

O M A N
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AYN HAMRAN: A TRANQUIL GREEN RETREAT JUST OUTSIDE SALALAH

INBRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO KING OF MOROCCO

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco on the occasion of the Throne Day anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to King Mohammed VI and the people of his country. His Majesty wished Morocco further progress and growth in various spheres.

His Majesty the Sultan also expressed the Sultanate of Oman’s keenness to enhance bilateral relations and expand joint cooperation in a manner that serves both countries.

NO NEW LEAK IN OIL POLLUTION



The competent authorities in Dhofar Governorate continue to carry out intensive field operations to address the effects of recent oil pollution observed along the coast from Khor Salalah to the Hilton Hotel on Awqad Beach, as well as the western area of Raysut Beach.

Authorities have confirmed no new leaks have been detected in the affected sites.

Specialised technical teams from the Directorate-General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate are participating in these efforts, coordinating with Dhofar Municipality and other relevant entities. They are working to remove pollutants using approved machinery under the National Response Plan, in collaboration with Salalah Port and specialised environmental protection companies. **DETAILS ON P3**

2 OMANI PROJECTS WIN BIG IN UK

Two Omani research projects have been selected among the top 13 global projects to be showcased at the 66th edition of the London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) 2025.

Oman is represented at the forum by five innovative scientific projects, chosen from over 340 local innovative and research projects. The selection of two Omani projects for this elite global list reflects the excellence of Omani youth in scientific research and innovation.

Innovator Hala al Zaabi presented the project titled “Tannova: an Omani Solution – Statistically Optimised Leachate Treatment with Date Pit Tannins and AOP.” This project offers an innovative environmental solution for treating industrial waste through eco-friendly methods that utilise local natural resource. **SEE P2**

Unicef hails Oman’s role in child development

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman stands as a pioneering nation in early childhood development, both in terms of policies and services. It was among the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and took early steps to enact legislation safeguarding children’s rights.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef) office in Oman emphasised that the issuance of the Child Law in 2014 was clear

evidence of this commitment. This was further reinforced by the 2023 School Education Law, which affirmed children’s rights to early education, and the 2023 Social Protection Law, which established an integrated system of social benefits and insurance. These laws adopted international best practices in delivering benefits, including those for childhood and persons with disabilities, while working to enhance them to maximise

protection and investment in childhood development and uphold principles of justice.

Sumaira Chowdhury, Representative of Unicef in Oman, noted significant progress in social protection through the reinforcement of national policies aimed at supporting children and families, ensuring services reach the most vulnerable groups.

She said that Unicef Office plays a pivotal role in supporting

national efforts by providing technical assistance and strategic guidance in policy and programme design. It also strengthens national capacities in data collection and analysis for evidence-based planning. In partnership with government entities, Unicef works to enhance child protection systems and integrate them into the social protection framework, contributing to a comprehensive and sustainable system. **SEE ALSO P4**

UN says Palestinian state is ‘a right, not a reward’

Gaza death toll hits 60,000 as world seeks to avert famine

THE Sultanate of Oman is participating in the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. The conference, held at the United Nations headquarters in New York, will continue until Wednesday.

Oman’s delegation to the conference is led by Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry.

The plenary session, held at the General Assembly hall, included statements from participating delegations.

During the session, António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, delivered a speech emphasising that the establishment of a Palestinian state is “a right, not a reward.” He reiterated that the two-state solution is the only realistic, just and sustainable solution.

The conference commenced with a high-level ministerial meeting of the working groups accompanying the conference proceedings. Discussions at the meeting focused on several topics aimed at providing a platform for unifying key visions, highlighting international consensus in support of the two-state solution through political, legal, economic and humanitarian tracks.

Meanwhile, a hunger monitor warned on Tuesday that a worst-case scenario of famine is unfolding in Gaza and immediate action is needed to avoid widespread death,



A Palestinian man reacts at the site of houses destroyed during an Israeli raid, in western part of Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. — Reuters

The alert by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification raised the prospect that the man-made starvation crisis could be formally classified as a famine

as the number of Palestinians reported killed in the conflict crossed the 60,000 threshold.

The alert by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) raised the prospect that the man-made starvation crisis could be formally classified as a famine, in the hope that this might raise the pressure on Israel to let in far more food. Facing mounting international criticism over conditions in Gaza, Israel announced steps over the weekend to ease aid access. But the

World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday it was not getting the permissions it needed to deliver enough aid since Israel began humanitarian pauses on Sunday.

It said it would quickly carry out the formal analysis that could allow it to classify Gaza as “in famine”.

For famine to be declared, at least 20 per cent of the population must be suffering extreme food shortages, with one in three children acutely malnourished and two people out of every 10,000 dying daily. — Agencies

Requests for admission modifications end on Thursday

MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Center (HEAC) of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, continues to receive preference modification requests for undergraduate admissions for the 2025/2026 academic year, with this phase remaining open until Thursday evening.

The centre reported that the number of successfully registered

students as of Tuesday morning reached 42,907 (19,988 males and 22,919 females).

Among them, 41,027 students have listed their programme preferences for government higher education institutions, domestic scholarships, private-sector-funded grants for private institutions, external scholarships, and grants from friendly nations for the 2025/2026 academic year.



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Within the same context, the HEAC announced the opening of registration for the Omani Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Program for the 2025/2026 academic year, starting from Thursday, August 21. Admission results will be announced on August 28.

The programme offers tuition-free scholarships for students from Arab and friendly nations residing

in Oman who have completed Grade 12 in Omani government or international schools. These scholarships are for studies at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), which has allocated seats for non-Omani children of its employees in recognition of their contributions and to support their children’s higher education opportunities.

— ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. - ONA

STATE COUNCIL EMPHASISES MEMBERS’ ROLE

MUSCAT: The State Council Office on Tuesday reviewed several topics, including a summary report from the Assistant Secretary-General for Sessions and Committees Affairs regarding the second ordinary session of the Council’s eighth term.

The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

During the meeting, the Chairman of the State Council emphasised the efforts made by the members and the Council’s General Secretariat in efficiently performing their assigned tasks. This, he noted, strengthens the Council’s legislative role during the second ordinary session of its eighth term and ensures responsible work across various activities and events.

The Council also discussed topics on the agenda and reports submitted by members concerning their participation in regional and international council meetings. — ONA

TEMPERATURES TO SOAR TODAY IN AREAS FACING SEA OF OMAN

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JULY 29

Weather forecasts indicate a rise in maximum temperatures on Wednesday in the governorates overlooking the Sea of Oman.

The Oman Met Office stated that there will be chances of cumulonimbus cloud formation and scattered thunderstorms of varying intensity, accompanied by active downdraft winds, over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and adjacent areas.

During the summer months, landmass heat up more rapidly than adjacent oceans, creating low-pressure zones over the land and high-pressure zones over the sea. This pressure difference causes moist air from the ocean to flow inland. As this moist air rises over the heated land, it cools and condenses, leading to cloud formation and precipitation.

The most intense rainfall-producing monsoons occur during the summer near the Indian Ocean. As the ocean’s warm waters evaporate, moisture rises into the atmosphere. This shift alters wind patterns, driving humid air towards land in nations like India and Sri Lanka. When this warm, moisture-rich air cools, it condenses into clouds, resulting in prolonged periods of heavy rain and increased humidity that can persist for months.

OMAN SHOWCASES FOOD SECURITY PROGRESS AT UN SUMMIT

ADDIS ABABA: The Sultanate of Oman has presented its progress in food and nutrition security indicators at the ministerial session of the 2nd UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4) in Ethiopia, highlighting advancements made since the 2021 Food Systems Summit.

In his address, Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, stated that the Sultanate of Oman has achieved significant improvements across multiple food and nutrition



security metrics.

“The ministry has launched several strategies — with others in development — to enhance domestic

production, diversify supply chains, ensure sustainable use of natural resources and improve nutrition while combating malnutrition,” he said. “Key initiatives include the Food Security Strategy, National Nutrition Strategy, National Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy, Environment and Natural Resources Strategy and the Genetic Diversity Strategy for Local Livestock.” He noted that Oman ranked third among Arab countries and 35th globally in the 2022 Global Food Security Index. — ONA

Top performing service providers get awards

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

MUSCAT Governorate, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, honoured the best public service providers in Muscat Governorate for 2024. This initiative aims to encourage ministries and public authorities to excel in providing the best services to the people. The event was held under the auspices of Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality.

Eight public service providers were recognised for reaching the highest levels of excellence in delivering government services in Muscat Governorate. This event is part of an effort to strengthen the institutional excellence system and motivate entities to improve performance efficiency and the quality of government services.

The winners included the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the National Museum, Al Amal Club - the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Education, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, and the Consumer Protection Authority.

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Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, expressed that this recognition acknowledges the sincere efforts and commitment of the institutions to provide excellent services to citizens and residents. He highlighted that the honoured entities serve as role models for performance excellence and emphasised that service excellence is a result of a culture of continuous learning in the workplace.

He also mentioned that Muscat Governorate, within the framework of decentralisation and strengthening the roles of governorates, aims to monitor service quality and oversee the implementation

of development plans. This is done by evaluating the performance of service outlets in coordination with relevant authorities to ensure alignment with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040. Muscat Governorate values the honoured entities for their effective commitment to institutional work methodologies and a culture of sustainable improvement.

Muscat Governorate appreciates the efforts of the honoured government agencies and emphasises the importance of sharing successful experiences to enhance government performance in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. This will contribute to an efficient government sector and quality services that meet the aspirations of society.

Two Omani projects among top 13 globally

MUSCAT: Two Omani research projects have been selected among the top 13 global projects to be showcased at the 66th edition of the London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) 2025.

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HALA AL ZAABI



AL MUNTASER AL MAAMARI

Omani Solution – Statistically Optimised Leachate Treatment with Date Pit Tannins and AOP.” This project offers an innovative environmental solution for treating industrial waste through eco-friendly methods that utilise local natural resources.

The second project by innovator Al Muntaser al Maamari, titled “Ecofie: AI-Driven Green Hydrogen Production From Mesquite and Industrial Effluents”, aims to develop and provide sustainable solutions in clean energy using artificial intelligence technologies.

The selection of these two projects embodies the level of scientific excellence achieved by youth in Oman and their growing role in presenting innovative research solutions to address global challenges, particularly in the fields of environment, energy and modern technologies. The forum, taking place in London, from July 23 to August 6, 2025, with the participation of elite researchers and talented students from various countries worldwide, is considered one of the most prominent scientific platforms. — ONA

Oman affirms commitment to fighting human trafficking

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 29

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and relevant authorities, joins the world countries to mark the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons which is celebrated on July 30 annually.

This year, the celebration is held under the theme ‘Human Trafficking Is Organised Crime – End the Exploitation’ in a global call to combat this transnational crime.

Brigadier Jamal bin Habib al Quraishi, Director-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations at ROP, said: “The ROP continues its efforts to combat

human trafficking crimes through continuous training, updating detection and investigation tools, and coordinating with international organisations.” He added that the ROP this year activated a system for protecting victims of human trafficking. This system aims to streamline coordination between relevant authorities and identify victims using indicators on which staff are continuously trained.

Al Quraishi revealed that the Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations has monitored a number of cases this year and exposed organised criminal networks using various methods to lure victims. In one case, the ROP



Brigadier Jamal bin Habib al Quraishi, Director-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations at ROP

arrested a number of Arab and Asian nationals who had entered the country for tourism. They promoted

the transplantation of human organs outside the Sultanate of Oman, exploiting some patients who were in dire need of organ transplants, particularly kidney failure patients.

He pointed out that among the criminal methods used by perpetrators of human trafficking crimes is the publication and promotion of fake job advertisements to lure young women abroad to work in the Sultanate of Oman. The criminals exploit their victims in immoral crimes after holding their personal documents and restricting their freedom. Other illegal practices monitored by ROP include employers holding workers’

passports or identity documents without their written consent, or recruiting workers on family or tourist visas in certain jobs in violation of the labour and residency laws for foreigners.

Al Quraishi noted that the Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations was able to track and arrest a person wanted by the Italian authorities after entering the Sultanate of Oman. He was accused of forming a criminal organisation involved in human trafficking and migrant smuggling to several European countries. His extradition procedures were done in accordance with international protocols.

SHORT TAKES



Through this initiative, Dhofar Municipality supports productive families and SMEs. — ONA

Over 300 families receive support at frankincense market

SALALAH: The ‘Frankincense Market’ for productive families on Al Haffa Beach in Salalah is witnessing a remarkable turnout from visitors as part of Dhofar Municipality’s activities accompanying the Khareef Dhofar Season 2025. The vibrant atmosphere is filled with the aroma of frankincense and adorned with authentic Omani heritage and arts. Through this initiative, Dhofar Municipality supports over 300 productive families and small-to-medium enterprises from various wilayats in the governorate. The market showcases a variety of handicrafts, traditional Omani foods, and heritage products that reflect Dhofar’s cultural and social identity. Salim bin Abdullah Fadhil, supervisor of the Frankincense Market, pointed out that this year’s edition features notably diverse participation, thanks to direct support from Dhofar Municipality. He emphasised that the market is not merely a sales outlet, but an integrated platform to display and promote local heritage elements. He added that visitors can explore a wide range of handmade crafts, including palm-frond products, incense burners and Omani frankincense goods, alongside traditional foods prepared by productive families. — ONA

SOUQS, TOURISM SITES ABUZZ WITH BUSINESS ACTIVITIES



SALALAH: Dhofar Governorate is experiencing a boom in commercial activity in traditional markets (souqs), shopping centres and tourism sites during the Khareef Dhofar Season 2025. The business activity is driven by a large influx of visitors to the governorate who wish to enjoy the exceptional monsoon weather. It constitutes direct support to the national economy. — ONA

AWARENESS EVENT FOCUSES ON DRUG RISKS, ONLINE BLACKMAIL

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 29

A community awareness event held in Salalah brought together healthcare professionals, law enforcement officers and members of the public to discuss the growing dangers of drug addiction and cybercrime. One of the event’s key speakers, Dr Hossam Fattouh, Head of Awqad Health Centre, described addiction as a chronic illness that alters brain function and behaviour, requiring comprehensive medical and psychological care. “Addiction doesn’t happen overnight,” Dr Fattouh said. “It develops in stages – starting with habituation, then building tolerance and eventually leading to full



dependency on the substance.” He noted that addiction can stem from a wide range of substances – including illegal drugs, synthetic compounds and even prescription medications when misused. Warning signs, he said, include sudden behavioural changes, poor

academic or work performance, mood instability, social withdrawal, neglect of appearance, new associations with questionable peers and unusual financial behaviour. “Recovery is possible,” he added, “but it requires a clear treatment plan, psychological support and long-term follow-up. Family and community support are essential to lasting recovery.” Major Engineer Ahmed bin Awadh al Mashikhi, Deputy Director of Criminal Investigations at the ROP in Dhofar, outlined the types and legal definitions of cybercrime. He described the emotional toll such crimes take on victims and detailed practical steps individuals can take to protect their privacy online.

No new leaks in oil spill sites in Salalah

THE competent authorities in Dhofar Governorate continue to carry out intensive field operations to address the effects of recent oil pollution observed along the coast from Khor Salalah to the Hilton Hotel on Awqad Beach, as well as the western area of Raysut Beach. Authorities have confirmed no new leaks have been detected in the affected sites. Specialised technical teams from the Directorate-General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate are participating in these efforts, coordinating with Dhofar Municipality and other relevant entities. They are working to remove pollutants using approved machinery under the National Response Plan, in collaboration with Salalah Port and specialised environmental protection companies. The response has also included field inspections of nearby beaches to ensure they remain free of pollution, along with precautionary measures such as closing some access points to the affected beaches in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality and the Royal Oman Police. These steps aim to ensure public safety and facilitate clean-up operations. Eng Zahran bin Ahmed al Abdulsalam, Acting Director-General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate, confirmed that the prompt response enabled teams to contain the pollution and limit its spread. He explained that intensive clean-up efforts over several days have helped restore the beaches’ cleanliness.



Specialised technical teams are working to remove pollutants using approved machinery under the National Response Plan, in collaboration with Salalah Port and specialised environmental protection companies

He added that the efforts are not limited to removing visible pollution but also include protecting marine and coastal ecosystems due to their environmental and economic importance. Precise surveys have been conducted to identify pollution hotspots and develop a comprehensive response plan, focusing on the most affected areas using both manual and mechanical methods. For his part, Mamdouh bin Salim al Marhoon, Director of the Environmental Emergency Centre, explained that the National Oil Pollution Control Plan (Level II) was activated immediately after

the incident was detected. This, he affirmed, accelerated the response, mobilised necessary resources and ensured efficient coordination. He noted that communication is ongoing with relevant international and regional organisations to identify the pollution source and take necessary legal action. Hatem bin Salim al Mahri, Acting Director of the Nature Conservation Department, affirmed that field operations are ongoing to ensure the removal of any remaining traces. He added that monitoring teams continue follow-up and evaluation efforts to ensure full restoration of the coastal environment and prevent future risks. — ONA

Shiheyty draws visitors seeking nature in Dhofar’s highlands

QASIM AL MAASHANI
TAQAH, JULY 29

As the monsoon season breathes new life into Dhofar’s mountains and valleys, the quiet village of Shiheyty, tucked high in the hills of the Wilayat of Taqah, is quietly emerging as a destination for travellers looking for nature, simplicity and solitude. Located around 10 kilometres north of Taqah, Shiheyty is surrounded by dramatic terrain — misty ridges, flowing wadis and cliffs that turn green with the rains of khareef. At the heart of the village lies the Shiheyty Sinkhole, a vast natural depression nearly 150 metres across. According to local folklore, a meteor once fell here, carving the land in a moment of fire and light.



