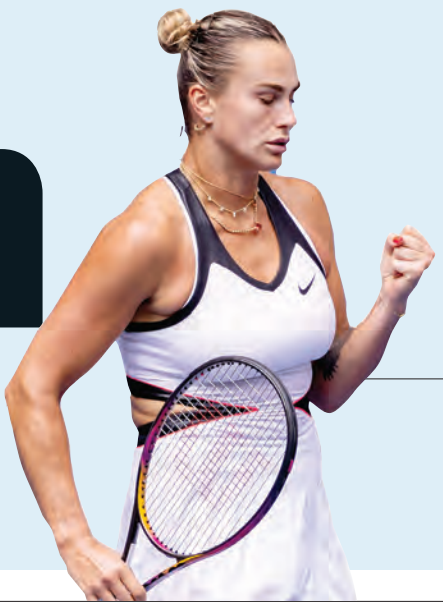


O M A N عُمَان D A I L Y

Observer



11 SABALENKA, DJOKOVIC WIN AS MEDVEDEV EXITS

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PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

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INBRIEF



PALESTINIAN
AMBASSADOR BIDS
FAREWELL

At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received at his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Dr Tayser Ali Farahat, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. During the meeting, HH Sayyid Shihab thanked the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in enhancing bilateral relations, wishing him continued success. On his turn, the ambassador expressed his appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to him during his tenure in Oman. He also wished His Majesty good health and a long life and the Sultanate of Oman further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.



SIX NEW PROJECTS
IN SOHAR
INDUSTRIAL CITY

Sohar Industrial City, an affiliate of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates Madayn, has recently localised six projects with a total investment volume exceeding RO 27 million. These projects will be developed on an area spanning 162,000 sqm, representing oil, steel, food, marble, tile and wood industries. The investment agreement signed with the National Petrochemical and Investment Company involves establishing an oil industry project with an investment of RO 25 million on a land area of 125,000 sqm. Additionally, an agreement was signed with Sultan Al Shidi Engineering Projects for a specialised steel industry project worth RO 1 million on 3,843 sqm, along with another agreement with Iron Trading and Investment for a steel industry project valued at RO 600,000 on 8,760 sqm. **DETAILS ON P13**

Oman claims gold and bronze at PhotOlympic 2025

SAINT PETERSBURG: The Sultanate of Oman won a gold and a bronze medal in the finals of the PhotOlympic 2025 held in St Petersburg, Russia, with the participation of 96 photographers from more than 15 countries around the world. Photographer Ali bin Hamad al Ghafri won the gold medal in the long exposure category for his

photograph titled ‘I am Still Waiting’. Photographer Mahmoud bin Mohammed al Jabri won the bronze medal in the reflection category for his visual photograph titled ‘Yellow Reflection’. The organising committee, affiliated with the non-profit organisation The Professional Photographers Association, laid down strict conditions on participants requiring them to



This success was the outcome of a rich artistic career.

complete and submit their work within 24 hours. This posed a great challenge for the photographers, testing their technical readiness and flexibility while working under pressure. **ADVANCED SELECTION** This success was the outcome of a rich artistic career, during which the two photographers underwent

three advanced selection stages, submitting 16 images across four main categories, before reaching the finals to represent the Sultanate of Oman at this prestigious international event. Besides, it reflects the strong presence of Omani photographers in international photography and attests to the professional level they attained in the art of photography. — ONA

Israeli strike on hospital
in Gaza kills 5 journalists

ISRAEL STRUCK Nasser hospital in the south of the Gaza Strip on Monday, killing at least 20 people, including five journalists who worked for Reuters, the Associated Press, Al Jazeera and others. Cameraman Hussam al Masri, a Reuters contractor, was killed near a live broadcasting position operated by Reuters on an upper floor just below the roof of the hospital in Khan Younis in an initial strike, Palestinian health officials said. Officials at the hospital and witnesses said Israel then struck the site a second time, killing other journalists as well as rescue workers and medics who had rushed to the scene to help. The journalists killed included Mariam Abu Dagga, who freelanced for the Associated Press and other outlets, Mohammed Salama, who worked for Qatar-based broadcaster Al Jazeera, Moaz Abu Taha, a freelance journalist who worked with several news organisations including occasionally contributing to Reuters, and Ahmed Abu Aziz. Photographer Hatem Khaled, also a Reuters contractor, was wounded. World powers voiced shock at the killing of five journalists among 20 victims reported by Gaza’s civil defence agency in an Israeli strike on a hospital on Monday. UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said in a statement that journalists and hospitals should never be targeted. Israel’s military, the Israel Defense Forces, acknowledged striking the area of Nasser hospital and said the chief of the general staff had ordered an inquiry. The IDF “regrets



A journalist holds the blood-covered camera belonging to Palestinian photojournalist Mariam Dagga, a journalist who freelanced for AP and who was killed in an Israeli strike on Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday. — AFP

any harm to uninvolved individuals and does not target journalists as such. The IDF acts to mitigate harm to uninvolved individuals as much as possible while maintaining the safety of IDF troops,” it said. A Reuters spokesperson said in a statement: “We are devastated to learn that cameraman Hussam al Masri, a contractor for Reuters, was killed this morning in Israeli strikes on Nasser hospital in Khan Younis in Gaza. Moaz Abu Taha, a freelance journalist whose work had been occasionally published by Reuters, was also killed, and photographer Hatem Khaled, a Reuters contractor, was wounded.” US President Donald Trump said he was not happy about it when asked for a reaction. “When did this happen?” he asked a reporter in the White House. “I didn’t know that. Well, I’m not happy about it. I don’t want to see it. At the same time, we have to end that whole nightmare.” **SEE ALSO P6**



AIN ATHUM WATERFALLS SURGE

Ain Athum Waterfalls, about 33 km from Salalah in Dhofar Governorate, are in full flow during the khareef (monsoon) season, turning the rocky escarpment into a 20-metre cascade that feeds a clear blue pool and attracts families from across the Gulf. The site is seasonal. In most years, the waterfalls peak from mid-August as khareef rains recharge underground aquifers that supply the spring. Flows then taper off after the monsoon ends, though the source spring continues to provide water. **DETAILS ON P2**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The fair aims to boost Oman's cultural presence in the international arena

OMAN TAKES PART IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM BOOK FAIR 2025

BRUNEI: The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the Brunei Darussalam Book Fair 2025. Oman’s participation in the event is aimed at consolidating bilateral relations and supporting efforts to boost the country’s cultural presence in the international arena. The step is in pursuance of the National Cultural Strategy, which aims to highlight the Omani intellectual output, introduce Omani authors and publishers, strengthen the national cultural identity and expand the distribution of Omani publications in educational establishments in East Asian countries. The book fair was opened by Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Nazmi bin Haji Awang Mohamad, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports in Brunei Darussalam. The minister toured the Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion, where he took note of a variety of publications that reflect Oman’s interest in literature, thought, history and heritage. At the conclusion of the tour, the minister hailed the level of Oman’s participation in the book fair and the exhibits that its pavilion showcased. The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion attracted the attention of different segments of visitors. It included a display of recent publications issued by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in addition to publications from government departments and civil society organisations. The exhibits included general information, tourism materials and tableaus that highlighted Oman’s heritage and natural attractions. — ONA

DHOFAR TO HOST 1ST ALECSO REGIONAL FORUM ON ARTS, CULTURE EDUCATION

SALALAH: Dhofar Governorate will host the first ALECSO Regional Forum on Arts and Culture Education from September 1-2. The forum is organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). The forum will be attended by a number of experts and educators specialising in culture, arts and education from ALECSO, as well as representatives from the GCC countries. This forum is a direct result of ALECSO’s push to enhance the role of culture and arts within the education system. It aligns



The forum aims to encourage investment in educational and cultural infrastructure.

with the Unesco World Framework for Culture and Arts Education, which was launched at the global

conference in Abu Dhabi in 2024. The forum also aims to support partnerships between governments, cultural institutions and the private sector, and to encourage investment in educational and cultural infrastructure. The forum will also feature field visits to prominent educational and cultural institutions in Dhofar Governorate. Furthermore, it will host practical workshops focused on utilising modern technologies in arts education, which will enhance the effectiveness of arts education practices and support innovation and creativity among students. — ONA

Ain Athum waterfall in full flow draws khareef visitors

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 25

AIN Athum Waterfalls, about 33 km from Salalah in southern Dhofar Governorate, are in full flow during the khareef (monsoon) season, turning the rocky escarpment into a 20-metre cascade that feeds a clear blue pool and attracts families from across the GCC. The site is seasonal. In most years the waterfalls peak from mid-August as khareef rains recharge underground aquifers that supply the spring. Flows then taper off after the monsoon ends, though the source spring continues to provide water. Ain Athum serves a dual role as both a tourist draw and a practical resource. Local residents temporarily relocate to the valley during the season to benefit from the water, and beekeepers also rely on the spring for apiaries set up in the surrounding greenery. Facilities include a stone-paved walkway shaded by trees, seating areas and kiosks offering snacks and



The waterfalls peak from mid-August as khareef rains recharge underground aquifers that supply the spring.

children’s games, making it a convenient stop — often combined with a visit to nearby Wadi Darbat. Access is via the Taqah road and the Nashib roundabout, with recent improvements easing the descent to the base of the falls. Visitors say the spectacle is at its best after heavy rainfall. “I never expected to find a place this beautiful in the GCC,” said a tourist from Saudi Arabia. “We arrived just after days of strong rain and were lucky to witness the waterfall in full force.” Dhofar, bordering the Arabian Sea in the south, experiences a unique monsoon (June–September) that cools temperatures and blankets the mountains in mist — unusual for the Arabian Peninsula. Salalah is the regional capital and the main gateway for khareef travellers. Travellers should note that the terrain can be slippery during peak flow. Visitors are advised to follow local safety signage, avoid venturing onto wet rocks and respect the natural environment.

MUSANDAM INTERNATIONAL DIVING FESTIVAL BEGINS

KHASAB: The Musandam International Diving Festival’s events and programmes began on Monday in the Wilayat of Khasab. The opening event was held under the

auspices of HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said. The festival features a variety of sections with broad participation from different government and private institutions. — ONA



550 students attend scholarship orientation

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUG 25

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, represented by the Directorate-General of Scholarships, held an orientation session at Sultan Qaboos University’s Cultural Center for students awarded external scholarships and grants for the academic year 2025-2026. The gathering, attended by students and their families, aimed to provide guidance on academic, legal, cultural and social aspects of studying abroad. Fahad bin Said al Qasabi, Acting Director-General of Scholarships, emphasised that the orientation was designed



The orientation also featured testimonials from students and parents.

to prepare students not only academically but also as ambassadors of Oman’s values and traditions overseas. This year, 550 scholarships were allocated for bachelor’s degree programmes, including those coordinated with entities such as the Military and Security Medical City and the Ministry of

Justice and Legal Affairs. In addition, 70 grants were offered by countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and France, widening the scope of destinations. Specialists from the ministry and the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs highlighted the importance of cultural identity while adapting to

life abroad. Students also received practical advice on travel procedures, personal safety, visa regulations and the use of e-services such as the ‘Asas’ system. The orientation also featured testimonials from students and parents, reflecting a mix of pride, excitement and reassurance. Additional virtual sessions, including tailored programmes for students with disabilities, will further support their academic journey. Al Qasabi summed up saying, “A scholarship is not simply a ticket to study overseas. It is a responsibility to represent your country with dignity and to return with knowledge that builds Oman’s future.”

Tender

مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
6/2025/PEIE/HQ-6	Consultancy Services for Master Planning of Raysut Industrial City Expansions, the Detail Design and Development of Phase 4 and the Administration Center at Dhofar Governorate	08-09-2025	05-10-2025	Consultancy Offices	First and above	150

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website.

1. **Tender Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. **eTendering System Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om and +968 24402200

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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SHORT TAKES

OMAN CLAIMS GOLD, BRONZE

SAINT PETERSBURG: The Sultanate of Oman won a gold and a bronze medal in the finals of the PhotOlympic 2025 held in St Petersburg, Russia. Photographer Ali bin Hamad al Ghafri won the gold medal and Mahmoud bin Mohammed al Jabri won the bronze medal. — ONA

39TH JOINT COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE COURSE BEGINS

The Joint Command and Staff College began its 39th course for officer students.

MUSCAT: The Joint Command and Staff College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Monday celebrated the start of its 39th course for officer students. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Brigadier Mohammed bin Ahmed al Mashaikhi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College.

On this occasion, the Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College delivered a speech welcoming the officer students. He urged them to be diligent and persevere in their pursuit of military and academic knowledge. He also extended a welcome to the students from Arab and friendly nations, wishing them a pleasant stay in Oman and success in the course. — ONA

Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah 72% complete; handover set for August 2026

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 25

The new Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah has reached 72 per cent completion and is slated for handover to the Ministry of Health in August 2026, according to Dr Hani al Qadi, Director-General of Health Services in Dhofar. He said that the facility will introduce oncology services, raise overall care quality, and be staffed with more highly qualified medical and technical personnel.

The RO 129 million flagship project sits on a 200,000-square-metre site and is designed to strengthen secondary and critical care capacity in the governorate. The main building comprises a ground floor and six upper storeys with a built-up area of around 94,400 sq m.

The hospital will provide 700 beds across

men's and women's inpatient wards in multiple specialties, including surgery, internal medicine and obstetrics and gynaecology. It will also house a paediatric ward, a burns unit, a paediatric special-care unit and an adult intensive care unit,

alongside 25 delivery rooms and two operating theatres, a fully integrated emergency department and an isolation ward. A comprehensive radiology department will include three X-ray units, two CT scanners, one MRI, ultrasound

systems, bone-density and mammography equipment, with an on-site pharmacy and medical laboratories. Day-care services will feature endoscopy suites, lithotripsy, a nephrology (kidney) unit, a room for minor procedures, and dedicated physiotherapy and chemotherapy units.

Supporting infrastructure encompasses administrative offices, service buildings and medical/general stores, a water-treatment plant, helipad, backup generators and drinking-water purification, among other utilities.

“The hospital will introduce new specialties, including oncology, enhance the quality of all services, and be supported by more highly qualified staff across medical and technical disciplines,” said Dr Al Qadi.

Children feted for creativity

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 25

THE Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) announced the winners of the 2025 Child Culture Award in its fifth edition, an award that aims to foster and enhance cultural and artistic creativity among children and youth, encourage talented individuals, and help develop their skills and nurture their talents.

First place was awarded to Maan al Jardani for his entry titled 'Imagine You Have Your Own Robot', while Aseel al Saadi secured second place on the same topic. Saif bin Khalid al Maawali took third place for his piece titled 'If You Owned a Tourism Company.'

These winners were among the top ten finalists in the two competitions, 'Speak So I Can See You', which targets children aged 7 to 12, and 'Oman Tells Stories,' which is dedicated to writers and authors of children's literature.

The award ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, at Omantel's Zain Hall, with a notable presence of families and participants. The event featured remarkable performances as children showcased their public speaking skills before the jury and audience.

During the ceremony, the ministry also honoured the five winners of the 'Oman Tells Stories' Competition: Umamah al Lawati, Mohammed al Jasmi, Jameela al Hinai, Abdullah al Mufriji and Intisar al Sinani.

Ahmed al Rashdi, Head of the Child Culture Department at the Ministry, said that the award aims to enhance children's literary and cultural abilities, while encouraging Omani writers to enrich Arab children's libraries with works that promote human values and instil loyalty and belonging to Oman's cultural heritage.

The current edition of the competition witnessed a significant increase in participation. The 'Oman Tells Stories' competition received 124 entries, 84 more than the previous edition, while the 'Speak So I Can See You' competition attracted 523 students in its first stage through three-

The awards aim to foster and enhance cultural and artistic creativity among children and youth

minute video submissions on assigned topics.

Eighteen entries were excluded for not meeting the requirements, yet the number of participants was still considerably higher than the previous year's 190 competitors. For the first time, the competition also welcomed seven children with visual impairments and two with mobility impairments, reflecting the award's commitment to inclusivity.

Maan al Jalandani, who bagged the first spot, told the Observer that he was overjoyed with the result, attributing his success first to Allah, then to his family's support and his own perseverance.

He expressed deep gratitude to the ministry for organising the competition, describing it as an exceptional experience

that helped him improve his confidence and skills in public speaking. He added that standing on stage and addressing the audience with confidence was an unforgettable moment that enabled him to give his very best and secure first place.

Similarly, Abdulaziz al Maamari, one of the visually impaired participants, explained that he joined the competition to develop his skills in public speaking and expressing ideas, as well as to share his knowledge and experiences with other children who may participate in the future.

He stressed the importance of such initiatives for children with special needs, noting that they provide a unique platform to highlight their talents and nurture their abilities in an encouraging and supportive environment.

TENDER

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR TECHNICAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLAR PROJECTS

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatization of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the PWP license.

