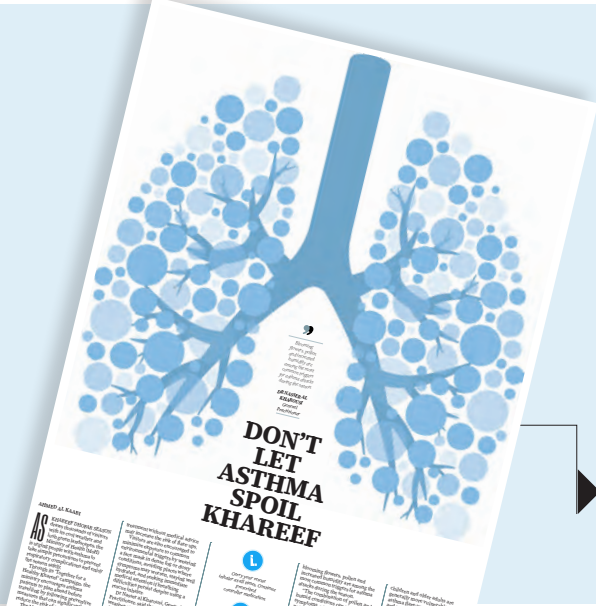


O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



VOL. 45, NO. 261
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210



IN BRIEF

APPLY FOR 1,222 JOBS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR TILL AUG 13



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Saturday announced the availability of 1,222 job opportunities in the public sector. These include 1,107 positions for Bachelor’s degree holders and those with post-secondary diplomas qualifications, and 115 positions for those with general education diploma (GED) certificates and lower qualifications.

This is part of a plan based on the actual needs of government entities.

The Ministry of Labour said that registration for the job opportunities is open until August 13. It noted that this is part of a series of announcements for job vacancies in the public sector regularly for this year. — ONA

EU COUNTRIES CALL FOR TALKS OVER CEUTA INFLUX



COPENHAGEN: A majority of EU countries called on Saturday for emergency talks on the sudden inflow of tens of thousands of migrants into Spain’s enclave of Ceuta in North Africa.

An open letter from the leaders of 22 of the EU’s 27 members demanded the bloc’s interior ministers have a video meeting “as a matter of urgency” to agree a speedy coordinated response, and to “prevent further uncontrolled crossings”.

“We have a duty to effectively deter and relentlessly combat illegal migration,” it said.

Ireland, which currently holds the EU’s rotating presidency, said the meeting would take place on Tuesday. EU foreign policy chief Ursula von der Leyen welcomed the move, saying the bloc needed “a lessons learned process to improve our European resilience,” while adding that “not a single person reached mainland Spain or the rest of the EU” during the influx. — AFP SEE ALSO P7



DHOFAR TREASURES

Nestled in the heart of pristine nature, along the northern edge of Wadi Darbat in Dhofar Governorate, the Aan spring flows year-round with fresh water. The spring forms one of the most prominent natural treasures and a vital permanent tributary of the valley in Dhofar. Its location, surrounded by mountains to the north, east, and west, makes it a unique destination for visitors yearning for both tranquillity and natural beauty.

Israel pounds Gaza amid uncertainty in peace deal

Israeli PM is yet to comment publicly, while his National Security Minister has called the agreement unacceptable

ISRAEL’S MILITARY on Saturday killed two Palestinians in Gaza and destroyed two warehouses near a hospital that were said to be storing medicine in separate strikes, amid uncertainty over whether Israel has accepted a deal reached with Hamas over the group’s disarmament.

Palestinian health officials said two Palestinians were killed in the Sheikh Radwan area of Gaza City in central Gaza in an Israeli air strike. A military spokesperson said those targeted were Hamas militants but declined to provide further details. In an earlier incident, an Israeli air strike destroyed two warehouses that were used to store medicine by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in southern Gaza, the Palestinian health ministry in Gaza said in a statement.

Several hours after the strike, the Israeli military said it had struck a Hamas hideout near the hospital which the group used to store weapons. Other sites in Gaza that it said were used by Hamas to store arms were also struck, a military statement said.

The military said the strikes were directed by the Shin Bet intelligence agency. It did not disclose any evidence to support the claim that Hamas was storing



A displaced Palestinians woman reacts holding up containers following an Israeli airstrike that targeted the medical supplies and pharmaceuticals warehouse of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, in Deir al-Balah. — AFP

weapons at any of the sites.

Reuters footage of the Deir al-Balah strike showed a crater several metres wide marking the site of the explosion, with debris strewn across the area, including what appeared to be medical supplies, close to a densely packed tent encampment.

Two other warehouses storing medicine and the hospital’s outpatient clinic were damaged in the strike, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. There were no immediate reports of any injuries.

The hospital said the warehouses had stored essential medical supplies used to treat kidney failure patients undergoing dialysis, along with other materials like gauze used in wound care and routine treatment.

Israel has continued to carry out strikes on Gaza since agreeing last October to a US-mediated ceasefire, killing 1,222 Palestinians in the past nine months. Palestinian health officials say many of those killed were women and children. Hamas rarely announces its casualties.

US President Donald Trump on Thursday said there had been a breakthrough in his plan to end the war, which both Israel and Hamas agreed to last year and which started with the ceasefire.

Trump said that Hamas, which ruled Gaza for nearly two decades before carrying out the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel that triggered the Gaza war, had agreed to lay down its weapons.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is yet to comment publicly, while his National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has called the agreement unacceptable and said that Israel must continue its policy of assassinating Hamas leaders. — AFP

Oman receives 1.8 million tourists in the first half of 2026

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

1.8 million tourists arrived in the Sultanate of Oman in the first half of 2026, maintaining figures similar to those recorded during the same period of last year, unaffected by regional tensions and air travel disruptions.

The UAE accounted for the highest number with 491,000 visitors, followed by India with 382,000, and Germany with 68,000.

The number of Omanis travelling abroad during the first half of this year dropped to 2.8 million from 2.9 million during the same period in 2025. Tourism indicators show that the repercussions of escalating geopolitical tensions on the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman have remained limited so far. However, the continuation or expansion of the conflict could pose a challenge to targeted growth rates in the tourism sector this year.

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan targets



to achieve a 5.6 per cent growth rate in the tourism sector by the end of 2026. However, the latest statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show a decline in several indicators of spending and hotel activity during the first half of this year. Hotel occupancy rates fell by nearly 15 per cent, hotel revenues by 12 per cent, and the number of guests by 13 per cent.

Despite the decline, the tourism sector, specifically accommodation and food services, achieved growth

of 1.2 per cent during the first quarter of 2026, bringing the sector’s added value to approximately RO 194 million, compared to RO 192 million in the first quarter of 2025. The impact of geopolitical developments on the growth of the tourism sector is expected to remain limited during the second quarter, with the potential for improved tourism indicators during the second half of the year, which coincides with the Khareef Dhofar season and the winter tourism season. TURN TO P2

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



2,214 COMPETE IN SULTAN QABOOS QURAN CONTEST

MUSCAT: The preliminary qualifications for the 34th Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition begins today with the participation of 2,214 contestants.

The Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition, overseen by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science (SQHCCS) at the Diwan of Royal Court, aims to instil spiritual values, develop Quranic skills, and encourage competition among participants, reflecting the importance of the Holy Quran and the nurturing young talents in its memorisation.

The competition comprises seven levels: Level 1 for the memorisation of the entire Holy Quran; Level 2 for the memorisation of 24 consecutive parts; Level 3 for the memorisation of 18 consecutive parts; Level 4 for the memorisation of 12 consecutive parts (the contenders must have been born in 2001 or later); Level 5 for the memorisation of six consecutive parts (the contenders must have been born in 2012 or later); Level 6 for the memorisation of four consecutive parts (the participants must have been born in 2016 or later); and Level 7 for the memorisation of two consecutive parts (the contenders must have been born in 2019 or later).

The judging committee will visit 28 centres in different governorates of Oman, following the addition of two new centres this year in the wilayats of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Dima W'attayeen. Registration for the 34th edition of the competition took place between April 21 and July 7, 2026. — **ONA**

OMAN RECEIVES 1.8M TOURISTS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2026

FROM P1

The war and geopolitical tensions in the region resulted in direct disruptions in the tourism and aviation sectors, including cancellation of thousands of flights and the closure of several regional airspaces, which has affected passenger traffic and travel bookings.

The World Travel & Tourism Council estimates that the tourism sector in the Middle East could lose up to \$600 million daily due to flight restrictions and cancellations. The repercussions of these disruptions are not limited to the region; they extend to international demand for travel and aviation, and to major tourist destinations outside the Middle East, due to the impact on global air traffic.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

Public awareness and prompt reporting are the first lines of defence in reducing the impact of oil spills and protecting Oman's environment and natural resources, according to an awareness campaign launched by the Environment Authority (EA) in coordination with the National Risk Register.

The campaign highlights the public's role in responding safely when an oil spill is detected in their area, stressing that quick action and cooperation with relevant authorities can help minimise environmental, health and economic damage.

"An oil spill can have environmental, health and economic impacts. A quick response and cooperation with the relevant authorities help minimise damage," the campaign states.

The awareness material outlines key safety measures, including maintaining a safe distance from affected areas, avoiding direct contact with oil and refraining from swimming in contaminated waters.

The authority also advised the public not

MoHT participates in Seminar for Arabian Studies in Italy

BOLOGNA: The 59th Seminar for Arabian Studies, which began on July 30, concluded at the University of Bologna, Italy. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism participated as the official sponsor of the main sessions and events.

The event saw presentations of 100 reports, findings, and specialised studies on the history and archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula. These included 28 scholarly papers specialising in Omani archaeological research and studies, presented by leading archaeologists and researchers from scientific missions conducting surveys and excavations at various archaeological sites in Oman.

Dr Tommaso d'Errico, Honorary



Consul of the Sultanate of Oman in the regions of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna in Italy, delivered an official speech in which he discussed the historical and cultural significance of Omani archaeological and architectural heritage. He touched on the roles played by Omani

castles and forts across different periods and the efforts undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman to enhance archaeological research and preserve cultural heritage.

The seminar also saw a screening of the Golden Jubilee film of the Journal of Omani Studies, a

peer-reviewed academic journal specialising in the cultural and natural heritage of Oman, whose first issue was published in 1975.

A corner was dedicated to showcasing the most prominent and recent scientific publications of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, including the Omani Archaeological Heritage Series, the Journal of Omani Studies, and the Athar bulletin, which specialises in documenting and publishing reports and results of archaeological surveys and excavations each season, in addition to explanatory publications on the work of archaeological missions at various archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

‘Purple Saturday’ promotes disability inclusion efforts

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

OMAN JOINED the rest of the Gulf region in marking 'Purple Saturday', concluding a week-long campaign promoting the inclusion, empowerment and accessibility of persons with disabilities.

Observed under the slogan 'A Day with a Lasting Impact,' the initiative seeks to strengthen social inclusion, reinforce corporate social responsibility, raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and encourage organisations to make their services more accessible and responsive to diverse needs.

Held annually on the last Saturday of July, 'Purple Saturday' is a Gulf-wide initiative that supports national efforts to promote accessibility, equal opportunities and full participation of persons with disabilities in economic and social life.

Public and private sector institutions, including commercial, service and tourism establishments, are encouraged to adopt inclusive practices and improve accessibility.

Speaking to *Observer*, Hassan al Lawati, Chairman of the Oman Association for the People with Disabilities, said that although 'Purple Saturday' is officially observed on the last Saturday of July, activities continued throughout the following week, recognised as Purple Week, with awareness campaigns and promotional offers for people



HASSAN AL LAWATI

Chairman of the Oman Association for the People with Disabilities



The MoCIIP headquarters was bathed in purple light on the final day of Purple Week.

with disabilities until August 1.

"Purple Week is built around three key pillars," Al Lawati said. "The first is the humanitarian and social pillar, which promotes the values of inclusion and social justice. The second is the economic and development pillar, where businesses play a vital role in supporting and empowering different segments of society through corporate social responsibility. The third is the awareness pillar, which emphasises that support for people with disabilities should continue throughout the year and not be confined to a single day."

He noted that Oman began observing 'Purple Saturday' in 2021 as part of a shared Gulf commitment to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities while promoting equality, dignity and social inclusion.

Purple, the internationally recognised colour representing the rights of persons with disabilities, symbolises dignity, diversity and the recognition of their abilities and contributions to society.

Al Lawati said Purple Week also focuses on easing the financial burden on persons with disabilities and their families by encouraging businesses to offer discounts, exclusive services and accessible facilities.

The initiative also encourages companies to integrate inclusive practices into their corporate social responsibility programmes.

"Over the years, 'Purple Saturday' has helped raise awareness, bridge accessibility gaps and highlight the importance of creating physical and digital environments that are inclusive and accessible to everyone," he said.

The initiative encourages organisations to make their services more accessible and responsive to diverse needs

Reporting oil spills is a civic duty, EA urges public vigilance



The public can contact 80071999, while EA's main call centre can be reached at 1991.

to attempt cleaning or removing oil spills themselves, urging them to leave such operations to specialised response teams and report incidents immediately through official

channels. Residents are encouraged to report sightings of oil slicks, marine pollution or the death of marine organisms, while following official instructions and avoiding the spread of

unverified information.

The Environment Authority (EA) warned that oil spills can cause serious damage to marine ecosystems by contaminating seawater and beaches, threatening fish, seabirds, sea turtles and coral reefs.

Such incidents can also have economic consequences, affecting fisheries, fishermen's livelihoods, tourism activities and local economies.

As part of its response mechanism, the EA activates the Environmental Emergency Plan and coordinates with relevant authorities to assess the scale of spills, monitor their movement and implement containment measures.

Field teams use modern technologies to track the spread of pollution, while specialists oversee control operations, assess environmental damage, test water quality and guide long-term restoration efforts.

The authority stressed that protecting Oman's marine environment is a collective responsibility and that timely reporting plays a crucial role in safeguarding natural resources for future generations.



SHORT TAKES



CBO’S CURRENCY HERITAGE EXHIBITION UNTIL SEPTEMBER 3

SALALAH: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO), in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has opened an exhibition showcasing Omani paper and metal currencies at the Land of Frankincense Museum in Dhofar Governorate.

The exhibition, which will run until September 3, highlights the rich monetary heritage of Oman and traces the evolution of the national currency through different historical periods, from early forms of currency to the modern Omani Rial.

The exhibition features a collection of rare and historic paper and metal currencies, along with information panels highlighting key milestones in the development of Oman’s monetary system. A visual display section also presents the history of currency issuance and showcases the artistic and security features of various currency editions.

The exhibition provides visitors with an opportunity to explore Oman’s monetary journey and understand the role of currency in supporting the country’s economic and developmental progress over the decades.

Organised as part of the CBO’s efforts to preserve national monetary heritage and raise public awareness, the exhibition offers residents and visitors to Dhofar an interactive experience highlighting the history and evolution of Omani currency. — **ONA**

115 RIDERS AT HORSEBACK ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIP

SALALAH: The horseback archery championship, organised by the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar and Dhofar Municipality, began at Al Haffa Beach in Salalah as part of the Dhofar Khareef Season 2026 activities.

The two-day event features the participation of 15 riders and aims to showcase Oman’s equestrian heritage, preserve traditional sporting practices and promote tourism through cultural and sporting events. The competition combines horsemanship and archery skills, testing riders’ ability to control horses while accurately shooting arrows. — **ONA**

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, AUGUST 1

Dhofar Municipality has launched Kiddy Time at Awqad Children’s Park as part of Khareef Dhofar 2026, creating an interactive environment where children can explore education, careers and technology through a mix of learning and entertainment.