Shiheyty is surrounded by dramatic terrain — misty ridges, flowing wadis and cliffs that turn green with the rains of khareef.

Nearby, Wadi Ghidhat winds through the hills, shaded by trees and fed by spring water that flows even in the dry months. Visitors who make the trip find themselves surrounded by silence, birdsong and a deep sense of calm. The valley is also known for its wild bees, which build their hives in the rocky cliffs — part of a long-standing tradition

of mountain honey collection in the area. Shiheyty has a small population — fewer than 100 residents — but a strong sense of place. Families grow crops, raise livestock and follow seasonal rhythms tied to the land. This week, three friends from Muscat visited the area in a four-wheel-drive vehicle after seeing videos of Shiheyty on social media. “We saw the place online and were curious,” one of them said. “It’s even more beautiful in real life. You need to know how to drive in the mountains, but it’s not difficult if you’re careful. Keep your camera lenses clean, take all your rubbish with you and leave the place just as you found it. Nature here deserves to be respected.” Access to Shiheyty requires a 4x4 vehicle, particularly for those

hoping to reach Wadi Ghidhat or explore beyond the village. A small primary school serves local children, but residents rely on nearby towns such as Taqah and Salalah for healthcare and other services. Though it lacks major infrastructure, Shiheyty’s quiet charm is exactly what makes it stand out. It offers a different kind of tourism — one not built on crowds or commercial centres, but on connection to nature and a slower, more thoughtful pace of travel. Officials say areas like Shiheyty highlight the broader potential of Dhofar’s highlands, especially during and after the khareef season, to provide unique experiences for visitors looking to discover Oman’s lesser-known landscapes.

OMAN

THE Sultanate of Oman stands as a pioneering nation in early childhood development, both in terms of policies and services. It was among the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and took early steps to enact legislation safeguarding children's rights. The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) office in Oman emphasised that the issuance of the Child Law in 2014 was clear evidence of this commitment. This was further reinforced by the 2023 School Education Law, which affirmed children's right to early education, and the 2023 Social Protection Law, which established an integrated system of social benefits and insurance. These laws adopted international best practices in delivering benefits, including those for childhood and persons with disabilities, while working to enhance them to maximise protection and investment in childhood development and uphold principles of justice.

nutrition and early childhood development. Both sides, she affirmed, work closely to develop national policies and programmes ensuring every child in Oman enjoys their rights fully and equitably, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Oman Vision 2040. She explained that this collaboration takes the form of a joint country programme, coordinated with relevant Omani child welfare authorities. This programme is reviewed every five years, with annual implementation plans, and involves discussions on national priorities and programmes within Unicef's framework of support for government efforts to enhance child well-being, she added. She further highlighted Oman's growing focus on early childhood development, reflected in its integration into national priorities and increased investment in early care and education programmes. The emphasis on a child's early years underscores Oman's deep



Sumaira Chowdhury, Representative of Unicef in Oman, noted significant progress in social protection through the reinforcement of national policies aimed at supporting children and families. — ONA

Sumaira Chowdhury, Representative of Unicef in Oman, noted significant progress in social protection through the reinforcement of national policies aimed at supporting children and families, ensuring services reach the most vulnerable groups. This progress includes the development of social protection systems and improved inter-sectoral coordination to ensure a comprehensive response to beneficiaries' needs. She revealed that Unicef Office plays a pivotal role in supporting national efforts by providing technical assistance and strategic guidance in policy and programme design. It also strengthens national capacities in data collection and analysis for evidence-based planning. In partnership with government entities, Unicef, she added, works to enhance child protection systems and integrate them into the social protection framework, contributing to a comprehensive and sustainable system dedicated to the well-being of every child. She pointed out that the cooperation between Oman and Unicef is built on a long-term strategic partnership dating back to 1971, aimed at promoting child rights across various fields, including education, health, protection,

understanding of this critical phase in shaping a child's future abilities and skills, she affirmed. She further added: "Oman has achieved advanced rankings in childhood development indicators, universal immunisation, and inclusive education covering all children without exception. It continues to demonstrate commitment through innovative solutions, such as labour laws and family-friendly policies that grant parents adequate time to care for their children in their early years. These efforts position Oman as a global leader in child care and protection". The Representative of Unicef in Oman noted that Oman implements a comprehensive package of programmes aimed at developing children's and adolescents' capacities in education, health, and community engagement. Today, she said, a qualitative shift is evident in adopting inclusive approaches addressing the needs of diverse groups, including children with disabilities and those at risk. Unicef supports these initiatives and works to amplify their impact through technical cooperation and capacity-building. She added that close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and



OMAN LEADS THE WAY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

UNICEF BELIEVES OMAN CAN BE AN INFLUENTIAL VOICE FOR CHILDREN IN THE REGION BY SUPPORTING INITIATIVES PROMOTING HEALTH, EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION, ESPECIALLY IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES



other relevant entities, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, has united efforts to analyse and understand child development pathways and protect children from all forms of abuse or harm. This institutional cooperation, she pointed out, includes updating the Child Protection Manual and preparing a study on establishing integrated early childhood centres to enhance coordination mechanisms among stakeholders, ensuring improved child case monitoring and high-quality, consistent follow-up. She stated that national laws, such as the Child Law and the Child Protection Manual, are pivotal achievements positioning Oman among countries striving to protect child rights. From an international perspective, these laws reflect Oman's genuine commitment to aligning its legislation with international conventions and standards, fostering a legal environment that ensures child protection and equity, she affirmed. She said: "Oman plays a crucial role in supporting developmental and humanitarian programmes for children, both nationally and through its participation in regional and international efforts. Unicef believes Oman can be an influential voice for children in the region by supporting initiatives promoting health, education, and child protection, especially in humanitarian crises. Oman garners global attention for its noble stances and balanced support for child and humanitarian causes. Its peaceful and neutral policy makes it a reliable and friendly partner for all, particularly amid recurring humanitarian crises in the Middle East and North Africa. In this context, Oman has generously supported Gaza's children by donating RO 385,000 (\$1 million) to aid children in the sector, as part of its ongoing support for Unicef's global humanitarian and relief efforts". She added that key initiatives in pre-school education development include supporting child-friendly school environments and empowering teachers with inclusive teaching methods through the Future Skills Framework. She explained that collaboration with the Ministry of Health focuses on building capacities in early childhood care services, alongside nutrition programmes such as breastfeeding and mental health support. Joint efforts with the Ministry of Social

Development and the Ministry of Education, she pointed out, include a comprehensive study exploring pathways to implement the Education Law, which stipulates pre-school education as a fundamental right for every child. Unicef is analysing strategies to ensure the rollout of early education services in Oman, alongside a study on enhancing early childhood development through integrated service centres. She noted that Unicef Oman implements programmes strengthening the capacities of early-grade educators and social workers, providing continuous technical support to partners in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to ensure intervention quality and sustainability. There is growing commitment to improving rehabilitation and care services for children with disabilities, alongside efforts to develop infrastructure, services, and qualified personnel, she added, stressing the need to enhance social and educational inclusion and develop early detection and intervention tools. She pointed out that Unicef plays a central role in supporting the Omani government to develop a unified national child protection system based on prevention, monitoring, and early intervention. It also works to raise community awareness, build frontline workers' capacities, and develop standardised protocols for addressing violence, abuse, and neglect. The office launched a positive parenting training programme to educate parents and caregivers on child protection, proper nutrition, early learning stimulation, and social inclusion. She further added that in collaboration with partners, local institutions, and the National Family Affairs Committee, Unicef launched a national awareness campaign titled "Our Children, a Trust", which received widespread engagement. The campaign continuously highlights the importance of early childhood development and its impact on children's futures. She said that Unicef has also designed and implemented behaviour-change communication campaigns focusing on family and community roles in child protection, addressing emerging issues like cyberbullying, mental health, and violence. These initiatives, she pointed out, engage children and adolescents in expressing their needs and becoming part of the solution. She added that in partnership with government entities, Unicef launched a national strategic communication strategy for societal behaviour change, based on scientific evidence addressing practices, habits, and knowledge levels related to early childhood development. It also implements targeted awareness campaigns to improve social indicators, such as promoting breastfeeding and proper nutrition, fostering supportive environments for holistic child development. — ONA

SHORT TAKES

AL BATINAH FILM FESTIVAL NOMINATIONS OPEN

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 29

The Oman Film Society (OFS) and Al Batinah North Governor’s Office have announced the opening of nominations for the official competition of the third edition of Al Batinah International Film Festival.

The biennial festival, now in its third consecutive edition, serves as a cultural and artistic platform to promote Oman and its governorates locally and internationally. It aims



to create an atmosphere that celebrates creativity and fosters communication between film-makers and cinema enthusiasts. This year’s official competition includes three categories: short documentary films for both

Omani and international film-makers, short narrative films for both Omani and international film-makers, and an Omani institutional film competition for both government and private entities.

“We celebrate Al Batinah International Film Festival every two years with the goal of fostering relationships between film-makers and society, spreading cinematic culture among community members, stimulating artistic activity among young people and improving the quality of Omani film production,” said Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society.

Al Ajmi added that this edition of the film festival is organised under the supervision of the Oman Film Society, in partnership with several supporting institutions from the public and private sectors. This is part of efforts to enhance Oman’s cinematic presence regionally and internationally.

Entries will be accepted until September 20, 2025, via approved electronic forms.

WORK PROGRESS OF UPCOMING PROJECTS IN MUTTRAH REVIEWED

MUSCAT: Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, conducted a field visit on Monday to inspect key upcoming projects in the Wilayat of Muttrah to ensure the commitment to on-site monitoring and delivering high standards in project execution.

The tour included a review of Al Wadi Al Kabir Roundabout Project, where the chairman was briefed on the latest progress.



He inspected the Wadi Kabir Vendors’ street to assess its

operational readiness and reviewed the functioning of utility services at the Muttrah Fish, Vegetable and Fruit Market, one of the municipality’s investment projects aimed at enhancing the visitor experience.

The chairman also visited the Muttrah Cable Car Project, a landmark initiative aimed at boosting the tourism sector and offering a distinctive recreational experience in the wilayat.

Almost 90,000 visit Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 29

AL Jabal Al Akhdhar received 89,700 visitors by the end of June 2025, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). These numbers show the mountain’s ongoing popularity among local and regional travellers, especially during the warmer summer months.

Leading the way in visitor numbers were Omanis, with 26,600 visitors in the first half of 2025. This highlights the strong bond Omanis have with their natural surroundings, as many seek cooler temperatures and peaceful landscapes during the peak of summer.

Salim al Nabhani, a visitor from Muscat, shared his thoughts saying: “My family and I visit Al Jabal Al Akhdhar every summer. The weather is pleasant, the views are stunning and the tourism services have improved greatly. It’s the perfect escape.”

Coming in second among GCC nationals were visitors from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with 4,400 Saudis exploring the area. This increased interest can be attributed to the convenient travel options by road and air, family-friendly resorts, and a shared admiration for the mountainous scenery.

Collaborative tourism campaigns between Oman and Saudi Arabia have also helped raise awareness of Oman’s hidden natural treasures, with Al Jabal Al Akhdhar being



With its breathtaking landscapes, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is not only becoming a summer sanctuary, but also a year-round destination.

one of the most prominent.

Additionally, 759 visitors from Kuwait visited Al Jabal Al Akhdhar during the same period. While this number is lower in comparison, it indicates a gradual rise in interest, especially among travellers seeking tranquil, nature-filled destinations away from city life.

With ongoing marketing strategies and regional partnerships, Oman’s tourism sector looks forward to continued growth in visitor numbers from Kuwait and other GCC

nations.

Situated within the Hajar Mountains, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar rises over 3,000 metres above sea level, providing a cool and moderate climate, even during Oman’s hottest months. Its altitude makes it an ideal retreat for both local and international tourists.

The area is renowned for its diverse agriculture. Villages like Sayq, Al Sherijah and Bani Habib offer picturesque terraces, traditional homes and scenic hiking trails.

Recent years have seen significant investments in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar’s tourism infrastructure. Luxury resorts and hotels have opened, roads have been upgraded and more tour operators now offer guided hikes, adventure activities and eco-tourism experiences.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has confirmed that the government is actively implementing a sustainable tourism development plan. This plan includes expanding nature-based activities, preserving cultural heritage and supporting rural communities through tourism-related initiatives.

Many families from the Gulf region prefer spending their summer vacations in safe, cool and naturally beautiful locations — and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar perfectly fits the bill.

This rise in domestic and regional tourism aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which positions tourism as a key driver of economic diversification.

‘CLUB CULTURAL INNOVATION COMPETITION’ CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth on Tuesday celebrated the conclusion of the second stage of Muscat Governorate’s “Club Cultural Innovation Competition” for the 2024/2025 season.

Khalfan bin Mohammed al Abri, Director of Exhibition Affairs Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and



Youth, said that the contest (now in its 6th edition) saw strong competition among representatives of Muscat Governorate clubs.

This ardent engagement indicates that the competition has achieved its desired goal of showcasing and honing youth talents. — ONA

LOOK OUT FOR DELTA AQUARIID METEOR SHOWER TODAY

MUSCAT: The Delta Aquariid meteor shower will peak on Wednesday, according to the Oman Society for Astronomy and Space. This is a moderate meteor shower, and you may see 20 to 30 meteors per hour if the sky is dark and clear.

The shower happens when Earth moves through dust left by an old comet that scientists aren’t exactly sure about. It might be from a group of comets that are no longer active.

These tiny dust pieces hit Earth’s atmosphere very fast and create bright streaks of light in the sky.

جامعة الشرقية A' SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

ASU’s Tender Committee is pleased to invite specialized companies to participate in the following auctions:

Auctions details:

Auction No.	Description	Document Fees	Site Visit	Document Collection Deadline	Bids Submission Deadline
ASU/58/ 24/25	Scrap Auction for IT Devices	OMR 10	03/08/2025 At 10:00 AM	03/08/2025 At 03:00 PM	05/08/2025 At 03:00 PM
ASU/59/ 24/25	Scrap Auction for Furniture & Appliances	OMR 10	03/08/2025 At 10:00 AM	03/08/2025 At 03:00 PM	05/08/2025 At 03:00 PM

- Specialized companies interested in participating in the auctions should obtain the auction document during official working days from Sunday to Thursday, between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM.
- Auction collection process: The interested companies shall follow the following steps:

1 - The payment should be made directly to ASU under the following bank account:

Account Name	AL SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY
Account Number	0423010693610011
SWIFT CODE	BMUSOMRX

2 - After payment, send the receipt to (abdullah.al-harhi@asu.edu.om) or via WhatsApp at +968 25401118.

3 - The auction document will be sent to the company via email.

4 - Companies that hold Riyadh certificate are exempted from auction document fee, They should send a copy of the riyadh certificate and the commercial registration to the email or WhatsApp number mentioned in the announcement.

- ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids. http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf
- For further details, please don't hesitate to contact us at: abdullah.al-harhi@asu.edu.om or 25401118.



Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Tender Announcement

Tender No.	105/2025/MHT/HQ-22	Tender Name	Providing Cleaning Services to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism building for the Year 2026.
	106/2025/MHT/HQ-23		Management and maintenance of the civil, mechanical and electrical installations of the Ministry's General Office building for the year 2026.
	107/2025/MHT/HQ-24		Providing cleaning services for the Ministry's sites in Muscat Governorate for the year 2026.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 R.O	
Tender Document Sales End Date		18/8/2025	
Last Date for Bid Submission		8/9/2025	
Grade	105/2025/MHT/HQ-22	Excellent / First	
	106/2025/MHT/HQ-23	Excellent	
	107/2025/MHT/HQ-24	First, Second, Third, Fourth	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.
- All companies submitting bids for this tender are required to attach a valid and recently issued Omanization Compliance Certificate from the Ministry of Labour, provided that the certificate is not older than 30 days from the date of issuance.
- This certificate is considered a mandatory document, and failure to submit it — for any reason — shall result in the outright disqualification of the bid, without being evaluated technically or financially.
- The certificate must also demonstrate the company’s compliance with the Omanization percentage required by the Ministry of Labour. If the required percentage is not met, the bid shall be automatically disqualified.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@gstb.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sotic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

WORLD

DEADLY FLOODS



A drone view shows partially submerged village houses and other buildings in Miyun. — Reuters

HEAVY RAIN, LANDSLIDES KILL OVER 30 IN NORTHERN CHINA

MIYUN: Heavy rain killed more than 30 people and forced authorities to evacuate tens of thousands as swaths of northern China were lashed by torrential downpours that sparked landslides and flooding, state media said on Tuesday. Weather authorities have issued their second-highest rainstorm warning for the capital Beijing, neighbouring Hebei and Tianjin, as well as 10 other provinces, state news agency Xinhua said. The rains are expected to last into Wednesday.

The heavy rainstorms had left 30 people dead in Beijing as of midnight on Monday, Xinhua said, citing flood control authorities. More than 80,000 people have been evacuated in the capital alone, according to state-run Beijing Daily. The death toll was highest in Miyun, a northeastern suburb, it said.

“This time the rain was unusually heavy, it’s not normally like this,” a Miyun resident surnamed Jiang said as water streamed down the road outside her house. “The road is full of water so people aren’t going to work,” she said. In Xinanzhuang village, journalists saw murky water had submerged homes, cars and a road. A local man in his sixties said he had never seen water levels so high.