Tender Description	Nama Power and Water Procurement seeks proposals to appoint a qualified and experienced Consultant as a technical advisor for the development of Solar Projects.
Tender Number	PWP/2025/33
Tender Purchase Period	From 25 August 2025 to 30 August 2025
Tender Fee	100 OMR / Free of charges for (SME) with a valid Riyada card
Submission date	15 September 2025 at 12:00 PM Oman Time Zone
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through the PWP website (https://www.omanpwp.om/new/Default.aspx). Payment is done electronically through the PWP website. For queries, please send an email to: procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om
Bank Guarantee	A Tender Bond or a bank certified cheque of not less than 1% of the tender value is required. It must be valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline. The tender bond or certified cheque shall be enclosed as part of the bid.

شركة الطاقة والمياه

POWER & WATER PROCUREMENT

الهيئة العامة للغذاء والدواء
Ministry of Health

الهيئة العامة للغذاء والدواء
Ministry of Health

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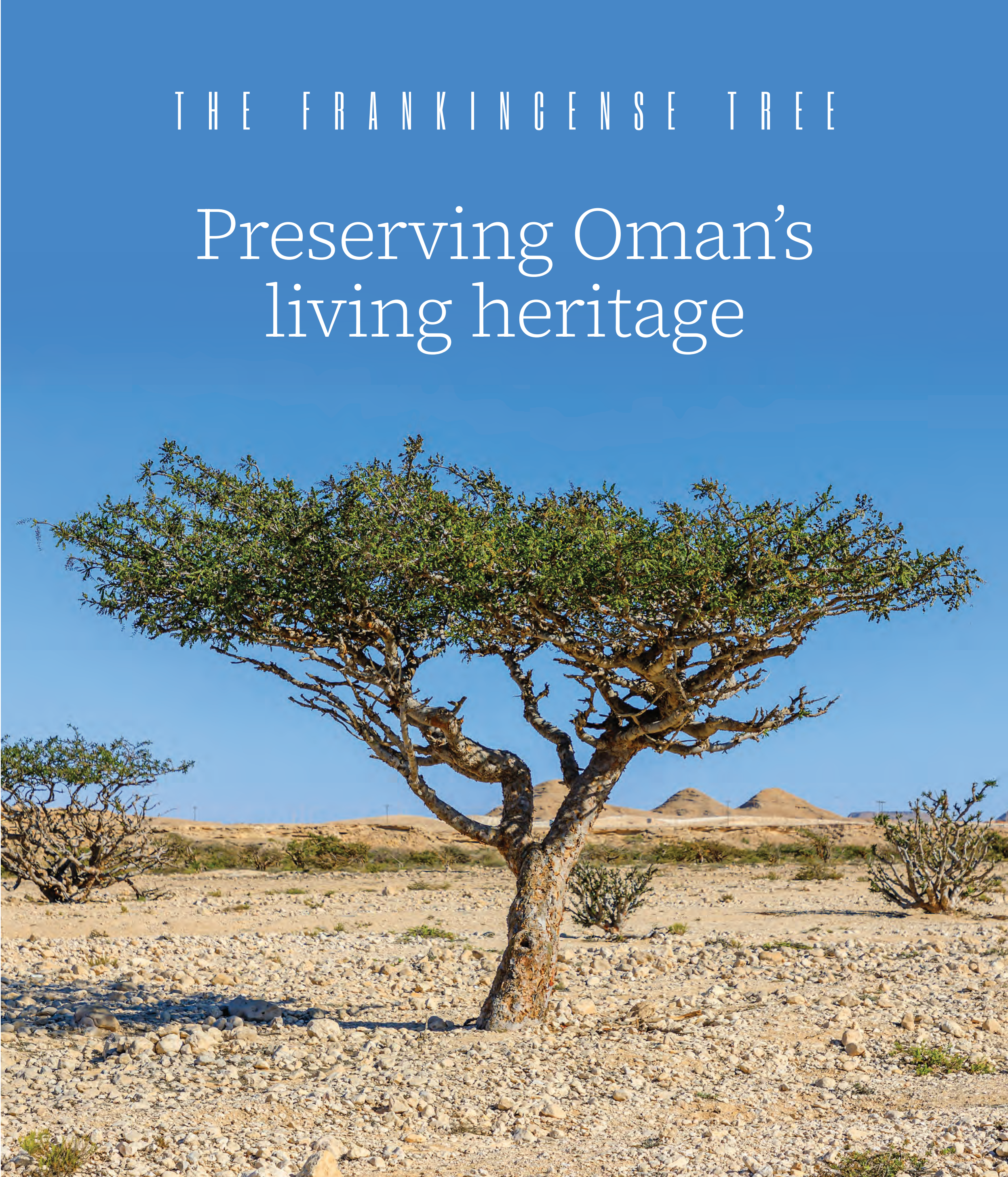
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SPOTLIGHT



T H E F R A N K I N C E N S E T R E E

Preserving Oman’s
living heritage



Frankincense is both a heritage symbol and a source of livelihood in Dhofar

Threatened by overharvesting, grazing, and climate change

Conservation efforts show stable tree numbers

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY underscores that the Omani frankincense tree is not merely a product to be sold, but a legacy to be preserved. Indiscriminate harvesting threatens to deprive Oman of part of its identity. For centuries, frankincense has shaped the cultural and economic fabric of Dhofar. Beyond its historical value, it enriches biodiversity, supports food and pharmaceutical industries, and serves as a cornerstone of traditional livelihoods. Yet,

Frankincense is more than a tree; it is an environmental resource, a cultural identity and the essence of Oman’s enduring heritage.

the tree now faces mounting challenges, namely overharvesting, overgrazing, habitat loss and the pressures of climate change. Efforts are underway to safeguard this heritage.

The Environment Authority is promoting replanting in natural habitats, regulating harvest seasons based on sustainability standards, and raising public awareness of the importance of trees.

REGENERATION PATTERNS
Initiatives to combat desertification, conserve wild plants and expand green cover also contribute to protection.

A 2022 study on frankincense trees in Dhofar revealed encouraging signs: while the trees show diverse regeneration patterns, no significant decline in their numbers has been detected. Still, threats remain serious — particularly overgrazing by camels, insect infestations, pest attacks, quarrying activity, unsustainable harvesting and erratic weather conditions.

Frankincense is more than a tree; it is an environmental resource, a cultural identity and the essence of Oman’s enduring heritage.

Preserving it is a responsibility shared by all.

SHORT TAKES



The workshop explores the latest research findings and practical experiments in controlling parthenium weed

WORKSHOP ON CONTROL OF PARTHENIUM WEED GROWTH HELD

SALALAH: A 3-day workshop on controlling the invasive growth of parthenium weed in the Governorate of Dhofar kicked off in Salalah on Monday. The workshop, organised by Dhofar Municipality, brings together experts and specialists from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

The workshop explores the latest research findings and practical experiments in controlling the invasive growth of the weed, both locally and internationally.

It also looks into means of enhancing international cooperation to support the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to build national capacities and develop integrated environmental programmes in the field.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

Two working papers were delivered after the presentation. The first, titled ‘Regional Research Reports: Oman and the Middle East’, dealt with the impact of parthenium on natural pastures in Dhofar Governorate. The second working paper outlined the role of environment-friendly allelopathic chemistry in controlling the growth and spread of parthenium.

The second day will include panel discussions about the biological and ecological nature of the parthenium weed, as well as reports about its presence in three regions: ‘India and South Asia’, ‘Australia and the Pacific’ and ‘Africa and the Middle East’.

The third day of the workshop will include three discussion panels on biological control, non-biological control and the best practices in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

INTERNATIONAL SCOUTS SUMMER GATHERING ENDS

SALALAH: The International Scouts Summer Gathering, organised by the Bausher Sports Club Scout Troop and Al Batinah Scout Council under the slogan ‘Our Identity Strengthens Our Values’, concluded on Monday at the Permanent Scout Camp in Jabal Ashur Plain in Dhofar Governorate.

The event was supervised by the General Directorate of Scouts and Guides at the Ministry of Education.

The gathering brought together 200 scouts and leaders from various



scout troops across Oman, as well as participants from Arab and friendly countries. The event aimed to develop scouting and leadership skills while providing a platform for exchanging experiences and ideas and reinforcing values associated with national identity.

The multi-day programme featured a variety of activities, including scouting competitions, workshops and training sessions, conducted both inside and outside the camp. — ONA

CPA services through Sanad to boost rights of consumers

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 25

THE Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has launched an initiative to expand the delivery of its services through Sanad offices, aiming to strengthen consumer rights and ensure a fair and transparent marketplace.

The move allows consumers to submit complaints and reports more easily, covering violations such as goods and services that fail to meet specifications, instances of commercial fraud, e-commerce issues, or products that pose risks or do not comply with standards.

Khalid al Siyabi, Director of the Market Control Department at CPA, said the initiative highlights the Authority’s pivotal role in creating balance and fairness in the market. “It instils trust in the Authority, enhances the quality of services and products, and contributes to building a national economy based on fair competition and the protection of rights,” he noted.

Sanad offices already provide a wide range of government and private services designed to bring transactions closer to citizens. A survey confirmed that these centres

Sanad offices already provide a wide range of government and private services designed to bring transactions closer to citizens. A survey confirmed that these centres play a significant role in speeding up services, improving efficiency and offering better organisation



This ensures that consumer grievances are addressed with greater clarity and efficiency

play a significant role in speeding up services, improving efficiency and offering better organisation. They are also regarded as a cornerstone of Oman’s digital transformation.

In addition to this new service channel, the CPA has developed digital services that allow consumers to submit complaints and report violations through its online portal.

The inclusion of Sanad offices as complaint outlets further ensures that consumer grievances are addressed quickly, with greater clarity and efficiency in the completion of transactions.

Through these measures, the CPA continues to reinforce consumer confidence while supporting the nation’s broader goals of digital progress and market transparency.



Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Economy

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees	Last Date For Tender Submission
7/2025	Empowering the Tourism Sector in the Sultanate of Oman - Opportunities and Challenges	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	5/10/2025

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the tender from the following website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

Second

The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Third

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone:

 etenderhd@mtc.gov.om

 + 96824402200

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1,900 shooters join Dhofar Traditional Weapons Championship

SALALAH: The Khareef Dhofar Championship for Traditional Weapons Shooting commenced on Monday at the shooting ground of the Command of the Sultan’s Armed Forces in Raysut, Salalah. Organised by Dhofar Municipality as part of the accompanying events of the khareef (monsoon) season, the championship will continue until August 29.

The competition features over 1,900 participants from various age categories.

This year, the championship introduces a new category – ‘heavy rifle targets with telescopic sights’ – as part of efforts to broaden participation and enhance the competitive atmosphere. — ONA

TENDER NOTICE



Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
554/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 59	Providing agricultural service workers to the Department of Agricultural and Animal Research in Dhofar Governorate for a period of 3 years	Sunday 24/8/2025	Sunday 14/9/2025	Sunday 5/10/2025	Specialized SMEs companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
555/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 60	Providing agricultural service workers to the Agricultural Research Department in North Al Batinah Governorate for a period of 3 years	Sunday 24/8/2025	Sunday 14/9/2025	Sunday 5/10/2025	Specialized SMEs companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
556/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 61	Providing agricultural service workers to the Department of Agricultural and Animal Research in the Eastern Provinces for a period of 3 years	Sunday 24/8/2025	Sunday 14/9/2025	Sunday 5/10/2025	Specialized SMEs companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
557/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 62	Providing agricultural service workers for the Department of Agricultural and Animal Research in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate for a period of 3 years	Sunday 24/8/2025	Sunday 14/9/2025	Sunday 5/10/2025	Specialized SMEs companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
558/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 63	Providing agricultural service workers to the General Directorate of Agricultural and livestock Research for a period of 3 years	Sunday 24/8/2025	Sunday 14/9/2025	Sunday 5/10/2025	Specialized SMEs companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.

- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@gstb.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Participating commanders gesture during the opening ceremony, in Jakarta. — AFP

INDONESIA, US AND ALLIES LAUNCH JOINT MILITARY DRILLS

JAKARTA: Indonesia and the United States launched joint military drills that will last more than a week, joining allies from 11 countries in exercises aimed at ensuring stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The annual “Super Garuda Shield” drills will take place in the capital Jakarta and several locations on the western island of Sumatra and the Riau archipelago until September 4. More than 4,100 Indonesian and 1,300 American troops will take part, joined by participants from Australia, Japan, Singapore, France, New Zealand, Britain and other nations.

Samuel Paparo, commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, said this year’s exercises were “the largest Super Garuda Shield ever”, adding that they would help participating nations boost deterrence, without elaborating. “It represents deterring anyone that would hope to change the facts on the ground using violence with the collective determination of all participants to uphold the principles of sovereignty,” Paparo said at Monday’s opening ceremony. The programme includes staff exercises, cyber defence drills and a live-fire event, the Indonesian military said. Countries including India, Papua New Guinea and East Timor also sent observers for the exercise. — AFP

INDIA SHARES FLOOD WARNING WITH PAKISTAN



Residents stand at the entrance of a house on a flooded road, near the Pakistan-India border in Kasur district. — Reuters

NEW DELHI: India has shared a warning on possible cross-border flooding with neighbour Pakistan, Pakistani officials and a source in New Delhi said on Monday, as the arch enemies grapple with deadly floods and relentless monsoon rains.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry said the warning was issued through diplomatic channels “rather than through the Indus Waters Commission as required under the Indus Waters Treaty”. Floods in India’s northern territory of Jammu and Kashmir have killed at least 60 people and nearly 400 more in northwest Pakistan this month.

Mazhar Hussain, a disaster management official in the Pakistani province of Punjab, said the information shared by India included a warning about a possible surge in the Tawi river. “It has not indicated the scale of water but has warned about high flooding in the river,” Hussain said. “Moreover, heavy rains across the border have filled the Indian dams, which would force India to release water. Heavy rains in Pakistan and the water released by India would cause high floods in Sutlej, Ravi and Chenab in Punjab.” — Reuters

FIRST SPEECH

Al Sharaa to speak at UN General Assembly



Syria’s President Ahmed al Sharaa will speak at the UN next month, a foreign ministry official said. Sharaa “will take part in the United Nations General Assembly where he will deliver a speech”. “He will be the first Syrian president to speak at the UN since former president Nureddin al Atassi (in 1967), and the first Syrian president ever to take part in the General Assembly’s high-level week,” scheduled for September 22-30. — AFP

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Sweden to sell four fighter jets to Thailand



Sweden said that it has signed a deal to sell four Gripen fighter jets produced by Saab to Thailand. The deal “strengthens the long-term development opportunities for Swedish warplanes,” Swedish Defence Materiel Administration (FMV) Director-General Mikael Granholm said. Saab said that the value of the order, which includes three Gripen E jets and one Gripen F, was around 5.3 billion crowns (\$556 million) and deliveries would take place in 2025-2030. — Reuters

DIPLOMACY TALKS

Russia and Iran discuss nuclear programme



The Iranian and Russian presidents discussed Tehran’s nuclear programme as European powers threaten to reimpose sanctions. Russia’s Vladimir Putin held a phone call with Iran’s Masoud Pezeshkian, the Kremlin said, in which the pair “touched on the situation around Iran’s nuclear programme”. The Iranian presidency said Pezeshkian had thanked Putin for supporting Tehran’s “right to enrichment” and said Iran was “not seeking, and will never seek to build nuclear weapons”. — AFP

UN slams global inaction over Gaza hospital attack

GENEVA: A UN chief slammed “shocking” global inaction over the Gaza conflict on Monday after an Israeli strike on a hospital killed at least 20 people including five journalists. Philippe Lazzarini, head of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees described the strike as “silencing the last remaining voices reporting about children dying silently amid famine. “The world’s indifference and inaction is shocking,” he added on X.

Gaza civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassa said an Israeli explosive drone targeted a building at Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis, followed by an air strike as the wounded were being evacuated. Reuters, the Associated Press and Al Jazeera said their contributors were among the journalists killed in the strike, which came just days after the UN declared a famine in the war-battered Palestinian territory.

The UN rights office also condemned the strike, insisting that “journalists are not a target. Hospitals are not a target”. “The killing of journalists in Gaza should shock the world — not into stunned silence but into action, demanding accountability and justice,” spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said. “In a situation of war and famine, international journalists continue to be denied entry by Israeli authorities,” she added. “These journalists are the eyes and ears of the international community, and they must be protected,” she said. “Their killings, and those of countless other civilians, must be independently, promptly investigated and justice must follow.”

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said four health workers were also among the dead. “Fifty others were injured, among them critically ill patients who were already receiving care,” he said on X. “While people in Gaza are being starved, their already limited access to health care is being further crippled by repeated attacks,” he added. “We cannot say it loudly enough: STOP attacks on health care. Ceasefire now!”

The ongoing war in Gaza has been one of the deadliest for journalists,



Palestinians inspect the site of Israeli strikes on Nasser Hospital, in Khan Yunis. — Reuters



Mariam Dagga



Moaz Abu Taha



Mohammed Salama

The UN rights office condemned the strike, insisting that “journalists are not a target. Hospitals are not a target”. “The killing of journalists in Gaza should shock the world — not into stunned silence but into action, demanding accountability and justice

with around 200 media workers killed over the course of the nearly two-year Israeli assault, according to media watchdogs.

