather than reflexively run toward it. But the desire to leave and the ability to do so remain very different things.

— Project Syndicate@2026

CLASSIFIEDS

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman.Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

DESKTOP support engineer, 6+ years experience, skilled in Windows/ Server/ Ubuntu, Network configuration, M365 & Google workspace admin. Contact: 99639710, jay.prajapati5655@gmail.ci

EXPERIENCED Accounts & Finance Candidate Seeking Suitable Opportunity. Expertise in Accounts, Invoicing, Reconciliation & Reporting. Contact: 75177637

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

SENIOR Logistics Coordinator seeking opportunity. 8 years' experience in Import, Export, Customs Clearance & Freight. PH +968 92267276

SIT. WANTED

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

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

SENIOR Accountant: Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

Accounts & Finance professional with 7+ years' experience in reporting, revenue assurance, audit, compliance & ERP. Contact: 90159392

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Lost Bill of Lading Notice

Six Construct LLC, registered under Commercial Registration No. (9014276), has lost Bill of Lading No. (GBTJSOH039/056) on 20/7/2026. Whoever finds it should hand it over to the nearest branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry or contact the following number: +968 99229518.

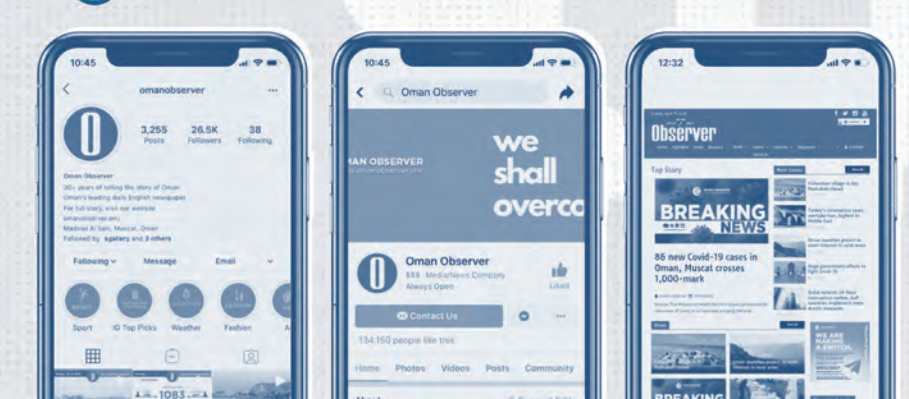
SIT. WANTED

LOGISTICS Experienced in Logistcs,warehouse & Operation incharge Seeking Suitable position with 15 yrs of experience in Logistics,warehouse Management & Supply chain along with hand on Chemical storage, involvement in project operation handling, Also have sales experiance in Mechanical & Instrumentation products. Immediate joiner Valid Oman D/LOL Contact: 95852916

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

PAKISTANI male, having diploma in mechanical engineering, 10+ years experience as "sales engineer" in UAE and 15 years experience as "operation manager" in Oman with D/L.Looking for job Contact: 99495131 email: manzoor.Ahmed1997@gmail.com

PROJECT manager (IT) 4+ years experience seeking opportunities in PMO Project Management or business analysis, MS Engineering Mgt. Experience across IT, Banking. Hgher Education & nonprofit sectors. PMP (in progress) currently in Oman. Contact: 95800828



FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male B.Tech Mechanical engineer with 3+yrs experience as Project engineer in project execution, commissioning, Auto CAD. Currently in Oman seeking job. Contact: +968 75174368

INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. Contact: 94158080

PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info



ART/LIFE



AN EYE THAT NEVER PUTS ITSELF DOWN

WILDLIFE **MEDICINE**

PIONEERING CANCER TREATMENT SAVES PYTHON JODIE FOSTER



A UK zoo on Friday hailed the curing of a cancer-stricken python named after Hollywood star Jodie Foster, who became the first snake to receive an innovative treatment combining surgery and electrochemotherapy (ECT).

Chester Zoo, in northwest England, said the 4.5 metre (15-foot) reticulated python had fully recovered after first undergoing surgery and then receiving ECT following the return of a cancerous tumour in her jawbone.

Animals are increasingly being treated for cancers with drugs and therapies once only used on humans.

Other creatures — including a turtle and lizard — have had ECT treatment previously, according to case reports posted on medical science databases.

But Chester Zoo’s veterinary team, who worked alongside University of Liverpool cancer specialists to adapt the pioneering treatment, believe it is a first for a snake.

“We were facing the possibility of losing her as the tumour made it more and more difficult for her to eat”, Chester Zoo vet Ian Ashpole said in a press release.