Nearby, torrents of water gushed from spillways in the Miyun Reservoir, which authorities said reached its highest levels since its construction in 1959. Beijing’s northern Huairou district and southwestern Fangshan were also badly affected, state media said. Dozens of roads have been closed and over 130 villages have lost electricity, Beijing Daily said. “Please pay attention to weather forecasts and warnings and do not go to risk areas unless necessary,” the outlet said.

More than 10,000 people also evacuated their homes in the neighbouring port city of Tianjin, which saw major flash floods, according to state-owned nationalist tabloid Global Times. And in Hebei province, which encircles Beijing, a landslide in a village killed eight people, with four still missing, state broadcaster CCTV said on Tuesday. The army was mobilised to help disaster relief operations, the channel said.

Mudslides and floods forced more than 8,000 people to evacuate, while rescuers were still attempting to reach some villages that had “lost contact”, China National Radio said. Local authorities have issued flash flood warnings through Tuesday evening, with the city of Chengde and surrounding areas under the highest alert, Hebei’s radio and television station said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called on authorities to plan for worst-case scenarios and relocate residents of flood-threatened areas. The government and Communist Party have collectively allocated around 490 million yuan (\$68 million) for disaster relief in nine regions hit by heavy rains. Another 200 million yuan will be allocated for the capital. — AFP

PHILIPPINES TO ‘SEEK HELP’ IN SECURING RELEASE OF HELD SAILORS IN YEMEN

MANILA: The Philippines said on Tuesday it would ask “friendly countries” to help secure the release of nine Filipino sailors being held by Yemen’s Ansar Allah. The group released footage on Monday of crew members missing after attacks on the Eternity C and Magic Seas cargo ships, claiming in an accompanying statement to have “rescued” the mariners.

Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Eduardo De Vega confirmed the Yemenis were holding

nine Filipino seafarers. “I do not want to use the term hostage. At least we know they are alive,” he said. “We’re not going to talk directly with the Yemeni group.

We’re going to seek help from friendly countries,” he added. The European Union’s Operation Aspides naval task force said that 15 of the 25 people onboard the Eternity C were still missing — with four presumed dead.

Cosmoship, the owner of the Eternity C, urged Ansar Allah on

Tuesday to release its crew members “at the earliest opportunity”.

In a statement, the company expressed relief that “ten of our missing crew members, as well as one of the vessel’s security guards (11 in total), are alive and appear to be receiving care”, after viewing the footage. “We continue to work through every available channel to support their continued care and to facilitate their safe and swift return home to their families,” it added.

— AFP

UK to recognise Palestinian state unless Israel acts

PRIME Minister Keir Starmer announced on Tuesday that the UK will formally recognise the State of Palestine in September unless Israel takes various “substantive steps” in Gaza, including agreeing to a ceasefire.

The potentially landmark move, part of a plan for “lasting peace” that Starmer is putting forward, came after the UK leader recalled his cabinet from recess for urgent talks on the worsening situation in the besieged territory.

Starmer told his ministers that London will formally recognise a Palestinian state in September if the Israeli government has not taken the steps demanded, his office said.

They include ending “the appalling situation in Gaza”, reaching a ceasefire, making “clear there will be no annexation in the West Bank”, and committing “to a long-term peace process that delivers a two-state solution,” it added.

“I have always said that we will recognise a Palestinian state as a contribution to a proper peace process at the moment of maximum impact for the two-state solution,” Starmer later said in a Downing Street address.

“With that solution now under threat, this is the moment to act.”

French President Emmanuel Macron said last week that his country would formally recognise a Palestinian state during the UN General Assembly meeting in September.

Starmer said, “The UK will recognise the state of Palestine by the



Palestinians climb onto trucks carrying aid supplies that entered Gaza in Beit Lahia on Tuesday. — Reuters



The UK will recognise the state of Palestine by the United Nations General Assembly in September unless the Israeli government takes substantive steps to end the appalling situation in Gaza”.

KEIR STARMER

United Nations General Assembly in September unless the Israeli government takes substantive steps to end the appalling situation in Gaza”.

The two countries would be the first G7 nations to do so, with Macron’s announcement last week drawing a strong rebuke from both Israel and the United States.

However, Starmer is believed to have presented his plan for the long-running conflict in the Middle East to US President Donald Trump when the pair met in Scotland on Monday.

Trump appeared to give his blessing for the recognition move, saying during a wide-ranging press conference lasting more than an hour that “I don’t mind him (Starmer) taking a position.” Speaking on Tuesday, Starmer also detailed several demands for the Palestinian group Hamas, which is holding Israeli

hostages seized in its attacks on October 7, 2023.

“They must immediately release all of the hostages, sign up to a ceasefire, disarm and accept that they will play no part in the government of Gaza,” he said. The UK leader added that London “will make an assessment in September on how far the parties have met these steps”, adding: “No one should have a veto over our decision.”

Starmer has been under growing domestic and international pressure to formally recognise a Palestinian state, as the humanitarian situation in Gaza dramatically worsens.

Macron publicly pressed for joint recognition of Palestine during his UK state visit earlier this month, while an increasing number of MPs in Starmer’s ruling Labour party have been demanding action. — AFP

THAI-CAMBODIA CEASEFIRE HOLDS

A ceasefire between Thailand and Cambodia held on Tuesday and military commanders from both sides met to discuss measures to maintain the truce, as some residents along the disputed frontier trickled back home after five days of intense fighting. Thai and Cambodian leaders met in Malaysia on Monday and agreed to a ceasefire to halt their deadliest conflict in more than a decade, which has killed at least 43 people, many of them civilians, and displaced over 300,000 in both countries. Border areas remained calm, Thailand’s acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai told reporters in Bangkok, although he accused Cambodian troops of violating the ceasefire early on Tuesday. Cambodia denied this, insisting its troops had strictly abided by the ceasefire since midnight. — Reuters

HAPPY RETURN

Displaced Sudanese stream home from Egypt



The Sudanese families crowding into Cairo’s main railway station hoped to be returning to relative stability after fleeing Sudan’s civil war. They are among thousands of displaced Sudanese streaming back home from Egypt into territory retaken by the Sudanese armed forces from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary in Khartoum and its environs. The families were waiting to board a free train to the southern Egyptian city of Aswan. — Reuters

VIOLENCE ERUPTION

Unrest in Angola kills 4 in fuel hike protests



Shots rang out as Angola’s capital was gripped by a second day of looting on Tuesday, after at least four people were killed and scores arrested when violence erupted during a strike against a fuel price hike. Gunfire could be heard in central Luanda’s Cazenga area, where people were seen taking food and other items from shops. Images shared on social media showed clashes in the Rocha Pinto suburb near the airport. — AFP

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Fukushima debris removal delayed till 2037



A massive operation to remove hundreds of tonnes of radioactive debris from Japan’s Fukushima nuclear plant has been delayed until at least 2037. Around 880 tonnes of hazardous material remain inside the power station, site of one of history’s worst nuclear accidents after a tsunami triggered by a 9.0-magnitude earthquake in 2011. Preparation work needed to start the retrieval is expected to take “12 to 15” years from now, Tepco official Akira Ono said. — AFP

SHORTTAKES



A firefighter monitors a wildfire in Pombal, Portugal. — AFP

PORTUGAL
BATTLES THREE
LARGE WILDFIRES

CANELAS: More than 1,300 firefighters backed up by a dozen waterbombing planes battled three big wildfires in central and northern Portugal on Tuesday, with authorities putting most of the country on red alert for fires after weeks of hot weather. In the Arouca area, some 300 km north of Lisbon — where the largest of the fires has been raging since Monday -the civil protection service evacuated several dozen villagers from their homes and closed the scenic trails of Passadicos do Paiva, a popular tourist attraction. “It’s desperate to see this ... we need help, we need air support,” said Rafael Soares, a resident of the village of Canelas, recalling a devastating wildfire last September which burned 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of forest near Arouca. He blamed the fires on droughts linked to climate change that have left the area’s forests bone-dry. Further north, a wildfire has been raging since Saturday in the Peneda-Geres national park near the Spanish border, enveloping nearby villages in thick smoke that led to orders for residents to stay at home on several occasions. Spain sent several waterbombing aircraft to help control the flames in the area. Three wildfires were raging in Spain’s region of Castile and Leon early on Tuesday, the most severe one near Avila, about 100 km west of Madrid. People in the town of Mombeltran were ordered to remain inside due to the smoke. — Reuters

MIGRANTS AT ENGLISH CHANNEL



Migrants board a smuggler’s inflatable dinghy in an attempt to cross the English Channel off the beach of Gravelines, northern France. Tens of thousands more have reached Britain, where the government has vowed to crack down on people-smuggling gangs. French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced an agreement on a pilot programme to return migrants crossing the English Channel on small boats. — AFP

POPE WARNS
AGAINST
UNDERMINING
HUMAN
‘DIGNITY’ IN AI,
SOCIAL MEDIA
ERA

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo XVI on Tuesday called on the world to protect human “dignity” online as it faces the “challenge” of AI, at the Vatican’s first mass for Catholic influencers. He was speaking as thousands of young Catholics are in Rome this week for the Vatican’s Jubilee of Youth — an event that takes place every 25 years — and as the Catholic Church tries to promote its message online amid a fall in church attendance.

“Nothing that comes from man and his creativity should be used to undermine the dignity of others,” Leo told young Catholic social media figures at a mass in St Peter’s Basilica. He called on the world to protect “our ability to listen and speak” in the “new era” of artificial intelligence. The Vatican is holding a two-day event bringing together what it calls “digital missionaries and Catholic influencers” from around the world in a bid to promote its presence

online. It is the first time the centuries-old institution holds such an event. He also called on Catholic social media influencers to convince others to create content that will “entail seeking out those who suffer and need to know the Lord.” Since taking over the papacy in May, the pope — an American mathematics graduate — has repeatedly warned about the dangers of AI for young people. — AFP

Kremlin ‘committed’ to
peace amid strikes in Kyiv

THE Kremlin said on Tuesday that it wanted to pursue peace in Ukraine hours after mounting attacks that killed at least 25 people, including a 23-year-old pregnant woman and more than a dozen prison inmates. The strikes on several regions came hours after US President Donald Trump issued Moscow with a new deadline to end its grinding invasion of Ukraine — now in its fourth year — or face tough new sanctions.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of purposefully targeting a prison in the Zaporizhzhia region — that Russia claims as its own — killing 16 people and wounding more than 40 others. “It was a deliberate strike, intentional, not accidental. The Russians could not have been unaware that they were targeting civilians in that facility,” Zelensky said on social media in response. The Kremlin denied that claim. “The Russian army does not strike civilian targets,” spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Peskov added that Moscow had “taken note” of Trump’s new deadline and told journalists that it remained “committed to the peace process to resolve the conflict around Ukraine and secure our interests.” Ukraine’s justice ministry said Moscow’s forces hit the prison with four glide bombs, while police said 16 inmates were killed and 43 were wounded. Bricks and debris were strewn on the ground around buildings with blown-out windows, according to images released by the ministry. The facility’s perimeter was intact and there was no threat that inmates would escape, it added. Rescue workers were seen searching for survivors in pictures released by the region’s emergency services. A senior Ukrainian source said that 274 people were serving sentences in the Bilenkivska facility, where 30 people worked. The source added there were no Russian war prisoners being held at the centre. Ukraine’s human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said the Zaporizhzhia attack was further evidence of Russian “war crimes”. “People held in places of detention do not lose their right to life and protection,” he wrote on social media. In addition to the glide bomb attack, the Ukrainian air force



A serviceman walks at the site of the penal colony hit by a Russian air strike, in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine. — Reuters

said that Russia had launched 37 drones and two missiles overnight, adding that its air defence systems had downed 32 of the drones. Zelensky said that among the separate attacks, Russian forces had targeted a hospital in the town of the Kamyanske in the Dnipropetrovsk region. “Three people were killed in the attack, including a pregnant woman. Her name was Diana. She was only 23-years-old,” Zelensky said. Separate strikes in the eastern Kharkiv region that borders Russia killed six people, regional authorities said. In the southern Russian region of Rostov, a Ukrainian drone attack killed one person, the region’s acting governor said. Kyiv has been trying to repel Russia’s summer offensive, which has made fresh advances into areas largely spared since the start of the attack in 2022. The Russian defence ministry claimed fresh

advances across the sprawling front line on Tuesday, saying its forces had taken control of two more villages — one in the Donetsk region, and another in the Zaporizhzhia region. The prison strike on Tuesday came on the three-year anniversary of an attack on another detention facility in occupied Ukrainian territory that Kyiv blamed on Moscow and that was reported to have killed dozens of captured Ukrainian soldiers. Ukraine and Russia blamed each other for the strike over the night of July 29 three years ago on the detention centre in the Russian-occupied Donetsk region, which the Kremlin says is part of Russia. Ukraine says that dozens of its soldiers who laid down their arms after a long Russian siege of the port city of Mariupol were killed in that attack on the Olenivka detention facility. — AFP

Gunman kills four in New York skyscraper shooting spree

NEW YORK: A gunman with mental health issues opened fire in a central Manhattan skyscraper on Monday, killing four people including a policeman before apparently taking his own life, officials said. A fifth victim was in critical condition after being shot, Mayor Eric Adams told a late - night press briefing at a nearby hospital. The gunman was caught on surveillance footage leaving a black BMW and carrying an M-4 rifle, police commissioner Jessica Tisch told the news conference. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday called a mass shooting in New York a “senseless act of violence” carried out by a “lunatic.” Trump posted on social media that he had been briefed on late on Monday’s incident, in which a gunman shot four people, then apparently took his own life, in a Manhattan skyscraper. One of those killed was a police officer. “I trust our Law Enforcement Agencies to

get to the bottom of why this crazed lunatic committed such a senseless act of violence,” Trump posted. On entering the building, he immediately opened fire on a police officer before “spraying the lobby” with bullets, she said. The gunman then took an elevator to the 33rd floor of Rudin Management, which owns the building, and continued his spree before apparently shooting himself. He was later discovered by officers next to his weapon. The office tower block at 345 Park Avenue — home to the National Football League, hedge fund giant Blackstone, and auditor KPMG — was apparently targeted by the gunman, who is believed to have acted alone, Tisch said. The police commissioner identified the shooter as Shane Tamura from Las Vegas and said a revolver, ammunition and magazines were found in his vehicle. Tamura had a history of mental



Members of the NYPD Crime Scene Unit work at the scene of a deadly mass shooting in Manhattan. — Reuters

health issues, she said. The incident began around 6:00 pm when reports of gunfire prompted hundreds of police to swarm a busy office district on Park Avenue, an area popular

with tourists and businesspeople. A worker from a nearby office building wept as she left the area after a local lockdown was lifted. Another office worker described the gunman going floor-to-floor as

staff prepared to leave for the day. “We lost four souls to another act of senseless violence,” the city’s mayor said, excluding the shooter, who died by an apparently self-inflicted gunshot. Two other males and a female died and another man remained in a critical condition, officials said without giving any preliminary motive for the shootings. The gunman had a note in his pocket saying he suffered from CTE, the news channels said, quoting a source with knowledge of the investigation. Office worker Shad Sakib told AFP that he was packing his things to leave work when a public address announcement warned him and his colleagues to shelter in place. “Everyone was confused with like, ‘wait, what’s going on?’ And then someone finally realized that it’s online, that someone walked in with a machine gun,” the witness said. — AFP

OPINION

How healthy are the oceans? Ask a whale shark



MATTHEW ABBOTT

The author is an Australian storyteller and photojournalist

ON a calm morning in May, Brianna Beaulieu, a master’s student in marine biology at the University of Western Australia, and several researchers from around the world boarded two research vessels bound for Ningaloo Reef on Australia’s west coast.

The scientists have invested months of planning to spend just a few minutes in the water collecting data on one of the ocean’s most mysterious animals. Whale sharks are not whales. They are fish, the largest in the sea, growing up to 60 feet long. Yet, surprisingly little is known about their life cycle. Researchers still don’t know where whale sharks mate, how often they breed or where they go to give birth.

Beaulieu and her colleagues hope to gain at least some insights into these giants. A whale shark can easily be spotted from the air, cruising just below the surface of the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean. In May, they gather off the reef in numbers so high that, for the half-dozen spotter planes overhead, finding them is simple.

For 20 years, a team from the University of Western Australia has conducted annual fieldwork at Ningaloo Reef. Ningaloo is one of the world’s longest fringing reefs, formed unusually close to shore, and is listed as a Unesco World Heritage site.

At the reef, the scientists measure the lengths and dimensions of the animals and collect tissue samples for chemical analysis.

They also use drones to assess the body condition of the whale sharks: Are they getting fatter? Thinner? “Whale sharks can live for over 100 years and grow very slowly,” Meekan said.

“By monitoring them, we’re not just learning about the sharks, we’re learning about ocean health more broadly,” he said.

“These animals travel thousands of kilometres, so each one is like a sentinel or autonomous sampling unit moving across the Indian Ocean and returning to Ningaloo each year to tell the tale.” Much of Beaulieu’s research focuses on measuring the overall health of whale sharks and the impact of human-made threats on them, including boat strikes and “forever chemicals” in the water.

Whale sharks gather at Ningaloo Reef to feed on plankton that appear each year when coral spawn. Beaulieu dives into the water, taking a compact underwater camera to document a whale shark’s appearance. Her colleague Sophie Jones often joins her in the water, gripping a yard-long reference pole that provides a crucial scale to help researchers precisely determine the animal’s size, while a drone captures the scene from above.

The whale shark typically remains relatively calm as Beaulieu swims beneath it and holds a small ultrasound device above the surface of its skin, just behind the dorsal fin. The data, which measures skin depth and the condition of the muscles, is sent to

Researchers have developed tools that allow the public to contribute to whale shark science. Platforms such as Shark Guardian and Wildbook for Whale Sharks invite divers, tour operators and marine tourists to upload their photographs of whale sharks, ideally with a clear view of the area just behind the gills, where the spot patterns are most reliableRising

a veterinarian to assess the whale shark’s internal health and reproductive status.