A Reuters spokesperson said the agency was “devastated” to learn of Masri’s death “and injuries to another of our contractors, Hatem Khaled, in Israeli strikes on the Nasser hospital in Gaza today”. “We are urgently seeking more information and have asked authorities in Gaza and Israel to help us get urgent medical assistance for Hatem,” the statement added. A spokesperson for Qatar-based TV network Al Jazeera said that one of its photojournalists and cameramen, Mohammad Salama, was also killed in the attack. “Al Jazeera Media Network condemns, in the strongest possible terms, this

horrific crime committed by the Israeli occupation forces, who have directly targeted and assassinated journalists as part of a systematic campaign to silence the truth,” the broadcaster said in a statement.

The Associated Press said in a statement that it was “shocked and saddened” to learn of the death of Mariam Dagga, 33, a visual journalist who had freelanced for the agency since the start of the war. The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate named two other victims as Moaz Abu Taha and Ahmad Abu Aziz. Later on Monday, a sixth journalist, Hassan Douhan, was killed by Israeli fire in the Al Mawasi area of Khan Yunis, according to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate and Nasser Hospital. — AFP

TYPHOON KAJIKI BATTERS VIETNAM



CUA LO: Typhoon Kajiki brought torrential rains to Vietnam’s north central coast on Monday, felling trees and flooding homes, despite wind speeds tapering off from earlier in the day. As of 0900 GMT, Kajiki was on the coast of Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces, with wind speed easing to 118-133 kph from as strong as 166 kph, according to the country’s weather agency.

Vietnam had shut airports, closed schools and begun mass evacuations as it prepared for the most powerful storm so far this year. The government warned earlier of “an extremely dangerous

fast-moving storm,” adding that Kajiki would bring heavy rains, flooding and landslides. The weather agency said rainfall could reach 500 millimetres from Monday afternoon until the end of Tuesday in several parts of northern Vietnam.

The Vietnamese government said earlier on Monday that about 30,000 people had been evacuated from coastal areas. More than 16,500 soldiers and 107,000 paramilitary personnel had been mobilised to help with the evacuation and stand by for search and rescue. — Reuters

FACING PROSECUTORS



The Oil tanker Eagle S is seen anchored near the Kõlilahti port in Porvoo, Finland. — AFP file photo

SUSPECTS BLAME TECHNICAL FAULTS FOR BALTIC BREACHES

HELSINKI: The captain of an oil tanker and two officers accused of severing five undersea power and telecoms cables in the Baltic Sea last December, blamed technical faults for the damage as their trial began in Helsinki on Monday. Nato allies with forces stationed around the Baltic Sea went on high alert after the December 25 incident, one of a string of suspicious cable and gas pipeline outages in the region since Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022.

Prosecutors say the Eagle S tanker deliberately dragged its 11,000 kg anchor along the seabed to sever the Estlink 2 power cable linking Finland and Estonia and four internet cables as the vessel sailed from a Russian port via the Gulf of Finland. Finnish security forces intercepted the Cook Islands-registered ship and boarded it from helicopters after ordering it to move into Finnish territorial waters.

The tanker’s Georgian captain, Davit Vadatchkoria, and its Georgian first and Indian second officers pleaded not guilty, saying the vessel’s anchor had dropped due to technical faults in the securing of the anchor winch. State prosecutor Heidi Nummela said that, while investigators did not find proof that the anchor’s fastening had been manipulated, the failure of all three available backstops was at minimum a sign of gross negligence on the crew’s part.

Finnish prosecutors are seeking 2.5 years in prison for aggravated criminal mischief and aggravated interference with telecommunications for the defendants who deny all charges and reject the cable owners’ claims for damages that amount to tens of millions of euros. They also questioned the court’s jurisdiction in the matter, given the cable cuts occurred in international waters. “This was a normal marine accident, not any sabotage,” second officer Santosh Kumar Chuarasia told reporters during a break. He said that the anchor dropped due to bad weather and mechanical malfunction and that he trusted the court to rule in the defendants’ favour.

Vadatchkoria declined comment, while his lawyer Tommi Heinonen told the court the incident was “a marine accident”. On December 25, the Eagle S sailed on for three hours at a reduced speed after severing the first power cable at 12:26 pm, prosecutors told the court. When contacted by Finnish marine authorities at 3:20 pm and asked whether its anchor was up and secured, its crew replied in the affirmative, which was not true, prosecutors said. — Reuters

UK MIGRANT ARRIVALS ON SMALL BOATS REACH NEW RECORD

LONDON: A record 28,076 migrants have crossed the Channel to Britain in small boats this year, a 46 per cent rise on the same period in 2024, government data showed on Monday, piling pressure on Prime Minister Keir Starmer over his handling of immigration. The sharp increase comes amid mounting public concern over immigration, which is polling as the public’s top concern, with anti-migrant protests continuing outside hotels housing asylum seekers.

The record was reached on Sunday

after 212 migrants arrived in four different boats that day, the data showed. The Home Office, or interior ministry, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Demonstrations took place across Britain over the weekend following a court ruling last week that ordered the removal of asylum seekers from a hotel in Epping, north-east of London, the latest flashpoint in the immigration debate.

Starmer’s Labour government has pledged to phase out hotel use by 2029

and to overhaul the asylum system. On Sunday it announced reforms to speed up asylum appeals and reduce a backlog of more than 100,000 cases. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, the country’s interior minister, said the changes were aimed at restoring “control and order” to a system she described as “in complete chaos”. Nigel Farage, leader of the right-wing Reform UK party that has topped recent surveys of voting intentions, outlined plans for “mass deportations” of migrants arriving by small boats. — Reuters

Ukraine needs security guarantees, says Germany

GERMANY is ready to help Ukraine obtain reliable security guarantees to ensure “lasting peace” once the conflict with Russia ends, Germany’s vice chancellor said on Monday on a visit to Kyiv. Lars Klingbeil also said that Germany, Ukraine’s biggest military backer after the United States, planned to spend nine billion euros (\$10.5 billion) supporting Kyiv this year and in 2026. “As long as this war continues, we will stand by Ukraine’s side, because it is also about our freedom and our security,” said the Social Democrat politician.

Kyiv is working with allies to hash out security guarantees seen as crucial in bringing the more than three-year old war to an end. Klingbeil, while noting discussions were in the early stages, stressed that guarantees would have to be reliable to “ensure lasting peace” for Ukraine. “What is important is that there are security guarantees in the end that ensure Ukraine is no longer attacked,” he said.

The aim must be that Russian President Vladimir Putin “no longer dares to attack Ukraine in the way he has over the past three and a half years,” he added. “We as Germany must naturally also take on responsibility,” added Klingbeil, who is also Germany’s finance minister. He said there were two components he viewed as particularly important -- that Ukraine has a strong army and that weapons production in Ukraine is ramped up.

President Volodymyr Zelensky has also said that the presence of foreign troops in Ukraine once the war ends is also key. While France and Britain have floated the idea of sending forces to uphold any peace agreement, Germany has sounded cool about the prospect. US President Donald Trump last week ruled out sending US troops but said he envisioned extending US air power as part of potential security guarantees. Russia has repeatedly objected to Western troops being stationed in Ukraine.

Hopes for peace have dimmed after Moscow on Friday ruled out any immediate meeting between Zelensky and Putin, despite efforts by Trump to broker a



A Ukrainian soldier stands next to a memorial wall for fallen soldiers, in Kyiv. — Reuters

Ukraine-Russia summit. “The ball is now in Vladimir Putin’s court,” said Klingbeil. “He is the one who can stop the war immediately, who can stop the killings immediately.”

The Russian army on Monday claimed to have captured another village in Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk region, moving deeper into Ukrainian territory as peace efforts stall. Russian forces are slowly but steadily gaining ground in costly battles for largely devastated areas in eastern and central Ukraine, normally with few inhabitants or intact buildings left.

Russia’s defence ministry said its forces had seized the settlement of Zaporizke in the region, which Russian troops recently advanced into for the first time in the three-and-a-half-year offensive. Kyiv denies that Russian troops have gained a foothold in the Dnipropetrovsk region, an important industrial hub. The central region of Dnipropetrovsk has previously been largely spared from fighting that has ravaged swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine, until Russia said its forces broke through in July.

Dnipropetrovsk is not one of the five Ukrainian regions — Donetsk, Kherson, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea — that Moscow has publicly claimed as Russian territory. Ukraine said Russia had launched over 100 drones on Monday, killing a 37-year old civilian driver and wounding two people in the northeastern Sumy region. Moscow said Kyiv had launched about two dozen drones targeting western Russia.

Meanwhile, Polish President Karol Nawrocki on Monday blocked legislation to extend child benefits to all Ukrainian refugees in Poland, saying only parents who work should receive them. Nawrocki, a nationalist, promised to cut social welfare benefits during the campaign ahead of his election victory on June 1. “I will not change my mind and I think that (this aid) should be limited only to Ukrainians who are committed to working in Poland,” Nawrocki, who took office this month, told reporters. The law put forward by Poland’s pro-EU government adopted by the parliament would have extended child benefits until March 2026. — AFP

Portugal counts the cost of its biggest ever forest fire

LISBON: Nearly 1,000 firefighters remained mobilised on Monday in central Portugal to prevent flare-ups of what authorities said was the biggest forest fire the country has seen -- ravaging an area more than 10 times bigger than Manhattan island. The blaze was only brought under control on Sunday after raging for 11 days and having burned 64,451 hectares, National Civil Protection Authority spokesman Commander Telmo Ferreira said.

That made it the largest fire ever recorded in Portugal, according to the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Forests (ICNF). The previous biggest was 53,000 hectares devastated by a forest fire in October 2017.

The blaze covered seven municipalities in Coimbra, Guarda, and Castelo Branco districts and was caused by lightning strikes, officials said. Ferreira said

authorities still had nearly 1,000 firefighters and 300 vehicles on “surveillance operations” Monday though the numbers were expected to be gradually reduced. Monday brought some respite as the civil protection system recorded no fresh outbreaks from a summer which has seen Portugal and neighbouring Spain suffer a slew of fires.

Since July, forest fires have killed four people in Portugal, destroyed homes and crops, and ravaged some 278,000 hectares, according to European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) data. Portugal’s worst year was in 2017, when more than 563,000 hectares were burned in wildfires that killed 119 people, according to EFFIS records.

The government has announced a number of emergency measures to help affected areas, including funding for the reconstruction of destroyed homes and aid for



Burnt cars are pictured, in Sarzeda village in Trancoso, Portugal. — AFP

farmers. The Iberian Peninsula has been severely affected by climate change, which is causing longer and more intense heatwaves, according

to experts.

A 16-day heatwave Spain suffered this month was “the most intense on record”, the national

meteorological agency said. With forest fires still burning across northern and western Spain, the AEMET meteorological agency said provisional readings for the August 3-18 heatwave exceeded the last record, set in July 2022, and showed an average temperature 4.6C higher than previous events.

The August heatwave exacerbated tinderbox conditions that have fuelled wildfires which have killed four people and forced thousands out of their homes. More than 1,100 deaths in Spain have been linked to the August heatwave, according to an estimate released on Tuesday by the Carlos III Health Institute. The institute had already said that 1,060 deaths in July could be attributed to excess heat, a 50 per cent rise on the figure for July 2024. Since it began keeping records in 1975, AEMET has registered 77 heatwaves in Spain, with six going 4C or more above the average. — AFP

OPINION

Oman’s education sector is on the right track



AS the summer break ends, the Sultanate of Oman is soon embarking on a new academic year, 2025/2026, a period marked by significant educational advancements and a renewed focus on student well-being and leadership development.

Oman has made significant strides in its education sector, consistently prioritising human capital development as a cornerstone of its national progress. The country’s commitment to education is reflected in its continuous efforts to enhance educational infrastructure, curriculum development and teacher training.

These achievements are particularly relevant as the nation prepares for the academic year 2025/2026, focusing on adapting to global trends and addressing contemporary challenges. The new academic year is set to build upon existing educational achievements while integrating new strategies to meet evolving demands.

A key focus will be on leveraging technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), to personalise learning experiences and enhance educational outcomes. This aligns with global trends where AI is seen as a transformative tool in education, offering solutions for administrative complexity and fostering personalised connections between educators and students.

The integration of AI-driven learning platforms will dynamically adjust to student interests and learning paces, enhancing

accessibility and inclusivity, with virtual labs and simulations enabling experimentation without geographical constraints.

The Ministry of Education stated that it has received 16 new schools in nine educational directorates to operate at the beginning of the new academic year. The ministry has earmarked RO 20 million for the establishment of 80 new schools as well as new facilities in existing schools.

New facilities have already been implemented in 68 schools at a cost of RO 15 million, with 53 of them expected to be operational this year. An amount of RO 7 million has been allocated for renovation work, RO 4 million to refurbish 77 science laboratories.

This year, the number of teachers in government schools has reached 66,379, distributed across 1,303 schools. The number of administrative and technical staff in government schools stands at 11,183, including 4,420 males and 6,763 females.

Meanwhile, special education schools employ 241 teachers and 46 administrative staff. The Ministry of Education has completed the appointment procedures for new teachers who passed written tests and personal interviews for this academic year to meet actual staffing needs across various specialisations.

To better equip the education sector in Oman, a national plan has also been implemented to prepare 100 government and private schools in Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah and

Oman’s commitment to educational advancement extends to higher education and the integration of modern technologies. The country aims to become a knowledge-based economy by 2040.

Al Batinah South for external review by the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA).

This effort aims to enhance administrative and technical readiness, activate self-assessment tools and improve institutional performance, reaffirming the ministry’s commitment to supporting educational staff and providing sustainable programmes that contribute to educational development.

The Ministry of Education has been seeking to implement a number of educational goals, the most important of which is to continue to update and develop school curricula in line with the requirements of sustainable development and global trends.

The ministry also continues to digitise the curricula and equip educational directorates with integrated educational studios, re-engineer procedures for its services and develop the educational indicators system.

Oman’s commitment to educational advancement extends to higher education and the integration of modern technologies. The country aims to become a knowledge-based economy by 2040. Overall, Oman’s education system has undergone a profound transformation, characterised by significant expansion, localisation of the teaching force, pedagogical reforms, integration of advanced technologies like AI, and a commitment to developing well-rounded citizens and professionals.

Merkel sees significant progress in integrating migrants, 10 years on

STEFAN HEINEMEYER

Ten years after her legendary statement - ‘We can do this’ - on Germany’s ability to accept hundreds of thousands of refugees, former chancellor Angela Merkel believes Germany has made significant progress in integrating migrants.

“It is a process. But so far, we have achieved a lot,” Merkel said in an interview with public broadcaster ARD for a documentary aired on Monday. “And what still needs to be done must continue to be done,” she added.

On August 31, 2015, Merkel used those words after it became known that 800,000 refugees were expected in Germany that year, and thousands more were on their way from Hungary.

“It was clear to me that this would be something truly challenging,” she said. At the same time, she said she was repeatedly surprised by how often her words were thrown back at her.

She said she just wanted to acknowledge that while Germany was facing a major task, she was placing her hopes in the people of the country.

Merkel does not believe that Germany was overwhelmed by her decision. “I don’t think so. Germany is a strong country,” she said. “Overall, I was convinced that Germany could handle it.” The former chancellor noted that the alternative would have been to prevent refugees from coming to Germany by force. “I would never have been willing to do that,” Merkel stated.

In hindsight, however, she sometimes reproached herself for not having done more for people on the ground in 2012-13, when the civil war in Syria was already under way.

Merkel also acknowledged that her decision contributed to the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). “This certainly made the AfD stronger,” she said. However, she added that this was not a reason to avoid making a decision she considered right and reasonable.

CDU General Secretary Carsten Linnemann offered a critical assessment 10 years after Merkel’s statement. “Since 2015, 6.5 million people have come to us, and less than half are currently employed. I find that, to put it mildly, unsatisfactory,” Linnemann a newspaper. He emphasised that the current focus should be on stopping illegal migration into the welfare system and promoting regular immigration into the labour market. — AFP

How GPT-5 surprised me

I seem to be having a very different experience with GPT-5, the newest iteration of OpenAI’s flagship model, from most everyone else. The commentariat consensus is that GPT-5 is a dud, a disappointment, perhaps even evidence that artificial intelligence progress is running aground. Meanwhile, I’m over here filled with wonder and nerves. Perhaps this is what the future always feels like once we reach it: too normal to notice how strange our world has become.

The knock on GPT-5 is that it nudges the frontier of AI capabilities forward rather than obliterating previous limits. I’m not here to argue otherwise. OpenAI has been releasing new models at such a relentless pace — the powerful o3 model came out four months ago — that it has cannibalised the shock we might have felt if there had been nothing between the 2023 release of GPT-4 and the 2025 release of GPT-5.

But GPT-5, at least for me, has been a leap in what it feels like to use an AI model. It reminds me of setting up thumbprint recognition on an iPhone: You keep lifting your thumb on and off the sensor, watching a bit more of the image fill in each time, until finally, with one last touch, you have a full thumbprint. GPT-5 feels like a thumbprint.

