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SUNRISE 05:33 AM  
PRAYER TIMINGS  
FAJR 04:09 AM  
DHUHR 12:18 PM  
ASR 03:40 PM  
MAGHRIB 06:59 PM  
ISHA 08:18 PM

TUNISIAN, LEBANESE AMBASSADORS BID 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 separately in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Azzedine el Tayse, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia, and Albert Samaha, Ambassador of the Lebanese Republic, to bid them farewell at the end of their tours of duty.

SEE ALSO P2

Follow UN Charter to solve disputes: Oman

THE Sultanate of Oman affirmed its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the unification of standards in applying the international law, and the achievement of justice and peace, including the implementation of the international will of the 143 member states who voted in favour of granting Palestine full membership of the United Nations.

In a speech delivered by Ambassador Omar bin Said al Kathiri, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, at the high-level session of the Security Council held in New York under the entitle ‘Promoting international peace and security through multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of disputes’, the Sultanate of Oman welcomed the invitation for holding the session,

Ambassador Al Kathiri called for consideration of possible measures to revitalise the Security Council and make it more comprehensive and responsive to contemporary challenges

hoping that the Security Council will renew its firm commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of sovereign equality among states, the pursuit of the settlement of conflicts by peaceful and legal means, and the protection of collective security to achieve peace and justice.

Al Kathiri stated that this session is being held at a time when the world is witnessing the most horrific scenes of systematic and deliberate killing by the Israeli occupation forces of innocent civilians including children, women and the elderly in the Gaza Strip. This constitutes a flagrant violation of international and humanitarian laws and conventions while the Security Council is incapable of taking deterrent and strict measures to fulfil its responsibilities to protect security and peace, achieve justice and protect civilians in conflict situations.

TURN TO P5

Healthy environment a human right: UN court

THE HAGUE: A “clean, healthy and sustainable environment” is a human right, according to judges at the top court of the United Nations.

The United Nations’ highest court has said that countries must meet their climate obligations – and that failing to do so could violate international law, potentially opening the door for affected nations to seek reparations in future legal cases.

In a groundbreaking advisory opinion delivered at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) said that states

“Failure of a state to take appropriate action to protect the climate system... may constitute an internationally wrongful act... Climate crisis an existential problem of planetary proportions that imperils all forms of life and the very health of our planet

YUJI IWASAWA  
President,  
International  
Court of Justice

must act urgently to address the “existential threat” of climate change by cooperating to cut emissions and protecting vulnerable populations and ecosystems from harm.

The non-binding opinion runs to more than 500 pages and is seen as a potential turning point in international climate law. Enshrining a sustainable environment as a human right paves the way for other legal actions, including states returning to the ICJ to hold each other to account, as well as domestic lawsuits.

“The consequences of climate change are severe and far-reaching: they affect both natural

ecosystems and human populations. These consequences underscore the urgent and existential threat posed by climate change,” said Yuji Iwasawa, ICJ President.

The ICJ was instructed to produce this document by the UN in 2023, after years of campaigning by a group of Pacific island law students and diplomacy led by the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu.

During two weeks of hearings in The Hague in December, representatives of vulnerable states told judges that a handful of countries should be held legally responsible for the continuing impacts of climate change.

— Agencies

SHOW OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Nova event held at Ittin Plain in Salalah as part of the activities of Khareef Dhofar Season 2025 featured youth entrepreneurship initiatives. SEE ALSO P4

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SHORTTAKES



The participants in the field of dentistry explored collaborative opportunities to address common challenges.

DENTISTRY CONTRIBUTES TO HEALTHCARE

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

Dentists in the private sector gathered last week at the Intercity Hotel for capacity building and knowledge sharing activities.

Over a hundred doctors from across the country attended the gathering under the chairmanship of Dr Hareesh Basheer of Hatat Speciality Polyclinic, in partnership with Viatris Pharma. They received lectures on modern trends in endodontics and orthodontics.

The meeting, aligned with Oman’s vision for healthcare advancement and professional development in dentistry, is crucial for the private sector’s contribution to healthcare, as emphasised at various ministerial conferences, according to Dr Basheer.

“We need to come together to share knowledge and expertise, contributing to national progress in dental healthcare within the private sector. Such initiatives are essential for improving healthcare services by equipping practitioners with the latest tools, techniques and insights to effectively address evolving patient needs,” said Dr Basheer.

By providing a platform for knowledge exchange and idea sharing, the meeting facilitates continuous professional development and encourages innovation within the dental community.

Through interactive sessions and discussions, the participants in the field of dentistry engaged with leading experts, exchanged perspectives, and explored collaborative opportunities to address common challenges and advance the field of dentistry collectively.

Dr Sheetal of Wellness Clinic welcomed the elite gathering, Dr Radhika Shetty of Sun Dental Center gave a lecture on Endodontic mishap and Dr Maria Habib of Euro Arabian Speciality Center spoke on Interceptive Orthotics. Dr Divya Maryam of Imperial Dental Clinic gave the vote of thanks and Dr Ashik Malik was the guest of honour. Nethaji, representing Viatris Pharma, spoke on pain management and the role of medicines at the occasion.

CONSTRUCTION WORK BEGINS ON IBRA FISH MARKET



IBRA: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources launched a project to establish a fish market in the Wilayat of Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. The project constitutes part of efforts to boost trade and activate the seafood sales sector. Dr Anwar bin Nasser al Saadi, Director of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in Ibra, said that steps are underway to develop fish markets to meet the needs of consumers, expand investment in the fisheries sector and provide employment opportunities for the national workforce. — ONA

Sayyid Shihab bids farewell to Tunisian, Lebanese ambassadors

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received separately in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Azzedine el Tayse, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia, and Albert Samaha, Ambassador of the Lebanese Republic, to bid them farewell at the end of their tours of duty.

HH Sayyid Shihab expressed his appreciation to the ambassadors for their efforts in strengthening bilateral relations between Oman



HH Sayyid Shihab expressed his appreciation to the ambassadors for their efforts in strengthening bilateral relations. — ONA

and their respective countries. He wished them success in their future endeavours and for their countries’ peoples further progress and prosperity.

For their part, the ambassadors expressed their profound thanks to His Majesty the Sultan, for the support extended to them during their tenure in Oman, which enabled them to carry out their duties. They wished His Majesty continued good health and a long life, and for Oman continued progress and prosperity under His Majesty’s wise leadership. — ONA

EA calls for approach to address environment issues

THE Environment Authority (EA) on Wednesday took part in the “2025 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development” in New York. The forum was held in New York under the theme “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind”.

The Sultanate of Oman’s delegation was led by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, who heads the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).

The forum focused on practical, data-driven strategies to bridge implementation gaps, notably amid interconnected global crises, including climate change, inequality and economic instability.

In a speech at the forum, Al Amri laid emphasis on the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), scheduled to be held in Nairobi in December 2025. He said that the UNEA-7 constitutes a “global opportunity to accelerate sustainable, knowledge-based solutions for a resilient planet.” Al Amri underscored the need to devise environmental solutions with special focus on the interconnectedness that exists between environmental challenges and public health. He stressed the need to embrace an integrated approach — like “One Health” principle — to effectively address these challenges.

He also underlined the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to



Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, heads the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7). — ONA

address environmental issues and espousing circular economy as a key factor to achieve sustainable production and consumption. In this context, he called upon countries to incorporate such solutions into their national policies.

Al Amri highlighted the progress made in negotiations on the convention to control plastic pollution. He stressed the need to ratify international agreements to protect marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, in addition to cooperation between the United Nations Environment Assembly and parties tasked with multilateral environmental agreements to ensure effective environmental governance.

The speech also underscored the urgent need to reform the global financial structure and provide sustainable and

innovative financing mechanisms to support sustainable economic and environmental models. Al Amri pointed out that areas affected by wars and conflicts should be included in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as part of measures to support peace and environmental justice.

At the conclusion of his speech, Al Amri underlined the importance of dialogue and understanding as the best means of achieving rapprochement at a time the international community is joining hands to ensure a sustainable future for all.