The encounter lasts just a few minutes, before the whale shark disappears again into the deep blue. Beaulieu and the other researchers then swim to the surface and signal for pickup.

Then they do it all again. The team repeated the sequence 11 times that day: spotting, diving, documenting and collecting data. These few minutes with the whale sharks are the culmination of a year’s planning, a gigantic logistical effort to shadow a giant. In the 12 days of fieldwork, the researchers documented 101 whale shark encounters — a bumper year. In 2023, after their boat broke down, they had only four.

Researchers have developed tools that allow the public to contribute to whale shark science. Platforms such as Shark Guardian and Wildbook for Whale Sharks invite divers, tour operators and marine tourists to upload their photographs of whale sharks, ideally with a clear view of the area just behind the gills, where the spot patterns are most reliable.

Sophisticated pattern-matching algorithms then compare these images with an international database of more than 8,000 individual whale sharks, improving the ability of scientists to monitor their movements, residency, growth and health.

— The New York Times

RISING AI BANDS SIGNAL NEW ERA FOR MUSIC BUSINESS

THOMAS URBAIN

A rising tide of artificial intelligence (AI) bands is ushering in a new era where work will be scarcer for musicians.

Whether it’s Velvet Sundown’s 1970s-style rock or country music projects “Aventhis” and “The Devil Inside”, bands whose members are pure AI creations are seeing more than a million plays on streaming giant Spotify.

No major streaming service clearly labels tracks that come entirely from AI, except France’s Deezer.

Meanwhile, the producers of these songs tend to be unreachable.

“I feel like we’re at a place where nobody is really talking about it, but we are feeling it,” said music producer, composer and performer Leo Sidran. “There is going to be a lot of music released that we can’t really tell who made it or how it was made.” The Oscar-winning artist sees the rise of AI music as perhaps a sign of how “generic and formulaic” genres have become.

AI highlights the chasm between music people listen to “passively” while doing other things and “active” listening in which fans care about what artists convey, said producer and composer Yung Spielburg on the Imagine AI Live podcast.

Spielburg believes musicians will win out over AI with “active” listeners but will be under pressure when it comes to tunes people play in the background while cooking dinner or performing mundane tasks.

If listeners can’t discern which tunes are AI-made, publishers and labels will likely opt for synthetic bands that don’t earn royalties, Spielburg predicted.

“AI is already in the music business and it’s not going away because it is cheap and convenient,” said Mathieu Gendreau, associate professor at Rowan University in New Jersey, who is also a music industry executive.

“That will make it even more difficult for musicians to make a living.” Music streaming platforms already fill playlists with mood music attributed to artists about whom no information can be found, according to University of Rochester School of Music professor Dennis DeSantis.

Meanwhile, AI-generated soundtracks have become tempting, cost-saving options in movies, television shows, ads, shops and other venues, DeSantis added. — AFP

When a scandal weakens superpower’s influence

ALL politics is local.” That simple rule, drilled into former students of political science major like myself, has never felt more relevant. To truly understand the US’s aggressive foreign policy, its preference for coercion over cooperation in conflicts and trade wars, we must first understand its domestic pressures. Today, few domestic issues are more radioactive than the Epstein Files.

Jeffrey Epstein, the disgraced teacher-turned-financier with ties to some of the world’s most powerful elites, was convicted of trafficking of minors and died under highly suspicious circumstances while in federal custody in 2019. His case seemed buried, until now. In mid-2025, major US media outlets confirmed that the FBI had alerted President Donald Trump that his name appears in the sealed Epstein documents. The news shook an already divided nation and ignited a firestorm among both supporters and critics of the current administration.

President Trump’s reaction has followed a familiar script: Deny, distract, discredit. From threatening lawsuits to dismissing the news as a political hoax, his team has gone into full damage-control mode. However, this time, it might not be enough.

What makes this moment different is the dissent rising from within Trump’s own conservative base. Influential Republican commentators, legal experts, and even some key donors have expressed concern over the President’s lack of transparency. They’re not just worried about



KHALID AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

The Epstein Files risk becoming a national wake-up call, not just for Trump, but for the broader political establishment that has long insulated itself from accountability

the legal implications, they fear political collapse. The Epstein Files risk becoming a national wake-up call, not just for Trump, but for the broader political establishment that has long insulated itself from accountability.

HERE’S WHERE THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE COMES IN

Trump’s foreign policy, often called the “Trump Doctrine,” has been marked by unilateralism, economic extortion, and an unrelenting push to extract strategic and financial concessions from allies and adversaries alike. From China to Europe, the Global South to SWANA - South West Asia North Africa, US diplomacy has too often been replaced by tariffs, sanctions and threats. Many in these regions see a pattern of bullying, one driven more by domestic political calculations than by coherent international strategy.

With the Epstein scandal threatening to implode whatever is left of Trump’s moral authority, that bullying stance may finally soften. Internationally, there is growing hope that America will be forced to retreat inward to clean up its own house before it can continue exerting pressure on others. The US, distracted by scandal and divided by distrust, may soon find it harder to command obedience abroad.

This doesn’t mean a complete pivot to diplomacy overnight. Nevertheless, it could mean a reduced appetite for foreign adventurism. As domestic investigations into the Epstein Files widen, potentially implicating other prominent figures across

party lines, the bandwidth for aggressive foreign policy will shrink.

WINNERS AND LOSERS FROM THE EPSTEIN FILES FALLOUT

Winners:

Global South economies including the AGCC: Nations previously targeted by US sanctions or trade pressure may find temporary relief and room to recalibrate.

Multilateral institutions: With US distraction, bodies like the UN, BRICS and Asean may have more space to operate independently and broker regional solutions.

Whistleblowers and victims’ advocates: The public attention on Epstein may empower new calls for transparency and justice across borders.

Losers

The US foreign policy establishment: Long accustomed to operating with impunity, evident in the genocide in Palestine, the scandal could weaken its grip on global influence.

Allies of convenience: Governments that hitched their strategy to Trump’s aggressive policies, such as the Israeli Occupation, may find themselves isolated.

Wall Street hawks: A distracted or discredited administration could rattle financial markets tied to defence, surveillance and foreign interventions.

In the end, the Epstein Files are not just a domestic scandal. They are a political earthquake whose aftershocks could be felt in every capital around the world. For those seeking a fairer and more balanced international order, this may be the unexpected turning point.

A visit to reconnect with colleagues and friends



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

RETURNING to a nation, especially one where your dreams were fulfilled, stirs up a mix of joy and reflection on former times, as well as views on the present situation, creating a sense of attachment that is simultaneously comforting and reminiscent.

I jot down this as I return to Oman, brimming with fond memories of my time here — the atmosphere, the locals, the country’s charm... all of this inspires me to write effortlessly since there’s so much to share.

After being away for three years, I recently reconnected with my old colleagues at the Oman Daily Observer. It seemed like the years had vanished as we shared stories about how our lives had changed during this period.

The ambiance was a blend of happiness, thrill and reminiscence, stirring a flood of memories.

We updated each other on our lives, creating space to reflect on our common memories.

Connecting with them again highlighted the significance of fostering relationships that transcend our professional roles! It offered an opportunity to explore their transformation and to reconnect with the

shared history we have.

The happiness I felt from the reunion was less about how long I had known them or how much I had missed them, and more about the emotions they evoked in me, as they were the ones who supported me during my highs and lows.

I appreciate that Oman once again greeted me as a long-time friend. It is the best country to be in. Despite residing in Oman for more than 25 years, I experienced Oman as a tourist on this visit.

Certainly, going back to the country you hold dear provides insight into its growth and reveals the changes in your perspective. Whenever you arrive, you receive a distinctive view of being.

Situated on the south-eastern shore of the Arabian Peninsula, the country offers not only magnificent scenery and historic customs but also exemplifies peaceful international relationships and is emerging as a centre of economic prospects.

With its thrilling coastlines, impressive mountains, extensive deserts and stunning architecture, the Sultanate of Oman can certainly be seen as a piece of paradise on earth.

It may sound like an exaggeration, but after more than 25 years in Oman, I can surely claim that the nation reflects all these traits. My strong affection for Oman arises

I jot this down as I return to Oman, brimming with fond memories of my time here — the atmosphere, the locals, the country’s charm... all of this inspires me to write effortlessly since there’s so much to share

from both my personal experiences and professional involvement while working here.

Oman hosts thousands of expatriates who appreciate working in an amazing environment that harmoniously combines tradition and modernity. It is known for being one of the safest nations in the area, with minimal crime rates, providing a feeling of security for both residents and tourists.

There is no doubt that Oman’s stunning and striking scenery captures the amazement of all.

The relaxed way of life, the welcoming Omanis, and the agreeable climate all combine to create a wonderful place to reside. Oman’s advantage is found in both affordability and quality of living. Its cities are less crowded, infrastructure is dependable, and its community ties remain strong.

Muscat’s combination of historic Arabian design and contemporary infrastructure immediately enchants anyone who enters the city. The amenities available and appreciated in any contemporary, cosmopolitan city can also be found in this country.

With all this in mind, I will be preparing to go back to my homeland, wishing to come back to this serene, tranquil and secure nation, where the people are remarkably kind, courteous and hospitable.

HEALTH RISKS FOR PHILIPPINE E-WASTE DISMANTLERS

PAM CASTRO

Dexter Barsigan has spent the past 13 years making a living with his bare hands and a pair of pliers, stripping scrapped laptops and air conditioners for metal he can sell to junk shops in the Philippines.

But since his hands began aching and his vision started to blur three years ago, there have been days he can only watch his wife and nephew do the job for him.

The 47-year-old father of three is a “mambabaklas”, the Filipino word for informal dismantlers who scavenge electronic waste for the nickel, aluminium and copper inside.

“Dismantling helps us put food on the table. It provides the money to send my kids to school,” Barsigan said while sitting along a kilometre-long stretch of Onyx Street, home to hundreds of fellow “e-waste” dismantlers.

Their work frequently involves burning away rubber wire casings, releasing a toxic brew of chemicals including lead, mercury and cadmium into the air.

Both the Philippine government and the Basel Convention, a global waste management treaty signed by 191 countries, consider e-waste hazardous.

“It poses serious threats to human health and the environment,” said Irvin Cadavona, a hazardous waste management officer with the environment department, citing health risks ranging from cancer and neurological diseases to respiratory illnesses and birth defects.

The World Health Organization said last year exposure to e-waste chemicals can lead to incidents of asthma and reduced lung function in children, while pregnant women are at higher risk for stillbirths and premature delivery.

“It’s very hard to recycle these (chemicals). When you dismantle (e-waste), you must intricately break it down. It can be very hazardous,” Gelo Apostol, an environmental health specialist from Ateneo de Manila University, said.

Exposure to the substances can lead to anaemia, kidney and thyroid diseases, and nerve damage, he said.

The Philippines is among the top e-waste generators in Southeast Asia, according to the United Nations’ Global E-waste Monitor, accounting for 540 million kilogrammes in 2022.

Dismantlers who work at the country’s accredited facilities are required to follow stringent guidelines. But their informal counterparts lack the training, regulations and protective equipment needed to properly protect themselves.

“I strongly believe that some Filipinos are getting sick because of the exposure to e-waste,” Cadavona said.

Barsigan, who doesn’t wear a mask while working, prefers dismantling computer circuit boards with aluminium and copper because they fetch as much as P470 (\$8) per kg. — AFP

Brazil’s brave stand against Trump

FOR decades, the United States was the champion of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Of course, there were glaring discrepancies between rhetoric and reality: during the Cold War, the US overturned democratically elected governments in Greece, Iran, Chile, and elsewhere in the name of defeating Communism. At home, the US was in a battle to uphold African-Americans’ civil rights a century after slavery’s end. More recently, the US Supreme Court has acted aggressively to restrict efforts to rectify the legacies of the long history of racial discrimination.

But while the US has often failed to practice what it preached, now it does neither. President Donald Trump and the Republican Party have seen to that.

In his first term, Trump’s contempt for the rule of law culminated in his attempt to overturn democracy’s most important principle: the peaceful transition of power. He claimed – and still insists – that he won the 2020 election, even though Joe Biden received some seven million more votes, and even though dozens of courts ruled that there had been no significant electoral irregularities.

Anyone familiar with Trump may not have been surprised; the big surprise was that some 70 per cent of Republicans believe that the election was rigged. Many Americans – including a majority of one of the two major parties – have gone down the rabbit hole of outlandish conspiracy theories and disinformation. For many Trump supporters, democracy and the rule of law are less important than preserving the American way of life, which in practice means ensuring domination by white males at the expense of everyone else. For better and for worse, America has long provided a model for others to follow. And unfortunately, there are demagogues around the world more than willing to adapt Trump’s formula of trampling on democratic institutions and repudiating the values that underpin them. A prominent example is Brazil’s



Lula has defended his country’s sovereignty not only in trade



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

The writer is a Nobel laureate in economics and University Professor at Columbia University, is a former chief economist of the World Bank (1997-2000), and former chair of the US President’s Council of Economic Advisers

former president, Jair Bolsonaro, who went so far as to try to emulate the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol to prevent Biden’s election. That attempted coup on January 8, 2023, in Brasília was larger than the attack on the US Capitol, but Brazil’s institutions held firm – and now they are demanding that Bolsonaro be held accountable.

Meanwhile, the US has been moving in the opposite direction since Trump’s return to the White House in January. Once again, Trump has made it clear that he loves tariffs and abhors the rule of law – even violating the trade agreement he made with Mexico and Canada in his first term. And now, ignoring the US Constitution, which gives Congress the sole authority to impose taxes – and tariffs are just a particular tax on imports of goods and services – he has threatened to impose a 50 per cent tariff on Brazil unless it stops the prosecution of Bolsonaro.

Here was Trump violating the rule of law to insist that Brazil, which has adhered to all the strictures of due process in prosecuting Bolsonaro, do the same. Congress has never enacted tariffs as an instrument for inducing countries to obey a president’s political dictates, and Trump could cite no law that gave him even a fig leaf for his

unconstitutional actions.

What Brazil is doing stands in marked contrast to what has happened in the US. While the legal process had moved slowly but judiciously to hold to account those who had participated in the January 6 insurrection, immediately after his second inauguration, Trump used the president’s pardon power to forgive all who had been duly convicted – even the most violent. Complicity in an attack that left five people dead and more than 100 police officers injured was no crime.

Like China, Brazil has refused to submit to America’s bullying. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silvacalled Trump’s threat “unacceptable blackmail,” adding, “No foreigner is going to give orders to this president.”

Lula has defended his country’s sovereignty not only in the domain of trade, but also in regulating US-controlled tech platforms. America’s tech oligarchs use their money and influence worldwide to try to force countries to give them free reign to pursue their profit-maximising strategies, which inevitably cause enormous harms, including by serving as a channel of misinformation and disinformation. As in recent elections in Canada and Australia, Lula got a “Trump bump” in national support as Brazilians recoiled from the US administration and rallied around him. But that wasn’t what motivated Lula to take his stance. It was a genuine belief in Brazil’s right to pursue its own policies without foreign meddling.

Under Lula’s leadership, Brazil has chosen to reaffirm its commitment to the rule of law and democracy, even as America seems to be renouncing its own Constitution. It must be hoped that other leaders of countries large and small will demonstrate similar bravery in the face of bullying by the world’s most powerful country. Trump has undermined democracy and the rule of law in the US – perhaps irreparably. He must not be allowed to do so elsewhere.

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SPORTS

GULF CUP



The approved list of participating clubs included eight teams.

AL NAHDA TO REPRESENT OMAN IN GULF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 29

The Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) announced on Monday the approved list of the clubs that will take part in the 2025-2026 AGCFF Gulf Cup Champions League which returns to action after a long absence. The Al Nahda club will represent the Sultanate of Oman in this Gulf event.

This regional tournament will be held under the umbrella of the AGCFF and feature eight clubs nominated by the respective national football associations of the GCC member states. It is expected that the AGCFF Gulf Cup Champions League will begin in October and conclude in April 2026. The draw for the event will take place in August or September. The playing format of the event will see the eight teams distributed into two groups as each group will feature four teams. The top two teams in each group will advance to the semifinals.

The approved list of participating clubs included eight teams including: Al Ain Club – representative of the UAE Football Association, Sitra Club – representative of the Bahrain Football Association, Al Shabab Club – representative of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, Zakho Club – representative of the Iraq Football Association, Al Nahda Club – representative of the Oman Football Association, Al Rayyan Club – representative of the Qatar Football Association, Tadhamon Hadhramout Club – representative of the Yemen Football Association and Al Qadsia Club – representative of the Kuwait Football Association.

This formal confirmation comes as part of the ongoing preparations for the highly anticipated edition of the championship which will aim to enhance football competitiveness among Gulf clubs besides fostering technical exchange, and contributing to the professional development of football in the region.

Shabab Al Ahli from the UAE had won the title three times along with Saudi clubs Ahli Club and Al Ittifaq. The GCC Champions League is considered as one of prestigious platform for clubs in the Gulf region to showcase their talent, tactical strength and footballing heritage. It will act as an opportunity to raise the level of competition and deepen cooperation between member associations.

The previous edition of the tournament saw Iraq’s Duhok Club crowned champions after a thrilling two-legged final against Kuwait’s Al Qadsia Club. Duhok secured a dramatic 2-1 victory in the return leg, clinching the title and setting a high bar for the tournament’s future.



The draw for the event will take place in August or September.