Right now, the AI companies are not making all that much money off these products. If they eventually do make the profits their investors and founders imagine, I don’t think the normal tax structure is sufficient to cover the debt they owe all of us, and everyone before us, on whose writing and ideas their models are built.

Then there’s the energy demand. To build the AI future that these companies and their investors are envisioning requires a profusion of data centres gulping down



EZRA KLEIN,

The author is NYT columnist and podcast host

Perhaps this is what the future always feels like once we reach it: too normal to notice how strange our world has become.

almost unimaginable quantities of electricity — by 2030, data centres alone will consume more energy than all of Japan does now.

If we had spent the past three decades pricing carbon and building the clean energy infrastructure we needed, then accommodating that growth would be straightforward. That, after all, is the point of abundant energy. It makes new technologies possible, and not just AI: desalination on a mass scale, lab-grown meat that could ease the pressure on both animals and land, direct air capture to begin to draw down the carbon in the atmosphere, and cleaner and faster transport across both air and sea. The point of our energy policy should not be to use less energy. The point of our energy policy should be to make clean energy so abundant that we can use much more of it and do much more with it.

But President Donald Trump is waging a war against clean energy, gutting the Biden-era policies that were supporting the build-out of solar, wind and battery infrastructure. There’s something almost comically grim about powering something as futuristic as AI off something as archaic as coal or untreated methane gas. That, however, is a political choice we are making as a country. It’s not intrinsic to AI as a technology.

So what is intrinsic to AI as a technology? I’ve been following a debate between two different visions of how the next years will unfold. In their paper “AI as Normal Technology”, Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor, both computer scientists at Princeton University, argue that the external world is going to act as “a speed limit” on what AI can do.

In their telling, we shouldn’t think of AI as heralding a new economic or social paradigm; rather, we should

think of it more like electricity, which took decades to begin showing up in productivity statistics. They note that GPT-4 reportedly performs better on the bar exam than 90% of test takers, but it cannot come close to acting as your lawyer. The problem is not just hallucinations. The problem is that lawyers need to master “real-world skills that are far harder to measure in a standardised, computer-administered format.” For AIs to replace lawyers, we would need to redesign how the law works to accommodate AIs.

“AI 2027” — by Daniel Kokotajlo, Scott Alexander, Thomas Larsen, Eli Lifland and Romeo Dean, whose backgrounds range from working at OpenAI to triumphing in forecasting tournaments — takes up the opposite side of that argument. It constructs a step-by-step timeline in which humanity has lost control of its future by the end of 2027. The scenario largely hinges on a single assumption: In early 2026, AI becomes adept at automating AI research, and then becomes recursively self-improving — and self-directing — at an astonishing rate, leading to sentences like “In the last six months, a century has passed within the Agent-5 collective.”

Even if you believe that AI capabilities will keep advancing — and I do, though how far and how fast I don’t pretend to know — a rapid collapse of human control does not necessarily follow. I am quite sceptical of scenarios in which AI attains superintelligence without making any obvious mistakes in its effort to attain power in the real world.

And yet I am a bit shocked by how even the nascent AI tools we have are worming their way into our lives — not by being officially integrated into our schools and workplaces but by unofficially whispering in our ears. — The New York Times

Safety of journalists in a war zone



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

OCCUPATIONAL safety is a subject that is highly sought after. It is an important aspect of the Human Resources department. Occupational safety is a practice of protecting people from accidents, injuries and illnesses in the workplace by implementing preventative measures, safe working policies, risk assessment, and employee training to foster a culture of health and well-being. It is a multidisciplinary field that considers all aspects of physical, mental, and social health to create a safe and healthy work environment for everyone involved in or affected by the workplace. But maybe now it should include death, especially for journalists working in war zones. An Israeli strike this week on a Gaza medical complex killed 10, including four journalists. Medics are protected by the Geneva Conventions. This means that anyone who purposefully attacks or kills a medic clearly wearing medical clothing and has no weapon in their hand commits a war crime. Journalists practice freedom of expression. By nature, they tend to push their luck. They know they might have to push for their stories, but the objective is to get the true story out. War correspondents know their role clearly. There have been war correspondents throughout history, and it

was most prominent from World War. Are war correspondents becoming targets today? A journalist in a war zone also has to be objective and convey what they see and experience. They bring the experiences to the outer world. Is information important for people to know? Journalists produce news, but is it relevant to others? The information adds up to become knowledge that is significant for the public, especially in the process of decision-making. The individual journalists must be exceptional in their inner strength and bravery to choose to work in the zones of conflict. Nothing in their environment is normal, in most cases - even for the basic essentials such as food and access to water. For that matter, a hospital must be one of the safest places. But in this situation, they too became victims as the health complex came under fire. This incident too we know because the media was there to report. The role of war correspondents is crucial in documenting wars, interviewing military personnel and civilians, and exploring the human impact of conflict. They are the witnesses and narrators. They have been the most important link to the public. They document wars and raise the questions against the need for a war. But what happens when they become the

Medics are protected by the Geneva Conventions. This means that anyone who purposefully attacks or kills a medic clearly wearing medical clothing and has no weapon in their hand commits a war crime

victims of war? They also have family for whom the loss must be unbearable. With the development in technology, would we see a change in war reporting? The answer is yes, methods for war reporting are significantly changing, driven by technology and new conflict dynamics. Experts also point out that there is a blurring of the line between journalist and combatant. This necessitates new skills, a greater emphasis on personal safety, and an ethical challenge to maintain credibility and report effectively in a fragmented information environment. Technology has enabled participant and citizen journalism to allow more people to provide coverage from conflict zones. This also has an impact on traditional news reporting. But what harms the most is when war correspondents lose their lives while on duty, and worse, when they are targeted. Yet another question remains, and that is whether the ethics of war have changed. Facing the frontline are not just the military, but also the common man, medics, humanitarian workers, and war correspondents. And then we realise that it is not just about occupational safety, because what do we say to the people for whom living in the war is the reality?

KENYA SLUM EXCHANGE OFFERS WATER FOR PLASTIC

Using a crutch to bear her weight, 85-year-old Molly Aluoch trudges from her mud-walled room on the outskirts of a sprawling Nairobi slum, shouldering a sack of used plastic to exchange for a shower or a safe toilet. For the 31 years she has lived in Kibera, Kenya’s largest informal settlement, water and sanitation have remained scarce and costly - often controlled by cartels who charge residents prices beyond their means. The Human Needs Project (HNP) seeks to mitigate that. Residents can trade discarded plastic for “green points”, or credits, which they can redeem for services such as drinking water, toilets, showers, laundries and even meals. “With my green points, I can now access a comfortable and clean toilet and bathroom any time of the day,” Aluoch said. Before, she would spend 10 shillings (eight US cents) to use a toilet and another 10 for a bathroom, a significant chunk from the residents’ average daily income, 200 to 400 shillings, before food and housing costs. “It meant that without money, I would not use a toilet,” she said. Unable to use Kibera’s pit latrines owing to her frailty meant she would have to resort to “unhygienic means”. Now, that money goes towards food for her three grandchildren. Aluoch, a traditional birth attendant, is among some 100 women who collect plastics for green points, helping them access water, sanitation, and hygiene services. She takes her plastic to a centre 200 metres from her home, where one kilogramme of recyclable plastics earns 15 green points, equivalent to 15 shillings. The project serves some 800 residents daily, allowing them access to modern bathrooms, clean water and menstrual hygiene facilities - services that are out of reach for many Kibera households. Since 2015, the project has distributed more than 50 million litres (13 million gallons) of water and more than one million toilet and shower uses. In 2024 alone, it distributed 11 million litres of water and enabled 124,000 bathroom and toilet uses. With water a scarce commodity in Kibera, it is common for vendors to create artificial shortages to inflate prices, forcing residents to pay more than 10 times the normal price. The city’s water service charges between \$0.60 and \$0.70 per cubic metre for connected households, but by comparison, Kibera residents have to stump up as much as \$8 to \$19 for the same amount. “Getting water was hard. We could go several days without water,” said Magret John, 50, a mother of three. Today, her reality is different. “The water point is at my doorstep. The supply is steady and the water is clean. All I need is to collect plastics, get points, redeem and get water,” she said. John, who has lived in Kibera for nine years, says the project has been a game changer, especially for women and girls. — AFP

Finally the age of robotic warfare has arrived

RUSSIA’S WAR with Ukraine has become a full-scale technological conflict, where 70-80 per cent of casualties are now caused by unmanned aerial drones. After three and a half years, the war has become a non-stop cat-and-mouse game, where every new weapon system offers only a brief two- or three-month advantage before the other side develops countermeasures. That means the age of robotic warfare is here. We are witnessing its first stage in Ukraine’s skies, on the ground, and at sea. The fastest military-tech development in the world is happening in Ukrainian garages, basements, and factories, where hundreds of small teams are building new-model drones and interceptors. Many have been working non-stop since February 2022, without weekends or vacations. As soon as a new product is ready, it is deployed to the front line. Soldiers test it the next day, and within 24 hours, combat feedback is sent to developers, starting a new cycle. Some defence-tech teams even hand deliver their products to combat zones and work directly with soldiers on integration and iteration. But Russia’s war machine is also operating at full speed, with many factories running around the clock. A clear sign of how quickly Russia can scale up effective weapon systems came on July 9, when it launched 728 Shahed drones in a single day. By the end of the month, more than 6,200 Shaheds had been deployed - 14 times more than in July 2024, and 16 per cent more than in June. To address this threat, at least two Ukrainian defence companies have developed AI-powered interceptor drones that use machine learning to identify and destroy Shaheds. On the best nights, they have achieved 60-70 per cent success rates. But the fight is evolving quickly. The Shaheds, too, are getting smarter. When Ukraine deployed machine guns for air defence, Shaheds responded by flying above three kilometres - well out of range. Then, in late July, Russia launched a jet-powered Shahed that can fly up to 700 km per hour, faster than most known interceptors. Moreover,



On July 9, Russia launched 728 Shahed drones in a single day.

some Shaheds are now equipped with thermal imaging, advanced processors, and even autonomous swarm coordination. They appear to sense when they are being hunted, swerving and dodging to escape their pursuer. Such is the nature of the first-ever robot-on-robot war. The conflict is being waged by two autonomous systems, each trying to outsmart the other in real time. Similar breakthroughs are happening on the ground. FPV (first-person view) drones with optical cable connections (meaning their signal cannot be jammed) can now strike targets up to 30 km from the frontline - making any movement in that zone extremely dangerous. Both sides have begun using “sleeping drones” that wait on the ground for hours until a target appears. As a result, unmanned ground vehicles are now being deployed at scale - mostly for logistics, resupply, evacuation, mining, and even attacks. For now, Ukraine appears to be ahead in this area. In July, its 3rd Assault Brigade carried out a historic fully autonomous operation, combining FPV drones and ground robots to force Russian troops to surrender in Kharkiv Oblast without any Ukrainian soldiers participating directly in the assault. One of Ukraine’s biggest successes has been the use of maritime drones to push Russian ships out of the Black Sea. These units, too, have been upgraded over time. On December

31, 2024, a Ukrainian Magura V5 sea drone armed with a surface-to-air missile destroyed a Russian Mi-8 helicopter over the Black Sea. Never before had an unmanned surface vehicle shot down a manned aircraft. And now, some maritime drones are being used as launch platforms or communication relays for smaller drones, expanding both range and capability. These are not isolated cases. They confirm that we have entered a new era of warfare, in which autonomous systems are central to battlefield success. Ukraine’s top drone units operate like high-performance tech startups, each with its own recruitment, training, funding, and team culture. One advanced brigade includes more than 70 data architects analysing live intelligence around the clock. These units build rapid learning loops, adapting to battlefield changes faster than traditional military units. The most successful new player in the Ukrainian conflict is former Google CEO Eric Schmidt’s defence company Swift Beat, which plans to deliver hundreds of thousands of drones this year. The company has developed one of the most effective Shahed-interceptor drones and is developing systems capable of intercepting cruise and ballistic missiles. But, remarkably, many of the new technologies are being developed not by large defence contractors, but by thousands of volunteers and civil society. © Project Syndicate, 2025



RAGNAR SASS

The writer is an Estonian tech entrepreneur and angel investor, is Co-Founder of Pipedrive, a developer of customer relationship management software, and Founder of the Darkstar Coalition, which launched the first pan-European defence fund focused entirely on combat-proven military products

SPORTS

ARAB CHAMPIONSHIP

OMAN SCHOOL
FUTSAL TEAM MEETS
JORDAN IN FINAL



SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 25

The Oman school futsal team will play for glory on Tuesday as they will take on hosts Jordan in the final of the Arab Schools Championship, with the coveted gold medal and championship trophy at stake. The decisive fixture will also witness the crowning of the top three finishers in the tournament. Oman will enter the match with six points, having recorded two commanding victories earlier in the competition including a 4-2 win against Libya and an emphatic 6-1 triumph over Saudi Arabia. With both teams unbeaten, the final showdown against Jordan will determine the champion of this year’s edition.

Speaking ahead of the final, assistant coach Sultan al Balushi emphasised the team’s readiness for this essential clash. “We are approaching this last match with full focus and enthusiasm. We know it will be a tough challenge against a strong Jordanian side, but the players are in high spirits and determined to deliver their best performance,” he said.

“We are relying on teamwork, tactical discipline and making the most of our strengths across all lines. I want to especially thank our goalkeepers, who have been a solid wall for us throughout the tournament and played a major role in reaching the final. We trust our players to execute the game plan with persistence until the last moment, and we hope to bring joy to our supporters by lifting the championship trophy for Oman,” he concluded.

Sohar, Saham share points in exciting draw

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 25

THE CLASH between Sohar and Saham ended in an exciting 2-2 draw at Sohar Sports Complex in the opening round of the Jetour Cup, with both teams settling for a single point at the start of their campaign. This encounter was part of Group Two, which also includes Al Rustaq, Al Khabourah, Al Nahda, Al Shabab and Ibri.

The match started with high intensity, as Sohar needed only one minute to break the deadlock when Amir al Kinani latched onto a precise cross inside the box and fired directly into the net, giving his side a quick lead that unsettled Saham’s plans. Saham responded swiftly through a series of well-organised attacks led by Zuhair al Hosni, who managed to level the score in the 16th minute with a powerful strike from inside the area after a neat build-up. But Sohar restored their lead just five minutes later, when Mohammed al Hamdani finished off a fast counterattack with a low strike past the goalkeeper, making it 2-1 at the 21st minute.

Both sides continued to trade attacks until half-time, which ended with Sohar in front. The second half saw Saham press hard for an equaliser while Sohar relied on counterattacks to exploit the spaces left behind.

The turning point came in the 56th minute, when Saham was awarded a penalty after a clear foul inside the box. Mohammed al Balushi calmly converted it to make it 2-2, sparking wild celebrations from Saham’s supporters.

The match grew even more intense, with dangerous chances from both sides. Amir al Kinani almost gave Sohar the lead again with a thunderous shot, only to be denied by the goalkeeper, while Zuhair al



Saham and Sohar players in action during the Jetour Cup (OFA Cup) match in Sohar.

Hasni went close for Saham with a fierce attempt that missed the post. Saham’s hopes were dented in the 85th minute when Bassam al Saadi received a red card, forcing them to play the closing stages with ten men.

Despite the setback, Saham held firm defensively and denied Sohar from

capitalising on their numerical advantage. The game ended in a 2-2 draw. Sohar also entered the match without their head coach, Mustafa Kiyouh, who parted ways with the team after their opening Elite League fixture against Al Rustaq, which Sohar had won 4-2. The team was managed on the day by the assistant coaching staff.



Sultanate of Oman
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Grade in Tender Board Registration	Last Day to Purchase Tender Documents	Last Date of Tender Submission
14/2025	Services	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING & GARDENING SERVICES TO HORSE RIDING CENTRE AT BARKA FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	First Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
15/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO SOHAR SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING DIRECTOR OF CULTURE AT SOHAR) FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
16/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO NIZWA SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING NIZWA CULTURE CENTER) FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
17/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO RUSTAQ SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT AWABI AND BEACH GAME FACILITY AT MUSANNAH SPORTS CITY) FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
18/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO BURAIMI SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING ART ASSOCIATION AT BURAIMI & SPORTS CENTRE AT SUNAINA) FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
19/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO SUR SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING ANNEX SPORTS CENTRE AT SUR & SPORTS FACILITIES AT TIWI, KHALHAT AND RAS AL HAAD) FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
20/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO SAADAH SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRES AT DHOFAR GOVERNORATE FROM 01/01/2026 TO 31/12/2027	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
21/2025	Supply	CLEANING SERVICES TO ENTIRE CAMPUS AND FACILITIES TO MINISTRY'S VARIOUS BUILDINGS AT MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 2026	Excellent Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
22/2025	Supply	MAINTENANCE OF LANDSCAPING WORKS TO MINISTRY'S CAMPUSES IN MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 2026	First Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025
23/2025	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL AND AIR-CONDITIONING UNITS TO MINISTRY'S VARIOUS BUILDINGS IN MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 2026	First Grade	6/9/2025	6/10/2025

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Oman, Kuwait play out draw in U23 friendly in Thailand ahead of AFC qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 25

The Oman Under-23 Olympic football team continued its preparation for the AFC U23 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 Qualifiers with a close 1-1 draw against Kuwait in a friendly match at Wend Mellis Club, Bangkok.