On the sidelines of the forum, Al Amri conferred with the President of the United Nations General Assembly. The meeting touched on ways to enhance international environmental action and highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s role in advancing the global agenda on sustainability.

Al Amri also held a meeting with the Hungarian Minister of Environment. The meeting discussed bilateral and regional cooperation in the field of environment and sustainable development. The two sides spoke about preparations for the forthcoming seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Acting in cooperation with Environment Society of Oman, the Environment Authority also participated in an event on the sidelines of the forum. The event was aimed to enhance the role of youth in climate action and marine environment protection, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 13 on climate action, Goal 14 on Life Below Water and Goal 17 on Partnerships for the Goals. — ONA

SQU student team develops eco-friendly bricks for sustainable construction

MUSCAT: A student team from Sultan Qaboos University has developed an eco-friendly brick named “Envibrick”. Made entirely from local natural materials, this innovation is a promising and sustainable alternative to traditional bricks. It contributes effectively to reducing carbon emissions in the construction sector, aligning with Oman’s unique environmental requirements and marking a pioneering step towards a future of sustainable building.

Envibrick possesses exceptional properties that make it ideal for Oman’s hot and humid climate. It is lightweight, salt-resistant, and offers very high thermal insulation, which significantly reduces energy consumption in buildings and creates a more comfortable indoor environment.

The brick also has an insect-repellent property, adding a health and environmental dimension to buildings. Furthermore, its low production



Envibrick possesses exceptional properties that make it ideal for Oman’s hot and humid climate. — ONA

cost makes it an excellent economic choice compared to imported alternatives.

Halima al Fajrani, CEO of Envibrick, explained that the team underwent a meticulous research and development journey. This began with extensive product testing in university labs using specialised equipment, with comprehensive documentation of the results through videos and photos.

She noted that the main challenge was the brick’s weight. The team adjusted the component ratios, replacing heavy materials with lighter ones without compromising quality. Some of the alternatives even demonstrated higher-than-expected performance.

Al Fajrani confirmed that work is ongoing to finalise the product’s composition in preparation for obtaining

a patent. She added that the company plans to use 3D printing technology in the next phase, after the final mixture is approved, to produce precise models that meet the latest needs of modern construction.

The Envibrick project has achieved notable accomplishments, including winning the Best Marketing and Promotional Idea award at the Sultan Qaboos University Scientific Festival. The company was also ranked among the top three student industrial companies, reflecting the promising potential of this innovation.

The Envibrick team aims to expand into the Gulf market, leveraging the growing interest in sustainable building materials in the region. This step is fully aligned with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 in the areas of sustainability and innovation, thereby reinforcing Oman’s position as a regional centre for environmental innovation. — ONA

SHORT TAKES

3RD HONEY AND TURMERIC EXHIBITION FROM TODAY

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
SALALAH, JULY 23

The third edition of the Omani Honey and Turmeric Exhibition 2025 will open today at Salalah Grand Mall in Al Saada. Organised by the Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar Governorate, the event will run until August 25 as part of the Khareef Dhofar Season activities.



ENG FAEL BIN MOHAMMED AL JAHFALI

The exhibition serves as a key marketing platform to promote Omani honey and turmeric products in local and international markets. It also supports economic empowerment initiatives for farmers and beekeepers in the governorate, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 —

particularly in food security and rural development.

In an exclusive statement to the Observer, Eng Fael bin Mohammed al Jahfali, acting director general of the directorate of agriculture, fisheries and water resources in Dhofar, said: “This is the third edition of the exhibition this year. Our aim is to provide direct marketing channels for honey and turmeric producers and to support small agricultural businesses by giving them a platform to showcase their products to a wider audience, especially during the high tourist influx in the Khareef Dhofar season”.

He added: “The event is a vital platform for small-scale farmers, beekeepers and agri-entrepreneurs to promote their products, engage with consumers and build partnerships across the agricultural value chain. It’s more than just an exhibition – it’s a real opportunity to empower local producers, preserve traditional industries and introduce Omani products to wider regional markets”. Producers from across the wilayats of Dhofar will participate in the exhibition, offering a variety of natural honey and turmeric products, along with value-added goods such as essential oils, wellness items and natural cosmetics.

The event is considered a cornerstone for supporting rural economies, activating local value chains and encouraging entrepreneurship based on quality production and modern marketing standards.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has called on residents and visitors to visit the exhibition and explore its diverse offerings, stressing that increased consumption of local products contributes to economic and environmental sustainability and supports national self-sufficiency in agricultural and organic goods.

TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REVIEWS CRITERIA MECHANISM



Members of the committee from various relevant government bodies were in attendance. — ONA

MUSCAT: The main committee for the Traffic Safety Competition reviewed a number of topics related to the competition, including the nomination mechanism and criteria, the evaluation of projects and the media plan for the fourth edition of the Traffic Safety Competition for 2025/2026.

The review took place during the committee’s meeting on Wednesday at the Directorate General of Traffic, chaired by Maj Gen Abdullah Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations and head of the committee. Members of the committee from various relevant government bodies were in attendance.

The organisation of this competition stems from the active role undertaken by government and private entities, as well as community members of all backgrounds, in promoting traffic awareness and a culture of road safety. This has a direct impact on the behaviour of road users and contributes to reducing accidents. — ONA

STUDENT TEAM DEVELOPS AI-POWERED PLATFORM FOR SIGN LANGUAGE

SUHAR: A student team from Sohar University in Al Batinah North Governorate has successfully developed an electronic platform project to translate sign language for individuals with hearing impairments using artificial intelligence technologies.

This platform leverages AI to provide direct and instant communication, unlike traditional methods that rely heavily on



The platform provides a digital bridge between sign language users and people who communicate orally.

human interpreters or limited resources. The platform provides a digital bridge between sign language users and people who communicate orally. Its system offers real-time translation tools, including sign language recognition, speech-to-text and text-to-speech, making it a flexible tool for use in workplaces, schools, healthcare centres, and daily life. — ONA

MoHUP pavilion highlights the future of urban life

BALQEES AL ORAIMI  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

In a unique initiative that blends visionary planning with public engagement, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) inaugurated its ‘Future Cities’ exhibition pavilion at the Oman Across Ages Museum. The exhibit, which will run from July through September 2025, is part of the ministry’s broader mission to raise public awareness about Oman’s urban development vision and sustainable planning goals.

The pavilion offers an immersive experience for visitors, highlighting key strategic projects that embody the future of urban life in the Sultanate of Oman. These initiatives reflect Oman’s commitment to building modern, inclusive and smart cities based on the principles of sustainability, quality of life and urban integration.

At the heart of the exhibition lies Sultan Haitham City, the country’s first integrated and sustainable next-generation city. Designed with cutting-edge infrastructure and intelligent systems, the city aims to provide a high quality of life through walkable neighbourhoods, green spaces and comprehensive services. This landmark project exemplifies the Oman’s shift towards building future-ready cities and reflects the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for a society that balances economic prosperity with environmental responsibility and human well-being.

Beyond Sultan Haitham City, the pavilion showcases a diverse array of strategic projects derived from Oman’s National Urban Development Strategy. Among them is the Highland City project, an innovative model for sustainable mountain development that combines natural topography with advanced residential and tourism solutions.

The pavilion also features Al Thuraya City — a futuristic smart city development located in the heart of Muscat. With its global investment outlook and sustainable design, the project demonstrates Oman’s ambition to



The exhibit, which will run from July through September 2025, is part of the ministry’s mission to raise awareness about Oman’s urban development vision.

become a leader in smart urbanism. Another highlight is the Central Al Khuwair Master Plan, which reimagines a dynamic, mixed-use urban core in Muscat. Meanwhile, in the south, the Future Salalah City is presented as a landmark coastal development in Dhofar Governorate, designed to harmonise with the region’s rich ecological and cultural identity. The exhibition also shines a spotlight on the Sorouh initiative — a national programme aimed at delivering integrated residential neighbourhoods that meet the evolving housing needs of Oman’s population. These communities are designed with a focus on sustainability, affordability and livability, offering diverse housing solutions tailored to different social segments. One of the exhibition’s special features includes a display of the Royal Directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin

Tarik, which have significantly influenced the trajectory of Oman’s urban development efforts. These endorsements mark pivotal moments in shaping cities that reflect the nation’s aspirations for innovation, inclusivity and sustainability. On the sidelines of the inauguration, a prize draw was held for attendees of the Oman Real Estate Conference and the 20th edition of the Design and Build Week. The prizes — ranging from apartments and plots in Sultan Haitham City and Sorouh neighbourhoods to luxury cars and exclusive home furnishing packages — were aimed at stimulating public interest and investment in Oman’s evolving housing sector. This initiative forms part of a broader strategy to invigorate the real estate market while encouraging citizens to explore integrated housing options that combine quality construction, comprehensive services and a modern community ethos.