Running until September 5, the event features a Children’s University with eight specialised colleges, themed educational cities and a Future City dedicated to technology and robotics. The initiative aims to encourage curiosity, develop children’s skills and inspire them to

explore future opportunities.

Unlike traditional entertainment events, Kiddy Time places children at the centre of the experience, allowing them to participate through hands-on activities, simulations and workplace-style experiences. They can explore different professions and fields of study while combining learning with play.

The Children’s University serves as one of the main attractions, offering children a realistic university experience that includes registration, student services, academic colleges and a graduation ceremony. The university features eight colleges covering engineering, commerce, agriculture,

DHOFAR INTL FILM FESTIVAL INVITES GLOBAL FILM ENTRIES

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

The Dhofar International Film Festival will be held from September 6 to 9 at major theatres in Salalah, the Oman Film Society (OFS) has announced.

The festival, open to both Omani and expatriate film-makers, is inviting short films ranging from four to 20 minutes in any language, including Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Persian, Hindi and Korean, as well as silent films.

High-quality submission links must be shared with the festival



committee by July 30.

“With the Dhofar International Film Festival, we aim to encourage film-makers from across the globe to showcase their creative works, network with peers from different countries and promote an international film culture in the Sultanate of Oman,” said Anwar al Reziqi, Chairman of the OFS.

The festival features two main categories: Narrative Short Film and Documentary Short Film. Entries must have been produced between 2025 and 2026 and should include English subtitles for Arabic or other-language films and Arabic subtitles for non-Arabic films.

Schools drive Dhofar’s latest govt land deals

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 1

FIVE PRIVATE schools account for half of ten new government land agreements signed in Dhofar, marking a shift in land allocations towards education, services and diversified investment alongside traditional agricultural projects. The usufruct agreements, covering more than 54,000 square metres across Salalah, Thumrait, Taqah, and Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, carry a combined investment value of around RO 5.01 million.

The agreements were signed on July 30 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, in cooperation with the ministries of Labour, Education, and Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, during the second Khareef Real Estate Season at Al Haffa Waterfront.

Besides the five schools, the projects include warehouses, an office for an inspection team, an events hall, and two commercial and industrial ventures. The latest package highlights a broader use of government land, directing investment towards education, public services and economic activities across Dhofar.

Ahmed bin Said Huwairar



AHMED AL MAASHANI

Ten usufruct agreements covering more than 54,000 square metres channel government land into education, services and private-sector investment across four wilayats



The agreements come after major agricultural land allocations in Dhofar, particularly in food security projects.

al Maashani, Director of the Housing Department at the Directorate-General of Housing and Urban Planning in Dhofar, said the agreements reflected the transformation of investment opportunities into actual projects.

“The public signing is not limited to concluding contracts. It sends a clear message that the investment opportunities offered by the ministry are being converted into actual projects within a framework of transparency, confidence and partnership with the private sector,” he said.

Under the usufruct system, investors develop and operate

projects on government land for specified activities, while ownership remains with the state. The latest agreements come after several years of major agricultural land allocations in Dhofar, particularly in food security projects. However, the new contra cts represent a smaller but more diversified approach, with education emerging as the largest component by number.

The second Khareef Real Estate Season, held from July 25 to August 5, features more than 40 property developers, four commercial banks and several government entities showcasing projects aimed at supporting Dhofar’s future growth.

Kiddy Time transforms Children’s Park into a world of imagination



The initiative aims to develop children’s skills and inspire them to explore future opportunities.

medicine, aviation, arts, media and sports. Through interactive lessons and practical activities, children learn the basics of each field before receiving graduation

gowns and celebrating their achievements on stage.

The learning journey continues through themed cities linked to each college. Engineering graduates

can explore construction, design and innovation at the Engineering City, while aviation students experience the Pilots’ City and learn about aircraft and air navigation.

The Sports City introduces children to teamwork, discipline, fitness and sportsmanship, while Talent City provides opportunities to explore art, music, acting and media in a creative environment. The Future City introduces children to emerging technologies through science-based attractions, including virtual reality experiences, robotics displays, interactive laboratories and exhibits explaining natural phenomena such as volcanic activity.

The Military Discipline City, designed to promote responsibility, teamwork and commitment through activities. Visitors can enjoy additional attractions, including a suspended cinema, theatre performances, competitions, family dining facilities and a range of illuminated displays featuring giant characters, colourful installations and themed walkways.

Dhofar Municipality said Kiddy Time aims to go beyond entertainment by creating an educational environment that helps children discover their interests, develop confidence and gain early exposure to different professions and areas of knowledge.

SPOTLIGHT



”

Blooming flowers, pollen and increased humidity are among the most common triggers for asthma attacks during the season

DR NASSER AL KHAROUSI
General Practitioner

DON'T LET ASTHMA SPOIL KHAREEF

AHMED AL KAABI

AS KHAREEF DHOFAR SEASON draws thousands of visitors with its cool weather and lush green landscapes, the Ministry of Health (MoH) is urging people with asthma to take simple precautions to prevent respiratory complications and enjoy the season safely.

Through its ‘Together for a Healthy Khareef’ campaign, the ministry encourages asthma patients to plan ahead before travelling by following preventive measures that can significantly reduce the risk of asthma attacks.

The MoH advises patients to carry their rescue inhaler at all times and continue taking prescribed controller medications, even if symptoms improve. Discontinuing

treatment without medical advice may increase the risk of flare-ups.

Visitors are also encouraged to minimise exposure to common environmental triggers by wearing a face mask in dense fog or dusty conditions, avoiding places where symptoms may worsen, staying well hydrated, and seeking immediate medical attention if breathing difficulties persist despite using a rescue inhaler.

Dr Nasser al Kharousi, General Practitioner, said the unique weather conditions during the khareef season can trigger asthma symptoms in susceptible individuals.

“Cold air can irritate the airways, causing them to narrow, while high humidity may make breathing more difficult for some people,” he said.

According to Dr Al Kharousi,



Carry your rescue inhaler at all times, Continue prescribed controller medication



Avoid fog, dust, smoke and pollen exposure



Seek meaiical care if symptoms worsen

blooming flowers, pollen and increased humidity are among the most common triggers for asthma attacks during the season.

“The combination of pollen and humid conditions can aggravate symptoms, particularly among people with asthma or respiratory allergies,” he explained.

He advised visitors to carry a rescue inhaler at all times, wear a face mask when necessary and avoid barbecue areas or locations where smoke, dust and other airborne irritants may trigger breathing difficulties.

“One of the most common mistakes people make during holidays is forgetting to bring their inhaler or exposing themselves unnecessarily to smoke and dust,” he noted.

Dr Al Kharousi added that

children and older adults are generally more vulnerable to asthma flare-ups during khareef and recommended that people with poorly controlled asthma or respiratory allergies consult their physician before travelling.

He also advised those planning outdoor activities, including visits to valleys and tourist attractions, to carry both a rescue inhaler and a mobile phone to contact emergency services if symptoms suddenly worsen.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) said the awareness campaign forms part of its broader efforts to promote preventive healthcare during the Khareef Dhofar Season , helping residents and visitors enjoy Dhofar Governorate’s unique climate while protecting their health.

ARI extends UpGrade Programme registration deadline to August 15

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

THE Authority for Research and Innovation (ARI) has extended the registration deadline for the ninth edition of the UpGrade Programme until August 15. This offers university students and recent graduates more time to apply for one of Oman's leading entrepreneurship initiatives aimed at transforming graduation projects into viable start-ups.

The extension reflects ARI's efforts to encourage wider participation and enable more young innovators to benefit from the programme's incubation, mentorship and business development support. The initiative seeks to bridge the gap between academic research and

commercial application
by helping participants
turn innovative ideas into
sustainable businesses.

The programme is open to Omanis and residents enrolled in higher education institutions, including diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Graduates who completed their studies within the past two years are also eligible to apply, allowing them to further develop promising graduation projects into market-ready ventures.

The ninth edition features three strategic tracks aligned with Oman's development priorities: Emerging Technologies, Water, and Financial Technologies (FinTech).

The Emerging Technologies track supports innovative solutions in areas such as



The programme is open to Omanis and residents enrolled in higher education institutions

artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, cloud computing, robotics and advanced digital technologies contributing to economic diversification and digital transformation.

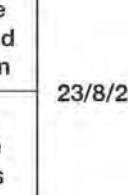
The Water track focuses on solutions addressing water management, conservation, treatment and sustainability challenges, while encouraging technologies that enhance efficiency and strengthen environmental resilience.

Supervised by ARI, the programme forms part of national efforts to strengthen Oman's innovation ecosystem and promote entrepreneurship among young people. Participants will receive technical guidance, specialised training, mentorship, business advisory services, prototype development support and incubation opportunities.

The initiative is supported by key partners representing each track, with Omantel as the strategic partner for Emerging Technologies, NAMA Water Services supporting the Water track, and National Bank of Oman backing the FinTech track.

The programme is implemented through a strategic partnership involving the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

By extending the deadline, ARI aims to attract a wider range of innovative ideas and provide aspiring entrepreneurs with more time to submit competitive applications.



محافظة مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (25/2026)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PREM/ 26/001	Ground and side concrete protection works at the end of the Darsait Wadi Stream	23/8/2026	13/9/2026
PREM/ 26/002	Supply and installation of lighting to regulate the activity of itinerant sellers in Masar Al-Wadi Kabir		

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
2. Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).



THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tenders Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, invites tenders for the following:-

Tender Reference	Subject	Grade	Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable)	Submission Date
03/2026	Various works in Halban	III & above	SME R.O 10/- L.O R.O. 50/-	08 th September 2026
05/2026	Renovation of the (96) existing Studio Apartments in Al Husn Mess	III & above	SME R.O 10/- L.O R.O. 60/-	08 th September 2026
06/2026	New car parking at Halban & rectification works for asphaltting in Al Husn Mess	III & above	SME R.O 10/- L.O R.O. 35/-	08 th September 2026

Specialized companies registered in the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the above-mentioned Grade and the Procurement and Contracts Directorate of the General Directorate of Finance, Royal Guard of Oman, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from **Sunday 02nd August to Thursday 06th August 2026.**

Wax-sealed Tenders addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 1200 hours on the submission date along with a Tender Bond the name of the Royal Guard of Oman equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the value of the Tender from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman. The tenderer shall not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

Tender Committee
P.O. Box 381, C.P.O
Postal Code 111

'Caravan of Goodness' launched



AHMED BIN
MOHAMMED
AL JABRI

Chairman, ODSA

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

A caravan of 12 buses carrying more than 200 children with Down syndrome, along with their parents, volunteers and officials, embarked on a week-long journey from Muscat to Salalah and back, spreading awareness and promoting social inclusion.

The 'Caravan of Goodness', organised by the Oman Down Syndrome Association (ODSA), aims to raise awareness about Down syndrome, support families of children with special needs and promote their integration into society.

“Many children are unable to interact and mingle with the wider community. This journey is an awareness initiative to show that these children, too, deserve a social life and opportunities to participate,” said Ahmed bin Mohammed al Jabri, Chairman of ODSA.

The convoy includes 12 vehicles, 24 board members and volunteers, with children participating in awareness activities at various locations along the route to Dhofar Governorate and back.

تثمير
TATHMEER

TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER)

Board of Director Report For the period ended June 30th, 2026.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board, I am pleased to present the results of TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER) for the period ended June 30th, 2006.

During the first half of 2026, the Fund recorded a return of -1.32%, compared with a benchmark return of -0.04%. Performance was impacted by a challenging market environment characterized by heightened geopolitical tensions, fluctuating oil prices, and cautious investor sentiment across GCC equity markets. Despite the near-term headwinds, we remain focused on identifying high-quality investment opportunities with attractive long-term fundamentals while maintaining a disciplined investment approach and prudent risk management.

Period	Fund Performance	Benchmark Performance
YTD-2026	-1.32%	-0.04%
Last 5 Years*	1.61%	1.25%
Since Inception *	2.92%	-1.43%

*Annualized

Global and GCC Markets Performance

Global growth held up in 1H26 on resilient consumption, improving sentiment, and surging AI-related capex, even as China stayed constrained by weak demand and limited fiscal room. The Fed, now under Kevin Warsh, held rates at 3.50-3.75% but turned hawkish, pushing the 10-year yield to 4.44% with energy costs haunting over the horizon. Meanwhile, the region was dominated by an escalating US-Iran confrontation over the Strait of Hormuz, sending oil swinging between \$70 and above \$100/barrel. Growth diverged: Saudi Arabia slowed to 3% in 1Q, UAE inflation rose to 5.5% with Dubai's growth at 2.4%, Qatar contracted 8.6% Y/Y, while Oman stayed resilient with steady energy flows.

Within the GCC, market performance showed significant divergence. Oman clearly outperformed the region, with the MSX 30 Index rising 28.0%, ranking among the best-performing indices globally. This strong performance was supported by expectations of potential inclusion in FTSE and MSCI Emerging Market indices, alongside solid corporate earnings prospects. Saudi Arabia's TASI followed with a more modest gain of 2.9%, reflecting the Kingdom's relative resilience and limited exposure to the most severe spillover effects from regional tensions.

In contrast, the remaining GCC markets ended the quarter in negative territory. Qatar recorded the largest decline at -4.9%, followed by Kuwait at -4.4%. Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Bahrain also posted losses of 1.9%, 1.5% and 1.2%, respectively.

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	30 th June 2026 USD	30 th June 2025 USD
Total Comprehensive Income	-883,157	-557,435
Net Asset Value	21,539,503	21,959,138
Fund Capital	20,586,270	19,706,349
NAV per unit	1.036	1.109

Outlook

Looking ahead, the investment outlook for the remainder of 2026 remains cautious as markets continue to navigate geopolitical tensions, energy supply uncertainties, and a global growth backdrop increasingly supported by AI-driven investments. Inflation is expected to remain elevated due to commodity prices, supply chain disruptions, and higher energy costs, keeping monetary policy restrictive and supporting a stronger US dollar.

Within the GCC, market performance is expected to remain driven by company-specific fundamentals rather than broad market trends. While attractive valuations have emerged in several markets, investor focus has shifted towards earnings delivery, sector-specific developments, and the evolving geopolitical environment. Selective opportunities continue to exist in fundamentally strong companies with resilient cash flows and sustainable dividend profiles.

The Fund will continue to follow a disciplined investment approach, focusing on high-quality companies with strong balance sheets, attractive valuations, and sustainable earnings. Active portfolio management and selective stock picking will remain central to navigating market volatility and delivering consistent long-term returns for unit holders. The Board remains confident that this approach positions the Fund to deliver stable and consistent returns over the medium to long term.

Expressions of Gratitude

We pay our tributes to His Majesty, Hatham Bin Tank, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity, would also like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the regulatory authorities and our valued unit holders for their continued support. Special thanks are also due to the Fund Management Company for its consistent efforts in managing the Fund with efficiency and dedication.