The behind-closed-door encounter was arranged and agreed between both head coaches, Badar al Maimani and his Kuwaiti counterpart Dario Basic, to maintain focus and privacy ahead of the upcoming qualifiers matches. The warm-up match was part of both team’s preparations for the forthcoming continental assignment.

Next on the schedule, Oman will conclude their overseas camp in Thailand with a final warm-up match against Thap Luang United – a local third-tier team – on Wednesday. This match is intended to fine-tune the starting line-up before the critical qualifier campaign.

Against Kuwait, Oman took the lead early through a well-taken goal by Ali al Balushi, setting the tone as they asserted control in the opening stages. The squad, featuring key players including goalkeeper Ibrahim al Kindi and midfielders Mohammed Abdulhakim and Said al Ghanbousi, created



several promising scoring opportunities but were unable to extend their advantage. As the second half progressed, coach Al Maimani made several strategic substitutions to test squad depth and player readiness for the qualifiers. Despite the changes, Kuwait team managed to equalise late in the match, earning a 1-1 draw with a goal that came just before full-time.

This friendly marks the first international match for Oman following their participation in the four-nation friendly tournament in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where they recorded a 1-0 victory over Bahrain, drew 1-1 with Kyrgyzstan, and suffered a 2-0 loss to eventual champions Syria. Oman were drawn in Group F for the Asian qualifiers, alongside the hosts Cambodia,

Iraq and Pakistan. Their campaign will begin with a match against hosts Cambodia on September 3, followed by encounters with Iraq on September 6 and Pakistan on September 9. Only the group winners and the four best runners-up will advance to the finals in Saudi Arabia.

SQUAD: Jawad al Azi, Osama al Mahrouqi, Nasser al Saqri, Sameer al Hatmi, Said al Ghanbousi, Mohammed Bait Sabee, Abdulaziz al Shaqsi, Loqman al Jadidi, Masoud al Bahri, Abdullah al Jabri, Ibrahim al Kindi, Osama Bait Sameer, Ziyad al Rasbi, Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Abdulaeem al Rawahi, Nayef Bait Sabeeh, Turki Bait Rabee, Ali al Balushi, Yassar al Balushi, Rashad al Dheen, Mohammed al Oraibi, Abdulhadi al Manwari, Essa al Buraidi and Adnan al Mushaifri.

17-MEMBERSQUAD



Oman team celebrating a wicket.

OMAN READY TO MAKE IMPACT IN ASIA CUP 2025

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket has officially announced its 17-member squad for the Asia Cup 2025, marking a historic first-ever appearance in the prestigious tournament. The team earned qualification by finishing runners-up in the ACC Premier Cup 2024, held on home soil.

Known for its high-octane action and massive global viewership, the Asia Cup offers Associate nations like Oman a golden opportunity to compete against established cricketing giants.

Oman will be led by experienced opener Jatinder Singh (captain), who has enjoyed a brilliant year with the bat and will look to carry that momentum into the tournament. Among the batting talents, Hammad Mirza stands out as one of the most promising young players, having played a memorable impactful knock against India in the ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup 2024 in Oman. The middle order brings stability and experience with the likes of Mohammed Nadeem and Vinayak Shukla adding depth to batting.

The bowling unit looks well-rounded. The pace attack features Hassnain Ali Shah and Mohammad Imran, strengthened by the addition of tall left-arm pacer Faisal Shah. Sufyan

”

It is real that we are participating in the Asia Cup – a major tournament and a fantastic opportunity for our players to showcase their skills on a global stage. Playing against teams like India and Pakistan is a moment to embrace for any cricketer.

DULEEP MENDIS

players to showcase their skills on a global stage. Playing against teams like India and Pakistan is a moment to embrace for any cricketer. Anything can happen in a fast-paced T20 game, where one over of brilliance can change everything,” coach Duleep Mendis said.

Mendis further added, “Our build-up has been strong, with the ongoing National T20 tournament providing competitive exposure, and our training sessions have been intense and focused. It’s not just about skills – in high-pressure games against elite teams, mental strength is equally crucial. We are hopeful of making an impact in this Asia Cup and showcasing Oman as a growing cricketing nation.”

“Oman enter the Asia Cup with a blend of experience and youth, determined to leave a mark against Asia’s cricketing powerhouses. The tournament will not only test their skills but also their mental toughness on one of the most watched platforms in the sport,” Mendis said.

Oman Squad for Asia Cup 2025: Jatinder Singh (captain), Hammad Mirza, Vinayak Shukla (wk), Sufyan Yousuf (wk), Ashish Odedera, Aamir Kaleem, Mohammad Nadeem, Sufyan Mehmood, Aryan Bisht, Karan Sonavale, Zikriya Islam, Hassnain Ali Shah, Faisal Shah, Mohammad Imran, Nadeem Khan, Shakeel Ahmad, Samay Shrivastava. **Support Staff:** Manager – Alkesh Joshi, Head Coach – Duleep Mendis, Deputy Head Coach – Sulakshan Kulkarni, Assistant Coach – Mazher Khan, Analyst – Zeeshan Siddiqui, S&C Trainer – Shiva Manhas, Physio – Dr Ashish Awasthi, Masseur – Bashir Ahmed
Oman’s Asia Cup 2025 Fixtures: September 12 – vs Pakistan; September 15 – vs UAE September 19 – vs India



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus in action against Rebeka Masarova of Switzerland in the first round of US Open at Arthur Ashe Stadium. — Imagn Images

Sabalenka, Djokovic win as fuming Medvedev exits

ARYNA

Sabalenka launched the defence of her US Open crown with victory on Sunday while Novak Djokovic made a successful start to his latest bid for a record 25th Grand Slam singles title – but a raging Daniil Medvedev exited. World number one Sabalenka, bidding to become the first woman to claim back-to-back US Open titles since Serena Williams completed a hat-trick of wins in 2014, was made to work hard en route to a 7-5, 6-1 victory over Switzerland’s Rebeka Masarova.

Masarova, ranked 108th in the world, pushed Sabalenka out of her comfort zone with a gutsy performance on the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center’s main Arthur Ashe Stadium showcourt.

“Happy to get this win and happy to be in the second round. I feel like I didn’t start my best in the first games, but then I found my rhythm,” said Sabalenka, who will face unseeded Russian Polina Kudermetova. While Sabalenka advanced safely, Danish 14th seed Clara Tauson tumbled out to Alexandra Eala.

Eala, 20, became the first player from the Philippines to win a Grand Slam singles match with a thrilling 6-3, 2-6, 7-6 (13/11) win, battling back from a 5-1 deficit in the final set. “I’m super over the moon with what I was able to do today, especially coming back in the third,” Eala said.

“It’s a very special win for me.” Another player from Southeast Asia – Indonesia’s



Novak Djokovic (SRB) hits a return against Learner Tien (USA) at the US Open. — Imagn Images

Janice Tjen – also bagged an upset, ousting Russian 24th seed Veronika Kudermetova 6-4, 4-6, 6-4. “I feel proud to be able to do this for my country,” said Tjen, the first Indonesian since Angelique Widjaja in 2004 to reach the main draw of a Grand Slam singles event. Tjen, ranked 149th in the world, will face Britain’s Emma Raducanu in the second round.

DJOKOVIC OFF THE MARK

Raducanu, who made history at Flushing Meadows in 2021 by becoming the first qualifier to lift a Grand Slam title, clinched her first US Open match win since that memorable triumph with a 6-1, 6-2 drubbing of Japan’s Ena Shibahara.

“I wanted to win a match here really bad,” said Raducanu. “It’s been four years and it’s a very special tournament for me.”

With men’s defending champion Jannik

Sinner and rival Carlos Alcaraz not opening their campaigns until Monday and Tuesday, all eyes were on the veteran Serbian star Djokovic in Sunday’s night session on Ashe. The 38-year old showed flashes of brilliance in a 6-1, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 win against his unseeded 19-year-old American opponent Learner Tien.

Djokovic raced through the first set but was then forced to save a set point in the second after Tien grew in confidence.

A lengthy medical timeout to treat what looked like a blister on his right foot helped revive Djokovic and he pulled away to wrap up victory in 2hr 25min.

The final game of the opening day saw a chaotic victory for France’s Benjamin Bonzi over Russian 13th seed Medvedev, the 2021 US Open champion.

Amid extraordinary scenes at the end of the third set, play was held up for more than six minutes as Bonzi waited to serve on match point. It followed a tirade by Medvedev against chair umpire Greg Allensworth after the official re-awarded Bonzi a first serve when a photographer mistakenly walked onto the court.

With Medvedev egging the crowd on to voice their displeasure, Bonzi lost the set and Medvedev won the fourth to square the match. Bonzi though recovered in the fifth to close out a 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (5/7), 0-6, 6-4 win in 3hr 45min. “It was crazy,” Bonzi said. “The energy was wild. Thanks to all those who were booing, that gave me energy in the fifth.” — AFP

Mbappe fires Madrid to victory at Real Oviedo

OVIEDO, Spain: Kylian Mbappe was again on target for Real Madrid as they overcame Real Oviedo 3-0 in La Liga on Sunday.

For Oviedo, returning to Spain’s top flight after an absence of almost a quarter of a century, the arrival of the 15 time European champions was a gala occasion, and the Asturian fans made their presence heard. Star turns Mbappe and Vinicius Junior made the difference in the north of Spain. The Frenchman notched a brace before the Brazilian slid in a late third.

Coach Xabi Alonso made a couple of notable changes to his starting line up from Madrid’s opening 1-0 win against



Real Madrid’s Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

Osasuna, dropping Vinicius and Trent Alexander Arnold for Rodrygo Goes and club captain Dani Carvajal, returning from injury.

But the dropped Vinicius responded by producing an

assist and a goal in his half hour cameo.

Argentinian teenage sensation Franco Mastantuono made his full debut in another change for Los Blancos. The 18-year old showed his explosive

dribbling ability early on when he burst past two defenders into the Oviedo box before going down and looking appealingly at the uninterested referee.

Turkish international Leander Dendoncker turned provider as he drilled a pass into Mbappe’s feet on 37 minutes, which the Frenchman welcomed on the turn before firing across Escandell.

In the 83rd minute, Vinicius won the ball and drove forward towards the box before slipping a disguised pass to Mbappe who slotted home first time. The Brazilian then scored in the 93rd minute, when Diaz found him in space and he slipped home a composed finish. — AFP

SPORTS

PREMIER LEAGUE

FERNANDES MISSES PENALTY AS FULHAM HOLD MAN UTD TO 1-1 DRAW



Man United’s Bruno Fernandes misses a penalty kick as Fulham’s Bernd Leno dives. — Reuters

LONDON: Fulham held visitors Manchester United to a 1-1 draw in the Premier League on Sunday after Emile Smith Rowe equalised for the hosts with his first touch as a substitute to cancel out an own goal while Bruno Fernandes missed a first half penalty.

After Leroy Yoro’s header took a deflection off Rodrigo Muniz’s back to open United’s account this season, Smith Rowe scored 93 seconds after coming on as the two teams seeking their first win of the campaign shared the spoils.

“We are very competitive in training, we all want to score goals and contribute to the team. We know when we come off the bench we have to work hard and try and score,” Smith Rowe told Sky Sports.

It was a first point for Fulham against United in nine home games as they moved up to 13th with two points while Ruben Amorim’s side are 16th with just a point from two games.

United made their intentions clear early on when Matheus Cunha had two shots on goal in the first two minutes, the first a powerful long-range effort that flew over the bar and the second a shot that came off the post with the keeper beaten.

The electric Cunha had a third chance when he plucked the ball from the sky after goalkeeper Altay Bayindir launched it long and the crowd held its breath as the Brazilian controlled it in the box, but his shot was well saved by Bernd Leno.

Fulham nearly shot themselves in the foot when Calvin Bassey grappled with Mason Mount in the box before a set piece and then threw the midfielder to the ground.

Referee Chris Kavanagh checked the VAR screen and announced his decision to award a penalty on his microphone for all to hear.

FERNANDES SKIES PENALTY

United skipper Fernandes, usually composed and often decisive, looked irritated when the referee accidentally bumped into him before his run-up and Craven Cottage erupted when the Portuguese playmaker skied his spot kick.

“Everyone has their own routine. I missed the penalty because I kicked the ball very badly,” Fernandes said. “We are very disappointed. Obviously, we were into the game. We should have controlled it better after our goal and made them run. We cannot be satisfied with one point. We came here to win the game.”

United drew first blood in the second half when they scored from a corner.

Yoro rose up to meet Bryan Mbeumo’s cross and his header was deflected into the net after it came off Muniz’s back.

United’s lead did not last long and when Marco Silva threw Smith Rowe on as a substitute, the midfielder drifted into the six yard box to stab home a cross from Iwobi.

“It was really quick, I know when Alex gets the ball, I know his trademark cross and I have to be there to finish,” Smith Rowe said.

The goal put a spring in Fulham’s step and they pinned United back in their own half, pressing high to win the ball back and occasionally carving the defence open but failing to test the keeper. Harry Maguire nearly had his moment when he came on in the 87th minute and his header at the back post from another United corner could have settled the contest but it went wide. — Reuters



Manchester United’s Bruno Fernandes in action with Fulham’s Timothy Castagne. — Reuters

Fleetwood claims first PGA win to grab FedEx Cup



Tommy Fleetwood poses for a photo with the FedExCup Trophy after winning the Tour Championship golf tournament. — Imagn Images

STOP QUESTIONING Tommy Fleetwood about finally getting his first PGA Tour victory. He got his win, after so many close calls, in a big way. The Englishman captured the FedEx Cup championship with a victory in the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club on Sunday. He takes away the coveted playoff championship and a \$10 million winner’s check.

Fleetwood finished 18 under par with a final round 68. Patrick Cantlay (71), who played in the final pairing, and Russell Henley (69), the first and second round leader, tied for second at 15 under.

Fleetwood had a huge smile, maybe of relief, after making his tap in putt to finish as fans circled the 18th green. They chanted “Tom-my, Tom-my,” as he hugged his caddie. Then he looked upward and let out a scream of delight. He raised both hands as he walked off the green and was greeted by several players.

The win came in Fleetwood’s 164th career start on tour, which included 30 top 5 finishes. Two of those near misses came in these playoffs, a tie for third at the St. Jude’s Championship and a tie for fourth at the BMW Championship. He’s had to

answer questions about finally breaking through, especially when he entered the final round holding a share of the lead.

“It’s a shame the story is gone,” Fleetwood said of finally breaking through. “I enjoyed it while it lasted in a sick way. ... I’ll be proud of the strength that I had to show to keep coming back and showing that it can be done if you’re resilient enough and you keep putting yourself in those positions.”

“I’ll look back at it and I’ll be able to tell people that I am really, really pleased that I get to talk to kids or aspiring golfers or aspiring sports people, whatever they’re trying to do, and I can genuinely talk about showing resilience or keep coming back after tough losses and keep working and all of those things and the skills that you have to use in order to put yourself there again and then finally get it done.”

Fleetwood, who entered fifth in the points standings, became the first player in the FedEx Cup era (since 2007) to claim his first career PGA tour title at the Tour Championship. Cantlay found trouble early with a bogey at the first hole and a double bogey at the second. When Fleetwood birdied No 2, he was 17 under to Cantlay’s 13 under. Henley took

over second place at 15 under.

Fleetwood took a three stroke lead, at 18 under, into the second nine over Cantay and Henley.

When Cantlay birdied and Fleetwood bogeyed the 10th, just a stroke separated the two. Cantlay bogeyed the 11th, and Fleetwood’s edge was back to two strokes. A Fleetwood birdie at the 13th, and the lead was back to three at 19-under.

When Fleetwood’s tee shot at the par-3 15th landed on dry land — after he hit water in the third round — the tournament was all but over even though he took a bogey. He would play the final hole with a three stroke lead.

“I think it’s easy for anybody to say that they are resilient, that they bounce back, that they have fight,” Fleetwood said. “It’s different when you actually have to prove it. There’s different types of mental strength. I’ve clearly got things wrong in the dire moments of tournaments, and I might have made the odd dodgy decision, might have put a bad swing on it.

“But I’ve had to have mental strength in a different way. I’ve had to be resilient in terms of putting myself back up there, getting myself back in that position, no matter how many times it doesn’t go my way, no matter how many doubts might

creep in. Think the right things, say the right things to yourself, say the right things outwardly, and I am really pleased that I can be proof that if you do all the right things and you just keep going that it can happen.”

Scheffler, the world’s No 1 player and FedEx Cup points leader, started four strokes back. He hit his opening drive out of bounds and managed bogey. He would get two within two strokes of Fleetwood on the back nine but put his tee shot on the par-3 15th in the water and made double bogey. Scheffler’s chance at back-to-back FedEx Cup titles was over. Scheffler (68) finished tied for fourth at 14 under.