‘Journey of Challenge’ programme attracts 740 students to hone skills, enhance capabilities

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: During the summer holidays, students are eager to invest their free time in meaningful educational and recreational activities that develop their skills and enhance their capabilities.

Educational centres are dedicated to providing engaging and safe programmes that combine learning with enjoyment. They offer a variety of activities such as art workshops, educational camps, sports, self-development programmes and recreational trips. These initiatives aim to instill positive values like cooperation, discipline and creativity, while also developing students’ talents and motivating them to discover their potential in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and positive energy, learn new skills and build friendships among participants. In this context, the Ministry



The programme includes 37 specialised training courses with the participation of 740 male and female students from various governorates. — ONA

of Education, represented by the Career Guidance and Student Counseling Center, in collaboration with “Challenge Oman”, is implementing a summer programme for students. The programme, titled “Journey of Challenge”, aims to empower and develop

students’ skills and prepare them for future demands through a stimulating, interactive environment that blends learning with practical experience. The programme began this July and will continue until 21 August. The programme includes 37

specialised training courses with the participation of 740 male and female students from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The courses cover diverse topics focused on building students’ character and enhancing their skills in different aspects of life. The sessions are being held in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and at the Ashour Camp in Dhofar Governorate. The programme aims to promote self-discovery, build self-confidence and foster new friendships among students from different governorates. It also includes field visits to the Outward Bound Oman centre in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, which features two educational halls, a theatre and outdoor learning units, to provide a unique learning and training experience. — ONA

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MONSOON  
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**QASIM AL MAASHANI**  
SALALAH, JULY 23

**WHEN** in Dhofar Governorate, the first thing you notice is the mist. It doesn't fall — it floats, moves and curls into your hair. It's not just the air that's cooler; it's the spirit.

The monsoon, known here as khareef, has returned. And with it, Dhofar is not simply hosting a festival — it is becoming one.

This is Khareef Dhofar Season 2025, not in the abstract, but as it breathes and dances through the mountains, cities, and minds of everyone who enters its reach.

Every road into Salalah tells a story. And this week, those roads are full. Car after car flows from the north, the east, the borders. Families from Muscat. Adventurers from Riyadh. Young dreamers from Dubai. At petrol stations and roadside cafés, you hear the same buzz: “Did you see the drone show?” “Is the Glow Forest open tonight?” “Let's drive to Al Mughsail before the rain”. Al Mughsail Beach, kissed by the Indian Ocean, is not just a postcard. It's a feeling — where blowholes roar with theatrical fury and children scream in delight. There, on Salalah's west coast, the monsoon isn't something you observe. It's something you survive, enjoy and remember.

Back in the city's heart, Ittin Square has transformed into a visual opera. Fireworks rise without smoke, drones paint galaxies in the sky and the Crow Show, famous

from America's Got Talent, delivers spectacle with soul. But that's only the opening act.

The European Carnival spills onto the grounds — costumed dancers and stilted characters posing for selfies one minute and waltzing past families the next. On another corner, International Folklore Performances bring rhythms from Africa, Asia and Europe to the monsoon stage. Each act is applause — worthy. But it's the little gasp from a child, the laughter in the crowd, that seals the moment.

If you want to trace the wonder's roots, follow the children. At Awqad Park, the Kiddy Time zone is pulsing with life. Not chaos — joy. Inside The Enchanted Forest, kids paint with mud and neon, draw constellations in Luminous Jungle and learn Omani myths through puppet shows. Today's Jungle Carnival and Princess and the Dwarfs Parade reimagine fairy tales through forest ecology and cultural fun. “My son didn't want to leave”, said a visitor from Saudi Arabia. “He asked if Salalah has a school that runs all year like this”. But this isn't just for children. Wadi Darbat is a silent cathedral of green. Boats glide like whispers beneath overhanging trees. The Boat Adventure isn't fast. That's the point. You hear your breath again. You listen to birds and forget your inbox.

Climb a little higher and Dhofar's highlands stretch out beneath you, a sea of emerald and fog. The Mountain Climbing Adventures are more than trails — they're rites of presence. You begin in ambition.



You end in stillness.

Back in Salalah Public Park, there's movement of another kind. Joggers loop the Health Garden, children play football under the drizzle, grandparents stretch on inclusive fitness equipment. Here, health isn't forced — it's embedded. Oman Vision 2040 is not a slogan. It's in the layout, in the people.

And just when you think you've seen it all, The Modern Frontage at Ittin Plain opens another portal: 14 countries, 14 stories. Each pavilion is a passport stamp. There's a Live Music Pathway, the Kids' World Village and the radiant Luminous Float Carnival that turns monsoon



nights into glowing dreams. “It's like Expo, but with rain and real joy”, said a tourist from the UAE. And it's true. But the soul of this season is old. The Return of the Past area offers no neon — just authenticity. A clay oven. A folk poem. A flame lit not for spectacle but for memory. At the Village Theatre, Al Bar'ah dancers stamp out rhythms older than maps. You don't just watch—you inherit. “Every wilayat has its own story”, said an Omani visitor from Al Dakhiliyah. “But here, Dhofar gathers them like rain gathers in a wadi”. In Taqah, Mirbat and Sadah, the story continues. Each Wilayat Day unveils another

layer of Oman — its music, textiles, flavours and oral traditions. It's not performance—it's living proof.

And if your heartbeat still needs raising, try the Salalah International Cycling Tour, the Traditional Shooting Championship, the Drag Race Championship, or the Salalah Marathon — where athletes race the rain itself.

All of this — the wonder, the flow, the crowds, the quiet — is held together by vision and care. Behind the scenes, the Khareef Dhofar Main Committee, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Dhofar Municipality and public safety teams orchestrate not just logistics, but memory.

SHORT TAKES



During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed a number of matters of mutual interest. — ONA

RNO COMMANDER RECEIVES QATARI MILITARY OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman, received at his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Rear Admiral Khalid bin Nasser al Hajri, Commander of Mohammed bin Ghanem Al Ghanem Maritime Academy in the State of Qatar. The RNO Commander welcomed the visiting official and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed a number of matters of mutual interest, particularly in naval affairs. — ONA

FOLLOW UN CHARTER TO RESOLVE DISPUTES: OMAN

FROM PAGE 1

He added that through this session, the Sultanate of Oman wishes and looks forward to prioritising the practical implementation of the principles of the United Nations Charter namely the protection of international peace and security through negotiation, mediation and preventive diplomacy to achieve a just, impartial and non-politicised solution to the



OMAR BIN SAID AL KATHIRI  
Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations

root causes of conflicts. He pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman backs the Secretary-General's call to adapt peacekeeping operations to changing realities while establishing clear objectives and standards that ensure the effectiveness and credibility of peacekeeping efforts. He emphasised the vital importance

of the role of the Security Council and the International Court of Justice in upholding the rule of law and mechanisms of deterrence and accountability, restoring confidence in the international system and its credibility, and strengthening the legitimacy of the multilateral system.

At the end of his speech, Ambassador Al Kathiri called for consideration of possible measures to revitalise the Security Council and make it more comprehensive and responsive to contemporary challenges, through established legal norms of justice and solid foundations of cooperation and consensus among all states in order to achieve peaceful coexistence and economic prosperity for all. — ONA

CDAA intensifies efforts to enhance safety

SALALAH: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has intensified its field operations in Dhofar Governorate during the 2025 Khareef Dhofar Season, (monsoon) season, as part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing safety measures. The governorate continues to attract increasing numbers of visitors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman due to its unique natural tourism attractions.