Said Hilal Al Habsi
Chairperson

Managed By:

Oman National Investment Development Company SAOC

PO Box 3078, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman, Tel +968 22 300 400 Fax +968 22 300 430

www.tanmia.om

INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2026

30 June 2025	31 Dec 2025	30 June 2026	30 June 2025	31 Dec 2025	30 June 2026
Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited
			US\$	US\$	US\$
ASSETS					
Current assets					
7,801,910	7,856,515	7,529,906	Investments at fair value through profit or loss	19,558,185	20,406,529
539,735	353,725	351,456	Receivables	912,873	918,768
112,623	171,062	411,347	Cash and cash equivalents	1,068,434	444,317
8,454,268	8,381,302	8,292,709	Total assets	21,539,502	21,769,614
UNIT HOLDERS' FUNDS					
7,588,944	7,586,504	7,925,714	Fund Capital	20,586,270	19,706,349
825,621	748,592	287,052	Retained earnings	745,591	1,944,239
8,414,565	8,335,096	8,212,766	Total unit holders' funds	21,331,861	21,649,444
LIABILITIES					
Current liabilities					
3,242	4,751	751	Accruals and other payables	1,953	12,338
38,461	41,515	79,192	Amount due to a related party	205,680	107,832
41,703	46,266	79,943	Total liabilities	207,642	120,170
8,454,268	8,381,302	8,292,709	Total unit holders' funds and liabilities	21,539,502	21,769,614
0.427	0.423	0.399	Net asset value per unit	1.036	1.099

INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SIX MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

Six-month period ended 30 June 2025	Six-month period ended 30 June 2025	Three-month period ended 30 June 2025	Three-month period ended 30 June 2026	Three-month period ended 30 June 2025	Three-month period ended 30 June 2026	Six-month period ended 30 June 2025	Six-month period ended 30 June 2026
Unaudited							

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the *Observer* classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.

WAR

SHORT TAKES



The day of a burial service for US soldier Sgt Angel S Rampersad, who was killed in an attack on Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, at the Long Island National Cemetery, in New York. — Reuters

US embassies urge citizens to consider departing Mideast

DUBAI: US embassies in capitals across the Middle East on Saturday warned American citizens to beware of an “unforeseen escalation” in the regional conflict and urged them to be ready to leave. The warning, posted online by US embassies in Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates came a day after US President Donald Trump threatened to hit Iran “very hard”. “Americans in the region should consider departing, or be prepared to depart should there be escalation,” said the security alert. The messages urged citizens to check flight details and to follow safety advice from local authorities. “Americans currently in the Middle East should exercise caution and heightened vigilance and should be prepared for flight cancellations, periodic airspace closures, and potential travel disruptions,” it said. Americans in Jordan were told not to visit US military bases there, which have recently come under Iranian missile attack, and in Israel they were urged to seek the location of the nearest bomb shelter. The US embassy in Beirut said that the mission remained on “ordered departure status”, meaning that non-emergency US government personnel were still relocated outside of Lebanon. — AFP

IRANIAN PILGRIMS FLOOD IRAQ



ZURBATIYAH: Under a blazing sun, clad in black and clutching portraits of their slain leader Ali Khamenei, Iranian pilgrims streamed across the border into Iraq to observe the Arbaeen, their most revered event. Some stamped on a portrait of US President Donald Trump, others raised their fists or flashed victory signs, as fresh strikes rattled the region, drawing Iraq back into the Middle East war. This year’s pilgrimage comes amid a war launched by a US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28, which has not left Iraq unscathed. — AFP

UN says Israeli demolitions in Lebanon ‘deeply concerning’

BEIRUT: The United Nations on Saturday expressed concern over Israel’s ongoing demolitions in southern Lebanon despite a ceasefire in its war with Iran-backed Hezbollah. “The scale of the detonations and demolitions taking place in south Lebanon is deeply concerning, with a devastating impact on civilian infrastructure, cultural heritage, and the collective memory of communities,” the UN said in a statement. The statement comes a day after the Israeli military carried out large overnight detonations near a UNESCO-listed castle in Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said the army destroyed “tunnels in the Beaufort area” using approximately 700 tonnes of explosives. Beaufort castle was added last week to Unesco’s List of World Heritage in Danger. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Friday labelled the detonation “an extremely dangerous escalation” and “a direct threat to the process which was launched as part of the framework agreement” reached with Israel during US-sponsored talks last month. Under the Israel-Lebanon deal, Lebanon’s army is to disarm Hezbollah



Smoke rises following an Israeli controlled-explosion on the village of Kfartibnit, southern Lebanon. — AFP

and the Israeli military is to withdraw from “pilot zones” where Lebanese forces will subsequently deploy. The timing of the blasts ahead of another round of talks with Israel in Rome next week “sends negative messages and undermines international efforts aimed at consolidating stability”, Aoun added. Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency reported several detonations in other parts of the south since. It also reported at least one Israeli strike on the south on Saturday, saying it wounded two people. The UN said, “this escalating pattern of destruction must stop as

diplomatic channels exist to resolve any outstanding issues”. Iran-backed Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with attacks on Israel. Israel retaliated with a massive bombing campaign and a ground offensive that Lebanese authorities say have killed more than 4,300 people. Meanwhile, the Israeli military said that it killed several Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon and that an Israeli soldier was injured there despite a ceasefire. The military said it identified several Hezbollah fighters inside what Israel has labelled a “security zone”. — AFP

Iran military accuses US of ‘escalating tensions’

US embassies in several Middle Eastern capitals warned American citizens to beware an “unforeseen escalation” and urged them to be ready to leave

The Israeli military said one of its soldiers was moderately injured during a “close-quarters encounter” with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon

An “unknown projectile” struck a tanker, a British maritime agency said on Saturday, as the United States and Iran vie for control of Hormuz

Kuwait said the air defences were intercepting hostile Iranian missiles, targeting government facility in north and vehicles private company

Iraq ordered its defences and intelligence activities to be bolstered, after US-Saudi strikes on militants accused of launching attacks in the region

IRAN’S MILITARY accused the United States of “escalating tensions” in the Middle East on Saturday and warned countries in the region against cooperating with Washington during the ongoing conflict. “The United States is rapidly moving down the path of escalating tensions in the region,” said Ali Abdollahi, head of Iran’s military central command. “Any country serving as defensive shield for criminal and aggressive America will be engulfed by the flames of war,” he said in a statement read on state television.

The remarks came after US President Donald Trump reiterated threats to hit Iran “very hard”. US media reported he was considering renewed heavy attacks as soon as this weekend, including against energy infrastructure targets. This week, Iran and the US resumed overnight exchanges of fire after a days-long lull in fighting although there were no reported strikes overnight on Friday to Saturday. The Middle East war broke out on February 28 when the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, which has retaliated with missile and drone strikes across the region.

President Donald Trump threatened to hit Iran “very hard,” as US media reported he was considering renewed heavy attacks as soon as this weekend, including against energy infrastructure targets. After more than five months of war, which began on February 28 when the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, there is seemingly no end to the conflict, with resumed tit-for-tat attacks. “We’ll be hitting him very hard and, you know, at some point they’re going to say, ‘We just can’t take it anymore,’” Trump said on Friday as he hosted a cabinet meeting at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

The Wall Street Journal later reported that Trump had ordered a fresh attack aimed at convincing Tehran to surrender, which could begin as soon as this weekend, citing unnamed US officials. CBS News meanwhile reported that the United States and Israel were planning joint strikes on energy-related targets, possibly throughout the weekend. Such targets would likely be oil refineries and power plants.

Trump has repeatedly threatened



Iranians arrive to visit and shop at the Grand Bazaar in Tehran. — AFP

The remarks came after US President Donald Trump reiterated threats to hit Iran “very hard”. US media reported he was considering renewed heavy attacks as soon as this weekend, including against energy infrastructure targets. Iran and the US resumed overnight exchanges of fire after a days-long lull

to strike Iran’s vital infrastructure throughout the war, vowing last week to destroy a bridge or power plant every time ships in the vital Strait of Hormuz are attacked. The president had not yet given the green light for the campaign, but Israel and the US were coordinating, CBS said, citing multiple unnamed sources.

The report comes just days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Washington and met with Trump and US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth. Some White House aides voiced strong objections to the plan at the cabinet meeting, the CBS report said. If the plan went forward, it would mark the first time that Israel has joined in attacks on Iran since the initial phase of the war.

Meanwhile, US embassies in several Middle Eastern capitals warned American citizens to beware an “unforeseen escalation” in the regional conflict and urged them to be ready to leave. “Americans in the region should consider departing, or be prepared to depart should there be escalation,” said a security alert, versions of which were posted on social media by the US missions in Amman, Jerusalem, Muscat, Baghdad and Beirut.

The messages urged citizens to check flight details and to follow safety advice from local authorities. “Americans currently in the Middle East should exercise caution and heightened vigilance and should be prepared for flight cancellations, periodic airspace closures, and potential travel disruptions,” it said.

Americans in Jordan were told not to visit US military bases there, which have recently come under Iranian missile attack, and in Israel they were urged to seek the location of the nearest bomb shelter. “The Iranian regime is unpredictable, as seen by its recent decisions to attack areas in the region without warning or provocations as well as to expand attacks to areas not previously targeted (such as Egypt),” said a post on the US Embassy Jerusalem site.

The US embassy in Beirut said that the mission remained on “ordered departure status”, meaning that non-emergency US government personnel were still relocated outside of Lebanon. On Wednesday a drone struck a US-owned gas vessel moored in an Egyptian port, causing a fire. Egypt is investigating but has not yet accused any group of launching the attack. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Spanish soldiers watch migrants sitting on the pavement prior to escorting them back to Morocco, Ceuta. — AFP

SPAIN’S ENCLAVE RETURNS TO NORMAL AS MIGRANTS DEPART

CEUTA: Almost all of the tens of thousands of migrants who entered Spain’s enclave of Ceuta in North Africa had left by Saturday, officials said, as some EU countries bolstered their border controls over the sudden influx. An estimated 60,000 migrants entered Ceuta over just a few days from neighbouring Morocco, the enclave’s regional president Juan Jesus Vivas told reporters, but by Saturday Spain’s interior minister said almost all had left. “The situation has been almost entirely reversed,” Fernando Grande-Marlaska told reporters.

Under the watch of Spanish soldiers and police on Saturday morning, the remaining young migrants continued crossing back over the border to Morocco, journalists saw. Any who lingered too long on the coastal path were immediately ushered back out by the soldiers. To cross into Ceuta, many swam around a small border barrier that juts out into the Mediterranean. At least 67 people died in the attempt, said Grande-Marlaska providing updated figures on Saturday. The sudden influx of migrants had sparked political panic in Europe.

Twenty-two EU countries issued a joint open letter on Saturday calling for a video meeting of the bloc’s interior ministers “as a matter of urgency” to agree a speedy coordinated response, and to “prevent further uncontrolled crossings”. — AFP

FAMED NIRMAL PURJA CONFIRMED DEAD IN PAKISTAN



NIRMAL PURJA

KATHMANDU: Acclaimed British-Nepali climber Nirmal Purja, a trailblazer who summited the world’s tallest mountains, has been confirmed dead in an avalanche on Pakistan’s Broad Peak,

his climbing company said on Saturday. Purja, 43, served with Britain’s Brigade of Gurkhas and then the Special Boat Squadron of the Royal Marines before becoming a full-time mountaineer and guide. He famously completed the summit of the 14 highest peaks in the world in just over six months in 2019, shattering the previous record of seven years.

“It is with profound sadness and immense heartbreak that we confirm that Nirmal Purja tragically lost his life following the avalanche on Broad Peak,” Purja’s company Elite Expeditions said in a social media post. “We have also received confirmation that other members of the expedition sadly did not survive.”

The determined climber had the 14 mountains tattooed across his back, complete with swirling clouds and Tibetan prayer flags. His efforts were chronicled in a 2021 Netflix documentary, inspiring a new wave of climbers. Purja made history in 2021 with the first winter ascent of the treacherous K2, the world’s second-highest peak, along with a team of nine other Nepali climbers. — AFP

SEARCH ENDED AT MALL WRECKED BY JAPAN QUAKE BLAST

TOKYO: Japanese officials said on Saturday they had ended rescue operations at a shopping mall devastated by an explosion following a powerful earthquake that killed at least 36 people. A total of 12 people were pulled from the site, including seven who were confirmed dead, according to the disaster management office of the Kumamoto region, hit by the 7.1-magnitude jolt on Tuesday. “We conducted a thorough search over the past two days in

collaboration with the fire service, the Self-Defence Forces, and other regional police units,” to ensure no one remained missing, a police official told a disaster management meeting on Saturday. “We found no such individual,” he added. A spokesperson for Aeon, operators of the mall, said that the seven people who died were employees of tenant stores. On Friday, rescue operations were terminated at a paper factory where a smokestack collapsed. A total of

nine bodies were recovered, and two survivors were extracted. The quake caused widespread damage in the sweltering southwestern region, flattening homes, damaging bridges, triggering fires and leaving many without electricity and water. 9,000 people, many of them elderly, were still at shelters as of Saturday. 59,000 households still had no water. Japan is sitting on top of four major tectonic plates along the western edge of the Pacific “Ring of Fire”. — AFP

Strikes rock Ukraine, as Russian cargo ship sinks

RUSSIAN

ATTACKS on Kyiv and its suburbs killed 10 people early Saturday, officials said, as Ukrainian drones sank a huge Russian container ship in the Black Sea. The exchange of strikes comes amid a prolonged lull in US-led talks aimed at ending the conflict, Europe’s deadliest since World War II. Both Moscow and Kyiv have escalated long-range attacks on each other in recent weeks, with Russia more than doubling its use of missiles last month, according to analysis. Civilian casualties in Ukraine have meanwhile soared to their highest since Russia attacked in 2022, according to UN human rights monitors, with Kyiv pressing its allies to provide more air defences.

In a statement on social media, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky appealed for supplies of Patriot air defence systems, Kyiv’s only effective counter against Russian ballistic missile attacks. “It is this shortage of ballistic missile interceptors that only encourages Russia to launch such attacks that take human lives,” Zelensky said in a post on X. More than 30 people were wounded in Saturday’s attacks on Kyiv, which struck five districts of the city, Ukrainian authorities said.

Among the buildings damaged was the embassy of Lithuania, with the Baltic country’s foreign minister



Smoke rises above residential buildings following an air attack in Kyiv. — AFP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky appealed for supplies of Patriot air defence systems, Kyiv’s only effective counter against Russian ballistic missile attacks. “It is this shortage of ballistic missile interceptors that only encourages Russia to launch such attacks that take human lives”

publishing images appearing to show a cracked door and damaged light fixture. Journalists reported hearing more than 10 explosions in a row early Saturday, triggering car alarms on the streets.

In Kyiv’s eastern Darnytsky district, the attacks damaged multiple buildings and vehicles, with authorities reporting seven people killed and 14 wounded in the area. Two people were killed and eight others were wounded in the western Solomiansky district, where strikes damaged a five-storey residential building. One other person was killed in an attack on the Kyiv suburb of Brovary, authorities said. Reporters saw dark clouds of smoke rising over Kyiv in the morning hours.

As Kyiv has faced near-nightly attacks, Ukraine has escalated its retaliatory strikes on Russia in

recent months, partly to pressure Moscow to the negotiating table after nearly four-and-a-half years of war. Ukrainian drones sank a Russian-owned container ship in the Black Sea early Saturday, forcing its 17-member crew to abandon the vessel, the ship’s owner said.

The Russian-flagged “Yanina”, owned by the shipping arm of Russia’s state-owned nuclear power operator Rosatom, was sailing near the Russian port of Novorossiysk when it was hit. The ship was carrying civilian goods including frozen food and construction materials, Rosatom said.

There was no immediate indication that the vessel was carrying out activities related to Rosatom’s nuclear arm or carrying nuclear material. “All 17 crew members have been rescued and are in good condition,” Rosatom said on Telegram in a statement.

Zelensky confirmed Ukraine was behind the strike in a post on X, describing it as a “sanctioned Russian container ship”. Kyiv has accused Russia of using the waterway to transport sanctioned goods, including oil.