“I wasn’t as sharp as I would have hoped to have (been),” Scheffler said. “I had a good first round, but outside of that didn’t really play my best.”

The Tour Championship changed formats this year to a winner-take-all final with all players starting at even par. However, had they used the starting strokes format from the previous six years, Scheffler would have won the tournament and the title. Fleetwood, starting at 5 under, who have finished at 23 under; Scheffler, starting 10 under, who have finished 24 under. — Reuters

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The biggest of the new projects is an oil industry venture worth RO 25 million.

SUHAR INDUSTRIAL CITY ATTRACTS 6 NEW PROJECTS WORTH OVER RO 27 MILLION

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 25

Suhar Industrial City — part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) — has recently localised six projects with a total investment volume exceeding RO 27 million. These projects will be developed on an area of over 162,000 sqm, representing oil, steel, food, marble, tile and wood industries.

The list includes an oil industry project by National Petrochemical and Investment Company with an investment of RO 25 million on a land area of 125,000 sqm. An agreement was also signed with Sultan Al Shidi Engineering Projects for a specialised steel industry project worth RO 1 million on 3,843 sqm, along with another agreement with Iron Trading and Investment for a steel industry project valued at RO 600,000 on 8,760 sqm.

Moreover, Suhar Industrial City has signed an agreement with Asas International to establish a marble and tiles project with an investment of RO 400,000 on 11,000 sqm area. Another investment agreement was signed with Al Rawdha International Business for a food industry project worth over RO 150,000 on an area of 2,688 sqm. An agreement was also signed with United Wooden Platform Company to establish a wood industry project with an investment of RO 150,000 on 11,250 sqm.

Asyad sets hydrogen corridor, net-zero course

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 25

ASYAD Group, the integrated logistics provider of the Sultanate of Oman, has set out an aggressive sustainability blueprint that ties the country’s logistics expansion to green fuels, digitalisation and SME growth, mapping a path to net-zero emissions by 2050 and a potential liquid-hydrogen trade lane from Al Duqm to Amsterdam.

The plans are detailed in the company’s new Sustainable Development Impact Disclosure (SDID), which aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Wholly-owned by the Oman Investment Authority, Asyad operates across maritime transport, ports and free zones, public transport and logistics in more than 90 regions worldwide.

The SDID adopts Impact Disclosure Taskforce guidance and concentrates on three strategic aims: integrated logistics, development of the local logistics ecosystem and embedding disruptive technologies. The report links these aims to SDGs 7, 8, 9, 13 and 17, underscoring Oman’s ambition to become a diversified logistics hub.

Maritime growth is central to the plan. Asyad intends to add 30 vessels to its mixed fleet over time, building on a 2025 baseline of 5 container ships, 23 bulk carriers, 34 product tankers, 22 crude tankers and 10 LNG carriers. The dry dock targets three additional



Asyad says it will broaden its network beyond today’s 90 global destinations and build on a 2023 contribution of \$2.7 billion in FDI tied to its free zones at Suhar, Salalah and Al Duqm.

Wholly-owned by the Oman Investment Authority, Asyad operates across maritime transport, ports and free zones, public transport and logistics in more than 90 regions worldwide.

shipbuilding projects, 174 ship repairs and two industrial steel fabrication projects by 2030. Efficiency retrofits — including propeller boss cap fins, pre-swirl ducts and rotor sails — are expected to cut fuel use and emissions, while feasibility work on e-methanol could position Oman’s ports as a “low-carbon molecule” hub.

The decarbonisation arc is explicit. Asyad’s total greenhouse gas emissions baseline is set at 1,847,787 tCO₂e (2022), with Group-wide net-zero targeted for 2050.

Public transport operator Mwasalat will shift to clean energy, aiming for a 3% emissions reduction by 2030, 34% by 2040 and net-zero by mid-century; the proportion of Asyad’s “eco/green” fleet is slated to rise from 30% in 2023 to 86% by 2033.

Hydrogen is the hinge between industrial growth and lower carbon. Under a “historic agreement” at Port of Duqm,

Asyad plans to develop a liquid-hydrogen corridor with the Port of Amsterdam and is procuring LH₂ vessels as part of its energy transition. If executed, the wider green hydrogen ecosystem could generate 70,000–80,000 construction jobs and 30,000–40,000 support roles by 2030.

Complementing the seaborne trade lane, the Group’s concept for a 1,000-km north-south hydrogen pipeline — designed for 500,000 tonnes per annum — would support storage and transport needs for shipping, industry and mobility. On trade facilitation, the Group is leaning on multi-modal, low-carbon logistics and AI-driven route optimisation while expanding green warehousing powered by renewables. Baselines highlighted in the SDID include 4.6 million TEUs handled in 2023, 33.5 million tonnes of general cargo exported through ports and 6,877 vessel calls that year.

Asyad says it will broaden its network beyond today’s 90 global destinations and build on a 2023 contribution of \$2.7 billion in foreign direct investment tied to its free zones at Suhar, Salalah and Al Duqm. The plan dovetails with Oman Vision 2040’s objective to elevate ports and logistics as a top contributor to GDP.

Measured against the World Bank’s Logistics Performance Index, Oman posted a 3.2 score in 2023; Asyad frames a long-term aspiration of 3.8 as its infrastructure and services scale. The Group will report annually on targets in the SDID’s reporting table, a nod to investor-grade transparency.

Oman targets value chain for green energy manufacturing in Salalah

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 25

With three major green hydrogen projects in early development in Dhofar Governorate in the south of Oman, Salalah Free Zone (SFZ) — which adjoins the Port of Salalah overlooking the Indian Ocean — is positioning itself as an optimal destination for low-carbon downstream industrial investments.

The promise of green molecules becoming available in Salalah, starting from 2030 and beyond, bodes well for investment inflows that leverage the city’s geostrategic, infrastructural and logistical advantages, according to top officials of the free zone.

“Looking ahead, we also see Salalah playing a central role in Oman’s green energy transition, especially in green hydrogen and related industries. The zone offers the land, infrastructure and export access needed to support



At present, three gigawatt-scale projects are targeting the production of green ammonia and green hydrogen in Salalah, starting from 2030 onwards.

large-scale renewable projects”, said Ahmed Tabook, Commercial Director — SFZ.

Tabook, joined by his colleague Leena al Kathiri, Senior Business Development Specialist and Port of Salalah’s Chief Commercial Officer Ahmed Aubad Qatan, shared their thoughts on the free zone’s potential as an investment hub for petrochemicals, metals and

logistics during a recent webinar hosted by Energy Connects.

Underpinning Salalah’s green hydrogen potential are several drivers.

These include a strong government strategy and long-term support, partnerships with international markets such as the Netherlands to expand green hydrogen trade and bunkering solutions and export infrastructure already in place, with pipelines and liquid jetties at the Port of Salalah. Opportunities also extend across the full value chain: upstream, midstream and downstream.

“We are also actively focusing on attracting companies in the renewable energy supply chain — including solar cell and panel production, wind turbine components, wind blade manufacturing, electrolyzers and hydrogen-related equipment. The aim is to build a complete supply chain for green energy

manufacturing within Salalah Free Zone”, he stated. At present, three gigawatt-scale projects — represented by the consortiums of SalahaH2, EDF / J-Power / Yamna and Actis / Fortescue — are targeting the production of green ammonia and green hydrogen starting from 2030 onwards.

Supplementing the production of green molecules, large-scale renewable energy capacity based on solar and wind energy will also come on stream in the governorate, providing clean energy options for other industries in the free zone, he noted.

According to the officials, downstream opportunities in the free zone include green steel and green aluminium production, both of which are emerging focus areas. Initially, some projects may use a mix of hydrogen and natural gas, transitioning fully to hydrogen over time. Another major opportunity is green bunkering. As the global shipping industry

shifts away from traditional fuels, future alternatives such as green ammonia and green methanol will be in demand.

Pipelines from the free zone will connect directly to the Port of Salalah, creating an ideal hub for green fuel supply, they pointed out. Strategically, Salalah is well-positioned between Rotterdam in Europe and Singapore in Asia — two of the world’s largest bunkering hubs. In the future, Salalah is expected to emerge as a new player in this global value chain.

This is significant because sectors such as steelmaking and shipping fuels are among the hardest to decarbonise. Having the infrastructure in place for green hydrogen, green steel and green bunkering positions Salalah Free Zone as a hub for the industries of the future, officials noted.

Significantly, Salalah Free Zone also maintains robust liquid logistics infrastructure.

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Crowne Plaza Duqm is poised for continued success under Al Rahbi's leadership.

CROWNE PLAZA DUQM APPOINTS FIRST OMANI GENERAL MANAGER



The appointment reflects IHG's commitment to developing local talent and Oman's growing leadership in the regional hospitality industry.

MUSCAT: IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of Yousuf al Rahbi as General Manager of Crowne Plaza Duqm, making him the first Omani national to hold a General Manager role for IHG in the Sultanate of Oman.

The appointment reflects IHG's commitment to developing local talent and Oman's growing leadership in the regional hospitality industry. Al Rahbi's decade-long journey with IHG has seen him progress

through key leadership roles, culminating in this achievement following his successful completion of the "Journey to General Manager" programme, IHG's leadership development framework designed to prepare high-potential talent for executive roles.

He began his career with IHG in 2015 as Director of Human Resources at InterContinental Muscat, before becoming Area Director of Human Resources for Oman, overseeing multiple hotels.

Driven by a passion for hotel operations, he later transitioned into an operational role as Hotel Manager at InterContinental Muscat. Earlier this year, he joined Crowne Plaza Duqm on a task force assignment, where he quickly demonstrated his operational and leadership strengths.

Al Rahbi is also an alumnus of Omran Group's "Lift Programme", a national initiative empowering Omani professionals in tourism and hospitality.

"It's a proud moment to take on the role of General Manager at Crowne Plaza Duqm. I'm grateful for the trust placed in me by IHG and Omran Group. This opportunity reflects our shared commitment to building a strong, locally led future for hospitality in Oman", said Yousuf al Rahbi.

Commenting on the announcement, Rajesh Chauhan, Head of HR, India, Middle East and Africa, said: "We are proud to celebrate Yousuf al Rahbi becoming the first Omani General Manager.

Developing and empowering local talent remains central to our strategy and we are committed to creating platforms that enable Omanis to shape the future of hospitality".

This appointment reinforces IHG's focus on nurturing local talent while strengthening its presence in Oman's hospitality market. Crowne Plaza Duqm is poised for continued success under Al Rahbi's leadership.

ACM unveils Ford's latest SUVs in Oman

ARABIAN Car Marketing Company (ACM), the official distributor of Ford vehicles in Oman, unveiled the all-new Ford Expedition and the new Ford Territory during the Gulf Academies Cup 2025 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The launch, attended by families, football fans and automotive enthusiasts, highlights the growing appeal of Ford's SUV lineup in the Sultanate of Oman.

"The new Territory is a smart, capable SUV designed to elevate everyday driving. It combines advanced connectivity, safety and sleek design, making it ideal for young professionals and families alike.

Alongside it, the Ford Expedition delivers commanding performance, advanced technology and spacious comfort for larger families and adventurous journeys.

Together, these vehicles reflect our commitment to bringing customers the best of Ford's innovation, capability and quality", said a representative from ACM.

The all-new Expedition, a fully redesigned full-size SUV, offers enhanced versatility, technology and capability.

Available in Active, Platinum® and Stealth models with a 3.5-litre EcoBoost® V6 producing 400 hp and 651 Nm of torque, the Stealth and Tremor series feature a High-Output 3.5-litre EcoBoost® engine with 440 hp and 691 Nm of torque.

The SUV introduces the Ford Digital Experience, including a 24-inch panoramic instrument display, 13.2-inch central touchscreen and 22-speaker B&O® Unleashed Sound System. Safety features include six airbags, a full three-row side-curtain safety canopy, BLIS® with Cross-



Customers interested in experiencing the all-new Expedition or the new Territory can visit any Ford showroom.

Together, these vehicles reflect our commitment to bringing customers the best of Ford's innovation, capability and quality", said a representative from ACM.

Traffic Alert, Lane-Keeping System, Pre-Collision Assist, adaptive cruise control and a 360-degree camera.

The class-exclusive Ford Split Gate tailgate, towing capacity up to 4,354 kg and Pro Trailer Assist further enhance versatility.

The new Ford Territory, designed for urban versatility, impressed attendees with its bold design, connectivity and comfort. Powered by a 1.8L EcoBoost engine producing 190 hp, the SUV offers a refreshed exterior, LED headlamps, wider seats with extra padding and generous shoulder and knee room. Advanced connectivity includes

dual 12.3-inch displays with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, Arkamys 3D Audio and fast-charging USB-A and USB-C outlets. Safety features include Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keeping Assist and Lane Centering Control.

Visitors praised both models for their blend of style, technology and capability. The launch underscores ACM's commitment to offering cutting-edge vehicles that meet customer expectations in Oman.

Interested customers can experience the all-new Ford Expedition or new Territory at any Ford showroom across the country.

Ominvest joins MEIRA 2025 as strategic partner

MUSCAT: Oman International Development and Investment Company SAOG (Ominvest) has announced its strategic sponsorship of the MEIRA Annual Conference & Awards, taking place in Muscat on September 24-25, 2025.

Under the theme "Elevating Impact: The New Era of IR in the Middle East", the conference provides a timely platform to support transparency, governance best practices and investor engagement across Oman and the broader GCC.

Last year, the MEIRA Conference attracted over 900 participants, including senior investor relations (IR) professionals, institutional investors and market regulators, across more than 30 thematic sessions, workshops and



The 2025 Conference represents a timely platform to support transparency, governance best practice and investor engagement across Oman and the broader GCC.

networking events. This year, over 50 expert speakers will address topics such as

integrated reporting, ESG communications, global market access and IR digitalisation.

Commenting on the partnership, Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, said: "As a long-term investor committed to market development, Ominvest is proud to support the 2025 MEIRA Annual Conference.

This platform reflects our shared vision for driving transparency, investor confidence and capital market growth in Oman and across the region".

Andrew Tarbuck, Chairman of MEIRA, added: "We are delighted to welcome Ominvest as a Strategic Partner for the 2025 MEIRA Annual Conference in Muscat. Their participation underscores the vital role that

investment institutions play in strengthening capital market infrastructure and enhancing investor confidence across the region". Hana al Maani, Head of Investor Relations at Ominvest, said: "We see this partnership as an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the regional IR dialogue.

Our focus remains on fostering greater transparency, consistent engagement and long-term value creation for all stakeholders".

This partnership builds on Ominvest's active involvement in the MEIRA Oman Chapter, where it co-hosted the May 2025 meeting with Muscat Stock Exchange and MEIRA, advancing investor engagement and governance across listed issuers.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches gold rate protection with 10% advance

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's 5th largest jewellery retailer with over 400 showrooms across 13 countries, has launched its much-awaited Gold Rate Protection offer, giving customers the opportunity to block prevailing gold rates by paying just 10% as an advance.

The offer allows customers to purchase their favourite jewellery without worrying about price fluctuations. Customers can block the gold rate until October 19, 2025 by paying just 10% upfront.



Customers can block the gold rate until October 19, 2025 by paying just 10% as an advance.

If gold prices rise at the time of purchase, they benefit from the blocked rate and if prices fall, they can take advantage of the lower rate.

For example, a customer intending to buy gold jewellery worth RO 1,000 can pay RO 100 in advance to secure the rate and protect against rising prices. Customers who make their first advance booking on or before September 28, 2025 will also receive a complimentary diamond voucher. The offer is valid across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds

showrooms, with payments accepted in-store or via the company's mobile app.

"The Gold Rate Protection scheme has consistently been a customer favourite, offering peace of mind during unpredictable gold price movements.

With the festive season approaching, this initiative allows customers to secure their jewellery at the prevailing rate with just a 10% advance, ensuring that their purchases remain unaffected by future fluctuations. Our mobile app makes the process simple, secure and

convenient", said Shamlal Ahamed, MD — International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

In addition to the 10% advance option, customers can also pay 50% or 100% of the amount as advance to enjoy gold rate protection for 90 days and 180 days, respectively. This option is available throughout the year across all showrooms of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, giving customers flexibility and peace of mind in managing their jewellery purchases.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Analysts said oil prices appear to lack momentum as markets increasingly factor in the economic risks of Trump’s tariff threats. — Reuters

OIL PRICES EDGE UP AS TRADERS MULL SUPPLY RISKS

LONDON: Oil prices climbed on Monday as traders weighed concerns that Russian supply could be disrupted by more US sanctions and Ukrainian attacks targeting energy infrastructure in Russia.

Brent crude futures rose 29 cents, or 0.4%, to \$68.02 at 08:39 GMT and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained 36 cents, or 0.6%, to \$64.02.

“The market is somewhat concerned that these peace negotiations are going nowhere”, said Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank. “The market is looking for supply to exceed demand in the autumn months, but in the short term that’s being challenged by a potential geopolitical disruption”.