The authority has strengthened its on-ground presence by deploying specialised teams across key tourist and natural sites, including wadis, beaches, mountain areas and waterfalls. This aims to ensure rapid emergency response, secure



The authority has strengthened its on-ground presence by deploying specialised teams across key tourist and natural sites. — ONA

locations; and provide rescue and ambulance services, guaranteeing the safety of all and reinforcing a sense of security among visitors and

residents. Additionally, the authority continues its awareness campaigns through educational and guidance programmes targeting both visitors and the local community. These initiatives aim to raise awareness about potential hazards in natural sites, emphasise the importance of adhering to public safety guidelines and discourage risky behaviours that could endanger lives.

These efforts align with the authority's commitment to fostering a culture of prevention and enhancing the readiness of its specialised teams, which operate in an integrated manner under the highest safety and rapid response standards. — ONA

UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CITY PIONEERS SPINAL SURGERY TECHNIQUES

MUSCAT: The spinal surgery team at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH), part of the University Medical City, has successfully implemented three groundbreaking surgical technologies for treating spinal disorders and deformities — marking a regional first in specialised healthcare services. The integrated use of surgical robotics, 3D printing and virtual reality within single procedures represents a qualitative leap in medical care, demonstrating the institution's commitment to adopting cutting-edge global medical technologies. These advanced techniques have been applied in complex



The integrated use of surgical robotics, 3D printing and virtual reality within single procedures represents a qualitative leap in medical care. — ONA

surgeries including scoliosis correction, spinal canal decompression and spinal tumor resections. The University Medical City has become the region's first healthcare facility to simultaneously combine all three technologies in individual operations, establishing itself as a regional leader in specialised spinal surgery. Dr Hamad al Farei, Consultant Orthopedic and Spinal Surgeon, stated: "This achievement marks a transformative development in Oman's spinal surgery capabilities. Our medical team's integration of three advanced technologies into unified procedures has

significantly enhanced surgical precision while reducing risks and complications – directly improving treatment outcomes and patient recovery times". Dr Siham bint Salim Al Sinaniyah, CEO of University Medical City, emphasised: "Implementing these advanced technologies strengthens public confidence in government healthcare services while elevating specialised care standards. This reflects our execution of national policies for healthcare development through localising modern medical technologies to deliver services meeting international benchmarks". — ONA

Youth programme looks at agripreneurship challenges

SIHAM AL SAIDI  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

AS a part of Oman strategic plans to empower youth and foster innovation in the agricultural sector, the Youth Centre, in collaboration with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development recently concluded a week-long Agripreneurship training initiative implemented across the governorates.

Aimed at youth aged 18 to 34, the programme selects 30 participants per governorate, providing them with the necessary entrepreneurial skills to explore opportunities in agriculture, address sector specific challenges and develop sustainable business ventures that meet local market needs while aligning with global trends in food security and environmental sustainability.

The programme offers a comprehensive curriculum that introduces participants to the fundamentals of agricultural entrepreneurship, the local agricultural landscape, innovative thinking and idea development, value chain enhancement, smart agriculture practices, food processing, digital and entrepreneurial marketing, financial planning, risk management and sustainability strategies.

This integrated approach allows participants to understand the broader context of agriculture and empowers them to transform their ideas into market ready solutions that contribute to national economic growth and resilience. According to programme facilitators, agripreneurship is not merely about farming, but rather a powerful

Against the backdrop of growing demands for food security and sustainability, the Agripreneurship Programme stands out as a vital step towards empowering Omani youth to become drivers of innovation, resilience and long-term wealth in the agricultural sector



The programme offers a comprehensive curriculum that introduces participants to the fundamentals of agricultural entrepreneurship and innovative thinking.

economic engine where creative ideas can be turned into viable projects that make use of value chains and modern technologies.

Amjad al Khawaldi, an agricultural enthusiast and small farm owner, said, "This kind of programme is exactly what the agricultural sector needs. It connects youth with real opportunities and equips them with practical knowledge. Many young people are interested in agriculture but lack the business mindset or technical guidance to succeed. This programme fills that gap and gives hope to communities looking for sustainable income taking the benefits of their dignity and culture".

The programme forms part of a broader set of entrepreneurial tracks introduced by the Youth Centre in partnership with national entities. Among the most pressing agricultural issues that the programme seeks to address are

water scarcity, soil salinity, limited arable land, climate change impacts, pests and crop diseases; and the need for modern technologies to boost productivity.

These challenges have a direct impact on food production, farmer livelihoods and Oman's long-term food security; and therefore require urgent, innovative and sustainable solutions.

These diverse programmes like Agricultural entrepreneurship are tailored to each governorate's character and youth demographics, ensuring that every region benefits from initiatives that support innovation, skill building and enterprise.

Against the backdrop of growing demands for food security and sustainability, the Agripreneurship Programme stands out as a vital step towards empowering Omani youth to become drivers of innovation, resilience and long-term wealth in the agricultural sector.



مجيس للخدمات الصناعية ش.م.ع.م  
Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C

Tender Announcement

Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C is pleased to announce a public tender, as per the details below:

| Tender No.    | Tender Description                                                    | Tender Fees OMR | Site Visit            | Bid Submission Date |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Majis/18/2025 | Supply and installation of Water & Wastewater Utilities for Marsa LNG | 50/- + 5%VAT    | 31 July 2025 10:00 AM | 18 Aug 2025         |

The interested bidder/contractor may visit Majis Industrial Services SAOC e-tendering system website for more information [www.majis.om \(http://tendering.majis.om/VendorLogin.aspx\)](http://tendering.majis.om/VendorLogin.aspx). The bidder to make sure the registration of the company through the portal is not registered.

- For site visit: the bidders shall maintain wearing the PPE (minimum of safety shoes, helmet, safety vest).
- For Tender Fees Payment: the bidder shall credit the tender fees +5% VAT & upload the receipt in the system.
- For inquiries, please contact:  
Email: [hajer.al-balushi@miscoman.com](mailto:hajer.al-balushi@miscoman.com) or [issa@miscoman.com](mailto:issa@miscoman.com)  
Phone: +968 94511331 or +968 9200321

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



India to resume issuing tourist visas to Chinese citizens

**HONG KONG:** India will resume issuing tourist visas to Chinese citizens from July 24 this year, its embassy in China said on Wednesday, the first time in five years as both countries move to repair their rocky relationship. Tensions between the two countries escalated following a 2020 military clash along their disputed Himalayan border. In response, India imposed restrictions on Chinese investments, banned hundreds of popular Chinese apps and cut passenger routes.

China suspended visas to Indian citizens and other foreigners around the same time due to the Covid-19 pandemic but lifted those restrictions in 2022, when it resumed issuing visas for students and business travellers.

Tourist visas for Indian nationals remained restricted until March this year, when both countries agreed to resume direct air service.

Relations have gradually improved, with several high-level meetings taking place last year, including talks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Russia in October. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said on Wednesday that Beijing had noted the positive move. — AFP

Japan vows to pursue anti-whaling activist despite Interpol move



Paul Watson

**Tokyo:** Japan reacted angrily on Wednesday after Interpol lifted its red wanted notice against anti-whaling activist Paul Watson, insisting its own arrest warrant remains valid.

Interpol had issued the notice against Watson, known for radical tactics including confrontations with whaling ships at sea, at the request of Japan.

But “Interpol has officially and permanently dismissed the Red Notice against me”, Watson said in a statement Tuesday, calling the move an end to the Japanese whalers’ “vendetta”.

Interpol confirmed to AFP that it had deleted the red notice, which asks police worldwide to arrest a suspect.

Tokyo called the decision “extremely regrettable”, with top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi saying it would not deter Japan.

“The removal doesn’t change the fact that Japan’s arrest warrant for him is valid,” Hayashi told a regular news briefing.

“Our position remains unchanged that we will continue to call on the parties involved for his extradition,” he said.