The attacks come as Ukraine presses its allies for Patriot air defences. Zelensky had met with Trump for talks, partly to lobby Washington for licenses to produce Patriots domestically. — AFP

FIREFIGHTERS STRUGGLE WILDFIRES RAGE IN GREECE

ATHENS: Wildfires fanned by heavy winds burned across multiple areas of Greece on Saturday, including near Athens, with large-scale firefighting operations and emergency evacuations underway. Blazes fed by gale-force winds flared up across Greece, which until recent days had experienced fewer heatwaves and a relatively quiet fire season.

Greek authorities issued emergency alerts for several areas for Saturday and warned of extreme wildfire risk in the regions of Attica and Evia. More than 300 firefighters, 92 firefighting trucks, heavy machinery and aircraft have continued to battle a conflagration in the region of Boeotia, where over 200 people from the town of Agios Vasileios, about 80 kilometres northwest of Athens, had to be evacuated by sea.

Another 12 people, fleeing the same blaze, were evacuated from the beach in Porto Germeno by Greek Coast Guard patrol boats and a Fire Service vessel. Firefighting operations have also continued overnight in the regions of Argolida and Arta. On the Greek island of Crete, crews were still tackling persistent hot spots along a 15-km front and guarding against fresh outbreaks. A fire that broke out in central Crete forced the evacuation of hundreds of tourists and locals, including by boat from coastal communities. — Reuters

ATROCIOUS ACT

At least 11 injured in Colombia car bombing



At least 11 people were injured in a truck bombing on Saturday in the Colombian city of Cucuta, near the border with Venezuela, six days before the inauguration of president-elect Abelardo de la Espriella, local authorities said. “At this time, we have eight police officers and three civilians who have been injured... This was an atrocious, violent act... and what happened is regrettable,” George Quintero, security secretary for the department of Norte de Santander said. — AFP

SIGNIFICANT SCALING

Ebola in DR Congo ‘intensifying’: WHO



The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is intensifying at an “exceptional” pace, the World Health Organization warned on Saturday, calling for a significant scaling-up of the health response. “This outbreak is now the largest recorded Ebola virus disease outbreak in the country,” the WHO said. The outbreak is “intensifying, with sustained transmission and continued increases in reported cases and deaths,” the WHO warned. — AFP

SEISMIC ACTIVITY

Quake in Italy injures 21, damages properties



A 4.7-magnitude earthquake west of Italy’s city of Naples caused 26 injuries and damaged properties, a day after the strongest tremor to hit the area in several decades. The quake had occurred late Friday in the Campi Flegrei area, at a depth of three kilometres. The quake “is the strongest earthquake to have occurred in the Phlegraean Fields in the past 40 years,” Lorenzo Benedetto, president of the Order of Geologists of Campania, said. — AFP

OPINION

The psychology of holidays and why we need to get away



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist, SQU Hospital

I recently travelled to Europe with my family for a summer holiday. Since it was my first driving trip abroad, I decided to go through a travel agent who arranged not only the flights and accommodation, but also a detailed daily itinerary of major attractions, exact locations, and even places where halal food could be found. The countryside was breathtaking, green valleys, mountain roads, and small villages that seemed untouched by time. More importantly, the journey provided something many of us silently crave after a long year of work and a chance to step away from routine.

Holidays occupy a special place in human psychology. Research consistently shows that taking regular vacations is associated with lower stress levels, better mood, improved sleep, and even reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. Yet the greatest psychological benefit of a holiday may not come from the trip itself, but from temporarily escaping the demands of everyday life.

Modern life often traps us in repetitive cycles of work, responsibilities, and

digital distractions. Over time, this can lead to what psychologists call “hedonic adaptation”, the tendency to become accustomed to our surroundings and routines, causing life to feel less rewarding. A holiday disrupts this cycle. New places, unfamiliar experiences, and exposure to nature stimulate the brain, creating fresh memories and renewing our sense of wonder.

Interestingly, psychological studies suggest that anticipation itself is a major source of happiness. Planning a holiday weeks or months in advance gives people something positive to look forward to, boosting well-being even before the journey begins. In many ways, the vacation starts long before boarding the plane.

Good planning can also reduce stress and save money. Booking flights and accommodation early often results in better deals and greater choice. Before travelling, it is wise to check visa requirements well in advance, as unexpected paperwork can quickly turn excitement into anxiety. Looking up the expected weather helps you pack appropriately for summer heat,

Sometimes, stepping away from our ordinary lives allows us to return with clearer minds, stronger relationships, and a renewed appreciation for the life awaiting us back home

mountain rain, or cooler evenings .

Some travellers want to visit all places suggested by their Instagram reels which leads them to return from holidays more exhausted than when they left. The key is intentional planning. A good holiday should balance activity with rest. Packing too many attractions into a single day can transform leisure into another form of work. Leave room for spontaneity like an unplanned walk through a village, sitting quietly by a lake, or sharing a meal with loved ones may become the most memorable moments of the trip.

It is also worth reflecting on what we truly seek from a holiday. Is it adventure, family connection, spiritual renewal, or simply rest? Different people need different forms of recovery. The ideal holiday is not necessarily the most expensive one, but the one that matches our psychological needs.

In my opinion, we should view holidays not as luxuries, but as investments in our mental well-being . Sometimes, stepping away from our ordinary lives allows us to return with clearer minds, stronger relationships, and a renewed appreciation for the life awaiting us back home.

MERZ VOWS FRESH START AFTER BACKLASH

FRANK ZELLER & JASTINDER KHERA

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz promised a fresh start and to communicate better after a chaotic cabinet reshuffle stoked anger within his ruling conservatives.

The discord within the CDU/CSU bloc hit Merz at a time his popularity ratings are low, the economy is flatlining and the far-right AfD is topping the polls ahead of a string of key regional elections.

“We must all reflect together on what we need to do better... and how we can regain the trust of those who do not trust us today”, Merz, in power since May last year, said after a lengthy closed-door meeting of his bloc’s MPs.

He stressed he was confident the meeting would “generate new momentum, new dynamism and a renewed effort on the part of us all to lead the country well, to guide our country into a bright future”.

Complaints over Merz’s high-handed leadership style have boiled over in recent days after a series of personnel changes, some of which appeared in media reports before those affected were told.

At pains to signal humility, Merz, 70, promised that “a key focus of my work will be ensuring good communication” among the government, MPs and the party. “We have agreed on this approach together”. The head of the Bavarian CSU party, Markus Soeder, said recent days had been “admittedly turbulent” and that “there was certainly annoyance at one point or another”.

In the meeting, which ran two hours overtime, some lawmakers expressed “frustration”, the deputy leader of the parliamentary group, Guenter Krings, told Welt TV, adding that “there were, of course, critical comments”.

The cabinet reshuffle was sparked by the recent resignation of the CDU’s parliamentary leader Jens Spahn.

CDU lawmakers met to crown Thorsten Frei, Merz’s chief of staff, as their new leader with 92 per cent of the vote.

At that meeting Merz met lawmakers to discuss the reshuffle, including the botched sacking of Patrick Schnieder as transport minister.

Merz’s intention to sack Schnieder leaked last week but the minister was left dangling in post after Merz’s initial pick for his replacement pulled out.

As he bade farewell to the ministry, Schnieder was given a rapturous round of applause by employees, the Bild newspaper reported, in what the daily interpreted as a rebuke to Merz.

Frei’s successor as Merz’s chief of staff will be outgoing health minister Nina Warken, who in turn is being replaced by CDU general secretary Carsten Linnemann. — AFP

War is prehistoric politics, diplomacy only way ahead

WAR is prehistoric politics and belongs to the past. It is a crude and foolish way for nations to deal with one another, it cannot produce lasting security. The conflict between the US and Iran will end only when both sides accept a permanent ceasefire and a peace agreement. Since an agreement has already been signed, common sense suggests that both sides should uphold it now, in the interests of their own people and the wider region.

Diplomacy is slower than war, but it is the only path that can bring a durable peace. Prehistoric people fought with stones, clubs and spears. Today some States still use tanks, drones, bombs and missiles. The weapons have changed. The prehistoric thinking has not. War is the law of the jungle. War can briefly look like a success. An army takes a town. A government falls. A leader declares victory. We see tanks moving forward and buildings burning. One side looks strong only to find itself weaker in time.

The Second World War holds a lesson. Nazi Germany and Japan under a military dictatorship had to be defeated. But lasting peace did not come from military victory. It came because countries rebuilt. Old enemies worked together, trade grew, new treaties were signed. It was diplomacy, not more war, that has helped keep the peace.

In Vietnam, the US had more bombs, planes and guns than its enemy. Yet it could not ultimately defeat the people. The Soviet Union found the same in Afghanistan. It had a huge army. After years of fighting, it left. Years later, the US and its allies went into Afghanistan. They drove out the Taliban. They spent many years trying to build a new country. Then they left. The Taliban came back. The war had cost many lives. It had not settled Afghanistan’s future.

War can win a fight, but it cannot



A child wears a pot on their head as displaced Palestinians shelter at a tent camp, in Gaza City. — Reuters



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

make people agree with the winner. It cannot make them trust their enemy.

The genocide in Gaza has not produced security for Israel. Palestinians and Israel’s enemies will not forget. Palestinians who have lost their homes will carry anger for generations. A child who sees people killed will grow up bitter. A people who feel beaten and shamed will fight again later. Ordinary people always pay the price. It is not leaders who lose their homes. It is not leaders who search for water, food or medicine. It is families. It is children. Homes are destroyed. Schools close. Hospitals are hit. Roads, power and water systems break down. People run from their homes carrying what they can. A government may go to war to look strong, but inevitably it ends up weaker. Its economy suffers, it loses friends and global support. It may try to crush an enemy but can make that enemy stronger. It may steal territory and then face years of attacks and unrest.

In the 21st century, we depend on each other. We trade food, oil, and goods. A war in one place can harm people globally. If ships cannot use a sea route, food and medicine may arrive late. If oil is hit, fuel prices rise.

In the 21st century, a distant war can hurt the world. Of course every country has the right to protect its people and regain its stolen territory. But military defence should not normalise war.

Diplomacy takes time and patience. It means talks. It means listening. It means keeping lines open, even with people you do not trust. It means using peace-loving mediators like Oman, a country skilled in the art of diplomacy. It means finding a resolution that lets both sides live without more killing. War may make one country dominant for years. But a civilised, peaceful future depends on nations solving their problems without killing each other. The use of military violence belongs to a past age.

The influencer: Famous or fatuous, you decide



RAY PETERSEN
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

AN ‘OLD-FASHIONED’ definition of an influencer is someone who inspires, guides, or motivates the actions of others by being the best possible example, in their actions or behaviour, and being reflective of their society’s expectations.

Earlier examples of these would have been maybe, Omar Sharif, a suave Egyptian actor, the first Arab to conquer Hollywood, whose roles portrayed him as sophisticated and worldly, influencing men towards a greater appreciation of women, and guiding women towards greater expectations of their men.

Clark Gable was another who influenced men and women positively through both his glamorous private life, and his many cinema roles. Yet when he ripped his shirt off to display a bare chest, in the 1934 movie ‘It Happened One Night,’ undershirts and singlets became a thing of the past overnight! It’s also impossible to go past Elvis Presley’s influence on all generations musically, with his rock and roll, or corning romanticism. Physically and sartorially, Elvis Aaron Presley was the full package.

Norma Jean Mortensen was a successful model, but as Marilyn Monroe, she influenced the way women walked, talked, danced, and laughed out loud. Often portrayed as the ‘blonde bombshell’ in her movies, she challenged that stereotype vigorously inspiring her generation. Meanwhile, across the other side of the Atlantic, British fashion

designer Mary Quant decided ‘less was more,’ in creating the ‘mini skirt’ and ‘hot pants,’ knee and calf length boots, and giving the ‘swinging sixties,’ an iconic imagery to last forever. Florence Nightingale professionalised nursing and altered forever the way in which women were seen in the workplace, and particularly hospitals. They would never be docile, subservient and unheard again.

These six individuals changed the world by doing ‘their things,’ by inspiring, motivating and guiding entire generations towards expression, liberty, and identity, with their skills, knowledge and understanding, demonstrating resilience, and the indefinable quality that is missing in so many of today’s generation... talent. They worked hard for their success, not seeking influence, yet finding it.

Globally, with 88 million TikTok, and 36 million Facebook followers, Addison Rae tops the world standings. Blonde and beautiful, she has been a student, see Louisiana State University, dropped out in 2020; a cosmetician, see ‘Item Beauty,’ discontinued in 2023; a modestly talented dancer, and an actress with minor roles in ‘She’s All That,’ and ‘Thanksgiving.’ A singer boasting a high of 54 on billboard, she has maintained her imposing social media numbers through musical collaborations with the likes of Charlie XCX, Lana del Ray, and a host of ‘walk-through’ and ‘dance-through,’ music videos, and television appearances. Rae is clearly a driven young woman, but with Britney Spears as her main

Today’s so-called influencers are a motley assortment of would-be-wonders, self-obsessed wannabees, freeloaders, crudely imposing themselves upon a generation that seeks fame without talent, industry, or effort

influence, and a large part of her life, how does that CV stack up as inspirational? Benito Skinner is thirty-something, and identified by ‘The Hollywood Reporter,’ as one of the top five influencers in America, is a comedian, apparently.

In ‘Overcompensating,’ a Prime Video offering, “he rose to digital prominence creating sketches about characters who are nothing like him,” but as his alter ego, Benny Drama, performing skits that he says, “tap back into a childlike version of himself.” And that’s it, I ask myself? Top 5, and all he wants to do is to access JK Rowling’s Twitter account so he can delete it! What a fatuous personality! Quelle horreur!

And then there’s the ‘Queen of the Kardashians,’ Kim. Imagine, her first brush with fame was a 2007 unauthorised x-rated video, a ‘dalliance,’ if you like, yet today she is a ubiquitous presence on television, has a burgeoning business empire, being named one of Fortune Magazine’s ‘Most Powerful Woman,’ in 2023, and is as rich as Croesus. Yet clearly surgically enhanced, she is dissatisfied with her body image, and what message does that send to impressionable teens, her target market? Today’s so-called influencers are a motley assortment of would-be-wonders, self-obsessed wannabees, freeloaders, crudely imposing themselves upon a generation that seeks fame without talent, industry, or effort. Well, you can put lipstick on something ugly, but... it will still be ugly.

TRUMP’S LEGAL CRUSADE AGAINST NEWS MEDIA FALTERS

RAPHAËLLE PELTIER

Donald Trump’s early legal wins against broadcasters ABC and CBS have given way to defeats and retreats as courts and newsrooms act to protect press freedom.

“News organisations recognise that the only positive outcome to this is prevailing against the president and standing up for the reporters and their newsrooms,” said Ken Paulson, director of the Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University.

At the end of July, the Justice Department withdrew subpoenas issued to New York Times journalists who had written articles about the security of Trump’s presidential aircraft.

It was forced to act after a federal judge slammed the administration’s sloppy legal work and found it violated protections granted to journalists and their sources.

The president has also filed defamation suits targeting The New York Times over articles and a book about the origins of his fortune, and the Wall Street Journal over an article about a salacious letter he sent to Jeffrey Epstein. Both are floundering. “If you’re willing to stand up to Trump, you’re going to do fairly well in court, given the lack of merit behind the cases that he has filed,” observes Dan Kennedy, a journalism professor at Northeastern University in Massachusetts.

The cases involving ABC and CBS ended in December 2024 and July 2025 with the broadcasters promising to pay \$15 million and \$16 million, respectively. Trump sued ABC for defamation over statements about a civil judgement against Trump in an assault case. He took CBS to court for allegedly misleading viewers by airing different clips of the same answer from an interview with 2024 Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris. But most legal experts agree that the courts could have thrown out Trump’s claims.