“So we worked with cancer specialists to see whether we could adapt electrochemotherapy for a snake. As far as we’re aware, this is the first time it’s ever been used in one”.

Zookeepers first became concerned when 23-year-old Jodie — who has been at the zoo for two decades — began eating less and spending more time inactive in her habitat.

‘Bright and feisty’

Tests confirmed a malignant tumour in her jaw, which was removed through surgery. But it then returned, prompting another surgical procedure when ECT was also deployed to target any remaining cancerous cells.

ECT combines the use of cancer drug bleomycin with a series of electrical pulses directly on the tumour site which temporarily make cancer cells more permeable, allowing the drug to enter more effectively.

“She is so big, we had to put two operating tables together, effectively making one the size of a double bed”, recounted Ashpole, who carried out the procedure. It included removing part of the python’s jawbone.

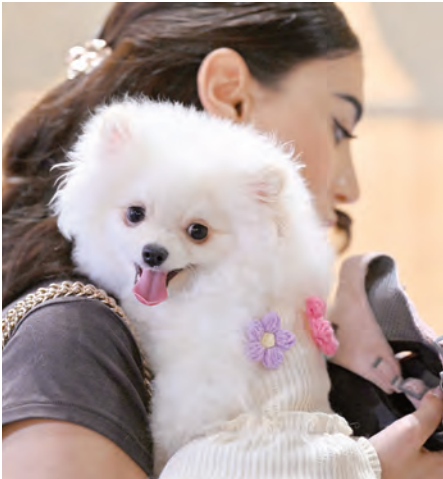
“We used heated blankets and warmed air to keep her body temperature stable throughout the operation. After 90 minutes of surgery, she recovered remarkably quickly”.

Following a check-up this week, the zoo said Jodie is “cancer-free, eating normally and back to her usual ‘bright and feisty’ self”.

Jose Alvarez Picornell, of Liverpool University’s small animal and clinical science department, called the successful treatment “a testament to the power of collaboration”.

“By working closely with Ian (Ashpole), we were able to develop a plan that not only benefited Jodie Foster but will also contribute to the wider veterinary community”, he added. — **AFP**

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



PET FASHION

A dog owner carries her pet as they prepare to take part in a fashion show at Petzone megastore, to mark International Dog Day, in Kuwait City. — **AFP**



ANIME

A cosplayer attends Anime NYC 2026 at the Jacob Javits Centre in New York, the largest anime convention on the East Coast. — **AFP**



TECHNOLOGY

A robot is seen sitting relaxed with one foot up at a food booth during the 2nd World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



Where light flows like water and water moves like silk



Salalah's finest feathered resident, the Arabian Partridge

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

‘BABY SHARK’ BOY RETURNS TO STAGE AS A K-POP SINGER



The child star of the “Baby Shark Dance” video, the most-watched video in YouTube history, released his first K-pop digital single on Thursday, a decade after he first found fame. Park Geonroung, who starred in the video when he was 7 years old, will make his solo K-pop debut under the name “Baby Shark Boy” and is backed by Pinkfong Company which owns the copyright for Baby Shark. “Baby Shark Dance brought joy to people around the world and I’m very grateful that so many people still remember me from 10 years ago. That made me want to come back and connect with people through music again”, he said. The catchy song, which is about a family of sharks, was released in 2016 and the video has

since surpassed 17.2 billion views. It has been played at the White House and praised by US President Donald Trump, Tesla CEO Elon Musk and celebrities, while prompting parodies and dance craze. In the years since the video, Park has starred in Pinkfong’s other shows. He said his new digital single, titled “WAVE”, opens with the familiar Baby Shark melody before shifting into an electropop sound, to which he contributed lyrics. Park added that he views the single as the start of a longer musical journey. “WAVE feels more like a new beginning than a one-off project. I hope to keep showing different sides of myself through music as well as other kinds of content”, he said.

— Reuters



Vermeer’s celebrated masterpiece, known as the “Mona Lisa of the North,” makes a rare journey to Japan.

Masterpiece ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’ back in Japan



The iconic portrait, featuring a young woman in a blue and cream turban, returns to Japan for its fourth visit.



‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’ will be exhibited in Osaka through September 27 during the Mauritshuis’ temporary closure.