Watson, a 74-year-old Canadian-American, was arrested and detained in Greenland in July, 2024 on a 2012 Japanese warrant, which accused him of causing damage to a whaling ship and injuring a whaler.— AFP

FOR FIRST FIVE MONTHS

S Korea sees record birth rate growth



**Seoul:** South Korea registered record birth rate growth during the first five months of the year, a statistics agency official told AFP on Wednesday.

The country has one of the world’s longest life expectancies and lowest birth rates -- a combination that presents a looming demographic challenge.

Seoul has poured billions of dollars into efforts to encourage women to have more children and maintain population stability. —AFP

2023 RIOTS

Pakistan jails eight from Khan’s party



**LAHORE:** A Pakistani anti-terrorism court sentenced eight senior members of former PM Imran Khan’s party to 10 years in prison late on Tuesday over riots that targeted military sites following Khan’s 2023 arrest, their lawyer said.

Khan is on trial on similar charges. The government accuses him of inciting the May 9, 2023, protests, during which demonstrators attacked military and government buildings, including the army headquarters.

CASH AID

Malaysia’s sops for rising living costs



**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Wednesday announced new measures to address growing public disquiet about the rising cost of living, including a cash handout for all adult citizens and a promise to lower fuel prices.

The announcement came ahead of a planned protest to be held in Malaysia’s capital Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, calling for Anwar to step down over escalating prices and a failure to deliver on promised reforms.

Call for ceasefire & action as hunger spreads in Gaza

**MORE** than 100 largely aid and rights groups on Wednesday called for governments to take action as hunger spreads in Gaza, including by demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the lifting of all restrictions on the flow of humanitarian aid.

In a statement signed by 111 organizations, including Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Refugees International, the groups warned that mass starvation was spreading across the enclave even as tons of food, clean water, medical supplies and other items sit untouched just outside Gaza as humanitarian organizations are blocked from accessing or delivering them.

“As the Israeli government’s siege starves the people of Gaza, aid workers are now joining the same food lines, risking being shot just to feed their families. With supplies now totally depleted, humanitarian organisations are witnessing their own colleagues and partners waste away before their eyes,” the organizations said.

“The Government of Israel’s restrictions, delays, and fragmentation under its total siege have created chaos, starvation, and death.” The organizations called for governments to demand that all bureaucratic and administrative restrictions be lifted, all land crossings be opened, access to everyone across Gaza to be ensured and for the rejection of military-controlled distribution and a restoration of a “principled, UN-led humanitarian response.”

“States must pursue concrete measures to end the siege, such as halting the transfer of weapons and ammunition.” Israel, which controls all supplies entering Gaza, denies it is responsible for shortages of food.

More than 800 people have been killed in recent weeks trying to reach food, mostly in mass shootings by Israeli soldiers posted near Gaza Humanitarian Foundation distribution centers. The foundation, backed by the United States, has been fiercely criticized by humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations, for an



Palestinians wait to receive food from a charity kitchen in Gaza City on Wednesday. — Reuters

111 groups warned that mass starvation was spreading across the enclave even as tons of food, clean water, medical supplies and other items sit untouched just outside Gaza

alleged lack of neutrality.

Israeli forces have killed nearly 60,000 Palestinians in airstrikes, shelling and shooting since launching their assault on Gaza in response to attacks on Israel by the Hamas group that killed 1,200 people and captured 251 hostages in October 2023.

For the first time since the war began, Palestinian officials say dozens are now also dying of hunger. Gaza has seen its food

stocks run out since Israel cut off all supplies to the territory in March and then lifted that blockade in May with new measures it says are needed to prevent aid from being diverted to militant groups.

The Norwegian Refugee Council told Reuters on Tuesday its aid stocks were completely depleted in Gaza, with some of its staff now starving, and the organization accused Israel of paralysing its work. — Reuters



FLOODING CUTS OFF HUNDREDS IN VIETNAM

Flooding caused by Tropical Storm Wipha left hundreds of families cut off in villages in central Vietnam on Wednesday, authorities said.

Around 12,500 people were evacuated from high risk areas over the weekend, before the storm made landfall on Tuesday bringing heavy rains that triggered landslides and flash floods.

Authorities in central Nghe An province said the Ban Ve hydropower plant — the biggest in the area — had to discharge water from its reservoir. Several communities were hit by water rising to rooftops on Tuesday night, forcing local residents to evacuate to higher ground.

“Water levels this year were much higher and more terrible than what we considered a historic flooding in 1988,” resident Nguyen Thai Hung told the Dan Tri news site. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Shigeru Ishiba

SPECULATION SWIRLS ABOUT JAPAN PRIME MINISTER’S FUTURE

Tokyo: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba denied discussing his resignation with party elders on Wednesday, as media speculation about his future intensified after a weekend election debacle.

Ishiba’s coalition lost its majority in the upper house in elections on Sunday, just months after suffering the same fate in the lower house, forcing him into a minority government.

Late Sunday Ishiba insisted that he would remain in office in order to “fulfil my responsibility” as Japan sought to agree a trade deal with the United States.

US President Donald Trump announced on Tuesday that a deal had been struck that included lowering threatened tariffs of 25 percent to 15 percent, and cutting auto tariffs to this level.

News reports followed on Wednesday saying that Ishiba would discuss his resignation, potentially in a meeting later that day with senior members of his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

But Ishiba told reporters after that gathering: “There was no discussion of whether I should stay on or resign. Media reports suggest that I made a remark to this effect, but never once did I say such a thing,” Ishiba said.

“Everyone (in the meeting) shared a strong sense of crisis, and we agreed that the party having infighting must not happen,” the 68-year-old told reporters. Some media interpreted his comments as quashing any speculation that he would throw in the towel, while others said that he still intended to step down soon. The Yomiuri newspaper said Ishiba wanted his tariffs envoy Ryosei Akazawa to return from Washington and brief him on the US trade deal. He would then review the latest political calendar and decide when to announce his resignation and his last date, Yomiuri reported, without giving a source.

These and other reports said calls for Ishiba to depart had grown louder within the LDP since the results of the upper house election on Sunday.

The result was a humiliation for the LDP, which has governed Japan almost continuously since 1955. Voters angry at inflation turned to other parties, notably the “Japanese first” Sanseito, whose “anti-globalist” drive echoes populist movements elsewhere.

The LDP and its junior partner Komeito fell three seats short of retaining a majority.

It came after Ishiba’s coalition in October was forced into a minority government in the more powerful lower house, in the LDP’s worst result in 15 years. — AFP

TALKS BETWEEN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA EXPECTED IN TÜRKIYE

Istanbul: Ukrainian and Russian officials could meet in Istanbul on Wednesday for a third round of peace talks, their first meeting in more than seven weeks amid US pressure to reach a ceasefire.

Expectations of a breakthrough are low. The two sides previously met in May and June, but failed to agree an end to the nearly three-and-a-half year war.

The Kremlin has not explicitly confirmed it will attend on Wednesday, but cautioned earlier

not to expect any “miraculous breakthroughs” if it does.

The two sides have wildly different positions for ending the conflict. Russia has called on Ukraine to effectively retreat from the four Ukrainian regions it claims to have annexed in September 2022, a demand Kyiv has called unacceptable.

Ukraine has ruled out any negotiations on territory until after a ceasefire and says it will never recognise Russia’s claims

over occupied territory — including Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014. Russia’s full-scale invasion, launched in February 2022, has ravaged parts of eastern and southern Ukraine and resulted in tens of thousands of military and civilian deaths.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he hoped the two sides would discuss the release of prisoners and prepare a meeting between himself and Russian leader Vladimir Putin. — AFP

People-smuggling gangs face tough UK sanctions

THE first wave of the United Kingdom’s sanctions aimed at key figures in people-smuggling gangs have come into force in a bid to hit those involved in assisting illegal immigration.

They target 25 individuals and entities including a small boat supplier in Asia and gang leaders based in the Balkans and North Africa. They also hit “middlemen” putting cash through the Hawala legal money transfer system in the Middle East, which is used in payments linked to Channel crossings.

Albanian Bledar Lala, leader of the Belgian operations of an organised smuggling group, and a company in China that advertiseds mall boats for people smuggling on an online marketplace are among those sanctioned.