Both reached the settlements “for business reasons,” said Kennedy.

In another case, the BBC, which the US president is suing for \$10 billion over an allegedly misleading edit of one of his speeches, has adopted a strategy that experts expect to become more widespread. The British broadcaster is demanding that Trump’s legal team produce financial documents in order to quantify the damages suffered. “That is the biggest deterrent of all for a man who has constantly resisted efforts to look inside his empire and financial circumstances,” said Paulson.

Trump’s real objective, however, is not to win the lawsuits, experts say. “You go right back to the beginning of his political career, 11-12 years ago, and it’s been a central part of his strategy to discredit the news media,” said Kennedy. “He does that by insulting them, calling them fake news, calling them enemies of the people, and he does it by filing lawsuits.”— AFP

A case for compassionate artificial intelligence

THE DEFINING question of our time is no longer whether AI will transform our world. It already has. What the world needs now is a moral compass for the technology, which is why I introduced the concept of Compassionate AI to the 12,000-plus delegates from 170 countries who attended the AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva earlier this month.

If we are serious about ensuring that AI contributes to the common good, not just to profit and power, we must send AI engineers and developers out of their laboratories for one month. Let them meet children working in mines and factories, families displaced by conflict, and vulnerable communities enduring poverty, discrimination, and exclusion. Let them walk beside people whose lives are shaped far more by uncertainty, fear, and injustice than by any technological advance. Even one month can change how a person thinks, and that will bear on how developers build this technology and shape the future. AI is already reshaping education, health care, business, governance, and scientific discovery. It promises remarkable advances, from accelerating medical research and improving learning to exposing trafficking networks, predicting hunger before famine strikes, and strengthening humanitarian action. But every technological revolution poses a moral test, and AI is no exception. With the technology having become the frontline of an intense global competition for economic and geopolitical power, speed is rewarded, scale is celebrated, and market dominance is prized above all else.

Under such conditions, we risk forgetting the most important question: Whom is this intelligence ultimately meant to serve? The greatest failure of AI today is one of leadership, not engineering. True, much of the conversation at global gatherings already focuses on concepts like “ethical AI” and “responsible AI,” and



KAILASH SATYARTHI

The author is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is Founder of Laureates and Leaders for Children

these are indispensable. We need stronger governance, meaningful accountability, and effective regulation. But such safeguards are not enough. Ethics can tell us what is right, and laws can establish boundaries; but neither, by itself, will change the mindset of those who are imagining and designing technologies that will influence billions of lives. That requires something deeper, namely compassion.

Compassion is often mistaken for empathy, kindness, or charity. But it is not synonymous with any of them, nor is it simply an emotion or an abstract moral ideal. Compassion begins with recognising another person’s suffering as our own, which prompts us to take action to alleviate that suffering. It includes the courage to act before additional harm occurs. It leads us not merely to optimise systems, but also to protect human dignity. Far from being a constraint on technological progress, compassion is the backbone for responsible innovation. Compassionate AI differs from every other framework because it begins not with technology, but with humanity. Before asking what a system can do, Compassionate AI asks whom the system serves. Before pursuing greater efficiency, it considers the human consequences. Before celebrating innovation, it asks who might be left behind.

This single shift changes everything. Many of today’s AI failures—bias, discrimination, exclusion, misinformation, environmental damage, threats to children’s well-being—are often described as unfortunate side effects of progress. But they are not mere side effects. They are evidence that someone was absent, overlooked, or ignored when these systems were conceived. Human rights cannot be the paint applied after the building is complete. They must be a load-bearing pillar of the entire structure. We trust that a bridge has been made safe before anyone crosses it, because safety is essential to its purpose. Obviously, AI should be held to the same standard.

Ethics can tell us what is right, and laws can establish boundaries; but neither, by itself, will change the mindset of those who are imagining and designing technologies that will influence billions of lives. That requires something deeper, namely compassion

Compassion cannot be retrofitted after deployment. It must shape the system’s design.

Changing the technology’s trajectory is an urgent priority. Children growing up today may spend more time interacting with intelligent machines than with parents, teachers, or neighbours. We already understand some of the negative psychological consequences of social media, which is powered by relatively simple forms of AI. The effects of far more capable systems on children’s emotional development, relationships, imagination, and mental well-being remain largely unknown, but they could be profound.

Rather than dwelling primarily on how AI could transform the economy, we should be asking what will happen if algorithms replace the uniquely human capacity to feel another person’s pain. To be sure, AI could become one of humanity’s greatest allies. It could help eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking, detect child abuse, expand access to high-quality education in every child’s own language, improve health care in underserved communities, predict humanitarian crises, and accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

But AI will not choose that future. We will. The principles we enshrine today will form the foundations for the increasingly powerful systems that we are building. Once those foundations harden into standards, institutions, and business models, they will shape humanity’s relationship with intelligent machines for generations.

We cannot afford to wait until harms become irreversible. Legislation has often followed suffering; but with AI, we no longer have the luxury of a wait-and-see approach. The age of intelligence demands wisdom. History will not judge us by how intelligent our machines became. It will judge us by whether we had the foresight and courage to ensure that intelligence remained in the service of humanity.

© Project Syndicate 1995–2026

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Inter Milan’s Alessandro Bastoni lifts the Asahi Super Dry Trophy to celebrate with team-mates. — Reuters

MARESCA LOSES FIRST MAN CITY MATCH ON PENALTIES

HONG KONG: Enzo Maresca’s first game as Manchester City manager ended in defeat on penalties after drawing 1-1 with Inter Milan in a friendly in Hong Kong on Saturday.

Matteo Lavelli netted the decisive spot-kick for a 3-1 shootout win for the Italian champions as Maresca led out City for the first time since taking over from legendary Pep Guardiola in June.

An open first half saw City take the lead in the 14th minute when Antoine Semenyo jinked towards the byline and crossed for youngster Divin Mubama to tuck in from a few yards out.

Semenyo was a constant menace and almost scored a wonderful solo goal soon afterwards when he weaved through several Inter defenders but could not squeeze the ball past goalkeeper Josep Martinez. Within minutes the Italian champions equalised when City failed to clear a Jamal Idrissou cross and the ball fell for Benjamin Pavard to slot home from near the penalty spot.

Both sides missed golden chances soon after the restart but the game began to drift as the substitutions piled up.

City’s Vitor Reis sliced a shot against the crossbar while young winger Ryan McAidoo hit the post as the Manchester club pushed for a late winner that never came.

Maresca took over in June and faces a tough task to succeed Guardiola, who won 20 trophies in a glorious decade at City.

Many clubs have struggled after the exit of serial title-winning managers, with local rivals Manchester United notably falling from the pinnacle of the English game after Alex Ferguson retired in 2013. — AFP



Manchester City’s Savinho in action with Inter Milan’s Carlos Augusto. — Reuters

Omani fighters sweep FFC 6.0 in Muscat

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

OMANI FIGHTERS produced a clean sweep as FFC 6.0 FITBOX Fighting Championship concluded successfully at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Friday night.

The sixth edition attracted a strong crowd and featured 15 professional bouts, including 14 mixed martial arts contests and one Muay Thai fight, bringing together local and international fighters from around 15 countries.

The championship was organised by Kerdi Trading SPC under the supervision of Ali Bilal Kerdi, owner of the company and chairman of the organising committee. The event was presented by Sohar International, with Muscat Steel among its main partners.

Oman enjoyed an impressive night inside the cage, with all five home fighters Abdulmajeed, Nawaf, Musab, Mahmood and Aymen emerging victorious against international opposition.

Abdulmajeed defeated Iran’s Aref Ali in the heavyweight contest, while Nawaf overcame Iranian opponent Pejman in the super middleweight division.

Nawaf received further recognition after being named the best Omani fighter of FFC 6.0, earning a car presented by Mohsin Haider Darwish

Musab secured victory against Egypt’s Mohammed at welterweight, and Mahmood prevailed over Iran’s Sobhan in the super heavyweight bout.

Aymen completed the successful Omani showing by defeating Pakistan’s Mustafa in the evening’s Muay Thai contest. The five victories underlined the growing technical standard of local combat sports athletes and their ability to compete against fighters from different international schools.

In the headline middleweight contest, Russia’s



Winners celebrate after an exciting night of professional combat sports in Muscat.



Nawaf al Balushi during the face off on Thursday

Yaaqoub defeated Iran’s Amir Ardalet to cap a competitive programme featuring representatives from Team Khabib and Team Khamzat.

Russian fighter Sharapudin claimed victory over Britain’s Sia in the super middleweight division, while Uzbekistan’s Almardon defeated Iraq’s Khamza at welterweight.

Iraq’s Omer emerged victorious against Russia’s Bagoma in a lightweight contest, while Norway’s Seyamand overcame Brazilian fighter Victor in another

lightweight encounter.

The remaining bouts saw Iraq’s Saad defeat Lebanon’s Talal at welterweight, Uzbekistan’s Islam prevail against Iran’s Hesam at lightweight and Iran’s Shadmehar overcome Egypt’s Amro in a welterweight contest.

Tunisia’s Mohamed defeated Ahmed of Spain in the bantamweight division, while Lebanon’s Jawad secured victory over Palestine’s Mohamed in the catchweight bout, completing the list of

15 winners announced by the organisers.

The championship also attracted leading figures from the international combat sports community, including UFC veteran Jack Hermansson, who attended the event in Muscat.

Ali Bilal Kerdi said the success of the sixth edition reflected the championship’s continued technical and organisational development.

“FFC 6.0 delivered a highly competitive international fight card, a strong turnout from the public and an outstanding night for the Omani fighters,” Kerdi said.

“FFC 6.0 delivered a highly competitive international fight card, a strong public turnout and an outstanding evening for the Omani fighters. Seeing all five local competitors secure victories against international opponents reflects the progress of combat sports in Oman,” Kerdi said.

He expressed his appreciation to HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said, highlighting his major role and valuable support in ensuring the success of the event.

Kerdi also thanked Sohar International, Muscat Steel, Mohsin Haider Darwish, voco Muscat Al Mouj, FitBox, the Oman Automobile Association, government bodies, official partners, participating teams and spectators for their contributions.

Kerdi also thanked his partner Mohammed Abdulraouf for his contribution to the development of FFC in Oman.

“The strong public response encourages us to continue developing FFC as an international platform that attracts leading fighters while creating genuine opportunities for Omani talent,” he added.

The successful staging of FFC 6.0 strengthened the championship’s position on Oman’s combat sports calendar and highlighted Oman’s growing ability to host major international martial arts events.

Oman U20 end Asian qualifier training camp with 2-1 defeat to Al Shabab

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

OMAN'S NATIONAL under-20 football team concluded their latest domestic training camp with a 2-1 friendly defeat against Al Shabab Club as preparations continue for the AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifiers in Doha.

The match provided another opportunity for head coach Hamad al Azzani and his technical staff to assess the players’ technical and physical readiness, provide them with further competitive minutes and test different tactical approaches before the final stages of the team’s preparations.

The Al Shabab encounter was

Oman’s latest friendly against a local club, following a 2-1 defeat to Bahla Club. The young national team also played two international friendlies against Bahrain during the latter’s training camp in Muscat, with both matches ending in 1-1 draws.

Oman will now move into the next phase of their preparations with another domestic camp in Al Buraimi from August 6 to 17. The programme will include two friendly matches against Syria on August 13 and 16.

The two matches are expected to provide a strong test for the players and allow the coaching staff to evaluate their ability to implement the tactical and technical work carried out during training.

The technical staff will also look



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

to improve coordination between the different departments of the team, address the shortcomings identified in recent matches and raise the overall level of readiness before finalising the squad for the continental qualifiers.

Oman U20 have completed seven training camps since beginning their preparation programme in April. During that period, the coaching staff assessed nearly 80 players from different domestic clubs before settling on the current squad.

Across their previous six camps, Oman played six international friendly matches against Egypt, Iraq and Bahrain, in addition to several warm-up matches against local clubs.

The current 26-player squad comprises Ibrahim al Tamimi,

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

The remaining players are Ahmed al Fahdi, Abdulmunim al Habsi, Khalil Arafah, Ziyad al Faraji, Abdullah al Oraimi, Akram Ramadhan, Mohammed al Sameen, Muzn al Hinai, Abdulaziz al Manwari, Fahad al Mashaikhi, Sulaiman al Kharousi, Ahmed al Rawahi and Hassan al Hinai.

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

ADIL AL
BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

Oman's table tennis umpires are continuing to establish themselves among the sport's most respected officiating officials with an increasing presence at the world's most prestigious International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) events. Their consistent appointments to elite global championships reflect the remarkable progress of the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) in developing internationally accredited officials and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's reputation in world table tennis.

In recent years, Omani international referees have been selected to officiate at several of the sport's flagship events, including the 2026 ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London, the 2025 ITTF World Team Championships in South Korea, the 2026 ITTF World Masters Table Tennis Championships in Gangneung, South Korea, and the 2023 ITTF World Youth Championships in Tunisia, in addition to numerous events on the World Table Tennis (WTT) calendar across Asia and Europe. The growing international recognition highlights the confidence placed by both TT bodies including the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU) and the International Table Tennis Federation in Omani officials, whose technical standards continue to rise through continuous education, international exposure and consistent performances at major championships.

BLUE BADGE PATHWAY

The head of the OTTA umpiring committee, Mohammed bin Humaid al Jassasi, described the current period as one of the most successful eras for Omani table tennis officiating. "Omani umpiring has witnessed significant progress over the past few years, both in terms of the number of qualified officials and the quality of their international appointments," Al Jassasi said.

"We are proud to have four umpires progressing through the Blue Badge pathway. Mohammed al Alawi and Aisha al Saidi have officially earned the prestigious ITTF Blue Badge, while Ibrahim al Jassasi and Khalid al Alawi are completing the remaining evaluations required to obtain the same certification." He added. The referring head affirmed that

another important milestone was achieved recently when international umpire Mohammed al Alawi successfully passed the ITTF Advanced Umpire Examination during the Asian Youth Championships in Thailand. "This achievement qualifies him to begin the pathway towards the ITTF Gold Badge and also enables him to enrol in the International Referee programme, representing another major step forward for Omani officiating."

Al Jassasi revealed that Oman currently has 28 ITTF international umpires holding the White Badge while around 10 first-class national umpires form the foundation for producing future international officials.

RISING INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

The Chairman highlighted the remarkable increase in overseas appointments. "Omani umpires officiated in approximately 25 international championships during 2025, while by the middle of 2026 they had already participated in 20 international events. Overall, our officials have accumulated more than 50 international assignments in recent years."

"We expect these figures to continue rising as the technical standards of our umpires improve and the confidence of both the Asian and International federations in Omani officials continues to grow."

He explained that the committee is preparing another group of first-class umpires to sit the upcoming ITTF International Umpire Examination scheduled for November, while continuing to organise introductory courses, specialised workshops and practical training programmes to keep pace with the latest developments in the Laws of Table Tennis.

Among the committee's future initiatives are annual technical and physical development plans, regular seminars on law updates, practical performance evaluations during domestic tournaments, simulated match situations, international expert workshops and continued support for outstanding officials to gain overseas experience before progressing to the Blue and Gold Badge levels.

LEARNING FROM THE WORLD'S BEST

International Blue Badge umpire Mohammed al Alawi said officiating at major international competitions provides invaluable experience. "International tournaments are essential for every umpire because they offer the opportunity to work alongside the world's best officials and gain practical experience that cannot be obtained from domestic competitions alone," he said.

"They also expose us to the latest interpretations of the laws, different styles of match management and high-pressure situations, all of which contribute significantly to our technical development."