Dawood clinches gold at 2025 Asian taekwondo

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 29

OMAN’S national taekwondo team member Dawood bin Fahd al Yousfi clinched a gold medal in the under-45 kg category at the 2025 Asian Taekwondo Championship, currently being held in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, under the supervision of the Asian Taekwondo Union and World Taekwondo. With this medal, the national team’s tally rises to two medals the first being a bronze earned by Qaboos al Balushi.

The championship brought together over 1,300 athletes from 44 countries, including 406 juniors from 36 nations. Al Yousfi’s gold marks another historic achievement for Omani sports.

Al Yousfi showcased his dominance in this category, delivering exceptional performances in all rounds of the championship. His balanced offensive approach and strong defense enabled him to advance confidently to the final match, where he sealed victory and ascended the podium to claim gold.

Commenting on the achievement, national coach Fahd al Yousfi emphasised that the Asian Taekwondo Championship is one of the toughest in the world, noting that most world champions come from Asia. This makes competition at this championship extremely challenging and demands top-tier preparation.

He added that the Omani team delivered an honourable performance, particularly in the youth category, which demonstrated great discipline and commitment throughout the tournament. Qaboos al Balushi earned a bronze medal, while Dawood al Yousfi excelled in the juniors’ category to claim gold -- an accomplishment that reflects the results of thorough preparation.

Regarding preparations before the championship, Al Yousfi explained that the training for Dawood al Yousfi in the juniors’ category was of the highest level. The team held two weeks of internal training camps, followed by two external camps two weeks in South Korea and four days in Thailand. This comprehensive programme was designed to reach peak



Gold medal winner Dawood al Yousfi with other medal winners on the podium.

performance before the championship. He noted that the readiness level before the competition was at its highest, saying We were confident in our players’ ability to deliver strong performances, as they entered the championship in top technical, physical, and mental condition.

FIERCE COMPETITION
Speaking about the level of competition, Al Yousfi said the competition was extremely fierce, as the championship brings together some of the strongest athletes in the world, including world champions and Olympic medalists. Any lapse in focus could knock a player out of the first round.

He added that Dawood al Yousfi delivered an impressive performance that amazed everyone. He managed his bouts intelligently, maintained composure under pressure, and capitalised on his

opponents’ weaknesses. Qaboos al Balushi also displayed great fighting spirit despite the strength of his opponents, reaching the semifinals and earning bronze.

Regarding how players deal with pressure, Al Yousfi explained as a coaching staff, we make sure to ease players’ anxiety and stress before matches through mental preparation and motivation, because mental readiness is the key to strong performance in tournaments like this.

Al Yousfi concluded by affirming that the future of taekwondo in Oman is bright. “We have promising talents that require care and continuous follow-up. Thanks to the strong support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Olympic Committee and the Oman Taekwondo Committee, we are confident that these achievements will continue and multiply in future competitions.”

Salalah Club lead intense battle at Oman Open chess

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 29

The Clubs Chess Championship for the Open category, organised by the Oman Chess Committee from July 24 to 31 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, has witnessed an atmosphere of excitement and fierce competition among 20 teams representing 13 clubs from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, with the participation of 100 male and female players of different ages and skill levels.

The championship is being played under the Swiss system over nine rounds, with a time control of 90 minutes plus a 30-second increment per move, making each match a true test of the players’ mental abilities and tactical strategies. From the very first round, the matches have reflected the strong technical preparation of the players and the overall development of the participating clubs’ standards.

By the end of the fifth



20 teams representing 13 clubs from the various governorates are taking part.

round, Salalah Club (A) lead the overall standings after a streak of consecutive victories, followed closely by Masirah Club (B) in second place with a narrow point difference, while Masirah Club (A) occupy third place. The coming rounds are expected to bring even more excitement, given the slim margins separating the top three teams.

In terms of key results,

the first round showcased Salalah (A)’s strength with a sweeping 4–0 win over Seeb. Masirah also defeated Oman by the same scoreline, while Nakhal secured an important 3–1 victory over Nizwa. In the second round, Salalah (A) continued their fine form with a 3.5–1.5 win over Qurayat, while the encounter between Masirah and Nakhal ended in a balanced 2–2 draw. The third round saw an exciting win for Salalah (A) over Masirah (B) by 2.5–1.5, with Nakhal also prevailing over Al Hamra by the same margin.

In the fourth round, Salalah (A) kept up their winning streak by overcoming Masirah (A) 2.5–1.5, while Qurayat claimed an important 3–1 victory over Al Suwaiq. In the fifth round, Salalah (A) stayed firmly on course with a 2.5–1.5 win against Nakhal, while Masirah secured another key win, beating Qurayat 3–1 to strengthen their position.

The Oman Chess Committee aims, through this championship, to provide

an ideal platform for fair competition between clubs and to raise the technical level of local players by engaging them in well-organised tournaments. This has positively impacted the international ratings of several participants in the Fide ranking. The event also serves as an important scouting ground for the national team’s technical staff to discover promising talents and refine their skills in preparation for upcoming regional and international events.

Beyond the battle for top spots, the championship has fostered a friendly atmosphere reflecting the high level of sportsmanship among participants, with teams exchanging experiences and discussing strategies. This has helped create an environment that encourages continuous improvement. With the closeness of competition and the strong desire of all teams to reach the podium, the remaining rounds promise plenty of surprises.

LEADERSHIP AWARDS



The award celebrates Oman Sail’s long-standing efforts to embed sustainability across its operations and events.

OMAN SAIL WINS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES AWARD

MUSCAT: Oman Sail has been recognised for its ongoing commitment to sustainability, ocean protection and national development with the Sustainable Business Practices Award at the prestigious Oman Leadership Awards 2025. The award celebrates Oman Sail’s long-standing efforts to embed sustainability across its operations and events, using sport as a platform to raise environmental awareness, empower young people, and contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Through a combination of sailing programmes, community engagement, coastal clean-ups, and strategic collaborations, Oman Sail is helping to build a more sustainable future for Oman’s coastline and communities.



DR KHAMIS BIN SALIM AL JABRI
CEO of Oman Sail



This award reflects the collective dedication of our team, partners, and communities. Sustainability is more than a principle for us; it’s a daily responsibility.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, commented, “This award reflects the collective dedication of our team, partners, and communities. Sustainability is more than a principle for us; it’s a daily responsibility. We’re proud to play a role in protecting our marine environment, developing youth potential, and contributing to the blue economy by having a positive impact on the nation’s natural assets.”

From reducing single-use plastic use at events to launching environmental initiatives and supporting eco-tourism with SeaOman brand, Oman Sail’s sustainability strategy is

aligned with both the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Oman’s national ambitions to ensure progress is measurable and can make a tangible difference to the community and the environment.

The Oman Leadership Awards, organised by World CSR Day, recognise organisations and individuals making exceptional contributions in leadership, corporate responsibility, and sustainability across the region.



Katie Ledecky of the US in action during the 1,500m freestyle final in Singapore. — Reuters

Ledecky claims 1,500m freestyle for 22nd gold

KATIE Ledecky cruised to a dominant 1,500m freestyle gold in Singapore on Tuesday to claim the 22nd world title of her storied career. The American great touched the wall in 15min 26.44sec, ahead of Simona Quadarella of Italy in 15:31.79 and Australia’s Lani Pallister in 15:41.18.

The masterful win moved all-time great Ledecky four short of Michael Phelps’s career tally of 26 world gold medals.

It also gave her the sixth world 1,500m freestyle title of her career and she paraded around the arena afterwards with the American flag.

“I love this race. This race was the race that I broke my first world record in in 2013,” said Ledecky, 28, who has won nine Olympic golds.

“Lots of great races and memories over the years at worlds. I’m happy I could do it in Singapore.”

Ledecky was the red-hot favourite going into the race, having qualified for the final over 10 seconds faster than nearest challenger Pallister.



Gold medallist Katie Ledecky of the US celebrates on the podium after winning the final with silver medallist Italy’s Simona Quadarella and bronze medallist Australia’s Lani Pallister. — Reuters

She also went into the race owning the top 24 1,500m freestyle times ever, and set the second-fastest time in history in April behind her own record.

Ledecky and Pallister broke clear of the rest of the field early on, with the Australian determined to keep close to the American.

Both were on world record pace at the 500m mark before Ledecky began to leave Pallister behind.

Ledecky was in a class of her own from there on, with the world record still within sight.

That prospect drained away in the closing stages but by that time the gold was in the bag.

“Lani took it out there. I knew she would be out fast and I just wanted to get out fast, but comfortable enough that I could go from there,” said Ledecky.

“I’m happy with the time and happy with the swim.”

The victory gave Ledecky her first gold medal of the championships, after picking up a bronze behind Summer McIntosh in the 400m freestyle on Sunday’s opening night.

Ledecky is set to go head-to-head with Canadian phenomenon McIntosh again in Singapore in the 800m freestyle.

Ledecky’s win came against the backdrop of a gastroenteritis outbreak in the American team, which managing director Greg Meehan said had affected the “overwhelming majority” of the squad. — AFP

Australia complete 5-0 T20 series sweep against West Indies

SAINT KITTS: Australia completed a 5-0 sweep of the West Indies in their Twenty20 international series with Ben Dwarshuis’s bowling paving the way for a three wicket victory in Basseterre, Saint Kitts on Monday.

Mitchell Owen top scored for Australia with 37 off 17 balls, while Cameron Green (32), Tim David (30) and Aaron Hardie (28 nout out) all made valuable contributions as the visitors reached their target of 171 with 18 balls to spare.

The match sealed the first T20 series sweep by an Australian men’s team in the West Indies, and saw them end the tour with a perfect 8-0 record after a similar sweep in the three test series.

“I didn’t expect 5-0 at the start of the series,” Australia captain

AUSTRALIA CLINCH THREE WICKETS WIN IN FIFTH T20I

COMPLETE 5-0 SERIES SWEEP

DWARSHUIS TAKES KEY WICKETS

Mitchell Marsh said. “But we played some great cricket. It was something we spoke about after the fourth game.

“We knew no Australian team had completed a clean sweep. We’ve had guys come in and played different roles for us.”

The match featured 15 sixes, which Marsh attributed to the size of



Sean Abbott of Australia hits 4 to win the fifth and final Twenty20 international against West Indies at Warner Park Sporting Complex in Basseterre. — AFP

the venue.

“I think it’s a small ground, so there’s always going to be more sixes than normal,” he said.

“But I think if you look down our batting order in all the five games, we had a lot of power and I guess the messaging was just to play their natural game.”

Marsh also lauded the performance of his relatively inexperienced bowlers in the death overs.

“I’m pretty sure in the last four overs, we didn’t go for more than 40 or 50 across the five games,” he said.

“It’s really hard to do. So I think all of them executed. Nathan Ellis was outstanding, Sean Abbott was brilliant. Ben Dwarshuis hasn’t played a lot, did a really good role,

and even Xavier Bartlett has grown and grown as a bowler.”

West Indies fans must have feared the worst when Australia won a fifth straight toss and bowled the hosts out for 170, a total they reached thanks in large part to Shimron Hetmyer’s knock of 52 off 31 balls.

Dwarshuis picked up Hetmyer’s wicket as well as those of openers Brandon King (11) and Shai Hope (9).

“It was a little bit of a slower wicket so we tried to hit the wicket hard and use the slower balls as well,” said Dwarshuis, who was named player of the match.

Australia return home for a limited overs series against South Africa, while the West Indies play Pakistan in three T20Is and three one day internationals. — Reuters

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



AL NASSR SIGN JOAO FELIX FROM CHELSEA

Portugal forward Joao Felix has joined Saudi Pro League side Al Nassr from Club World Cup winners Chelsea on a two-year contract, the two teams said on Tuesday. “Let’s win together ... Joao Felix is a Nasraoui,” Al Nassr wrote on X, along with a short video of the striker. “I’m here to have fun and win together,” the 25-year old said.

Neither club disclosed any financial details of the deal, but Sky Sports said the transfer could cost up to 43.7 million pounds (\$58.17 million), consisting of an initial 26.2 million fee plus 17.5 million in potential add-ons.

Felix moved from Benfica to Atletico Madrid in 2019 when he was only 19 and then joined Chelsea on loan for the 2022-2023 campaign before being loaned to Barcelona the following season. He made a permanent move to Chelsea in August 2024.

After just six months, Chelsea loaned the forward to AC Milan before his latest transfer to Saudi Arabia. Felix will play alongside Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo at Al Nassr, who are coached by compatriot Jorge Jesus. They face Al Ittihad in the Saudi Super Cup semifinals on August 19. — Reuters



DIAZ IN MUNICH TO SIGN WITH BAYERN

MUNICH: Liverpool forward Luis Diaz arrived in Munich on Tuesday for his medicals at Bayern Munich, the Bild newspaper and broadcaster Sky reported.

Bild spotted the player after he landed at the Munich airport, pictures published by the tabloid showed.

Diaz is expected to sign a four-year contract with the Bavarian club and an official announcement should follow.

Bayern will reportedly pay 75 million (\$86.4 million) to Liverpool for the transfer.

If everything goes as planned, Diaz could make his debut for Bayern in a friendly against Olympique Lyon on Saturday.

Liverpool were initially not willing to sell Diaz, but the situation changed after they managed to sign Hugo Ekitike from Eintracht Frankfurt.

Bayern are looking for a new attacking player following the departures of Leroy Sané and Thomas Müller, and after they failed to sign Florian Wirtz, who moved from Leverkusen to Liverpool. — dpa



Team Visma | Lease a Bike’s Dutch rider Marianne Vos celebrates on the podium with the overall leader’s yellow jersey after the third stage. — AFP

Vos takes Tour yellow as Wiebes wins third stage

VETERAN Dutch rider Marianne Vos took the overall leader’s jersey in the women’s Tour de France on Monday after finishing second behind compatriot Lorena Wiebes on the third stage.

Three-time former world champion Vos, 38, moved six seconds ahead of Mauritius’ Kim Le Court in the general classification after a flat 163.5km ride from La Gacilly to Angers in western France.

France’s Olympic cross-country champion Pauline Ferrand-Prevot completed the top three, 12 seconds behind, with last year’s Tour winner Katarzyna Niewiadoma fourth.

One-day expert Vos has made an impressive start to this year’s edition of the Tour, having won Saturday’s opening stage in Vannes. Despite her incredible list of achievements, including 2012’s Olympic gold, the women’s Giro d’Italia and countless Classic success, she has yet to win the Tour, but wore the yellow jersey in 2022 for five days. “We knew there was quite a good chance for a bunch sprint,” Vos said.

“In the end when it comes to a bunch sprint you know that Lorena Wiebes is going to be the big favourite, but of course you still always try,” she added.

The end of the stage on the banks of the Loire river, best known for wine production, was marred by a mass crash as pre-stage



Dutch rider Lorena Wiebes celebrates on the podium after winning the third stage. — AFP

favourite Demi Vollering fell. FDJ-SUEZ’s Dutch rider Vollering, who finished second overall last year, remains fifth in the overall standings despite the incident with 3.7km to go to the finish line.

“She wants to continue, but we just need time to go to the hotel, examine, go to the hospital and after one night, we can come back to you to tell you,” FDJ-SUEZ’s general manager Stephen Delcourt told reporters.

“She’s completely shocked. She has a pain

at the knees, a pain at the glutes and pain at the back. “We need to wait, because we never know if it’s just the shock because she crashed or she needs time,” he added.

After the crash, two-time European champion Wiebes, 26, held on to secure her fourth Tour stage win, adding to her 15 wins this season. Tuesday’s fourth of nine stages on the fourth women’s Tour is another flat ride, stretching 130.7km south from Saumur, also on the Loire river, to Poitiers. — AFP

Bouchard extends career with first round win at Canadian Open

MONTREAL, Canada: Hometown hero Eugenie Bouchard beat Emiliana Arango 6-4 2-6 6-2 in the first round of the Canadian Open in Montreal on Monday, a win that delayed the former world number five’s retirement.

Bouchard announced earlier this month she would walk away from the sport after the tournament but added a condition to that plan in the wake of her thrilling victory in front of a packed crowd. “If I win this tournament, I will not retire,” she said in an on court interview.

Playing in only her second singles match of the year, Bouchard blasted a forehand winner to take the first set but Colombian Arango turned the tables in the second set amid a cascade of unforced errors from her



Eugenie Bouchard (CAN) returns the ball against Emiliana Arango (COL) in first round play at IGA Stadium. — Reuters

opponent.

However, Bouchard broke for a 3-1 lead in the decider and hammered a swinging volley to extend the advantage to 4-1. The 31-year old wildcard put her hands on her head and then her heart after securing the victory to set up a second round meeting with 17th seed Belinda Bencic of Switzerland.

Briton Emma Raducanu beat her good friend Elena Gabriela Ruse of Romania 6-2 6-4 and will next meet 32nd seed Peyton Stearns.

“It’s very difficult to play someone who you are close to,” Raducanu said. “I’m really glad about how I was able to put that to one side for the match and back up a good week in DC.”

Four-time Grand Slam winner

Naomi Osaka of Japan beat Canadian qualifier Ariana Arseneault 6-4 6-2 in breezy conditions to set up a second-round meeting with 13th seed Liudmila Samsonova of Russia.

In the men’s tournament, which is being playing in Toronto, Australian Adam Walton roared back from a set down to defeat Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi 4-6 6-0 6-3 and set up a second-round meeting with top seed Alexander Zverev of Germany.

Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta, the tournament’s 2022 champion, came from behind to defeat Liam Draxl 2-6 6-4 6-4. Several top players withdrew ahead of the Masters and WTA 1000 tournament including world number ones Aryna Sabalenka and Jannik Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz, Novak Djokovic and Jack Draper. — Reuters



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Oman’s trade balance surplus exceeds RO 2.4 billion

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s trade balance recorded a surplus of RO 2.454 billion by the end of May 2025, a 38.5-per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2024, which recorded a surplus of RO 3.989 billion.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed a 9.6-per cent decrease in the total value of merchandise exports, reaching RO 9.639 billion by the end of May 2025, compared to RO 10.659 billion during the same period in 2024. This decline is primarily attributed to a 15.2-per cent decline in Oman’s oil and gas exports, reaching RO 6.315 billion by the end of May 2025, compared to RO 7.444 billion during the same period in 2024.

Conversely, Oman’s non-oil commodity exports witnessed a significant growth of 7.2 per cent, reaching RO 2.701 billion by the end of May 2025, compared to



Oman’s non-oil commodity exports witnessed a significant growth of 7.2 per cent.

RO 2.521 billion during the same period in 2024.

Re-exports from Oman registered a 10.3-per cent decline by the end of May 2025, reaching

RO 623 million, compared to RO 695 million during the same period in 2024.

The data showed a 7.7-per cent increase in the total value

of merchandise imports to the Sultanate of Oman, reaching RO 7.185 billion by the end of May 2025, compared to RO 6.670 billion during the same period in 2024.

On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates topped the list of non-oil trade exchanges by the end of May 2025, with exports to it reaching RO 485 million, achieving a growth of 22.9 per cent compared to the end of May 2024.

It also topped the list of countries to which the Sultanate of Oman re-exported, with RO 248 million, and also topped the list of countries exporting to the Sultanate of Oman, with imports from it reaching RO 1.651 billion.

Saudi Arabia ranked second among Oman’s non-oil exports, with a value of RO 451 million, followed by India with RO 280 million. In terms of re-exports, Iran ranked second with a value of RO 109 million, followed by Saudi Arabia with RO 45 million.

Among the countries exporting to the Sultanate of Oman, Kuwait ranked second with imports worth RO 731 million, followed by China with RO 698 million. — ONA



المتحدة للتمويل
United Finance

أنتج المزيد
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH JUNE 2025

OVERVIEW AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The first half of 2025 has continued the strong momentum built through 2024, positioning United Finance Company SAOG firmly on its growth trajectory.

For the period ending 30th June 2025, United Finance recorded a net profit after tax of **RO 1.21 million**, representing a robust increase of **32.6%** compared to the same period last year. Total assets grew to **RO 120.3 million**, supported by healthy growth in our loan book and disciplined operational execution. Gross Instalment Finance Receivables rose to **RO 125.8 million**, an increase of **13.9%**, reflecting higher demand and effective market engagement.

This progress is the result of disciplined execution across all business units, continued improvements in credit quality, and prudent cost management. We remain committed to enhancing customer experience, expanding our digital capabilities, and delivering timely, practical finance solutions for individuals and businesses.

Oman’s macroeconomic landscape remains stable, underpinned by steady oil revenues and continued reforms under Vision 2040. Government investments in sectors like logistics, tourism, and technology signal long-term opportunities for growth. Our strategy is fully aligned with these national priorities, with an increasing focus on eco-friendly financing, SME support, and optimising our branch network.

Looking ahead, United Finance is determined to grow responsibly, invest in modern systems, deepen customer engagement, and maintain strong risk discipline. We will continue to build on our solid foundations while remaining agile in navigating an evolving market environment.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

- **Net Profit After Tax** rose to **RO 1.21 million**, up **32.6%** year-on-year
- **Total Assets** increased to **RO 120.3 million**
- **Total Revenue** grew by **18.7%**
- **Gross Instalment Finance Receivables** expanded to **RO 125.8 million**, up **13.9%**
- Return on Equity and Capital Adequacy remain strong and stable
- Cost controls and portfolio quality continue to support profitability margins

During the period, new initiatives included enhancements to our quality improvement program “Jawda,” progress in our core system upgrade project, and the successful opening of the Maabalah branch—an important milestone in improving accessibility and serving the automotive trading hub.

PROVISIONING POSITION

A prudent approach to risk management remains central to our operations. Provisions were allocated in line with portfolio growth and evolving credit profiles. Our provisioning remains fully compliant with IFRS 9 and regulatory standards, ensuring we maintain a healthy balance between growth and risk discipline.

FUNDING

United Finance continues to maintain a stable liquidity position. Our recent successfully oversubscribed bond issuance has further strengthened our capital base and demonstrated market confidence in our strategy. Renewed funding lines and diversified credit facilities provide the necessary financial strength to support both operational needs and future growth plans. We remain focused on optimising our funding mix, reducing the cost of capital wherever possible, and maintaining robust relationships with our banking partners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Board expresses its deepest appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tark Al Said - may he be granted long life and wisdom—for his continued leadership of Oman’s development journey. We also extend our gratitude to the Central Bank of Oman, the Capital Market Authority, and the Financial Services Authority for their guidance and oversight.

We thank our shareholders, customers, dealers, and business partners for their ongoing support and confidence. The Board also acknowledges the dedication and hard work of United Finance’s management and employees, whose unwavering commitment has driven these strong results.

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	2025 RO	2024 RO
Interest income on instalment finance income	5,256,918	4,606,424
Interest expense	(1,780,816)	(1,553,254)
Net instalment finance income	3,476,102	3,053,170
Fee commission and other income	896,414	577,673
Net operating income	4,372,516	3,630,843
Operating expenses	(2,189,970)	(1,956,624)
Depreciation	(76,643)	(67,678)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(680,828)	(531,738)
Profit before tax	1,425,075	1,074,803
Income tax expense	(213,761)	(161,221)
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	1,211,314	913,582
Basic and Diluted earnings per share	0.007	0.005

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

	2025 RO	2024 RO
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,093,063	2,182,481
Deposit with the Central Bank of Oman	250,000	250,000
Other assets	1,151,312	675,774
Instalment finance debtors - net	113,191,265	97,896,255
Investment securities	831,356	714,791
Deferred tax asset	-	16,923
Property and equipment	2,316,451	2,344,509
Assets held for sale	511,210	544,655
TOTAL ASSETS	120,344,657	104,625,388
EQUITY		
Share capital	35,612,729	35,612,729
Legal reserve	5,760,428	5,522,529
Special reserve	2,368,989	2,368,989
Impairment reserve	1,307,187	1,845,089
Investment revaluation reserve	235,625	160,641
Retained earnings	3,394,089	3,207,984
Total equity	48,679,047	48,717,961
Liabilities		
Creditors and other payables	7,933,182	4,113,086
Borrowings	31,684,445	39,734,903
Unsecured Non-convertible Senior Bonds	15,000,000	-
Current tax liabilities	223,885	173,772
Deferred tax liabilities	24,658	-
Corporate deposits	16,799,440	11,885,666
Total liabilities	71,665,510	55,907,427
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	120,344,657	104,625,388
NET ASSETS PER SHARE	0.137	0.137

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English within 7 days of the receipt of such request addressed to:
Chief Executive Officer, United Finance Co. SAOG
P O Box 3852, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: 24577300 Fax 24561557
E-mail: ufo@ufocoman.com, Website: www.ufocoman.com

Oman a strategic choice for green iron: Meranti

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 29

SINGAPORE-HEADQUARTERED low-carbon steel manufacturer Meranti Green Steel (MGS) is firming up plans to establish a Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI) facility at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Duqm on Oman’s southeast coast.

Phase 1 of the project targets a production capacity of 2.5 million tonnes per year of HBI, around 60 per cent of which will be shipped as feedstock for Meranti’s proposed green steel plant planned at Rayong in Thailand.

The latter project, slated for commissioning in 2028, will produce 2.5 million tonnes per year of hot-rolled steel earmarked for industrial consumers of green steel across Southeast Asia.

The remaining 40 per cent of HBI from the Oman project is proposed to be supplied to Meranti’s offtake partners distributed around the globe.

In a post on Monday, July 29, 2025, Meranti described the Oman project as a “strategic pillar of its integrated value chain.” It also outlined several reasons for selecting Oman — and Duqm in particular



The Duqm facility will manufacture Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI) to serve as feedstock for Meranti’s green steel project in Thailand. For illustration only.

— as the site for its HBI production facility.

Chief among these factors, it stated, is access to competitive energy: “Oman offers reliable, cost-competitive natural gas and a rapidly developing green hydrogen ecosystem. This makes it an ideal location for producing direct reduced iron (DRI) at scale.”

Equally significant, Meranti noted, are Duqm’s infrastructure and export readiness.

“The Duqm Special Economic Zone provides industrial land, deep-water port access and efficient permitting frameworks. This supports fast-track development and efficient global distribution.”

Additionally, Oman’s location enables efficient

supply to Meranti’s steel plant in Thailand, as well as to European offtakers seeking low-emission Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI). Shipping HBI from Oman improves logistics and lowers emissions compared to traditional supply routes, the company stressed.

Earlier this month, Meranti revealed that it had received tentative commitments from the Omani government for the supply of natural gas for the HBI project in Duqm.

“With gas secured and green hydrogen partnerships advancing, Oman is now fully positioned to become a critical enabler of our mission to decarbonise iron and steelmaking,” the company stated in its most recent post.

“We are working closely with Omani authorities and our raw material partner, who are committed to sustainable industrial growth. Their support is foundational to our success,” the company added.

A relatively recent entrant into the steel sector in Southeast Asia, Meranti aims to leverage the latest advancements in steelmaking and digital technologies to maintain a competitive edge.

ADVERTORIALS

STRATEGIC MEMBER



Amouage is set to take on an advisory role, contributing to the ongoing dialogue around technology in luxury.

AMOUAGE JOINS AURA BLOCKCHAIN CONSORTIUM

MUSCAT: Amouage, the independent Omani High Perfumery House, has joined the Aura Blockchain Consortium as its first Strategic Member, the first beauty brand globally, and the first member from the Middle East.

Standing alongside a collective of the world’s most influential global houses, Amouage is set to take on an advisory role, contributing to the ongoing dialogue around technology in luxury and guiding its application in ways that honour artisanal integrity.

DRIVING THE CONVERSATION FORWARD

In its role as a Strategic Member, the House will bring its perspective informed by four decades of experience, offering counsel on strategy and collaborating with the Technical Committee that guides the development of blockchain solutions for the luxury sector.

Through this, Amouage will play an active part in setting new standards for transparency, provenance, and long-term value across high-end perfumery and beauty.

By helping shape these tools, the House will ensure that innovation serves to strengthen trust and elevate the client experience, reflecting its commitment to advancing the industry while staying true to its identity.

At Amouage, every creation carries a story of ingredients, place, intention and craft. Through the launch of its first Digital Product Passport (DPP), powered by Aura’s blockchain technology, the House offers clients access to an even deeper story. Beginning in July 2025, all new creations are being integrated into the blockchain, with nearly three million existing ones set to be retroactively added.

This advancement marks a natural extension of the House’s philosophy of thoughtful luxury. With each DPP linked to a secure Wallet Card, clients will unlock a world of tailored services, premium content and personal engagements that embody Amouage’s dedication to excellence.

By encouraging refills and supporting circular practices, the initiative also brings the House’s values of responsible sourcing and sustainability to the forefront, laying the foundation for a future where craftsmanship and innovation evolve together.

“Today’s clients, especially younger ones, are more curious, more informed and more drawn to brands that speak with honesty,” commented Marco Parsieglä, CEO of Amouage. “At Amouage, transparency has never been an afterthought; it’s part of our DNA.

“Transforming Wadi Dawkah into the region’s first Smart Forest was one of our early steps to trace the journey of our ingredients, and today, we are building on that foundation by serialising every creation.

“It will bring our clients closer to the full story behind each fragrance, from the precision and time to the artistry, elevating the experience and reinforcing the trust that is earned when every detail is intentional and true.”

Marriott Business Council Oman unites to serve and inspire

MUSCAT: Established with a mission to Serve Our World, Marriott Business Council Oman continues to lead by example, embodying Marriott International’s enduring values and social responsibility vision.

Comprised of leaders and associates from six of the Sultanate of Oman’s flagship properties: JW Marriott Hotel Muscat, The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, W

Muscat, Sheraton Oman Hotel and Aloft Muscat, the Council works collectively to deliver initiatives that uplift the community, support environmental preservation and enhance the well-being of all those they serve.

Under the leadership of Samir Messaoudi, Chairman of the Marriott Business Council Oman and General Manager of JW Marriott Hotel Muscat, the Council launched a remarkable line-up of initiatives in

TAAGEER FINANCE PARTNERS WITH OMAN AVIATION ACADEMY

MUSCAT: In a strategic move aimed at empowering Omani youth and enhancing access to high-quality aviation training, Taageer Finance Company SAOG has partnered with Oman Aviation Academy, the Sultanate of Oman’s premier aviation training institution.

The collaboration introduces easy and flexible financing options for students, enabling aspiring pilots and aviation professionals to pursue their careers without the burden of upfront costs. Oman Aviation



Academy is widely recognised for its rigorous training programmes,

experienced faculty and adherence to international aviation standards.

By offering specialised courses tailored to the region’s growing aviation sector, the academy is actively contributing to building a skilled national workforce.

Through this partnership, Taageer Finance will offer students the opportunity to pay for their training programmes in Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs), making aviation education more financially accessible.

iCAUR Brand Night: SUV set for a cool debut

ICAUR has recently unveiled a teaser image of its all-new mid-to-large SUV. The vehicle features a boxy silhouette with a rugged profile, its sharp contours highlighted by dramatic interplay of light and shadow, sparking bold visual imagination. According to official sources, the SUV will make its global debut at the iCAUR Brand Night in Dubai on August 1.

As iCAUR’s first mid-to-large SUV, the model embodies the brand’s J-Style category innovation. Its retro-inspired silhouette collides with modern technology to create a boxy stance that makes a visual impact.

This distinctive design language resonates deeply with the global young and young-at-heart audience’s affection for classic off-road aesthetics, while also capturing the dynamic spirit of contemporary style, echoing the rising international trend towards rugged, stylish SUVs.

For decades, iconic models have set the benchmark in the global mid-to-large SUV segment with their formidable



As iCAUR’s first mid-to-large SUV, the model embodies the brand’s J-Style category innovation.

performance. But the new generation is no longer satisfied with these old-school classics.

Today’s young and young-at-heart users seek cool design, intelligent experiences and a vehicle that stands out both on the dunes and in the city. They want a cool player, one that unleashes wild power in the desert, delivers warmth during family camping trips and turns

heads on urban streets.

As iCAUR’s strategic model for the global market, this all-new mid-to-large SUV is born from a deep understanding of evolving user needs. In the Middle East and other key regions, SUVs of this size are not just essential for family travel, they also embody off-road culture and social connection.

From conquering complex terrains and adapting to extreme climates to providing space for multi-member journeys, these factors remain central to user decision-making. iCAUR’s new SUV is purpose-built for full-scenario adaptability, backed by solid technical foundations to meet the expectations of users worldwide.

A true hardcore SUV that earns its place in the global market always speaks through capability. This all-new mid-to-large SUV is built on iCAUR’s industry-leading platform, purpose-developed for future mobility.

Centred on full-scenario adaptability, the platform is engineered to flexibly support diverse powertrains and intelligent systems, while leaving ample room for continuous evolution.

BankDhofar opens new branch in Al Tharmad

MUSCAT: As part of its continued efforts to expand its footprint and serve communities more effectively, BankDhofar has inaugurated a new branch in Al Tharmad, Wilayat of Al Suwaiq.

The move underscores the bank’s commitment to strengthening relationships with its customers, and delivering comprehensive banking services to all segments of society and visitors from outside the wilayat as it is close to Al Tharmad castle, popular traditional markets, and other historical places.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Said bin Hamad al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, and a number of the bank’s executive.

With this latest addition, BankDhofar now operates a robust network of approximately more than 140 branches, making it the second-largest bank in Oman



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Said bin Hamad al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura.

in terms of branch presence. Strategically distributed across all governorates, these branches are equipped with state-of-the-art digital infrastructure, user-friendly

interfaces, and professional teams ready to serve customers efficiently and effectively.

Talib bin Mohammed al Hajri, Assistant General Manager – Internal Branches at BankDhofar, stated: “Expanding our branch network allows us to be closer to our customers and better respond to their daily financial needs.

Whether it’s applying for loans, issuing bank cards, arranging insurance, or addressing inquiries, our staff are committed to providing fast, personalised service.”

Through its extensive branch and digital channels, BankDhofar offers a full suite of banking products and services tailored to diverse customer segments, including women, youth, children and affluent clients. The bank also provides premium, discreet services for high-net-worth individuals and their families, ensuring confidentiality and long-term financial security.



the first half of 2025.

From distributing Iftar meals to taxi drivers and hosting Ramadhan dinners, to organising a charity bazaar for Eid Al Fitr donations, the team demonstrated a strong spirit of togetherness and compassion.

Volunteers also united to clean Al Athaiba Beach on World Earth Day and removed harmful debris from the ocean during World Ocean Day at Al Bustan, reaffirming their

commitment to nurturing the environment.

The impact of these efforts is both heartfelt and measurable. More than 5,000 volunteering hours have been contributed by passionate associates across all six hotels.

Nearly RO 7,500 was provided as in-kind donations, ranging from hosting displaced communities to providing meals, gifts and event spaces.

BUSINESS

OUTREACHPLAN



Officials reviewed production processes, celebrated key achievements and held discussions with stakeholders.

DHOFAR FACTORIES UNDER SPOTLIGHT IN DRIVE TO BOOST LOCAL CONTENT

MUSCAT: As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen local content and industrial development, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in collaboration with the The Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, conducted a joint inspection of several factories in Dhofar Governorate.