A former police translator, Alen Basil, who went on to lead a smuggling network in Serbia, aided by corrupt policemen, is also on the list.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said it was a “landmark moment in the government’s work to tackle organised immigration crime [and] reduce irregular migration to the UK.” “From Europe to Asia we are taking the fight to the people-smugglers who enable irregular migration, targeting them wherever they are in the world and making them pay for their actions.” “My message to the gangs who callously risk vulnerable lives for profit is this: we know who you are, and we will work with our partners around the world to hold you to account,” Lammy said.

The measures aim to target organised criminal gangs wherever they are in the world and disrupt their flow of cash, including freezing bank accounts, property and other assets, to hinder their activities.

It will be illegal for UK businesses and banks to deal with any one named on the list.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer took power a year ago promising to curb the journeys by “smashing the gangs” facilitating the crossings, but has struggled to deliver on the pledge.

Nearly 24,000 migrants have made the perilous journey across the Channel so far in 2025, the highest ever tally at this point



Nearly 24,000 migrants have made the perilous journey across the Channel so far in 2025, the highest ever tally at this point in a year.

in a year. The issue has become politically perilous in the UK, blamed for helping to fuel the rise of the far-right and violence at anti-migrant demonstrations.

Protests have erupted sporadically outside hotels believed to house asylum-seekers, with a recent demonstration outside one in Epping, east of London, descending into clashes that injured eight police officers.

The riots sparked by the Southport attacks in July 2024 also saw suspected asylum-seeker hotels attacked and anti-migrant sentiment on display.

Wednesday’s designations represent the UK’s first use of its new “Global Irregular Migration Sanctions Regime”.

It claims the regime is a “world first”, empowering the Foreign Office to target foreign financiers and companies as well as London hit alleged “gangland boss” Mohammed Tetwani with sanctions, noting he was dubbed the “King of Horgos” over his brutal running of a migrant camp in the Serbian town Horgos.

Tetwani leads the Tetwani people-smuggling gang, which the UK branded “one

of the Balkans’ most violent” and accused of holding migrants for ransom and sexually abusing women unable to pay the fees demanded.

The sanctions package targets three people accused of using the ancestral “hawala” banking system, which allows cash transfers without money actually moving, for irregular migration.

The sanctioned company in China -- Weihai Yamar Outdoor Product Co -- has advertised its small boats online “explicitly for the purpose of people-smuggling,” according to the Foreign Office.

Tom Keatinge, of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), said the sanctions were “a new front in the UK’s efforts to control a business model that brings profit to the enablers” and misery to victims.

“However, I would caution against overpromising,” he told AFP. “Talk of freezing assets and using sanctions to ‘smash the gangs’ seems far-fetched and remains to be seen.” History suggests that such assertions hold governments hostage to fortune. — dpa and AFP

Over 80% of Tuvalu citizens seek world-first Australian climate visa

SUVA: More than 80 percent of Pacific nation Tuvalu’s population is seeking a landmark climate visa to live in Australia as rising seas lap at its shores, official figures showed on Wednesday.

Australia is offering visas to Tuvalu citizens each year under a climate migration deal Canberra has billed as “the first agreement of its kind anywhere in the world”.

“We received extremely high levels of interest in the ballot with 8,750 registrations, which includes family members of primary registrants,” the Australian high commission in Tuvalu said in a statement. The figure is equal to 82 per cent of the country’s 10,643 population, according to census figures collected in 2022.

“With 280 visas offered this program year, it means that many will miss out,” the commission said.

One of the most climate-threatened corners of the planet, scientists fear Tuvalu will be

uninhabitable within the next 80 years. Two of the archipelago’s nine coral atolls have already largely disappeared under the waves.

The figures were released hours before a landmark decision by the world’s top court in The Hague laying out what legal obligations countries have to prevent climate change and whether polluters should pay up for the consequences.

The case, which has been brought by Pacific nations, could reshape climate justice, with major impacts on laws around the world.

Australia and Tuvalu signed the groundbreaking Falepili Union in 2024, part of Canberra’s efforts to blunt China’s expanding reach in the region. Under that pact, Australia opened a new visa category specially set aside for citizens of Tuvalu who will be selected at random.

“Australia recognises the devastating impact climate change is having on the livelihoods, security,



Bob Lisale drinks coconut milk as he watches the king tides pound the coast of Funafuti Atoll, home to nearly half of Tuvalu’s entire population of 11,500. — AFP

and wellbeing of climate vulnerable countries and people, particularly in the Pacific region,” Australia’s foreign affairs department told AFP last month. “This is the first agreement of its kind anywhere in the world, providing a pathway for mobility with dignity as climate

impacts worsen.” It will also provide Tuvaluans the choice to live, study and work in Australia.

Tuvalu citizens, including those living outside the country, were eligible to be included in the ballot if they are aged over 18 and pay a \$16 fee. The visa deal has been

hailed as a landmark response to the looming challenge of climate-forced migration. The Falepili pact commits Australia to defending Tuvalu in the face of natural disasters, health pandemics and “military aggression”.

“For the first time, there is a country that has committed legally to come to the aid of Tuvalu, upon request, when Tuvalu encounters a major natural disaster, a health pandemic or military aggression,” Tuvalu Prime Minister Feleti Teo said at the time. “Again, for the first time there is a country that has committed legally to recognise the future statehood and sovereignty of Tuvalu despite the detrimental impact of climate changed-induced sea level rise.”

The agreement also gives Australia a say in any other defence pacts Tuvalu signs with other countries, raising concerns at the time that the Pacific nation was handing over its sovereignty. — AFP

OPINION

Circularity Gap: Owning the present, shaping the future



RUMAITHA  
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an Omani environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

WHAT happens to a country that uses nearly 195 million tonnes of materials a year, only to reuse 2 per cent of them? This question became the framing lens for Oman's first Circularity Gap Report, asking all of us to reconsider how we define progress. The number reveals more than just a statistic. It brings us face to face with the story we've been telling about how our economy works and invites us to write something new. One of the most unexpected insights was that Oman recycles more than we tend to believe. At 27 per cent, our recycling rate is among the highest in the region. This is largely due to the construction and demolition sector, which has systems in place to recover and repurpose materials like concrete, gravel, and rubble. Some of this is used in low-value applications like backfilling, yet it still points to a level of structure that already exists and can be strengthened. Even so, our material flows remain largely linear. Extract, use, discard continues to be the prevailing rhythm. Many still view circularity through the narrow lens of waste, rather than as a mindset that begins much

earlier. A regenerative system takes shape in the way we think of how to use our land, design our homes, the durability of the products we use and the culture we create around repair, reuse and care. Today, Oman's material footprint stands at 15.3 tonnes per person. This is nearly double what the Earth can support. Carbon emissions follow a similar path, reaching 20 tonnes per capita. Less than 5 per cent of what we extract stays in the country. The rest moves across borders, carrying its environmental cost with it. As the numbers sank in, the discussion shifted. People began to ask why we rely so often on comparisons to define our direction. The Netherlands stands at around 24 per cent circularity. The global average is just above 6 per cent. Oman falls below both. But numbers alone cannot chart the future, the real question is how deeply we are willing to commit to a new way of thinking. Others noticed something familiar in our response. When confronted with uncomfortable truths, we often rush to explain them away. The gap is already there. Our task is to understand it clearly, without defensiveness and then choose a path forward that feels true to where we are and where we hope to be.

Circularity can become a core design principle from the start. When we need a guide, we can turn to nature. Nothing is wasted there. Every fallen leaf nourishes what follows.

Beyond the metrics, a human story began to unfold. Oman has more than 192,000 jobs tied to circular activity. Yet only 16.5 per cent of these are held by women. The transition we seek cannot just be technical. It must also be inclusive. It must reach across gender, geography and generations. An economy designed to endure must serve everyone it touches. There is power in timing and Oman holds a rare window of opportunity. Our cities are still growing, our systems still forming. Many nations are struggling to dismantle what they've already built. We have the chance to shape our home and country's foundations differently. Circularity can become a core design principle from the start. When we need a guide, we can turn to nature. Nothing is wasted there. Every fallen leaf nourishes what follows. Every element supports something else. The circular economy is not a new idea but as old as the Earth itself. Perhaps what we are looking at is not just a small beginning. Perhaps it is the root of something lasting. This reflection is not about where we fall short, but where we begin with clarity, imagination and the courage to design something better.