Al Alawi noted that while the Laws of Table Tennis remain identical worldwide, each region presents unique challenges. "Asian tournaments are characterised by exceptional technical standards and tremendous speed, demanding maximum concentration and accurate decision-making, while

European competitions are renowned for their professionalism and organisational excellence."

Having recently passed the ITTF Advanced Umpire Examination, Al Alawi described the achievement as the reward for years of dedication. "It opens the door towards achieving the Gold Badge and qualifying as an International Referee. That motivates me even more to continue improving and representing Oman at the highest international level."

BUILDING FUTURE GENERATIONS

International umpire Ibrahim al Jassasi stressed that overseas appointments play a decisive role in building the confidence and experience required to manage elite competitions. "International exposure gives Omani officials invaluable experience and greater confidence when handling major tournaments. Gulf competitions differ considerably from Asian and European events, where the technical level, pace and pressure are significantly higher."

He also highlighted the important role played by OTTA in organising educational workshops and supporting officials' development. "Hosting international championships in Oman also helps inspire more young people to become either players or umpires, contributing to the long-term growth of the sport."

INSPIRATION FOR YOUNG OFFICIALS

Blue Badge umpire Aisha al Saidi believes continuous learning is the key to success. "Every international tournament provides different experiences that help an umpire develop technically and professionally. Exposure to different cultures, organisational systems and officiating styles broadens an official's understanding and strengthens decision-making."

She encouraged aspiring officials to remain patient and committed. "Developing international-level umpires begins with identifying talented young people, providing continuous education, allowing them to officiate regularly and supporting them until they achieve international certification. With proper guidance and opportunities, Oman has every capability to produce more officials capable of excelling on the world stage." She ended.

Mohammed
al Alawi



Mohammed
al Jassasi



Aisha
al Saidi



Ibrahim
al Jassasi



OTTA
UMPIRES
STRENGTHEN
OMAN'S

GROWING
REPUTATION
ON THE
WORLD STAGE



FIFA

SCRAPS PRIVATE INVESTMENT PLAN AFTER BACKLASH

FIFA PRESIDENT GIANNI Infantino said on Saturday he had scrapped a plan to allow private investment in the World Cup following fierce backlash from football officials worldwide.

“Our purpose has always been and will always be to unite and improve,” Infantino said in a statement.

“As a result, this proposal will not proceed.”

Fifa, world football’s governing body, had floated the plan on Tuesday, saying it could raise up to \$4.2 billion based on a valuation of \$20 billion for a new Fifa Forward Enterprise (FFE), a commercial subsidiary it proposed to run events such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

It said that, if approved, the project could provide each of Fifa’s 211 member associations with a one-off payment of \$20 million in early 2027 and increase their funding allocation for the 2027-2030 cycle from \$8 million to \$20 million.

But the idea of allowing private investors even a small stake in the FFE was quickly condemned.

European football’s governing body UEFA said none of its national teams would participate in any Fifa competition “for so long as these proposals remain alive”.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and North American and Caribbean federation (CONCACAF) also condemned the move.

“The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product,” UEFA said in a statement. “No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale.”

Pressure mounted on Infantino on Friday with

the resignation of senior advisor Carlos Cordeiro, who called the idea “a bad deal for Fifa’s member associations, a bad deal for football, and a bad deal for the long-term future of the game”.

South American confederation CONMEBOL, whose president Alejandro Dominguez is regarded as a close ally of Infantino, demanded further information on the “scope, structure, governance and potential effects” of the project.

In the late night statement announcing the plan was dead, Infantino said the project was conceived as a means of strengthening member associations, and that it would only have gone ahead if a majority supported it.

“Having listened carefully to all the views, it has become clear that the project has created divisions of a nature that, regardless of the level of support, are no longer in the interest of the objective set out in the first place,” he said.

In expressing solidarity with UEFA and CONCACAF, the Kuala Lumpur-based AFC which represents 47 member nations had raised alarms at the idea of a World Cup boycott.

“The fact that the situation has reached the point where the real possibility of a Fifa World Cup boycott has entered public discourse should concern everyone who cares about the future of our game,” the AFC said.

“The wrong man”

Fifa had tried to fend off the critics, saying in a statement early on Friday morning that it would continue consultations with member associations and insisting that “nobody is selling football”. — AFP

FIFA SCRAP PROPOSAL TO SELL A STAKE IN THE WORLD CUP

ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION CHIEF URGES TIMELY TRANSPARENT CONSULTATION ON INITIATIVES AFFECTING GLOBAL FOOTBALL

BACKLASH DENTS INFANTINO’S 2027 RE-ELECTION PROSPECTS, EXPERTS TELL REUTERS

The Kia Tasman

Explore Khareef with Kia’s pick-up



Movement that inspires





X-Trek & Rock Mode



Ground View Monitor



3,500 Kg Trailer Capacity

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

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

Reliable International Automotive LLC. C.R. No. 1707183, Wattayah, Al Mawaleh, Barka, Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sohar, Sur, Suwaiq, Rustaq, Salalah. Contact us at 24579800.

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



Total production reached 198.01 million barrels.

OMAN OIL OUTPUT RISES 10.6 PER CENT

MUSCAT: Oman’s total oil production rose 10.6 per cent in the first six months of 2026, while crude prices and exports also increased, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Total production reached 198.01 million barrels by the end of June, compared with 179.05 million barrels during the same period last year.

Average daily production climbed to 1.094 million barrels per day from 989,200 barrels a year earlier.

The average price of Omani crude increased 9.4 per cent to \$80.90 a barrel from \$74.00 during the first half of 2025.

Exports rose 2.4 per cent to 155.22 million barrels, compared with 151.60 million barrels in the corresponding period last year.

The increase reflects stronger production levels alongside firmer international oil prices during the first half of the year, providing continued support for Oman’s hydrocarbon revenues. — ONA

OMAN GAS OUTPUT REACHES 29.54 BCM

MUSCAT: Oman’s natural gas production, including domestic output and imports, increased 6.7 per cent in the first half of 2026 to 29.54 billion cubic metres (BCM), driven by higher production of non-associated gas and stronger demand from industry and power generation.

NCSI data showed associated gas production rose 5.6 per cent to 6.60 billion cubic metres, while non-associated gas, including imports, increased 7.0 per cent to 22.94 billion cubic metres.

Industrial projects remained the largest consumers of natural gas, with usage rising 7.5 per cent to 14.86 billion cubic metres.

Gas consumption by electricity generation plants increased 13.7 per cent to 8.28 billion cubic metres. — ONA

Oman awards **ﷵ**734m development projects

THE Sultanate of Oman awarded 74 government contracts worth a combined RO 734.00 million during the first seven months of 2026, led by major healthcare and transport projects, while issuing a further 60 tenders valued at an estimated RO 365.00 million as it accelerated infrastructure spending under Oman Vision 2040.

The Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority said the awarded contracts and new tenders covered strategic sectors including healthcare, roads, flood protection and digital infrastructure aimed at improving public services and supporting long-term economic development.

The largest contract awarded during the period was for the supply of pharmaceuticals, vaccines and serums, worth more than RO 200.00 million, to strengthen medicine security and ensure the continuity of healthcare services.

Another major award was the RO 157.00 million expansion of the Muscat Expressway, a project intended to increase road capacity, improve traffic flow and accommodate the capital’s continuing urban and economic growth.

Other road projects awarded included Phase One of the Rub Al Khali dual carriageway in Al Dhahirah Governorate for RO 8.30 million, completion of Package Three of the Al Batinah Expressway at RO 21.70 million and construction of the Ibra (Al Yahmadi-Al Qafisi) dual carriageway for RO 29.10 million.

Outside the transport sector, contracts were awarded for the RO 36.80 million Mahout fishing port in Al Wusta Governorate, the Sur Cultural and Youth Centre valued at more than RO 3.50 million and the Oman Genome Centre and Biobank in Muscat Governorate at



Another major award was the RO 157.00 million expansion of the Muscat Expressway.

The Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority said the awarded contracts and new tenders covered strategic sectors including healthcare, roads, flood protection and digital infrastructure aimed at improving public services and supporting long-term economic development.

RO 4.20 million.

The authority also awarded several framework agreements covering legal consultancy services worth RO 50.00 million, the supply of light vehicles, electric vehicles, trucks and heavy equipment to government entities; and the automation and governance of official travel bookings for public-sector employees.

During the same period, the authority floated 60 new tenders with an estimated value of RO 365.00 million.

A significant portion of the tenders focused on flood mitigation projects following recurring extreme weather events.

These included flood protection systems for Al Duraiz in the Wilayat of Ibri, Samad Al Shaan in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate and Sadah in Dhofar Governorate, together with flood protection dams at Wadi Al Rajma in Liwa, Al Batinah North Governorate and Wadi Al Khoudh in Muscat Governorate.

Healthcare procurement also

featured prominently, with tenders issued for laboratory chemicals, reagents, medical consumables and equipment for the 2027-2029 period, catering services for Ministry of Health hospitals and dialysis units; and the management, hosting and support of the ministry’s electronic health portal.

In the transport sector, new tenders covered the dualisation of the Al Kamil W’al Wafi-Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan-Jaalan Bani Bu Ali road, construction of the Jabal Al Abyad road in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate & Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, the road linking Wakan village in Wadi Mistal, Wilayat of Nakhal; and a coastal road connecting Rakhyout and Dhalkout in Dhofar Governorate.

The authority said the projects form part of the government’s broader investment programme to improve transport connectivity, strengthen resilience against climate-related risks, enhance healthcare services and support economic growth across the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Ibri Industrial City draws **ﷵ**25 million in investment

MUSCAT: Ibri Industrial City attracted investments worth RO 25.00 million by the end of the first half of 2026, as Oman continued to expand industrial activity in Al Dhahirah Governorate and promote manufacturing, food production and logistics under its economic diversification strategy.

The Madayn-operated industrial city has signed 17 investment agreements covering more than 250,000 square metres, with projects spanning the oil and gas, food processing, manufacturing and light industrial sectors.

Salah bin Nasser al Alawi, Director-General of Ibri Industrial City, said the estate continued to strengthen its investment environment by working with government agencies to attract projects that support the governorate’s economic development and create new business opportunities.

As part of those efforts, Madayn has launched 11 investment opportunities in food manufacturing and organic fertiliser production through the Tharawat platform in cooperation with the Directorate General of Agriculture and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

The opportunities have also been promoted through the Tatweer platform in collaboration with the Directorate General of Housing and Urban Planning, broadening



Madayn has launched 11 investment opportunities in food manufacturing and organic fertiliser production through the Tharawat platform in cooperation with the Directorate General of Agriculture and Water Resources.

their exposure to domestic and international investors.

Al Alawi said the initiatives are intended to encourage value-added industries, increase investment in agriculture-related manufacturing, create employment opportunities and contribute to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Madayn is also preparing a series of infrastructure projects for the industrial city under the 11th Five-Year Development Plan

covering the 2026-2030 period.

The programme includes the construction of a security perimeter, an administration building, a Madayn Entrepreneurial Complex in partnership with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, protection works for service facilities and the expansion of green spaces throughout the estate.

Ibri Industrial City occupies a total area of 10 million square metres, of which more



SALAH BIN NASSER AL ALAWI
Director-General, Ibri Industrial City

than 2.60 million square metres have already been developed.

Its location in Al Dhahirah Governorate places it close to border crossings with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, providing manufacturers and logistics companies with access to regional

markets.

The governorate is also home to significant deposits of marble and chromite, giving the industrial city a competitive advantage for mineral processing and downstream manufacturing, while supporting investment in commercial and service activities linked to the industrial sector.

Madayn has been expanding its network of industrial cities across Oman to attract private investment, strengthen local manufacturing, support small and medium-sized enterprises and increase the contribution of non-oil sectors to the national economy as the Sultanate of Oman advances its long-term diversification agenda.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES

Be one of
5,330
winners
this summer



Valid till 31 August, 2026. Terms & Conditions apply.

The offer covers all successful international transactions made through POS terminals and e-commerce platforms.

Over 5,000 winners to receive 5% cashback on Bank Muscat Visa credit cards

MUSCAT: In line with its ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional value to its customers especially during travel and shopping seasons, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of a special offer for Visa credit cardholders, giving over 5,000 customers the chance to receive 5% cashback on their international spends made from July 1 through to August 31, 2026.

The offer covers all successful international transactions made through POS terminals and e-commerce platforms, with customers receiving 5% cashback on their eligible international spend once they reach the minimum spend threshold assigned to their card type: Asalah Signature Visa Credit Card, Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Card and Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders are required to spend a minimum of RO 750 internationally to receive cashback of up to RO 60.

Bank Muscat Visa Classic Credit Card and Visa Gold Credit Cardholders can receive cashback of up to RO 20 on a minimum spend of RO 250, while holders of the Private Banking Visa Infinite Credit Card and Bank Muscat Visa Infinite Credit Card can receive cashback of up to RO 300 on a minimum international spend of RO 4,000.

The current offer applies exclusively to successful international transactions made through POS terminals and e-commerce platforms and does not extend to local transactions, cash withdrawals, reversed transactions, fees and interest charges, government payments, or cryptocurrency transactions.

Bank Muscat has launched this exclusive offer to enable customers to enjoy a premium experience with its comprehensive suite of credit cards that offer a wide range of travel and shopping privileges, including the opportunity to earn and redeem reward points on flight and hotel bookings, shopping and e-vouchers through the Bank Muscat Rewards program that is accessible via the Mobile Banking app.

Customers can apply for Bank Muscat credit cards through Mobile Banking or at their nearest branch, with the card delivered free of charge via courier service.

For more information about the offer, customers may visit the Bank's website at <https://www.bankmuscat.om/en/bm-cards/Pages/offers.aspx>.

Customers can also contact the Bank Muscat Contact Centre on 24795555, reach the same number via WhatsApp, or connect through the Bank's official social media accounts on X and Facebook.

NBO ENHANCES
CUSTOMER
CONVENIENCE
WITH INSTANT
MAAL
DEBIT CARD
COLLECTION

MUSCAT: To further enhance the customer experience, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) now enables customers to instantly collect their Maal debit card through self-service kiosks and selected instant branches. Customers can now conveniently collect their Maal debit card from NBO self-service kiosks in just a few simple steps, eliminating the need to wait for card delivery.

Alternatively, they can instantly print and collect their card at selected NBO instant branches, with plans to expand the service to additional locations across the Sultanate of Oman.



Linked directly to customers' accounts, the NBO Maal debit card enables secure in-store and online payments, cash withdrawals and everyday purchases within the Sultanate of Oman, while providing access to exclusive offers and NBO reward points.

To mark the launch of the new collection service, NBO is also rewarding customers who use their Maal debit card. Customers who spend RO 10 or more using their card will receive 500 NBO reward points on their first purchase or payment transaction during August.

The Kia EV9 flagship SUV: Electric freedom, refined

MARKING a futuristic milestone in the Sultanate of Oman's automotive landscape, the all-electric Kia EV9 flagship SUV is officially transforming how families and enthusiasts approach sustainable luxury.

Built upon Kia's advanced Electric Global Modular Platform (E-GMP), this ground breaking series delivers an exceptional electric driving experience that blends zero-emission freedom with ultra-fast charging capabilities, making long cross-country trips and daily urban commutes easier than ever.

The EV9 showcases a distinctive, bold appearance that transcends aesthetics, providing large families of up to seven members with the absolute liberty to do more while ensuring minimal environmental impact.

Crafted with a pioneering approach to sustainability, the EV9 seamlessly merges eco-conscious engineering with first-class luxury and performance.