The visit covered a wide range of industrial facilities located in the Salalah Free Zone, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and the Dhofar Industrial Zone. Officials reviewed production processes, celebrated key achievements; and held discussions with stakeholders on challenges, growth opportunities and strategies to drive innovation and improve collaboration between government and private sector players.

These engagements support the broader objectives of the National Industrial Strategy and seek to boost in-country value by leveraging local capacities. The industrial sector in Oman is experiencing notable growth, with the manufacturing segment contributing over RO 3.6 billion to GDP at constant prices by the end of 2024. Non-oil commodity exports also surpassed RO 6.2 billion, including RO 1.8 billion in mineral products — figures that affirm the sector’s critical role in economic diversification.

Engineer Khalid bin Salim al Qassabi, Director General of Industry at the Ministry, noted that field visits provide valuable insight into factory operations and enable direct dialogue with owners and workers.

These interactions are essential to understanding operational needs and identifying pathways for growth and industrial synergies. He confirmed that the Directorate General of Industry will continue similar visits across other governorates as part of a structured national outreach plan. —ONA

GCC — HONG KONG TWO-WAY TRADE JUMPS 30%

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 29

THE total trade exchange between countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Hong Kong increased by 30.91% to reach a value of \$14.4 billion in 2021, up from \$11 billion in 2020, according to the GCC Statistics Centre.

Exports from the GCC to Hong Kong witnessed a remarkable increase of 34.88% in 2021, amounting to a total of \$11.6 billion in comparison to \$8.6 billion in 2020.

Precious stones and metals, valued at \$9.4 billion, made up 81% of exports. This was followed by miscellaneous commodities which made up for 6.1% of exports with a value of \$0.7 billion.



Exports from the GCC to Hong Kong witnessed a remarkable increase of 34.88% in 2021, amounting to a total of \$11.6 billion.

Electrical machinery and equipment represented 5.2% of exports with a value of \$0.6 billion, followed by clocks and watches which made up for 4.3% with a value of \$0.5 billion.

Moreover, iron and steel exports and machinery and mechanical appliances exports both made up for 1.7% of exports with a value of \$0.2 billion each.

On the other hand, imports from Hong Kong to the GCC increased 16.67% to reach a value of \$2.8 billion in 2021 in comparison to the previous year.

Precious stones and metals represented a majority of imports (46.4%), with a value of \$1.3 billion, followed by luggage and personal items which made up for 32.1% of imports with a value of \$0.9 billion.

Apparel articles made up for 10.7% of imports with a total value of \$0.3 billion, followed by other commodities made up for 7.2% of imports with a value of \$0.2 billion.

Abraj, PDO expand ties with new drilling contract

ABRAJ Energy Services has signed a strategic agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to deploy six onshore drilling rigs in Block 6, a key asset in the Sultanate of Oman’s energy sector. Drilling operations will be phased in from the fourth quarter of 2026.

This marks a major expansion in the longstanding collaboration between Abraj and PDO, underlining the company’s expertise in delivering high-performance, safe and reliable drilling solutions aligned with international standards.

Hood bin Khalfan al Barashdi, Acting General Manager of Business Development at Abraj, said the agreement highlights the company’s reputation for operational excellence and the trust it has earned through safe and efficient service delivery.

He emphasised that the deal reflects Abraj’s broader strategy to strengthen its role in advancing the energy sector while maximising in-country



This marks a major expansion in the longstanding collaboration between Abraj and PDO.

value (ICV).

The partnership with PDO forms part of Abraj’s wider growth strategy.

The company has recently secured additional contracts, including a new deal with BP Oman for drilling services in Block 61 and an agreement with ARA Petroleum Limited to drill three wells in Block 44.

It has also reinforced its

regional presence through the deployment of a third 3,000-horsepower rig in the Wafra field, jointly operated by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Engineer Sulaiman bin Abdullah al Salmi, Head of PDO’s Gas Well Drilling Team, noted the enduring commitment shown by Abraj to operational integrity, health and safety.

He said the latest agreement

reflects the joint ambition of both parties to drive sustainable growth in Oman’s oil and energy sectors.

Since 2020, Abraj has contributed more than RO 850 million in ICV, achieving an Omanisation rate close to 93 per cent. Over the last three years, activities linked to PDO alone have generated RO 79.1 million in ICV — accounting for 78 per cent of total spending. These figures underscore Abraj’s contribution to national development goals.

In 2024, the company posted strong financial results with revenues of RO 151.6 million, EBITDA of RO 53 million and a net profit of RO 16.9 million.

Abraj also achieved a remarkable safety record, completing three consecutive years of operations with zero lost-time injuries (LTI) across all units. Rig utilisation rates exceeded 86 per cent for drilling and reached 100 per cent for well maintenance, further demonstrating the resilience and reliability of its services.

— ONA

Study highlights MSX’s tangible impact on economic development

MUSCAT: An academic study by Mohammed bin Isa al Balushi confirms a positive correlation between the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) and its growing role in financing investments, in line with global trends positioning stock exchanges as effective financial instruments in modern economies.

The study took the MSX as a practical case. Titled “The Role of Muscat Stock Exchange Management in Financing Investments in Line with Oman Vision 2040”, the research is considered the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman to explore the capital market’s contribution to investment financing.

It aims to elevate the status of



MOHAMMED BIN ISA AL BALUSHI

regional financial markets are striving to deepen their ecosystems, diversify financial instruments and strengthen their roles amidst a favourable investment environment in the GCC. These efforts are

the MSX as a reliable liquidity provider and stimulate its use in financing major national economic projects.

The study comes at a time when

supported by economic reforms aligned with national strategies.

The study seeks to assess the MSX’s role in financing investments within the framework of Oman Vision 2040, highlighting key programmes that support its mission as a capital market financing tool and a generator of investment opportunities.

It also examines the development trajectory of the exchange in recent years. Findings revealed a strong, direct and positive linear relationship between the MSX’s performance and the level of investment financing in Oman, especially through mechanisms such as equity offerings (IPOs) and bond issuances.

As the MSX’s role expands, investment financing also increases — aligning with Oman Vision 2040 goals.

The research also reviewed the foundational objectives behind the creation of global stock exchanges, particularly their function in mobilising capital for economic and developmental projects.

It further emphasised the role of stock markets in channelling public savings into productive investment.

The study concluded with several recommendations, most notably the importance of implementing national initiatives that enhance the MSX’s competitiveness as a viable financing option.

It also called for improved coordination among regulatory and operational bodies within the financial sector to diversify financing instruments and continuously improve the investment environment.

Notably, the study opens the door for further research in economic development and investment financing, especially efforts aimed at strengthening capital markets, advancing financial inclusion and fintech solutions, developing innovative financial products; and raising public awareness about investment opportunities — particularly those offered through initial public offerings.

STEP BACK

US, China resume talks in Stockholm



US and Chinese officials began a second day of talks in Stockholm on Tuesday to resolve longstanding economic disputes and step back from an escalating trade war between the world’s two biggest economies.

The meetings may not yield immediate large breakthroughs but the two sides could agree to another 90-day extension of a tariff truce struck in mid-May. — Reuters

LOWEST LEVEL

Pound at 10-week low against dollar



The pound fell to a 10-week low against a stronger dollar on Tuesday, while staying just off a two-year low against the euro, as markets continue to digest the announcement of the trade deal between the European Union and the United States.

The pound was last a touch higher against the dollar at \$1.33570, but had earlier fallen to \$1.3316, its lowest level since May 23. — Reuters

EDGED UP

Oil prices rise further on trade war relief



Oil prices edged up on Tuesday on optimism that a trade war between the US and its major trading partners was abating and as President Donald Trump ramped up pressure on Russia over its war in Ukraine.

Brent crude futures were up 47 cents, or 0.7%, at \$69.46 a barrel, having touched their highest since July 18, while Light crude was at \$66.80, up 53 cents, or 0.8%. — Reuters

OPINION

More than a coat of paint: Rethinking corrosion protection in Oman



NAJAH
AL RIYAMI

The writer is
a Media and
Communication
Master’s graduate.

ACROSS Oman’s energy, marine and infrastructure sectors, corrosion is a quiet but costly adversary. While cathodic protection systems and smart monitoring technologies play a vital role, the first — and often most critical — line of defence is simpler than it seems: a coat of paint. Or more accurately, a high-performance anti-corrosion coating engineered to withstand one of the harshest environments on Earth.

According to the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP), corrosion-related economic losses consume between 3% to 5% of GDP in Gulf countries, owing to the region’s aggressive combination of high heat, humidity, salt spray and dust. For Oman, that translates to hundreds of millions of Omani rials annually, with the oil and gas, desalination and marine infrastructure sectors bearing the brunt of the damage.

Globally, corrosion is estimated to cost over \$2.5 trillion each year — but experts believe that up to 35% of these losses are preventable with proactive measures such as improved coatings, local standards and QA/QC procedures.

As Oman strengthens its industrial and coastal infrastructure, there is a growing opportunity to build local expertise in corrosion protection.

While many coatings are currently imported, industry assessments across the Gulf show that over 60% of failures stem from application issues — such as poor

surface preparation — rather than flaws in the coatings themselves. This highlights a valuable area for improvement: by enhancing training, certification and local application standards, Oman can ensure that even the most advanced coatings perform to their full potential.

Despite the presence of global industry players like Jotun Paints, which operates a manufacturing facility at Rusayl Industrial Estate and Hempel, which supplies protective coatings to marine and offshore platforms, coating selection across Oman is still too often driven by availability and price rather than performance and environmental fit.

Globally, the anti-corrosion coatings market is projected to reach \$42 billion by 2028, with the Middle East accounting for a growing share — particularly in oil, gas and maritime sectors (Statista, 2024). Yet in Oman, many assets are still coated with systems that offer a service life of just 3 to 5 years, especially if not applied under optimal conditions.

In contrast, high-performance systems — such as zinc-rich epoxy primers paired with polyurethane topcoats — can extend protection to 7 to 10 years or more, provided they are installed correctly.

Oman’s geography presents a compelling case for home-grown solutions. Its coastal regions — Suhar, Al Duqm, Salalah — are prime development zones, but also among the most corrosive environments in the country. Without proper protection, even newly built infrastructure can begin to

As Oman
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degrade within months, driving up operating and maintenance costs and compromising safety.

Oman’s coatings sector may still be developing, but its potential is vast. With targeted investment in accredited testing facilities, specialised training for certified applicators and Gulf-adapted coating standards, the country has a real opportunity to lead the region in climate-resilient corrosion protection.

Experts from AMPP suggest that such measures could recover up to 30% of corrosion-related losses—a substantial return on relatively modest interventions and a smart step towards long-term savings. While technologies like cathodic protection and real-time corrosion monitoring play vital roles, coatings remain the most accessible, scalable and cost-effective defence—especially for large, exposed assets such as pipelines, oil tanks, cranes and marine infrastructure.

In Oman’s next chapter of industrial growth — from hydrogen hubs to coastal mega-projects — high-performance coatings are more than just a protective layer. They are a strategic enabler. When selected and applied with care, coatings don’t just preserve structures — they protect progress, fuel resilience and extend the value of every investment.

In the end, a coat of paint isn’t just where protection begins. It’s where Oman’s leadership in corrosion innovation can take shape.

SAMSUNG’S \$16.5 BN
TESLA COUP COMES
WITH CAVEATS

KATRINA HAMLIN

Samsung Electronics finally has some good news. In posts on his X social media platform on Sunday, Tesla CEO Elon Musk detailed that his carmaker has struck a \$16.5 billion deal to buy state-of-the-art chips from the South Korean group. Yet the impressive coup, which pushed Samsung’s stock up 7% on Monday, comes with some caveats.

First, on an annual basis, it works out to \$2.1 billion in sales over the agreement’s eight-year span. That’s nowhere near enough to turn things around at Samsung’s foundry business. Its operating loss topped 5 trillion won (\$3.6 billion) in the first quarter and widened in the second quarter, estimates Fitch Ratings’ Shelley Zhang.

Granted, Musk also said that the contract, which includes advanced A16 chips, “is just the bare minimum” and demand could end up being “several times higher”. But Musk is notorious for over-egging production estimates. Even if he’s right, Tesla’s patronage is unlikely to be enough to turn around Samsung’s foundry fortunes alone.

That’ll require Chair Jay Y Lee finding ways to parlay Musk’s leap of faith into a broader contract chip-manufacturing business able to snatch share from the \$1 trillion market leader TSMC. That may not be straightforward. An unusual decision to allow Musk to walk production lines and work with Samsung to “maximise manufacturing efficiency” could force the company to share crucial know-how.

That may not be straightforward. An unusual decision to allow Musk to walk production lines and work with Samsung to “maximise manufacturing efficiency” could force the company to share crucial know-how. That might put off other potential customers.

Tesla is a risky partner in other ways, too. Last week, Musk said that the company faces a “few rough quarters” given waning US support for battery power. The electric-vehicle maker is also losing share in China and Europe. Long-term bets, including robotaxis and the Optimus robot, are not necessarily going to fill the gap.

Meanwhile, Samsung is under pressure to show it can execute. Its high bandwidth memory chips failed tests set by another key customer, Nvidia, due to heat and power consumption problems, Reuters reported last year.

Although it has been able to develop cutting-edge chips like the 2-nanometre device Musk needs, ensuring high yield and quality at scale is tough. Making the chips at an untested US plant adds further uncertainty. — Reuters

France criticises EU’s
trade deal with Trump



A man works for 'MTU Aero Engines' aircraft engines at the 55th International Paris Airshow at Le Bourget Airport near Paris, France. — Reuters



LIZ ALDERMAN

The writer is the
chief European
business
correspondent
of the New York
Times, writing
about economic,
social and policy
developments
around Europe.

has opted for economic coercion and complete disregard for WTO rules”, Haddad wrote on Monday, referring to the World Trade Organisation. “We must quickly draw the necessary conclusions or risk being wiped out”.

Trump and Ursula Von Der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, focused on the scale of the trade deal on Sunday when they met at Trump’s golf course in Scotland. The two sides have the biggest economic relationship in the world, trading nearly \$2 trillion in goods and services annually.

Despite France’s push on other European countries to take a harder line, a majority of them had wanted a deal quickly. Von Der Leyen “simply took into account the wishes of the majority of member states who do not want a confrontation with the United States”, Gérard Araud, France’s former ambassador to the United States, wrote on Monday.

A 15% tariff on EU goods is a notable increase, when just a few weeks ago Europe was working on negotiating a 10% across-the-board rate. Many European companies will be worse off under the recent deal than before Trump’s trade war, when US import tariffs were in the low single digits. While the

deal gives notable relief to Europe’s hulking car industry — in particular German automakers including Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz, which had been facing separate 25% tariffs — it also puts other European industries in a bind.

France, in particular, did not get what it had been pushing for in several areas. Major industries got exemptions from the tariffs, including airplanes, which will benefit European aerospace giant Airbus, based in Toulouse, France, along with its American rival, Boeing.

But many companies that are symbolic of “Made in France” may find their products becoming more expensive for US buyers. French cognac, wine and Champagne, for example, make up nearly half of all of Europe’s drinks exports to America. Negotiations on potentially exempting the wine and spirits industries were continuing, Von Der Leyen said.

Also at risk are French cosmetics products, which previously had zero customs duties to enter the United States. They will now be taxed at 15%, said Emmanuel Guichard, secretary-general of the Federation of Beauty Companies, which includes L’Oreal and LVMH, which owns Sephora as well as high-end beauty brands including Christian Dior perfumes. That shift poses “a significant threat” that could put up to 5,000 jobs at risk, he said.

And as Trump headed out to his golf resort in Scotland on Monday with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, the uneven nature of the United States’ trade deals with the EU and Britain was in stark relief.

Trump and Starmer hammered out an earlier deal for an across-the-board tariff of 10% on British goods in the US, including British-made cars. European companies were eager not to be taxed at the 30% rate Trump had threatened, but they are still worried that a 15% duty would make their exports more expensive in the US than British goods.

— The New York Times

BUSINESS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 29

FOR the second year in a row, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has won the award for Best Service Outlet in Muscat Governorate for the year 2024.

The award is conferred upon government entities participating in the Institutional Excellence System.

Dr Ahmed bin Saif al Maamari, Acting Customer Services Manager Department at the Authority, stated: “This honour reflects the Authority’s commitment to implementing the standards of the Institutional Excellence System, which is one of the key pillars for achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. It also reinforces a culture of continuous improvement in the work environment to ensure the delivery of high-quality and efficient services that meet the

OPAZ NAMED BEST SERVICE OUTLET IN MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR 2024

OPAZ affirms its ongoing efforts to enhance institutional excellence, adopt best practices in service delivery, and achieve top performance levels through innovation and continuous improvement.



The award is conferred upon government entities participating in the Institutional Excellence System.

expectations of investors and beneficiaries.”

The selection of the Authority was based on the results of surveys and indicators measuring client satisfaction.