US court to decide if climate collapse is ‘unconstitutional’

ISSAM AHMED

Is “drill, baby, drill” compatible with “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”? That’s the question a federal judge in Montana will weigh this September, as a group of young Americans sues the Trump administration — arguing its aggressive fossil fuel agenda is not only accelerating climate change but violating their constitutional rights. Courts worldwide are emerging as tools for driving climate action against political inertia, with the International Court of Justice set to deliver a landmark ruling on Wednesday. “It’s very intimidating to think about my future”, lead plaintiff Eva Lighthiser said during a recent protest outside Congress, where she and other youth plaintiffs were joined by Democratic lawmakers. Their case, Lighthiser v. Trump, is among the most high-profile in a new wave of US climate litigation. It hinges on the Fifth Amendment’s Due Process Clause, which prohibits the government from depriving people of fundamental rights without due process of law. In 2023, a Montana judge sided with youth plaintiffs who argued the state’s failure to consider climate impacts when issuing oil and gas permits violated their right to a clean environment. Mat Dos Santos, general counsel for Our Children’s Trust, said the conservative-dominated Supreme Court has shown willingness to hear “right to life” cases. “We’re trying to make sure that the right to life really extends to living children”, they said, “and that it means you have the right to enjoy your planetary existence”. In an unusual move, 19 state attorneys general led by Montana have filed to intervene on behalf of the Trump administration — a sign of how seriously the case is being taken, said Dos Santos. “Growing up in rural Montana, there’s a lot of emphasis on our natural surroundings”, said Lighthiser. Patrick Parenteau, an emeritus environmental law professor at Vermont Law School, said the case draws on the same constitutional logic as rulings on interracial marriage, desegregation, and — until recently — abortion rights. But while he supports it in principle, he doubts it will succeed. “I think the plaintiffs understand that’s an uphill battle, certainly with the Supreme Court we have”, Parenteau said. “But the point is, they need to try”. Other scholars are less sympathetic. Jonathan Adler, a law professor at William & Mary, dismisses such efforts as more geared toward public opinion than legal victory. — AFP

Don’t throw dictionary away

HAVE you ever obeyed the suggestions of a digital writing assistant to replace a word or restructure a sentence without knowing how, why or even if it made your writing better? Before the reign of digital tools, you’d probably have turned to a dictionary for the same assistance. Our parents and grandparents picked up a heavy book and looked up what words meant, how they’re used, maybe glanced at their etymology — and then made a linguistic choice, however shaky or idiosyncratic, to express their ideas. In today’s universe of spell-check, autocorrect and artificial intelligence — each of which is capable of making those choices for us — why should we keep producing and owning actual, cinder-block-sized dictionaries? Because dictionaries enable us to write not with fail-safe convenience but with originality and a point of view. While AI assistants manufacture phrases and statements so writers don’t have to think them up, dictionaries provide us with the knowledge to use language ourselves in expressive and potentially infinite ways. They place choice — and authority — literally in human hands, forcing us to discover how we want to explain ourselves and our ideas to the world. Dictionaries aren’t merely long lists of words and meanings; they’re also instructions for how best to use those words. Since the debuts of Samuel Johnson and Noah Webster, English dictionaries have reflected the language of particular populations — the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster don’t quite say the same things. Simultaneously, by codifying the meanings, uses and connotations of words, those same dictionaries have shaped language. Lexicographers look to the public to determine words’ meanings, and we in turn look to lexicographers to verify that our understanding of words is shared and mutually understood.



ALESSANDRO  
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The author is a cultural critic of NYT

As digital writing extends deeper into our lives and minds, we need dictionaries more than ever, not to write efficiently or correctly, but to cultivate relationships with the words we use.

The parameters of English are formed both top-down and bottom-up. Dictionaries amalgamate and standardise these two linguistic influences and, in doing so, define our most fundamental cultural medium. Standard English doesn’t exist today the way it did as recently as the late 20th century. Thanks to the colloquial tone of ubiquitous internet-based communication, formal English has become essentially absent from most people’s lives. Where my parents’ letters to friends and colleagues would have adopted genial but brittle tones and structures, the vast majority of my social and professional correspondence is informal. Smartphone messaging conventions — like using exclamation points to indicate pleasant normalcy and ellipses to evoke impatience or indifference — routinely seep into follow-ups from artists and lawyers alike. It’s almost as if the more informal one’s writing is, the more capable, authoritative and trustworthy it reads. The profusion of digital writing assistants like Grammarly and Microsoft Editor gives greater urgency to debates about what a dictionary should be. In 1946, George Orwell described good writing as “picking out words for the sake of their meaning”, a practice that dictionaries catalyse and writing programs stifle. Writers consulting a dictionary make a choice — writers guided by an app like Grammarly have their choices made for them. Grammarly brags that its users can “rewrite full sentences with a click”, while Orwell notes that “the worst thing one can do with words is to surrender to them”. It’s a fight between robotic consistency and human creativity. The digital-native approach delivers hands-off, derivative communication. The analog approach requires leafing through pages without knowing exactly where you’ll end up. One cedes the conviction of

writing to a machine. The other bestows the crucible of thinking critically about what and how to write solely on an imperfect writer. Without dictionaries to provide us with a manual guide to English’s potential, writing that way is nearly impossible. Web dictionaries like Wiktionary and Google Dictionary — whose contents are often derived from existing works by actual lexicographers and resources such as Google’s Ngrams — empower writers to some degree, but they can be lexicographically lax. I’m not convinced, for instance, that listing “amazeballs” as a synonym for “astonishing” helps clarify the scope and potency of the English language. Codifying English as it is spoken requires not just itemising neologisms but making deliberate choices. It’s traditional dictionaries’ human scrutiny and advocacy that make them catalysts for exploration rather than aggregators of information. Our ability to express ourselves is critical — it helps us define our culture and our being. Dictionaries aid us in achieving this: They catalog our unique ways of thinking through language. I’m a Canadian; my feeling of pride and belonging in my native land is elevated by small linguistic Canadianisms (not many Americans say “eaves trough” or “serviette” — nor do AI chatbots, for the most part). As digital writing — AI-generated, spell-checked, its words suggested for us — extends deeper into our lives and minds, we need dictionaries more than ever, not to write efficiently or correctly, but to cultivate relationships with the words we use. Abandoning dictionaries and embracing mechanised writing would erode our capacity for collective identity quite as much as the ability to express ourselves. We need these books to flip through, animate, and surprise ourselves with. Without the impetus for self-expression and lifelong learning, we have to ask ourselves, why write at all?

# Breaking free from scrolling; back to the big screen



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

**CINEMA** owners need to make an effort to captivate their audiences and encourage them to return. There is a need to offer a better cinematic experience.

Just been to the cinema. It is my second time since the Covid-19 pandemic ended. My first visit was to watch *Oppenheimer*, the story about the development of the atomic bomb and the first nuclear explosion that forever changed the world. *Oppenheimer* drew crowds back to theatres.

The cinema industry has been severely impacted by the Covid pandemic. We saw theatres being closed and the rise of over-the-top media service (OTT). Streaming platforms have changed cinema-goers' preferences.

While OTT services were a blessing during the pandemic, they now pose a significant threat to cinema because audiences have become too comfortable with their subscriptions. People still prefer watching films at home.

When the *Barbie* movie was released in 2023, I was eager to watch it at the cinema. However, as it was prohibited in Oman, I had to depend on streaming services.

There's nothing wrong with subscribing to popular streaming providers like Netflix, YouTube and Disney. They offer convenient access to services that bypass traditional cable, broadcast and satellite television platforms, as well as censorship.

However, there are still many reasons to watch films on the big screen. The feeling of total immersion is akin to being transported to the scenes and stories. All the boring things are removed; what truly matters is what is within the frame.