The expansive cabin features premium vegan leather and recycled PET materials, reflecting an uncompromised commitment to the environment. The interior is designed to make every journey feel like a



The EV9 showcases a distinctive, bold appearance that transcends aesthetics.

surreal experience, offering smart space optimisation such as extra storage in the front trunk, ventilated relaxation seats paired with second-row comfort seating and a high-end Meridian premium sound system that delivers rich, clear acoustics to instantly uplift the cabin's mood.

Connectivity and convenience are deeply woven into every aspect of the EV9 experience, keeping all seven occupants perfectly synchronised on the move.

The high-tech layout features seamless smartphone integration via Apple Car Play and Android Auto, supported by an advanced Bluetooth voice recognition system.

To keep everyone's devices powered effortlessly throughout the journey, the front centre console houses a dedicated wireless charging tray, while third-row passengers enjoy their own integrated cup holder tray equipped with dedicated USB ports.

National Finance helps businesses maximise growth

MUSCAT: In line with its promise of being a 'Partner for Growth', National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance and leasing company, continues to empower businesses to strengthen their financial resilience through its high-yield Corporate Fixed Deposits offering.

Designed to help organisations optimise surplus capital, the solution enables corporates to earn competitive returns while maintaining financial stability, providing a secure, flexible and rewarding investment avenue that supports long-term business growth.

Offering investment tenures ranging from 3 to 60 months and a minimum investment threshold of RO 5,000, National Finance's Corporate Fixed Deposits provide businesses



with the flexibility to align their investment horizons with evolving financial objectives.

Organisations can further tailor their investment strategy by selecting from a range of interest payout frequencies, including monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, or at maturity, enabling them to optimise cash flow management while

benefitting from secure, predictable returns.

Commenting on the offering, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, said, "Effective capital management is essential for businesses seeking sustainable growth in an increasingly dynamic market.

Our Corporate Fixed Deposits are designed to address these evolving needs by offering a flexible investment solution that enables businesses to maximise the value of surplus funds without compromising liquidity planning. As a trusted financial partner, we remain committed to delivering solutions that strengthen our corporate customers' financial position, enhance capital efficiency and support their long-term growth ambitions".

Mitsubishi Motors Oman launches summer service campaign

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (a part of The Zubair Corporation), the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, has announced the launch of its Summer Service Campaign, aimed at helping customers prepare their vehicles for the demanding summer months while ensuring maximum comfort, safety and reliability on the road.

Running from June 15 to August 15, 2026, the campaign offers Mitsubishi owners a comprehensive summer vehicle inspection along with exclusive service benefits designed to keep their vehicles performing at their best despite extreme temperatures.



The campaign offers Mitsubishi owners a comprehensive summer vehicle inspection.

As part of the campaign, customers can avail a free check-up covering critical vehicle systems, including the air conditioning system, cooling system, tyres and belts.

In addition, customers will receive a 20% discount on labour and a 50% discount on genuine Mitsubishi parts for repairs identified during the inspection. The initiative reflects Mitsubishi Motors Oman's commitment to delivering exceptional aftersales support and ensuring customers enjoy worry-free driving throughout the summer season.

By proactively inspecting key vehicle components that are most

affected by high temperatures, the campaign helps enhance vehicle performance, improve reliability and reduce the risk of unexpected breakdowns.

Commenting on the campaign, Manoj Ranade, General Manager of General Automotive Company, said: "Oman's summer can place significant stress on a vehicle's cooling, air conditioning and mechanical systems.

Through our Summer Service Campaign, we aim to provide our customers with expert preventive care, ensuring their vehicles remain comfortable, dependable, and ready for every journey throughout the season".

SHORTTAKES



An economic impact study commissioned by the project showed Al Mouj has generated more than RO 1.00 billion in revenue.

AL MOUJ ATTRACTS
≈880 MILLION IN FDI

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat has attracted RO 880.00 million in foreign direct investment since its launch two decades ago, reinforcing its position as one of Oman’s largest integrated tourism and real estate developments.

An economic impact study commissioned by the project showed Al Mouj has generated more than RO 1.00 billion in revenue and contributed RO 878.00 million to Oman’s gross domestic product.

Acting Chief Executive Officer Ahmed bin Abdullah al Massan said the development had become a key contributor to economic diversification, tourism and private-sector growth.

He said Al Mouj has supported 167 small and medium-sized enterprises, with local content valued at RO 560.00 million, equivalent to 43.6 per cent of project spending.

The integrated waterfront development includes five international hotels, among them Kempinski Muscat, The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort and voco Muscat Al Mouj, while the Okura Al Mouj Muscat Resort is scheduled to open in 2027 as Oman’s first Japanese-branded resort.

Al Mouj Golf has hosted 11 international tournaments, while the marina provides 400 berths and supports 31 tourism-related SMEs.

According to Al Massan, the project has delivered returns of 337 per cent for shareholders through a diversified portfolio spanning residential property, hospitality, retail, marina and leisure assets.

The community comprises residents and investors from more than 90 nationalities. So far, 3,272 residential units have been completed, housing over 8,000 residents, with the population expected to reach about 19,000 upon completion of the master plan. The project has created 2,200 direct jobs and 5,738 indirect jobs, invested about RO 1.00 million in training and skills development; and spent more than RO 6.30 million on community initiatives. — ONA

Oman Cement advances
alternative fuels strategy

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

OMAN Cement is stepping up efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and production costs by expanding the use of alternative fuels and raw materials, as the Sultanate of Oman’s leading cement producer accelerates its transition towards more sustainable manufacturing practices.

In its Board of Directors’ report for the first half of 2026, the publicly listed company said it is strengthening the sourcing and utilisation of alternative fuels and raw materials to improve its Thermal Substitution Rate (TSR) — the proportion of thermal energy in its cement kilns derived from non-fossil fuel sources

The Misfah-based manufacturer is evaluating a basket of alternative energy and feedstock options, including tyre-derived fuel (TDF), recovered carbon black and oil sludge, with the aim of reducing dependence on conventional fossil fuels, lowering raw material costs and supporting its broader decarbonisation objectives.

Tyre-derived fuel, produced from shredded end-of-life tyres, offers a calorific value comparable to coal, enabling cement kilns to substitute a portion of their traditional fuel requirements while diverting waste tyres from landfills.

Recovered carbon black, typically obtained through the recycling or pyrolysis of waste tyres, can serve as both an alternative fuel and, in certain



The publicly traded company is evaluating a basket of alternative energy and feedstock options.

applications, a supplementary raw material, supporting greater resource efficiency.

Oil sludge, a by-product of oil production, refining and storage operations, is also being considered as an alternative kiln fuel.

After appropriate treatment, its recoverable hydrocarbon content can be utilised to replace part of the fossil fuels consumed during clinker production while providing an environmentally sound disposal route for the waste.

In parallel, Oman Cement said it continues to work with government authorities and other stakeholders to advance the pre-treatment and co-processing of municipal solid waste (MSW) as an alternative fuel source.

Once processed into refuse-derived fuel (RDF) or

solid recovered fuel (SRF), the combustible fraction of municipal waste can substitute coal or petroleum coke in cement kilns, reducing landfill volumes while promoting a circular economy.

Collectively, these initiatives are expected to increase the company’s Thermal Substitution Rate, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and enhancing the long-term sustainability of cement production.

Beyond decarbonisation, Oman Cement is pursuing several strategic growth initiatives. Chairman Xu Gang said the company is progressing plans to establish an aggregates business by utilising surplus crushing capacity.

The project is expected to diversify revenue streams through supplies to industrial

customers while creating a platform for future expansion into ready-mix concrete and mortar production.

Meanwhile, a proposal remains under consideration to establish a new cement plant in Al Duqm with a clinker production capacity of 5,000 tonnes per day, reflecting the company’s long-term growth ambitions.

The strategic initiatives coincide with a strong financial performance during the first half of 2026. Cement sales rose 7.9% year-on-year to 1.761 million tonnes, while revenue increased 14.9 per cent to RO 38.06 million, driven by higher sales volumes and improved average selling prices.

Net profit climbed 41 per cent to RO 6.70 million, up from RO 4.75 million in the corresponding period of 2025.

PDO expands contractor pool with L&T framework deal

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has expanded its long-term engineering and construction contractor pool after India’s Larsen & Toubro (L&T) signed a six-year framework agreement covering future front-end engineering design (FEED) and engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) opportunities.

The agreement places L&T Energy Hydrocarbon Onshore among four international contractors pre-qualified to compete for upcoming PDO projects. Individual contracts will be awarded separately as projects move into execution.

L&T did not disclose the financial value of the framework, the number of projects expected to be tendered



The agreement covers future FEED, EPC opportunities across PDO’s upstream portfolio.

or the value of future work packages.

The company said the agreement covers future FEED and EPC opportunities across PDO’s upstream oil and gas portfolio, supporting the

company’s future project delivery requirements.

The framework itself does not constitute the award of a specific project but establishes a long-term

procurement arrangement under which selected contractors will compete for individual engineering and construction packages.

L&T said it would support PDO’s In-Country Value (ICV) programme by creating opportunities for Omani suppliers, subcontractors and service providers while contributing to local capability development.

No specific targets for local procurement, Omanisation or subcontracting were disclosed.

“This Framework Agreement marks an important milestone in our long-standing association with Petroleum Development Oman”, said E S Sathyanarayanan, Senior Vice-President and Head of L&T Energy Hydrocarbon Onshore.

He said the company would draw on its integrated engineering, procurement and construction

capabilities to support PDO’s future developments while contributing to Oman’s long-term energy objectives. L&T already has an industrial presence in Oman through its modular fabrication facilities at SOHAR Port and Freezone, which manufacture equipment and engineered modules for energy projects serving Oman and regional markets.

The company undertakes projects across the upstream, midstream and downstream energy sectors, including gas processing plants, pipelines, refineries, petrochemical facilities, liquefied natural gas terminals and fertiliser plants.

PDO has not publicly disclosed the overall project pipeline, procurement schedule or total value of work expected to be awarded under the framework agreement.

ENERGY MARKETS

Oil majors warn on fuel prices



Oil giants ExxonMobil and Chevron warned that diesel and refined fuel prices are likely to remain elevated in the second half of the year as the Iran conflict continues to disrupt global energy supplies.

Both companies reported strong second-quarter oil and gas refining profits, citing lower fuel inventories, reduced Chinese exports and refinery outages in Russia. — Reuters

TECH MARKETS

Apple shares tumble on outlook



Global tech leader Apple shares fell nearly 10 per cent after the iPhone maker issued a weaker-than-expected forecast, raising concerns over supply shortages linked to booming artificial intelligence demand.

The decline could erase almost \$500 billion in market value and return Nvidia, another tech giant, to the position of the world’s most valuable listed company. — Reuters

CURRENCY BOOST

US backs Japan in yen intervention



The US Treasury reportedly intervened in currency markets on Friday by buying Japanese yen to support the currency.

The reported move came as the yen hovered near 40-year lows against the dollar. The intervention boosted the Japanese currency, while reports said both countries could announce further measures to stabilise markets as early as next week. — Reuters

OPAL: Driving the success of Oman’s local content scheme



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

LOCAL content has become one of Oman's most important tools for translating investment into measurable national value. More than a procurement requirement, it is a strategic approach to strengthening national capabilities, supporting economic diversification and advancing the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

At the centre of this effort is the Local Content (LC) Certification Scheme, a national framework that measures, verifies and certifies the economic contribution of companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

The scheme provides a transparent and standardised method for assessing local value creation across industries.

STRONG GOVERNANCE AND INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION

The credibility of the certification scheme is built on a clear governance model that combines policy leadership with independent assurance.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM), working with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, provides strategic oversight and policy direction through a steering committee that ensures alignment with national priorities.

The Oman Energy Association (OPAL) serves as the operational manager of the scheme. It oversees implementation,

coordinates with participating companies, validates submissions and issues the official local content scorecard certificates.

To maintain transparency and confidence, OPAL appoints Financial Services Authority (FSA)-approved auditing firms as independent local content verifiers.

These firms examine company submissions against audited financial statements before certification is granted.

OPAL: THE ENGINE BEHIND THE CERTIFICATION SCHEME

OPAL’s contribution extends far beyond managing the certification process. As the energy sector’s leading industry association, it acts as the link between government regulators, operators, contractors, suppliers and independent verification firms, ensuring that the local content certification scheme is implemented consistently across the industry.

A key responsibility of OPAL is building industry capability. The association organises awareness campaigns, technical workshops and training programmes that help companies understand the certification methodology, improve the quality of local content reporting and prepare for independent verification.

These initiatives strengthen industry confidence while encouraging greater participation in the scheme.

OPAL also supports the development of qualified local verification professionals

OPAL’s contribution extends far beyond managing the certification process. As the energy sector’s leading industry association, it acts as the link between government regulators, operators, contractors, suppliers and independent verification firms, ensuring that the local content certification scheme is implemented consistently across the industry.

and promotes the adoption of international assurance practices, enhancing the credibility of the certification framework.

By working closely with both the public and private sectors, OPAL helps create a culture of transparency, accountability and continuous improvement in local content performance.

Looking ahead, OPAL will play an important role in integrating the certification scheme with the Taqah digital platform. Digitalisation will simplify data submission, automate verification workflows, reduce administrative effort and provide policymakers with reliable, real-time information on the economic contribution of certified companies.

This positions OPAL not only as an administrator of the scheme but also as a strategic partner in strengthening Oman's industrial ecosystem and supporting sustainable economic development.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The certification process follows three simple stages:

1. Companies submit standardised local content data based on audited financial statements.
2. Accredited third-party verifiers conduct an independent review and issue an agreed-upon procedures (AUP) report.
3. OPAL performs a final validation before issuing the official local content scorecard certificate.

Powering the desert: How Oman’s landscapes could become energy assets

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

For generations, Oman’s deserts have been seen as vast and challenging landscapes shaped by extreme temperatures and limited water resources. But as the world moves towards cleaner energy, these same landscapes are gaining a new identity: potential engines of economic growth.

With abundant sunlight, strategic geography, and growing ambitions in renewable energy, Oman is positioning its natural environment as a foundation for a new energy era.

The country’s transition is not simply about replacing one source of power with another; it is about creating new industries, attracting investment and reshaping its role in the global energy market.

Oman’s location gives it one of the key ingredients required for renewable energy development: sunlight.

Large parts of the country experience high levels of solar radiation throughout the year, creating strong potential for large-scale solar power generation.

Beyond solar, Oman also has significant wind resources, particularly in areas such as Dhofar, where seasonal monsoon winds have already demonstrated their potential for renewable energy projects.

These natural advantages allow Oman to explore a diverse renewable energy mix rather than relying on a single source. Solar and wind power can work together to provide cleaner electricity while supporting future industries that require large amounts of energy.

The future of Oman’s deserts may not be defined only by their size, but by what they can enable. Large renewable energy zones could transform remote areas into centres for clean power generation, industrial development and innovation.

Renewable projects can support more than electricity production. They can provide the foundation for industries linked to clean energy, including green hydrogen, manufacturing and export-oriented projects.

By using its available land and renewable resources, Oman has the opportunity to create new economic zones built around the energy transition.

Renewable energy is becoming increasingly important not only for powering homes and businesses, but also for producing new forms of energy for global markets.

Green hydrogen has emerged as one of the most promising areas of opportunity. Produced using renewable electricity, it could allow Oman to become a supplier of cleaner fuels to international markets while supporting domestic industrial growth.

What the barrel leaves behind really matters

EVERY producing field in Oman has an end date. Some are decades away; others are closer.

The question worth asking is not only how much a field yields before that date, but what remains standing afterwards.