US President Donald Trump warned again on Friday that he would impose sanctions on Russia if there was no progress towards a peaceful settlement in Ukraine in two weeks. He has also said he may hit India with tariffs over its Russian oil purchases.

US Vice President JD Vance said Russia had made “significant concessions” towards a negotiated settlement in the three-and-a-half year war.

Ukraine has repeatedly targeted Russian energy infrastructure, with a drone attack on Sunday sparking a blaze at the Ust-Luga fuel export terminal. A fire at Russia’s Novoskhtinsk refinery, also caused by a drone strike, was still burning on Sunday.

Softening concerns about Russian supply disruptions are OPEC+’s reversal of production cuts, which are adding millions of barrels to the market.

Eight members of the oil exporters’ group are scheduled to meet on September 7 to approve another boost. Investor sentiment improved after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell signalled a possible interest rate cut at the US central bank’s September meeting. — Reuters

STOCK EXCHANGES URGE REGULATORS TO CRACK DOWN ON ‘TOKENISED STOCKS’

A group representing the world’s biggest stock exchanges has called on securities regulators to clamp down on so-called tokenised stocks, arguing that the blockchain-based tokens create new risks for investors and could harm market integrity, a

letter seen by Reuters shows.

Tokenised equities are blockchain-based tokens created to represent shares in companies. The tokens represent ownership of the securities but investors do not become shareholders in the underlying



Proponents say tokenised equities can cut trading costs, speed up settlement and facilitate around-the-clock trading. — Reuters

company. Crypto exchange Coinbase and broker Robinhood are among those making a push into the nascent sector.

Proponents say tokenised equities can cut trading costs, speed up settlement and facilitate around-the-clock trading.

The World Federation of Exchanges (WFE), in a letter sent to three regulatory bodies last Friday, said it was concerned the tokens “mimic” equities without providing the same rights or safeguards. — Reuters

World’s first commercial CO₂ ‘graveyard’ opens

THE world’s first commercial service offering carbon storage off Norway’s coast has carried out its inaugural CO₂ injection into the North Sea seabed, the Northern Lights consortium operating the site said on Monday.

Northern Lights, led by oil giants Equinor, Shell and TotalEnergies, involves transporting and burying CO₂ captured at smokestacks across Europe. The aim is to prevent the emissions from being released into the atmosphere, and thereby help halt climate change.

“We now injected and stored the very first CO₂ safely in the reservoir”, Northern Lights’ managing director Tim Heijn said in a statement.

“Our ships, facilities and wells are now in operation”.

In concrete terms, after the CO₂ is captured, it is liquified and transported by ship to the Oygarden terminal near Bergen on Norway’s western coast.

It is then transferred into large tanks before being injected through a 110-kilometre (68-mile) pipeline into the seabed, at a depth of around 2.6 kilometres, for permanent storage. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology has been listed as a climate tool by



Northern Lights has an annual CO₂ storage capacity of 1.5 million tonnes. — AFP

the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA), especially for reducing the CO₂ footprint of industries like cement and steel that are difficult to decarbonise.

The first CO₂ injection into

the Northern Lights geological reservoir was from Germany’s Heidelberg Materials cement plant in Brevik in southeastern Norway. But CCS technology is complex and costly.

Without financial assistance, it is currently more profitable

for industries to purchase “pollution permits” on the European carbon market than to pay for capturing, transporting and storing their CO₂.

Northern Lights has so far signed just three commercial contracts in Europe. — AFP

Fed pivot bolsters world stocks, China shares at highest since 2022

LONDON/SYDNEY: Expectations of a resumption soon in US interest rate cuts bolstered world stocks on Monday, with shares in Asia rising to multi-year highs.

European shares retreated as enthusiasm following Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell’s Jackson Hole speech faded and investors refocused on the broader economic picture. London markets were closed for a holiday, thinning trading volumes in Europe.

Powell’s dovish shift has prompted futures to price in an 84% chance of a quarter-point rate cut in September and at least 100 basis points of easing to 3.25 — 3.5% by mid-2026. “As an investor, you lose



Powell’s dovish shift has prompted futures to price in an 84% chance of a quarter-point rate cut in September. — Reuters

an enemy whenever the Federal Reserve pivots because it gives valuations room to become ever more expensive”, said Florian Ielpo, Lombard Odier’s head of multi-assets.

MSCI’s broadest index of world shares rose 0.1% and held near Friday’s record highs, while China’s blue chips gained more than 2% to their strongest level since 2022. Japan’s Nikkei closed 0.4% higher.

The dollar ticked higher, while euro zone bond yields also rose as traders reassessed the Fed-driven move. Market focus is turning to Friday’s US personal consumption data, expected to show core inflation rising to 2.9%, its highest since late

2023. Any upside surprise would challenge the rally in longer-dated Treasuries, especially with \$183 billion in new debt issuance this week. Investors are also eyeing Nvidia’s results on Wednesday, with earnings per share forecast to rise 48%. Analysts expect details on shipments to China and the company’s deal with President Donald Trump to share revenue from advanced chip sales.

Elsewhere, Orsted plunged 17% after the US government ordered a halt to its Rhode Island offshore wind project. Shares in JDE Peet’s surged 17% after Keurig Dr Pepper agreed to buy the company for €15.7 billion. — Reuters

RECALL ALERT

US probes Honda engines



US regulators are investigating more than 1.4 million Honda vehicles over engine failures that could lead to total seizure, delaying a resolution to ongoing safety concerns.

The probe covers 2016-2020 Pilot and MDX, 2017-2019 Ridgeline, 2018-2020 Odyssey and 2018-2020 Acura TLX models, as officials assess risk and recall measures. — Reuters

SPACE SECTOR

SpaceX delays Starship test flight



SpaceX postponed the tenth launch of its Starship rocket from Texas due to a ground systems issue, delaying an attempt to achieve key development milestones after past failures.

The Super Heavy booster is set to try a water landing, while Starship aims to release mock Starlink satellites and test reentry heat shields and flaps for reusability. — Reuters

SALE TALKS

Coca-Cola eyes Costa sale



Coca-Cola is reviewing options for its British coffee chain Costa, including a potential sale, sources said. Initial talks with private equity firms are underway, with indicative offers expected in early autumn. The move follows CEO James Quincey’s remarks that Costa’s investment performance has fallen short, prompting a strategic reassessment of the business. — Reuters

AI bubble is dot-com bubble’s twin



**TARIQ
AL BARWANI**

*The writer is
the founder of
Knowledge Oman.*

RECENTLY, an official at one of the esteemed organisations called me for a meeting to demonstrate how impressed he was with the capabilities of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and in specific, the sheer volume of Generative AI apps that he has reviewed and saved on his internet browser as a stack and ease of reference.

Despite not being in a technology department, yet his knowledge and his usage of the various applications at his work place was very impressive to be honest. I personally have not come across the applications he uses, nor am I able to actually catch up with the huge number of applications that are launched periodically.

Furthermore, I continue to have companies invite me to talk about and/or demonstrate their “new” AI applications that aim to solve various things in personal and professional lives. Majority of the solutions are either mockups, or soon-to-be-ready apps looking for funds and investors to help turn them into a working reality. I see a familiar pattern of a disaster that the world may be heading into. This week, my article will revolve around an AI Bubble. What is it and why it is important for you to know is what I will aim to briefly share. Almost everyone in Oman (let aside the whole world) is speaking about AI.

From chatbots writing emails to AI models generating artwork, videos, music and even

full-fledged web and standalone applications.

The rules of how we live and how we work is being rewritten to some extent and probably tomorrow, to a very large extent, thanks (or no thanks) to the progressive technology of AI. People say that are “Ai-Ready”. Companies on the other hand race to claim they are “AI-powered” and are investing heavily on AI solutions as part of their digital transformation efforts.

I was personally requested to somehow introduce any AI initiative to one of the companies for the sake of them not to feel left out of the AI bandwagon. Investors, around the world, are putting a lot of money into virtually anything linked to AI and the soaring stock price of AI related companies in the stock market, is the proof in the pudding. I feel Deja-vu.

History may be repeating itself with the dot-com bubble that witnessed massive financial losses for investors, with several high-profile tech companies losing over 80% of their market value back in 2000. The dot-com bubble was a stock market bubble that ballooned during the late 1990s and peaked on Friday, March 10, 2000.

An AI Bubble may be the twin of dot-com bubble and may occur because of the hyperactive excitements we see all over the world due to the buzzing about Artificial Intelligence and the potential it holds for the future. Briefly, an economic bubble happens

An AI Bubble may be the twin of dot-com bubble and may occur because of the hyperactive excitements we see all over the world due to the buzzing about Artificial Intelligence.

when the price or valuation of an asset rises higher than its real value. The reason may be due to hype, speculation and fear of potential investors missing out. In a bubble, people invest not because of the actual returns it can expect soon (as traders do). People invest because they believe the future potential is limitless.

Eventually, when reality doesn’t match the hype, the bubble bursts, leading to a sharp correction. For AI and looking at the situations today as I had indicated at the beginning of the article, a bubble may occur too, where many companies, products and investments may be overvalued compared to their real-world business potential.

To conclude my article for this week, let me note that I am a technologist and by the same, anything to do about technology is something I am fond about.

I am aware of the benefits that AI is bringing to the society, the business and the government as a whole.

Yet, truth be told, AI in specific if not managed properly, would end up managing our entire lives in a catastrophic way. Let us embrace AI’s potential, but let us not be blinded by the hype, speculation and excitement without being critical of the same. Those who lived the dot-com era know what I mean when the technology eventually popped. Until we catch up again next week, stay safe.

WORLD’S CENTRAL BANKERS FEAR BEING CAUGHT IN FED’S STORM

FRANCESCO CANEPA, HOWARD SCHNEIDER & LEIKA KIHARA

Global central bankers gathered at a US mountain resort over the weekend are starting to fear that the political storm surrounding the Federal Reserve may engulf them too.

US President Donald Trump’s efforts to reshape the Fed to his liking and pressure it into interest rate cuts have raised questions about whether the US central bank can preserve its independence and inflation-fighting credentials.

Trump has put intense pressure on Chair Jerome Powell to resign and is pushing to oust another board member, Governor Lisa Cook.

If the Fed were to yield to that pressure, or Trump finds a playbook for removing its members, a dangerous precedent would be set from Europe to Japan, where established norms for the independence of monetary policy may come under new attack.

“The politically motivated attacks on the Fed have a spiritual spillover to the rest of the world, including Europe”, European Central Bank policymaker Olli Rehn said at the Fed’s annual symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Central bankers fear that a loss of Fed independence would entail major turmoil in financial markets, with investors demanding a greater premium to own US bonds and reassessing the status of Treasury securities.

More fundamentally, a capitulation would end a regime that has brought relative price stability since former

Chair Paul Volcker vanquished high inflation 40 years ago.

“It’s a reminder that independence should not be taken for granted”, Bundesbank President Joachim Nagel said.

Markets so far have not shown deep concern. Yet Trump’s soured relationship with the Fed, set in a country perceived to have strong institutional traditions, has made others aware of how fragile independence may be.

“Taking over the Fed is one development that would set a very bad example for other governments”, said Maury Obstfeld, former IMF chief economist. — Reuters

FDI in GCC strategic for economic development

FOR more than half a century, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies have thrived on a legacy where hydrocarbons fuelled state-building and the creation of modern infrastructure. This foundation is a source of immense strength, but the global economic landscape has fundamentally changed.

Today, capital is more cautious, supply chains are being re-wired, technology is advancing at unprecedented speed and climate commitments are reshaping industries from the ground up. In this new environment, foreign direct investment (FDI) is not an optional extra; it’s an essential tool for the GCC’s future. FDI must be seen as a strategic penetration mechanism — an accelerator that quickly and credibly embeds Gulf firms, talent and technologies within global value chains.

The global investment stage itself is also shifting. According to the UNCTAD 2024 World Investment Report, global FDI reached about \$1.3 trillion in 2023. However, once flows through conduit economies are stripped out, the report shows a significant tightening in capital availability, highlighting the need for clarity, stable rules and well-defined, investable projects. This reality makes the GCC’s position critical and the region is already making meaningful, though uneven, progress.

The evidence from across the GCC clearly shows this momentum. The UAE has firmly established itself as a regional heavyweight, attracting a remarkable \$45.6 billion in FDI in 2024, a 49% year-on-year increase. Its total inward stock reached \$270.6 billion. Reforms like 100% onshore foreign ownership prove the depth of its appeal, as reported by the UNCTAD 2024 World Investment Report and the UAE FDI Portal. Saudi Arabia recorded \$22.8



The GCC’s economic growth is expected to accelerate in 2025–2026, driven by easing OPEC+ production cuts and non-oil sector expansion



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billion in 2023 and \$15.7 billion in 2024, a substantial result in a year of global economic weakness. The Kingdom also secured strategic deals, such as the \$11 billion Aramco–BlackRock gas infrastructure project. Its ambitious Regional Headquarters (RHQ) programme shows an assertive approach to anchoring investors, according to the UNCTAD 2024 World Investment Report and the KSA Ministry of Investment.

Oman has emerged as a significant outperformer. According to the UNCTAD 2024 World Investment Report and Oman Hydrom 2025 Auction Data, its FDI nearly doubled to \$8.7 billion in 2024, with its inward stock rising to \$64.8 billion. This growth is driven by logistics, downstream energy and pioneering green hydrogen auctions under its national

entity, Hydrom. In 2025, Oman further consolidated this position as a regional greenfield FDI powerhouse, recording a record-breaking 4,402% year-on-year surge in greenfield FDI CAPEX during January–May 2025, with project counts rising by 36%. This strong performance was fuelled by major investments in renewables, ICT, real estate and new economic zones.

Bahrain saw normalised inflows of \$2.5 billion in 2024 after a record-breaking 2023, with its inward stock growing to \$45.9 billion, thanks to its Golden Licence initiative, as per the Bahrain EDB 2024 Report.

Kuwait remains a laggard, attracting only \$0.6 billion in 2024, but its Vision 2035 and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) frameworks offer significant room for acceleration, as noted by the UNCTAD 2024 World Investment Report.

Meanwhile, Qatar, after a negative inflow of — \$474 million in 2023, is focused on overhauling its legal infrastructure to build a stronger foundation for investor confidence, according to the Qatar Ministry of Commerce 2024. Together, these figures show a clear picture: the UAE is a magnet for diversified capital, Saudi Arabia is leveraging its scale and ambition, Oman is directing investment into future industries, Bahrain is using regulatory agility to attract niche projects, Qatar is fixing its institutional plumbing and Kuwait’s significant potential is waiting to be unlocked.

What makes FDI a true penetration strategy is its multiplier effect, which goes far beyond just bringing in money. FDI brings in capabilities that traditional financing simply can’t. It imports operational know-how, global technology and international standards, speeding up the adoption of best practices in advanced manufacturing, logistics, artificial intelligence (AI)

and renewable energy. It also provides crucial market access, plugging Gulf firms directly into international supply chains and creating new export opportunities. What’s more, FDI creates a powerful confidence effect, as major investors attract local co-investment, strengthen the ecosystem of local suppliers and increase demand for local services, from industrial maintenance to professional skills development.

The GCC’s economic growth is expected to accelerate in 2025–2026, driven by easing OPEC+ production cuts and non-oil sector expansion, according to the World Bank Gulf Economic Update 2025 and the IMF Regional Outlook 2025. This provides a prime opportunity to attract global investment, but investors require faster permitting, predictable regulations and transparent project structures.

Each GCC nation is sharpening its competitive edge. The UAE excels with diverse projects in fintech, logistics and manufacturing. Saudi Arabia, while unmatched in scale with its mega-projects, must ensure consistent and transparent execution. Oman is making a strong case for energy transition through projects like its hydrogen auctions, while Bahrain’s Golden Licence effectively attracts niche projects. Qatar is overhauling its legal system to boost investor confidence, and Kuwait’s potential awaits activation through faster Public-Private Partnership (PPP) frameworks. Going forward, the region must leverage individual strengths while aligning on policies, such as a common green-finance taxonomy, to remain globally competitive.

Ultimately, the GCC’s economic legacy has been defined by state-led modernisation, but the future requires a complementary engine: embedded private and foreign capital.

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ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

ON THE SLOPES OF JABAL SHAMS, OMAN IS BREWING THE COFFEE INDUSTRY > 20

FASHION

Fashion enthusiasts defy tradition in Venezuela ‘battle of outfits’



NINETY fashion aficionados showcased lace, denim, cotton, satin and recycled garments in an eclectic “battle of outfits” on Saturday at Venezuela’s National Art Gallery in Caracas, challenging conventional fashion and embracing their “unusual” identities.

On a stage where attitude at times outshone style, participants strutted in bold combinations — long skirts over pants, plunging necklines, scarves and ties over dresses, high boots and heels.

“It’s about existing in resistance, in a country that doesn’t always agree with you”, said 28-year-old Alejandro Castro, who won the contest.

His outfit, inspired by Venezuelan writer Miguel Otero Silva’s novel “Casas Muertas”, which depicts a town’s decline amidst disease and the discovery of oil, featured earthy and cream tones, a deep neckline, a crop top, a long white skirt with a train and a belt crafted from multiple scarves.