‘GIRL with a Pearl Earring’ will go on show in Osaka this week, on a rare trip abroad for the 17th-century Johannes Vermeer masterpiece and potentially its last to Japan. The work will be displayed from Friday at the Nakanoshima Museum of Art in Osaka while its home museum, the Mauritshuis in The Hague, closes until September 20 for maintenance. “For the Mauritshuis, the Girl’s journey is a special opportunity to share her with the Japanese public, perhaps for the very last time”, said Mauritshuis’ director Martine Gosselink. The museum generally does not loan the painting “because she is our most important and precious painting”, but the renovations allowed it to travel, Gosselink said. The Dutch institution is frequently visited by enthusiastic Japanese fans and other nations like China, Singapore and South Korea also have asked about loaning it, she said. “But we chose Japan, for Japan has a huge number of fans. And they really love Vermeer. They love ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’”, Gosselink said. “And the amount of visitors coming from Japan every year to the Mauritshuis is so large. So we thought, if one country deserves the girl, it should be Japan”, she said. ‘Mona Lisa of the North’ The Osaka exhibition, running through September 27, will feature a total dozen paintings from the Mauritshuis collection, including Vermeer’s “Diana and her Nymphs” and “The Laughing Man” by Rembrandt. Dubbed the “Mona Lisa of the North” for the inscrutable expression of its subject, which recalls Leonardo da Vinci’s famous portrait, the painting attained global fame after inspiring a best-selling novel that was turned into a Hollywood film. The small canvas shows a young woman set on a dark background, her head turned towards the viewer and a pearl earring glinting from beneath her blue and cream turban. The last time the portrait was out on loan was in 2023 for a less exotic trip to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. It went on a world tour in 2012-2014 while previous works were ongoing at the Mauritshuis. The Osaka show will be the fourth visit to Japan. Following a 1984 show in Tokyo, the painting came to Osaka to mark the 400th anniversary of Japan-Netherlands relations, drawing 600,000 viewers, said the Asahi Shimbun, which organised the latest show. It also came to Tokyo and Kobe in 2012 and drew 1.2 million fans, the Asahi said. — AFP

FEATURES



AN EYE THAT NEVER PUTS ITSELF DOWN



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

SAID AL GHAMMARI says a photographer never puts the camera down, not really, because a photographer's eye stays with him all the time. It is the line he ends on, and in many ways it explains everything that came before it. Since he was a boy taking pictures with a simple phone at school, Said's eye never quite looked at the world the way others did. He found himself drawn to details most people would walk past without a second glance, old things, scenes that seemed to hold a story no one had told yet.

At that early stage, he had neither the experience nor the equipment, only the passion and that was enough to begin. Over time, he came to understand that a photograph was never just a beautiful shot. It could carry a story, a feeling, something capable of saying a great deal without a single word.

His family supported him from the start, giving him the confidence to keep going. But the deeper influence came from Nasira al Mughairi, one of the photography lecturers at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, who stood by him and believed in his ability early on. He speaks of her with clear gratitude, not only for what she taught him academically, but for something more personal, the kind of belief that pushes a person to give their best simply because someone else can already see it in them.

As the years passed, that early passion matured into a clearer sense of what he actually wanted to say through the camera. He describes his style today in three words: story,



Said al Ghammari believes a photographer never really puts the camera down. His own journey, from curious schoolboy to museum photographer, shows exactly what he means.

feeling, message. They are not chosen carelessly. Together they sum up a philosophy he holds firmly, that a successful photograph is never just technically accomplished. It is one that brings together skilled execution and honest emotion.

Said found in Oman an endless visual source, its varied landscapes, shifting light and deep heritage. But what draws him in most are the details tied to identity and memory, old things that hold, in his words, the memory of a place and its people. It is perhaps this instinct that makes his

current role at the National Museum feel less like a job and more like a natural extension of who he already was. The museum, as he describes it, is not simply a workplace. It is a space he lives in daily, surrounded by artefacts, documents and details from Oman's history, each one carrying a story waiting to be told.

That closeness to history has not only shaped what Said chooses to photograph, it has deepened his sense of what a photograph is actually for. A picture taken today, he says, could one day become part of a visual record telling a piece of a country's history and culture.

Away from the camera, Said paints and plays the piano, two pursuits he sees as extensions of the same eye. Both, he says, rely on imagination and a particular way of noticing detail. It may explain something he says almost in passing, that he is constantly observing the small details of everyday life and that an ordinary scene to most people can instantly become, in his mind, the idea for a photograph.

Despite everything he has achieved so far, an academic career, a role at the National Museum, awards and recognition along the way, Said insists he still considers himself at the beginning of the path. His message to young photographers carries the weight of someone who has lived it himself: do not wait for the best camera to start and do not wait to feel like a professional before you believe in yourself. Start with what you have, learn, try, get it wrong, then try again.

Photography, as he puts it simply, is not just a camera and equipment. It is an eye that sees, a heart that feels and a mind always searching for a story that has not been told yet.