Public reporting on the sector remains dominated by flows: barrels per day, cubic metres, export receipts and contributions to state revenue.

These numbers are real, official and routinely reported and they have paid for a great deal of what the country has built. But flows stop. What survives them is capability — the engineers, firms, regulators and institutions that the industry either created or merely rented.

That distinction is not academic. An economy can host 40 years of world-class petroleum operations and be left, at the end, with depleted reservoirs, a workforce trained to operate equipment it cannot design and a supply chain that dissolves when its anchor customer leaves.

It can also be left with firms that win contracts abroad on merit, a regulator whose licensing terms are copied by its neighbours and technical expertise that has become a product in its own right.

The barrels look identical in both cases. The countries do not.

Oman’s policy architecture has grasped part of this challenge. In-country value requirements, Omanisation targets and local supplier programmes reflect an acknowledgement that extraction alone leaves too little behind.

The weakness lies less in their stated purpose than in what the available indicators allow the public to judge.

Oman’s official definition of in-country value extends beyond procurement. It covers expenditure retained in the country that supports business development, human capability and productivity.

Yet public reporting still tends to emphasise local content percentages, procurement allocations, employment ratios and



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer.

Production volumes tell us what the sector earns. Whether it is building companies and expertise capable of standing on their own is a harder question — and one the published indicators do not answer.

the number of facilities established. These are useful indicators, but they do not establish whether a locally based company can survive without the operator or contract on which it depends.

Spending with an Omani-registered firm is not necessarily the same as building an Omani firm capable of competing independently.

A supplier that exists principally to serve one operator, on terms determined by that operator, remains commercially vulnerable, however much expenditure it retains locally. A stronger test is whether it can sell to unaffiliated customers, preferably in other markets.

Employment ratios present a parallel difficulty. Headcount is easy to measure and targets can be met without revealing where in an organisation nationals work, whether they progress into design, strategic planning and commercial leadership, or whether they stay.

A sector can be substantially Omanised at the operational level and still depend heavily on expatriate expertise in specialist and decision-making roles. Retention and progression data would reveal far more than the aggregate percentage, yet they are rarely published.

The hydrogen programme is where this matters most because it is being designed now rather than inherited. Oman is assembling an industry from a blank sheet, supported by land, sun, wind, port capacity and international partners bringing capital and technology.

That is a genuine advantage. It also carries a familiar risk: importing the technology, hosting the plants and counting the jobs while much of the higher-value design capacity, intellectual property and commercial expertise remains elsewhere.

The test is whether the programme’s stated localisation ambitions become measurable project obligations and durable domestic capabilities. The counterargument deserves a

fair hearing. Capability takes time; the fiscal calendar does not. Foreign partners bring speed, finance and proven engineering; and every month spent negotiating additional domestic requirements may allow a competitor to move first. Nor is there merit in refusing capital on principle: Oman is a relatively small economy and cannot manufacture every component required by the energy transition.

All of this is true. None of it argues against making capability an explicit, priced and measurable contractual deliverable rather than a hoped-for side effect. Technology transfer cannot be assumed. Unless it is specified, measured and enforced, there is no basis for treating it as a project deliverable.

What would a better measure look like? Report what is being built, not only what is being spent: training that leads to qualifications with market value, design work performed in Oman and licences held domestically. Publish retention and progression alongside headcount.

Track whether Omani suppliers win unaffiliated work at home or abroad, because that is one of the clearest tests of whether a competitive firm has been created or a captive one subsidised. Treat decommissioning, enhanced recovery and reservoir management as exportable services, since the region will need all three and Oman’s operators have decades of experience.

Much of this may not require new legislation. It requires deciding that the sector’s contribution should be assessed as a stock of lasting capability, rather than only as a flow of production and expenditure and then measuring it accordingly.

The barrels will be counted regardless; that discipline is well established and the numbers are good.

The harder discipline is to ask, at every concession renewal, licensing round and hydrogen award, a question that no production figure answers: when this asset stops producing, what remains?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OMAN DAILY

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

- SITUATION WANTED
- * NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

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



ART/LIFE



HOW APPARELS BECOME BRAND AMBASSADORS OF TRADITION AND CULTURE

> 20

LITERARY LOSS

JAPANESE MYSTERY AUTHOR KEIGO HIGASHINO DIES AGED 68



Japanese mystery fiction author Keigo Higashino has died aged 68, his publisher said on Monday, triggering an outpouring of grief among fans across Asia.

Since his 1985 debut, Higashino wrote more than 100 books, with much of his work widely translated and adapted for film and television.

“Author Keigo Higashino passed away due to colon cancer in the early morning of July 23. He was 68”, publisher Kodansha said in a statement.

A statement posted on Higashino’s X account said that the author passed away in the early hours of last Thursday.

“Mr Higashino’s published works, from his debut novel ‘After School’, released in September 1985, to his latest book ‘Eternal Memory’, scheduled for release on August 5, 2026, total 106 books (excluding co-authored works)”, the statement read.

“The stories he created will continue to captivate many readers”, the statement said.

Higashino, whose books include “The Devotion of Suspect X” and “Malice”, enjoyed a loyal following around Asia, including in China where thousands of people took to social media to mourn the writer.

Other works included “The Keeper of the Camphor Tree” which was turned into an animated film and the “Galileo” series of detective novels which became a live-action TV series.

“Thank you very much. Your ‘Detective Galileo’ series was the first novel I bought. Thank you very much for giving me the best reading experience ever”, said one Japanese user on X.

In China, the passing of the Japanese novelist quickly became one of the top trending topics on social media platform ‘Weibo’.

Despite the volatile diplomatic ties between Beijing and Tokyo, his works have long been massively popular among readers in China.

‘The Miracles of the Namiya General Store’ sold more than 10 million copies within its first four years in the mainland Chinese market, according to Chinese news portal ifeng.com.

“His works accompanied me throughout my high school years. Rest in peace”, one Weibo user said.

“I got through the darkest period of my life by reading his novels”, another wrote.

He was also popular in South Korea.

“I’ve read so many of Keigo Higashino’s books and this feels so surreal. There are still so many of his books I haven’t gotten around to reading yet”, said one Threads user in Korea.

“Higashino had always been there ever since I was a little kid and thanks to him, I was able to become a mystery novelist in South Korea. May he rest in peace”, wrote South Korean novelist Park Ha-ru on his Threads account. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



ANIMAL KINGDOM

This picture shows a clownfish at Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology in Onna village, Okinawa Prefecture. — AFP



HOLLYWOOD

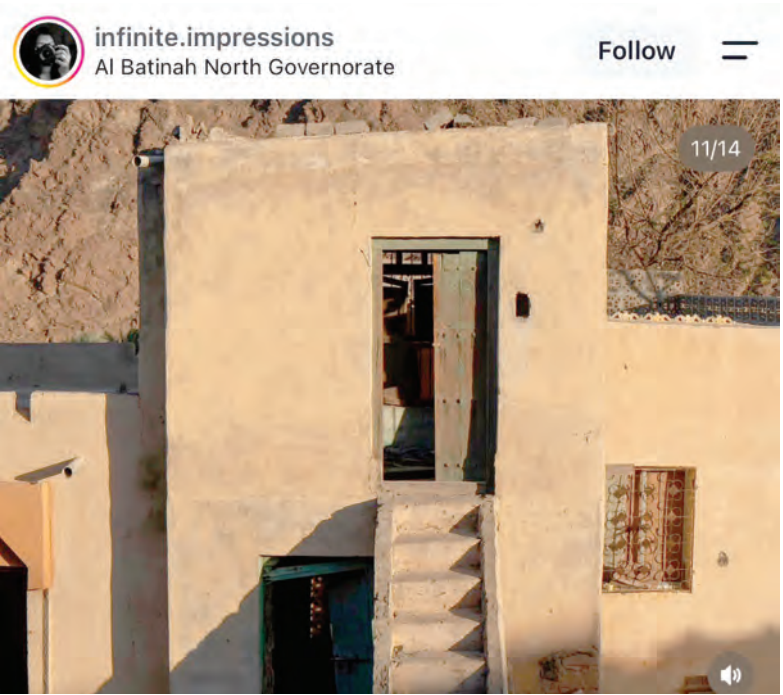
Cast member Mason Gooding attends the premiere for his upcoming film in Los Angeles, California, US. — Reuters



OPERA

Swedish opera singer Christina Nilsson performs during a photo rehearsal for the play “Ariadne auf Naxos” by German composer and conductor Richard Strauss. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Relics from the past in Al Batinah North Governorate



The wonderful wilderness of Dhofar

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.

SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL
TO HONOUR MEXICAN
ACTOR DIEGO LUNA, IRAN’S
FILMMAKER FARHADI

The Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF) will honour Mexican actor, director and producer Diego Luna at its 32nd edition that will kick off on August 14, as well as Iranian Oscar-winning filmmaker and screenwriter Asghar Farhadi, the SFF said on Monday.

“Through his exceptional body of work, Diego Luna has left a profound mark on contemporary cinema and it is our great honour to present him with the Honorary Heart of Sarajevo”, SFF Director Jovan Marjanovic said in a statement.

Luna’s work across film, television and theatre has been recognised for its creative range, social consciousness and a commitment to expand Latino and Hispanic representation on international stages, the SFF noted. He has been nominated for Golden Globe and Emmy awards for the Disney+ series ‘Andor’ in which he starred and executive-produced.

Luna will present ‘Ashes’, his latest directorial feature which premiered at this year’s Cannes Film Festival and give a masterclass. The SFF will also honour Iran’s Farhadi, who has received many international accolades, including two Academy Awards, a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival and the award for best screenwriter at the Cannes Film Festival, among others.

In 2018, Farhadi chaired the SFF jury for the feature film competition; the role that will be taken this year by British



actress Emily Watson. This year, a retrospective of Farhadi’s work will be presented as part of the festival’s Tribute To programme.

The Sarajevo festival, which was founded towards the end of Bosnia’s 1992-1995 war by a group of film enthusiasts, will be opened by “Fatherland”, the new film by Oscar-winning director Pawel Pawlikowski, which rounds up his Cold War trilogy.

“It seems like the film suits the Sarajevo Film Festival because it’s steeped in history and in conflict, in situations which are still within living memory in Bosnia. It feels like a good context to show the film”, Pawlikowski said in a statement. — Reuters

POP MART BRINGS LABUBU TO THE
DESSERT TABLE IN GLOBAL BAKERY PUSH



POP MART, the Beijing-based maker of collectible “blind box” toys including the toothy-grinned Labubu, is diversifying its business by opening its first international bakery in Singapore.

The toymaker is turning its best-known characters into three-dimensional edible treats, from black sesame Labubu popsicles to double cheesecake Molly. The two-storey bakery, opposite Universal Studios Singapore, sells 45 toy-inspired pastries and beverages priced from S\$5 to S\$32 (\$3.87 to \$24.77).

Singapore is the first stop. “We’re also considering opening bakeries in Europe and the United States. It’s a matter of timing and we need to address issues like local supply chains”, Zhang Xiaoyang, head of Pop Bakery at Pop Mart, said in an interview.

The company also plans to open dessert shops across Southeast Asia, including in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, he added.

The Singapore opening follows the debut of Pop Mart’s first bakery in the northern Chinese coastal city of Qinhuangdao in April after the company tested the concept through more than 30 dessert truck pop-ups in China.

It also comes at a time when the company navigates higher production costs and analysts have questioned the sustainability of its business model as annual sales and earnings growth missed expectations in recent quarters.

“Pop bakery is a great diversification tool because there’s only so much a toy company can do and they’ve probably hit the ceiling with toy manufacturing”, said Laura Pan, lecturer at SDA Bocconi School of Management.



The toymaker is turning its best-known characters into three-dimensional edible treats, from black sesame Labubu popsicles to double cheesecake Molly. The two-storey bakery, opposite Universal Studios Singapore, sells 45 toy-inspired pastries and beverages priced from S\$5 to S\$32 (\$3.87 to \$24.77).

However, should Pop Mart eventually launch bakeries in the US, it remains to be seen how well they will be received considering the Labubu craze is losing steam, she said.

Following a global wave of demand for its plush toys, bag charms and collectables, Pop Mart has increasingly branched out beyond selling toys and has said it plans to follow in the footsteps of entertainment giant Disney as a way of converting short-term virality into long-term success.

This year, Pop Mart

announced it is teaming up with Sony Pictures to develop a Labubu movie and opened an expansion of its Beijing theme park Pop Land.

“We hope to use our IP (intellectual property) to accompany all aspects of consumers’ lives and desserts are one of them”, Zhang said. The company takes pride in making its characters edible and three-dimensional while other entertainment companies like Disney usually use a flat design or put plastic ornaments on their pastries, he added. — Reuters

FEATURES



FROM THE VIBRANT KANGA TO THE ELEGANT KANZU, TRADITIONAL ZANZIBARI ATTIRE TELLS A STORY OF FAITH, HERITAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY, PRESERVING GENERATIONS OF HISTORY THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF FABRIC AND DESIGN.

How apparels
become brand
ambassadors of
tradition and
culture

KABEER YOUSUF

COSTUMES

are bridges between generations and the sartorial embodiment of a nation can be the torchbearers of its authentic culture, tradition and the legacy.

This is quite emphatic at the Tanzanian Day held at the Diplomatic Club in Muscat where a repertoire of its cultural hues were on display recently.

Zanzibari apparel is a vibrant reflection of its Swahili culture, deeply rooted in Islamic modesty and an amalgamation of African, Arab and Indian influences. Traditional dress symbolises respect, community pride and social communication, serving as a tangible expression of the island's history. Garments represent the treasure trove bequeathed from generation to generation and the very sight of people displaying their traditional dresses with pride and pomp was a sight worth comprehending their affinity towards their long heritage.

Zanzibar life is a vibrant blend of Swahili, Arab, Indian and African influences which is deeply rooted in Islam and the strong community ties are exemplary. Since Zanzibar is predominantly Muslim (around 98%), modest dress is not just a cultural custom but a sign of respect, especially when exploring outside of your resort or the beaches. Zanzibari women clad in colourful kangas (wraps with Swahili proverbs) and buibuis (black veils), while men donned the kanzu (tunic) and kofia (embroidered cap) reflected their brilliant lineage. When, as a curious student who researches some of the core

elements of Zanzibari dresses, one would find a plethora of costumes that are the true reflections of the age-old way of dressing and appearing in public.

The Kanga (Leso), a signature East African cotton fabric is at the top of the list. Kanga is characterised by a central motif (mji), a wide border (pindo) and a printed Swahili proverb (jina). Kangas serve as 'social media' in Zanzibar, allowing women to communicate sentiments or political stances without speaking. They are worn as wraps, head coverings or baby slings.

The Kitenge is a thicker, unhemmed cotton fabric featuring vibrant, intricate African patterns. Unlike the kanga, it has a distinct border and is highly tailored into dresses, skirts, blouses and menswear.

For men, the traditional attire is the kanzu, a flowing, ankle-length white or cream robe of Arab origin and is usually paired with a kofia, a meticulously hand-knit, brimless embroidered cap that highlights Swahili craftsmanship. On the other hand, the Baibui, which is influenced by Arab tradition, is worn by many local women and is a traditional black veil known as a baibui, alongside a niqab, when leaving their homes.

In Zanzibar, traditional clothing such as the kanga, kitenge, baibui and kanzu is much more than fabric — it is a living tradition that narrates stories of history, faith, identity and community. These garments provide insight into Zanzibar's multicultural heritage and continue to be cherished symbols of the island's vibrant Swahili culture.

Whether worn daily or reserved for special occasions, they unite Zanzibaris in a shared cultural expression that honours the past while embracing the present.