“Fashion in Venezuela has a rich tradition, tied to our colonial heritage, racial diversity and American influences”, Castro added.

The event, centred on urban and street culture, featured rap performances. “We want to promote culture and inspire more people”, said organiser and fashion designer Miguel Soriano.

Many outfits were sourced from used material or at low cost due to the prohibitive price of designer clothing.

For the participants, fashion lay not in big brands but in the creative combinations of garments.

Some even blended cinematic fantasies with cultural styles borrowed from other countries to set trends.

Wearing a white overcoat, 20-year-old Anjuliet Duran quipped: “I felt like the Phantom of the Opera”.

She later layered an Asian-style dress over it, dubbing herself “the Chinese Phantom of the Opera”. — AFP

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



ENTERTAINMENT

Australian actor Jacob Elordi speaks during English actor Gary Oldman’s hand and footprint ceremony at the TCL Chinese Theatre Forecourt in Hollywood. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Britain’s future king Prince William and his family are moving to a new home on the royal Windsor estate, prompting uncertainty about the future of Buckingham Palace. — AFP



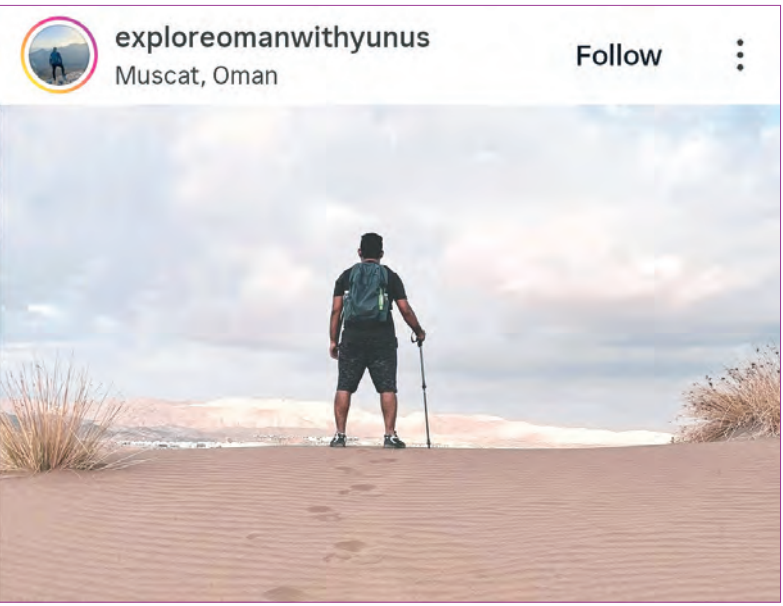
FASHION

A model presents a creation by designer Alessandro Michele as part of his Spring/Summer 2025 Women’s ready-to-wear collection show for fashion house Valentino. — Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Busy Day at the Dock

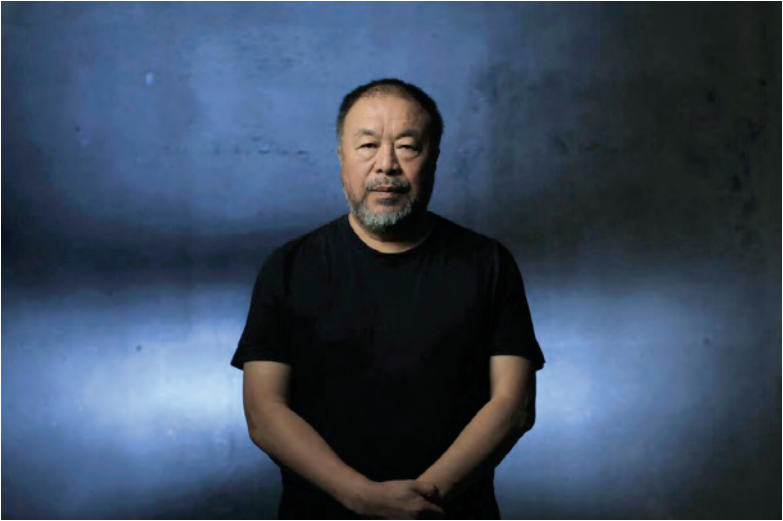


Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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Chinese artist Ai Weiwei says he is making a film about Ukraine



CHINESE artist Ai Weiwei has announced that he is making a film about Ukraine. Ai Weiwei said in remarks published on Friday that he is currently in Ukraine and plans to stay for another two months to complete the project. The film will explore questions such as “why Ukraine is still alive and how culture can exist in such difficult times”, the 67-year-old explained.

The project is being run by a non-profit institution that supports Ukrainian culture and brings artists to the country, according to the artist.

Ai Weiwei had previously travelled to Ukraine to set up an exhibition of his work, which is scheduled to open in Kyiv in mid-September. “Then I decided to commit myself completely to it”, he said. “I always want to know more, challenge myself, put myself in difficult situations”. He said he does this in order to

be able to form a judgement. “And then, as an artist, I have to find a language for it”. He added that he has developed “an emotional connection” to Ukraine. “The people here are incredibly friendly and willing to support you”, he said. That is why he decided to make the film.

Ai Weiwei remains a figure of controversy due to his outspoken criticism of the Chinese government and advocacy for human rights. His dissidence has led to his arrest, notably in 2011, when he was held for 81 days without charge.

Through his art, Ai challenges social and political norms, addressing themes like government corruption and human rights. His provocative works often stir debate, as does his involvement in global issues like the refugee crisis. Despite risks, Ai continues to advocate for transparency and freedom of expression. — *dpa*



The ‘good people’ battling to save Romania’s cultural treasures

GRAFFITI covers the crumbling walls of the main thermal baths in one of Europe’s oldest spa towns.

But after decades of neglect, a group of young architects is working to restore the picturesque Romanian resort that once attracted emperors.

“Someone once said that if you drink water from the spring from Herculane, you never leave”, said 31-year-old architect Oana Chirila.

“I was struck by the beauty of the place”, she said of the town in the southwest of the country, surrounded by mountains and crossed by a river.

“And at the same time shocked by its condition”, she said of the decrepit state of the old thermal baths.

She first stumbled upon Baile Herculane eight years ago, purely by chance, she said.

Her group’s restoration efforts are just one of several recent civil society initiatives launched to protect some of Romania’s historic monuments.

An estimated 800 of them are in an advanced state of decay or in danger of crumbling altogether. Some are already considered to represent a danger to the public.

The neglect is the result of Romania’s chaotic transition from Communism to democracy, which was marked by opaque privatisations, often resulting in interminable legal battles and investigations by anti-corruption prosecutors.



in.

Despite the decay, tourists still frequently stop to marvel at and photograph the long, rusty facade, some trying to peek inside through the broken windows.

For the moment, Chirila and her team of volunteers are confined to doing conservation work on the baths’ outer structure.

They could not restore the building until legal disputes between the authorities and the private owners are solved, she said, adding: “There’s always this fear that it might collapse”. “Most of the historical monuments are in their current state — meaning constant decay — because they are legally blocked”, preventing any use of public or European funds for their restoration.

For the moment then, along one side of the riverbank, people take dips in three basins with sulphur water — dubbed “little bathtubs” by Chirila.

It was her team that refurbished the basins and built the changing booths and wooden pavilions, one of a number of projects they have undertaken in the town.

When AFP met her, about a dozen students were helping out with the renovation of a path through the woods.

— Lesson in conservation — In recent years, Baile Herculane, a town of 3,800, has seen a steady rise in tourists, say local officials.

Some 160,000 tourists came in 2024 — up from 90,000 in 2020 — many for spa treatments, but also for the hiking and climbing.

“The resort has changed”, Aura Zidarita, 50, a doctor, said. She remained hopeful it could once again become a “pearl of Europe”.

Initiatives such as Chirila’s have multiplied in recent years, according to Stefan Balici, president of the Romanian Order of Architects.

They represent “a lesson in how citizens’ initiatives can intervene in heritage preservation”, in a country with little record of investing in the restoration of its monuments.

In 2019, young architects got involved in another spa resort, Baile Govora.

Chirila admitted she sometimes feared her work on the Imperial Baths is like “putting a bandage on a patient with sepsis”.

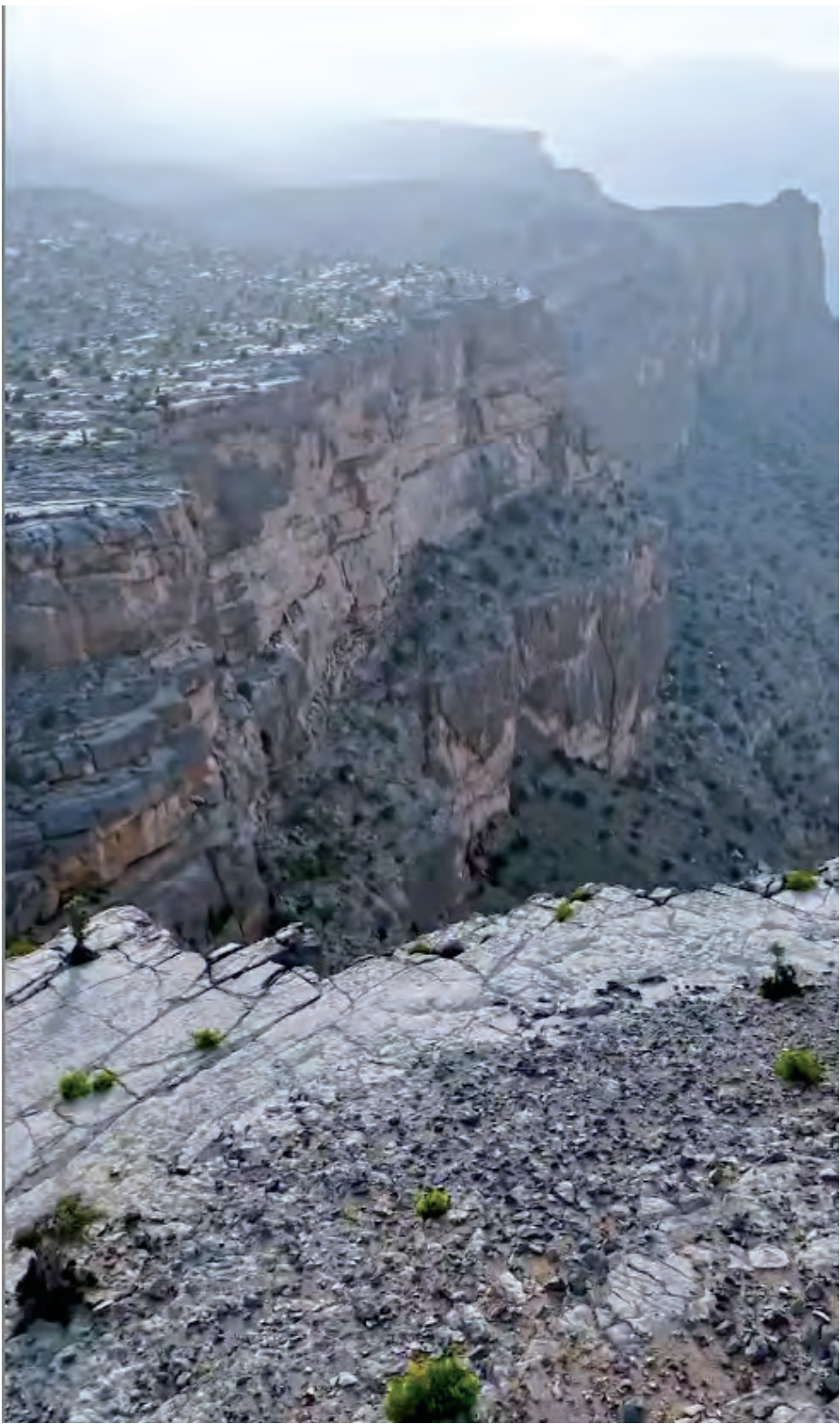
But Balici had no doubt of its value. Without her intervention, he said, the building would be “a pile of rubble” by now.

Chirila said she also drew hope from those like herself who believed in investing in the country’s heritage.

“Herculane ended up like this because of corruption”, she said.

“But we hope that thanks to good people it will heal”. — AFP

FEATURES



ON THE SLOPES OF JABAL SHAMS, OMAN IS BREWING THE COFFEE INDUSTRY

BY YERU EBUEN

STANDING at the edge of Jabal Shams, I am struck by the starkness of the landscape. The rugged mountains stretch endlessly under a vast, cloudless sky, their jagged peaks etched sharply against a pale blue backdrop.

The terrain is unforgiving, shaped by centuries of wind and weather, yet here, amidst the rocky expanse, a new enterprise is quietly taking root — a coffee farm rising from the high-altitude soil. Rows of young seedlings are carefully planted, a testament to patience and vision, promising a transformation that could redefine this mountain wilderness.

Oman’s ambitious journey towards food self-sufficiency is gaining momentum and the coffee project in Jabal Shams exemplifies that broader national endeavour. The Sultanate of Oman has begun investing seriously in high-altitude agriculture, aiming to diversify away from oil dependence.

Similar initiatives are already underway in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, where the nascent coffee industry is showing promising results. These efforts are part of Oman’s strategic push to develop local crops suited to the country’s varied climate zones.

The coffee farm in Jabal Shams, launched by Coffee Farm Company and led by CEO Said al Wardi, aims to plant 6,000 Arabica coffee seedlings by 2027. This bold move highlights Oman’s potential to establish itself as a producer of high-quality, specialty coffee.

The project began with the planting of 300 Yemeni Udaini Arabica seedlings — one of the world’s oldest and most esteemed varieties — which thrive in high-altitude environments.

These initial plantings are just the beginning; by 2026, the farm plans to expand to around 5,000 seedlings, reaching the full 6,000 by 2027. The choice of the Udaini and Haraaz varieties was driven by their adaptability to Oman’s mountain climate, characterised by altitude, temperature and humidity conducive to



premium Arabica cultivation.

As Al Wardi explained in a previous interview with local reporters, “The climate in Oman’s highlands is more suitable for coffee than many realise”. This project isn’t simply about farming; it’s a strategic, economic move aligned with national goals to develop sustainable agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

One of the earliest challenges was sourcing viable coffee seedlings — most countries classify coffee as a strategic crop and restrict seed exports. The team overcame this by propagating seedlings locally, cultivating the plants in the wilayats of Salalah and Bahla, thus bypassing restrictions and ensuring the continuity of their high-altitude project.

To ensure sustainable expansion, they partnered with Nakheel Oman Development Company and the Agricultural Research Centre, which are supporting the development of tissue-cultured coffee plants to scale production efficiently. This collaboration aims to produce consistent, disease-resistant seedlings capable of thriving in Oman’s mountain environment.

Integrating Tourism and Heritage

Beyond the agricultural ambitions, it’s fascinating to see how this enterprise plans to integrate tourism and cultural heritage. The company has announced plans to develop an agri-tourism infrastructure, including a coffee visitor centre in Jabal Shams. Tourists will have the chance to tour the plantations, participate in harvest activities and visit a dedicated Coffee Museum

near the popular viewpoint of Shurfat Al Nakhr.

These initiatives are designed not only to promote local coffee but also to generate additional revenue streams and support rural development, truly connecting farming, tourism and heritage into a cohesive value chain. Al Wardi explained that “this initiative is about much more than agriculture; it’s about creating a cultural experience and a sustainable future”. The branding of the coffee under the name “Bunn Al Madar” draws inspiration from traditional Omani brewing methods, notably the clay dallah used for making Qahwa. Already producing roasted beans and capsules, the brand aims to cement a “Made in Oman” identity that resonates regionally and globally.

Carvinh out a new niche

The global coffee trade remains a lucrative business, with the GCC increasingly positioning itself as a consumer market. Locally, coffee — or Qahwa — holds deep cultural significance in Oman, symbolising hospitality and social bonds. The country’s long-standing tradition, infused with flavours of cardamom and other spices, is rooted in Yemen’s historic coffee heritage and Oman’s highlands are uniquely poised to carry on this legacy through cultivation.

While small-scale attempts to grow coffee in Oman have existed, they have remained largely experimental, with limited commercial scope. Watching this large-scale project unfold, I am struck by how gradually the farm is taking shape. The vastness of the land and the



investments poured into it suggest a future where this might become a major producer. The scale of planting — expected to reach thousands of trees — coupled with modern practices and targeted varieties, promises to revolutionise the region’s agricultural landscape.

The deliberate choice of high-altitude Arabica varieties like Udaini and Haraaz is vital. These beans are appreciated for their distinctive bright acidity and complex aromas, making them ideal for specialty markets. Growing them under Oman’s mountain conditions could carve out a new niche in the global coffee industry, especially as Oman’s reputation as a producer of high-quality coffee begins to grow. If the project meets its ambitious targets, it has the potential to turn Jabal Shams into a recognised hub of premium coffee production, attracting interest from regional and international markets.

Watching these young seedlings slowly grow on the mountain slopes, I am reminded that this project is not merely about crop cultivation — it is a symbol of Oman’s resilience and foresight.