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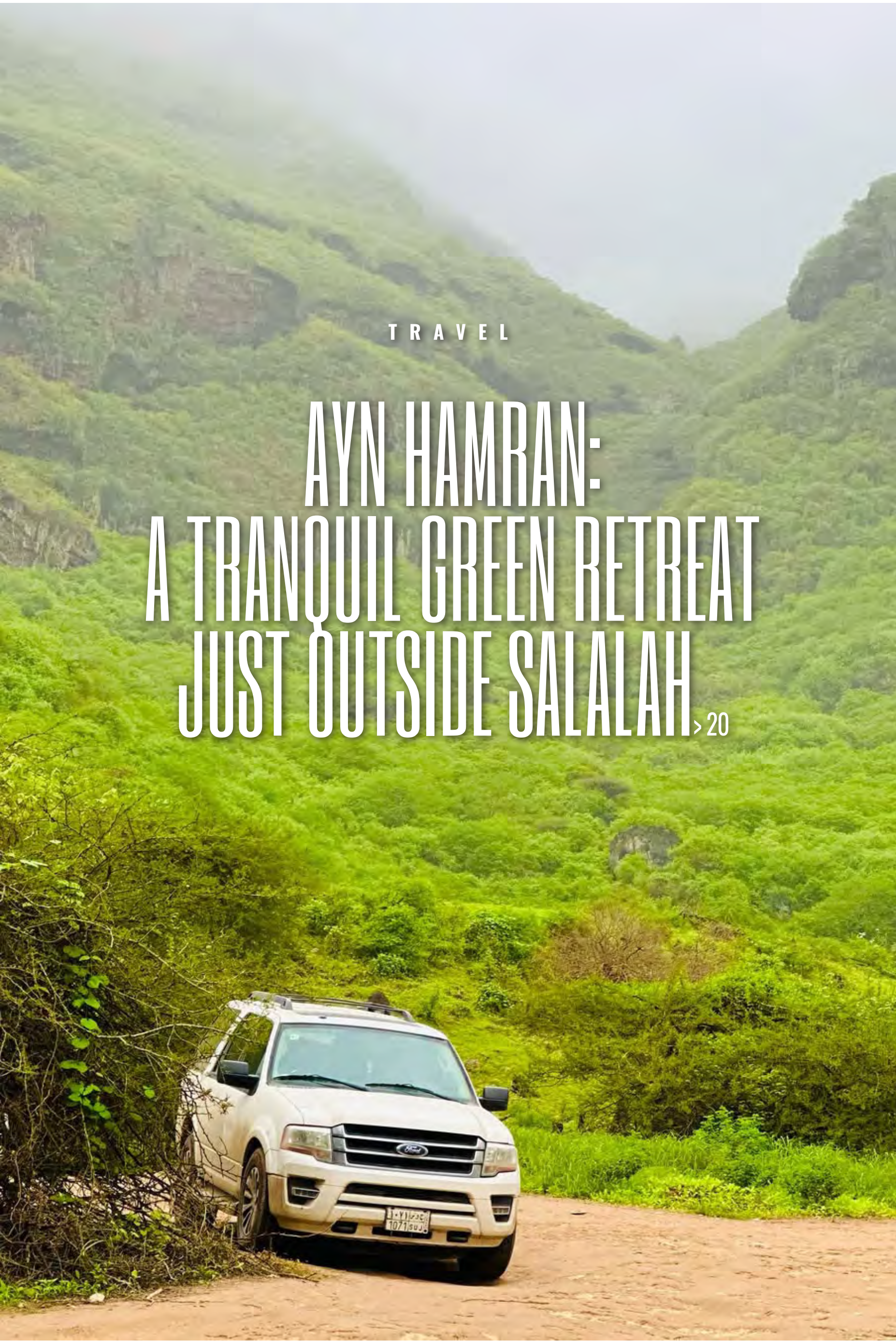
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ART/LIFE



ENTERTAINMENT

Superhero films ignite rivalry among Marvel and DC comic fans



COMIC FANS are embracing the latest showdown between Marvel and DC as their superhero films “Fantastic Four” and “Superman” compete for box office dominance, reigniting a rivalry spanning over eight decades.

Whether it’s the thrill of seeing the comic book superhero The Thing shout “It’s clobbering time!” before throwing a punch or watching Superman and his faithful pup Krypto save the day, fans are heading to movie theatres to support their favourite films.

“Well, clearly I’m a Marvel fan”, Danielle Stroski, who was dressed as the shapeshifter character named Mystique from Marvel’s X-Men comics, at the San Diego Comic-Con.

“But I have a little white dog at home, so I love me some ‘Superman’ as well. And I know the little white dog is stealing the show for ‘Superman’, so it’s going to be close. But I got to go Marvel”, she added.

The 42-year-old from California predicted “Fantastic Four” would outperform “Superman” at the box office.

DC fan Lito Loza, dressed as Superboy, voiced his support for “Superman”. “I’ve already seen ‘Superman’ three times and I’m very, very happy with what James Gunn did with it. It makes me feel hopeful”, he said, referring to the director.

The filmmakers, meanwhile, encourage fans to support both movies.

“I’m a huge Superman fan. I’m a huge James Gunn fan. I’m thrilled that both of us are coming out this month”, director Matt Shakman of “Fantastic Four: First Steps” said at the London premiere.

“I think we share a lot of similar optimism in our tone and our feeling in the worlds that we are building. And there’s room for ‘Superman’, there’s room for ‘Fantastic Four’. I’m thrilled. Go see both”, he added.

“Superman” director Gunn, who directed the Marvel movie “Guardians of the Galaxy”, said in an interview in Los Angeles that he grew up reading both Marvel and DC comic books, appreciating their distinct tones.

In theatres on July 11, “Superman” introduced David Corenswet as the Man of Steel. The movie grossed around \$173 million globally and \$264 million domestically, according to Box Office Mojo. Warner Bros has heavily invested in “Superman”, aiming to launch a new era at DC Studios under Gunn, named co-CEO, alongside producer Peter Safran. Upcoming projects include a Supergirl film slated for June 2026, a film based on the character Swamp Thing as well as TV shows for HBO Max. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



DISCOVERY

Excavators work to extract dinosaur fossilised bones at an excavation site in Angeac-sur-Charente, south-western France. — AFP



MUSIC

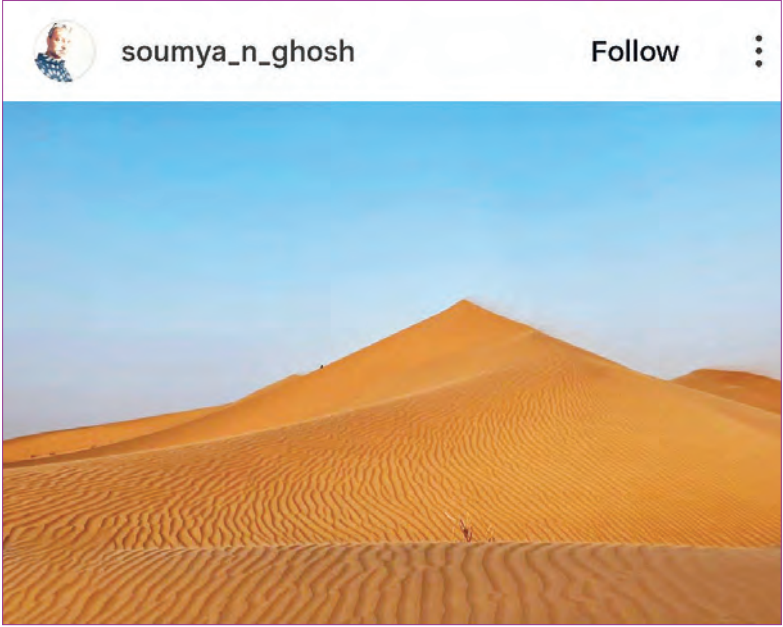
US singer Dee Dee Bridgewater performs on stage during the 60th Jazzaldia Jazz Festival in the Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian. — AFP



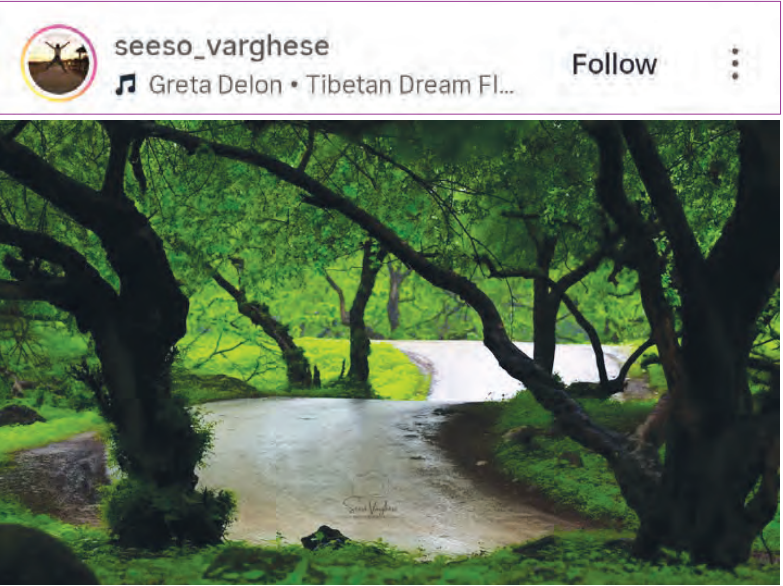
FESTIVAL

Artists perform Georges Bizet’s Carmen during the Baalbeck International Festival in the eponymous Lebanese city in the eastern Bekaa Valley. — AFP

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Denver Museum finds a dinosaur fossil under its parking lot



HAVE YOU ever searched for a pair of glasses, only to realise that they were on your head the whole time?

The Denver Museum of Nature and Science is filled with exhibits of dinosaur skeletons. And in the scientific equivalent of tossing couch cushions, its scientists discovered a dinosaur fossil deep — really deep — below the surface of one of its own parking lots, the museum announced this month.

The fossil was buried 763 feet below the surface and unearthed because of a drilling project that aimed to better understand the geology of the Denver Basin. Two drilling rigs bore test holes under one of the museum’s paved parking lots.

On January 30, one of the museum’s geologists, who was sifting through what had been extracted, immediately recognised the dinosaur bone, sending museum staff members into a frenzy. James Hagadorn, the museum’s curator of geology,

stepped out of a parent-teacher conference as his phone lit up with texts.

“There are never fossil emergencies”, Hagadorn said in an interview. “But that was a fossil emergency”.

The fossil extracted is cylindrical and inches long; and quite likely part of a bigger bone. To date it, scientists used the moment in time when dinosaurs went extinct as a result of an asteroid as a measuring stick. That event left a mark — a narrow horizon marked by a layer of clay — that is visible all over Colorado. To arrive at an age of 70 million years, scientists used the map of the horizon and measured the depth of notable fossil discoveries in the area and compared them to the one in January.

The fossil is too small to be linked to a specific dinosaur, though museum experts hypothesise that it belonged to an ornithopod, a small herbivore. — SOPAN DEB / NYT



This classical pianist has reached the mountaintop. No, really.

FOR THE last decade, classical pianist Hunter Noack has been embarking on an unusual journey: He hauls a 1,000-pound 1912 Steinway concert grand piano to places in the outdoors not known for hosting concerts.

Picture a man seated at a piano beside a lake. It could also be on a mountaintop, in a forest or meadow.

This summer, Noack, 36, is in the midst of a 10th-anniversary tour of his “In A Landscape” project, which has taken him to Jack London State Historic Park in Glen Ellen, California; Black Butte Ranch in Sisters, Oregon; and Warm Springs Preserve in Ketchum, Idaho.

“I get excited at the idea of bringing a piano where no piano has gone before”, Noack said.

Inspired by preservationist John Muir, Noack started the project as

a way of getting closer to nature and bringing classical music to rural areas where it is not typically accessible. The idea, Noack said, is to remove the barriers that typically limit classical music to concert venues like Carnegie Hall.

“What John Muir was trying to articulate is that we don’t just need the wild to recreate in”, Noack said in an interview. “We need the wild to be human, to be more compassionate and to be more empathetic. And that’s the medicine that I needed. To be outside”.

The roots of the project can be traced back to 2015. Noack, a native of Sunriver, Oregon, had just moved to Portland, a couple of years after graduating from the Guildhall School of Music in London. He was working odd jobs and struggling with student debt. He considered joining the National Guard, but instead applied

for a small grant from a regional arts and culture council in Portland to try an experiment.

Noack had long been fascinated by immersive theatre. As a student at the University of Southern California, Noack said he had been “enamored” with classmates who independently produced their own shows, which included plays by Anton Chekhov staged in abandoned warehouses and a Sam Shepard piece performed in a rundown hotel in downtown Los Angeles.

“I wanted more of this in my life”, Noack said. He found the shows “scrappy, fun and daring”. After graduating from college, Noack, along with a friend from boarding school, created an immersive play in San Francisco. In London, Noack eagerly took in shows by experimental theater company Punchdrunk.

“These theater and opera companies were really pushing the boundaries and that’s what I wanted to do with my art: classical piano”, Noack said.

A travelling group of six helps Noack bring his piano to the various remote locations. The team has developed a system for moving the 9-foot instrument. The piano sits on a custom-designed 16-foot flatbed trailer and can go anywhere that a 4-wheel-drive vehicle can. Once they have arrived at a destination, the trailer turns into the stage.

The first year, Noack rented a piano from a local dealer. But when he said he wanted to bring the rented piano to Mount Bachelor, in Bend, Oregon, and the Alvord Desert, in the southeastern part of the state, the dealer did not want to take on the insurance liability.

Afterward, in 2017, a philanthropist purchased and donated the piano that Noack uses today.

Noack didn’t intend for “In A Landscape” to be a full-time job, but the initial audience response was so large that he kept going. The original run of the tour had nine dates, but it has since expanded to more than 50 dates a year, over a wider area.

The concerts are held rain or shine, hot or cold. (The temperature during concerts has ranged from subfreezing to above 100 degrees). Among the notable locales where Noack has played are the entrance to Yellowstone (via the Roosevelt Arch in Montana, Joshua Tree National Park in California, Crater Lake in southern Oregon and Banff National Park in Canada. Most of the venues are in national parks in the Pacific Northwest, but Noack said that the most meaningful concerts haven’t necessarily been at the most recognisable locations, but rather at smaller, more intimate spots such as ranches and farms.

“It’s really all about the people that are there and the relationship that they have with that space and what the landscape is doing for us in that for those 90 minutes”, Noack said.

Noack’s shows have even appeared to attract wildlife. He recalled that at a two-night run near the Oregon coast, the piano was located near a cliff. A whale swam up to shore for both performances and lingered for their entirety.

“I like to think that the whale was enjoying this show”, Noack said.

Among other wildlife that made appearances were free-range horses, birds and deer.

Noack’s ambition to bring a piano to unfamiliar territory is expansive.

He said he wants to perform at, among other striking sites, remote villages in Canada; at the Preikestolen, a steep cliff in Norway; during a safari in Africa; atop Vinicunca, the rainbow mountain in the Andes of Peru; and by the salt flats of Bolivia.

“My hope is that I can use this project, my love of the music and my curiosity about how public lands and natural resources are managed, to explore the world and learn”, Noack said. — NYT

FEATURES



the mountains, eventually opening into the greenery-rich oasis of Ayn Hamran.

“It’s one of the few places that stays green most of the year”, said Hamed al Kathiri, a local guide who often takes tourists and school groups to the site.

“Even outside of the Khareef Dhofar Season, this place has shade, birdsong and fresh air”, he said.

Khareef Charm

Ayn Hamran truly comes alive during the Khareef Dhofar Season, typically from late June to September. The monsoon mist blankets the region, feeding small waterfalls that gently flow over rock formations scattered across the park.

“It’s like nature takes a deep breath and exhales beauty”, said Layla Rashid, a teacher who brings her students to the park for weekend nature lessons.

“We trek to the nearby springs where water trickles down from the mountain and the children are always fascinated”. Trekking here is considered light to moderate, ideal for families and older visitors. One of the highlights is the short hike towards the freshwater springs at the base of the nearby mountain. The trail is mostly easy, though visitors are advised to wear good shoes and, especially during Khareef, bring insect repellent.

The place is frequented by locals and visitors looking for a calm afternoon picnic or a short outdoor

adventure. The chirping of birds, rustling of leaves and occasional presence of camels and goats nearby add a pastoral charm to the experience.

“I come here with my grandchildren every month”, said 67-year-old Salim al Maashani, enjoying a picnic under a frankincense tree.

“There’s a special peace here that I can’t find anywhere else”, he quipped.

With its growing popularity, locals have begun calling for more structured conservation efforts to protect the flora and fauna of Ayn Hamran.

“It’s beautiful, but we also need to be responsible”, warned Salim and added: “Visitors must take their rubbish back with them. If we want to keep this green, we must respect it”. Ayn Hamran is perfect for a half-day outing from Salalah. While it has limited facilities, the natural beauty more than compensates.

Visitors should bring water, snacks and picnic mats. Early morning or late afternoon visits offer the best light and cooler temperatures.

In a region known for its dramatic desert landscapes and coastal beauty, Ayn Hamran quietly offers a softer, greener contrast — an oasis that continues to charm those who make the effort to find it.

Photos by Rajesh Pardeshi & Ansar Mohammed

AYN HAMRAN: A TRANQUIL GREEN RETREAT JUST OUTSIDE SALALAH

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

JUST OVER 26 kilometres from Salalah city centre, Ayn Hamran — also known as Ayn Humeran — stands as one of the Dhofar Governorate’s most charming natural escapes. Known for its lush greenery, year-round shade-giving trees and gentle waterfalls during the monsoon season, this serene park attracts both nature enthusiasts and casual visitors alike.

Set at coordinates N 17°05’50” and E 54°16’51”, Ayn Hamran offers more than just a picnic spot — it’s a natural retreat teeming with life and the soothing sounds of rustling trees and trickling water.

This is an easy getaway into nature. Reaching Ayn Hamran is relatively straightforward and scenic. A short 26-kilometre drive east from Salalah takes you along Route 49 towards Taqah and Mirbat. After crossing a major roundabout, a third exit leads you on a winding 5.1-kilometre journey into the foothills.

The road gradually ascends, revealing panoramic views of