The thrills of the Star Wars theatrical trilogy are more enjoyable on a large screen. Several iconic big-budget films, including *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, *Top Gun: Maverick*, *Jurassic World* and *Gladiator II*, are returning. Fortunately, local cinemas have been gaining small-scale audiences.

With the summer's sweltering temperatures, people are flocking to malls and cinemas. They are heading to theatres for a few hours of entertainment and to escape into a world of imagination. After all, there is nothing better than watching fantasy on a large, advanced screen with immersive sound, high-quality visuals, and, of course, delicious popcorn, nachos and soda. Shakespeare would have loved cinema.

Innovative thinking is key to boosting theatre attendance. There are discussions in the film industry about releasing films exclusively for the big screen to prevent OTT services from profiting from them.

The recent internationally coordinated effort to revive the big screen is worthwhile; it allows content creators the chance to play significant roles in producing innovative advertising material; it provides job opportunities and it keeps food courts busy

The recent internationally coordinated effort to revive the big screen is worthwhile; it allows content creators the chance to play significant roles in producing innovative advertising material; it provides job opportunities, and it keeps food courts busy with customers.

with customers. All these are part of the economic cycle – money exchanging hands.

Special events can attract new audiences while also finding new ways to make films culturally and socially relevant. Theatres might get a makeover from private and business events. The live sports screening trend, like the 2025 Uefa Champions League and the 2022 Fifa World Cup, is fantastic, as long as opposing groups do not engage in scuffles.

Younger audiences can learn to enjoy the big screen, while older audiences can rediscover the magic of cinema and be drawn to movie theatres. Documentary films are becoming increasingly popular. Although not theatrical, documentaries can both entertain and educate.

In the meantime, efforts are underway to promote and showcase Oman's film industry. There are plans for a 'Film City' aiming to provide production services and encourage local talent.

In Oman, audiences are avid viewers of international movies. Action films are the most popular, followed by family films, animation and horror. Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi productions are also well-liked.

There is something unique about cinema. It is a magical medium that offers an emotional journey; the shared laughter and screams foster social connection, enhance empathy and provide psychological benefits. Let's be happier together!

## SOMALIA DONORS LOSING FAITH AS AL SHABAAB SURGES

ERIC RANDOLPH

Despite billions of dollars in international support, Somalia's army has melted in the face of a months-long offensive by the Al Qaeda-linked Al Shabaab insurgency, and donors are running out of patience.

Using hundreds of fighters and a vehicle packed with explosives for a suicide attack, Al Shabaab retook the town of Moqokori on July 7, the latest in a wave of defeats this year for the government.

It has given them a strategic geographical position to launch attacks into the Hiiraan region, but it was also a powerful symbolic victory over a local clan militia that had been the government's "best fighting force" against Al Shabaab, according to Omar Mahmood of the International Crisis Group.

Somalia's government has been battling the militant group since the mid-2000s and its fortunes have waxed and waned, but now faces a perfect storm of declining international support, a demoralised army and political infighting.

The government relied on local militias, known as "Macwiisley", for a successful campaign in 2022-23, taking some 200 towns and villages from Al Shabaab. But the insurgents' counter-offensive this year has seen them regain some 90 per cent of their lost territory, estimates Rashid Abdi of Sahan Research, a think tank.

Towns that were supposed models of stabilisation, like Masaajid Cali Gaduud and Adan Yabal, have fallen. Three bridges along the Shebelle River, crucial to military supply lines, have been destroyed. The Macwiisley campaign collapsed, he said, because the government of President Hassan Shaikh Mohamud was extremely inept at working with the clans", empowering some and not others based on political favouritism rather than military needs. The Somali National Army has done little to stem the insurgents, unsurprising for a force "still in development mode while trying to fight a war at the same time," said Mahmood, the analyst.

Its most effective arm, the US-trained "Danab" commando unit, is better at killing militants than holding territory, and has suffered demoralising losses to its officer corps.

"It's unfortunate that attention was shifted towards insignificant political-related matters which do not help security instead of focusing on strengthening the armed forces," ex-president Sharif Sheikh Ahmed recently told reporters.

Al Shabaab has not launched a full assault on the capital, but has repeatedly demonstrated its presence. The group also controls much of the economy.

Meanwhile, the government's foreign backers are losing patience. The European Union and United States have poured well over \$7 billion into Somali security — primarily various African Union-led missions — since 2007, according to the EU Institute for Security Studies. — AFP

# COP30 must make good on past commitments

**I**n 2015, the landmark Paris climate agreement set the ambitious but necessary goal of limiting global warming to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and ensuring that the increase stays "well below" 2°C. With the average global surface temperature having already reached 1.1°C (1.98°F) above the twentieth-century baseline, time is running out to reach this goal. Yet governments have so far failed to agree on a strategy for doing so.

At last month's 62nd session of the United Nations Climate Change Subsidiary Bodies (SB62) in Bonn — the mid-year negotiations intended to lay the groundwork for November's UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém — countries got so hung up on the details of the agenda that little progress was made. Such delays have long characterised the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, but they are at odds with scientific reality, which demands rapid and unified action.

Building consensus is thus a key challenge facing Brazil's COP30 presidency. The task ahead is formidable — not only because of the challenges inherent in the UNFCCC process, but also because four interconnected global developments are undermining trust and impeding multilateral cooperation.

First, the global-governance architecture, with the UN at its core, is showing signs of disarray. Institutions that were designed to nurture and facilitate cooperation are increasingly hamstrung by bureaucratic inertia and outdated organisational structures.

Second, the rise of transactional diplomacy has meant countries prioritise their own short-term interests over collective long-term needs. This approach — based on a narrow conception of national interest — effectively precludes broad-based cooperation, as it erodes the norms that have traditionally underpinned international engagement. Third, compromise is increasingly being rejected in favour of "realism", leading to



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Brazil's COP30 presidency must eschew flashy results in favour of pragmatic pathways to deliver on past commitments

extreme polarisation and entrenched negotiating positions. Multilateral negotiations regularly come down to the wire, and the results are often disappointing, further encouraging transactional engagement at the expense of cooperation and compromise.

Finally, climate change is increasingly taking a back seat to other challenges, with armed conflicts, a global trade slowdown, intensifying growth headwinds, and record debt levels consuming countries' political attention, diplomatic space and financial resources. Brazil clearly has its work cut out for it. Above all, it must resist the tendency for COP presidencies to emphasise fresh agreements and ambitious commitments – the kind that grab headlines and make the negotiations look like a smashing success but often fall short when the hard work of implementation begins. Brazil's COP30 presidency must eschew flashy results in favour of pragmatic pathways to deliver on past commitments.

Fortunately, Brazil recognises this. Its Fourth Letter to the International Community outlines an Action Agenda aimed at making progress on what the world has "already collectively agreed" during previous

COPs and in the Paris climate agreement. Specifically, the Agenda seeks to leverage existing initiatives to complete the implementation of the first "global stocktake" under the Paris agreement, which was concluded at COP28.

The Agenda also charts the way forward. It is organised into six thematic "axes", including stewarding forests, oceans and biodiversity; transforming agriculture and food systems; and building resilience for cities, infrastructure and water. "Unleashing enablers and accelerators" in finance, technology and capacity-building — the final, cross-cutting axis — will accelerate implementation at scale.

Since responsibility for the implementation and governance of climate policy is distributed among many actors – which must have some level of trust that others are doing their part – the Agenda also establishes "transparency, monitoring and accountability" as top priorities. To this end, Brazil's COP30 presidency should seek to deliver a set of shared principles and supportive mechanisms.

The task ahead is daunting, but the chance to rebuild momentum is real. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

# SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



## QUEIROZ PROUD TO LEAD OMAN AS NEW COACH

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

The newly appointed head coach Carlos Queiroz expressed his deep sense of pride and responsibility in leading Oman's national senior football team, calling it a "great gratitude and huge honour" to be entrusted with such a role. This statement was part of his first official interview published in different channels of the social media accounts of Oman Football Association (OFA) following his appointment and official signing function which took place earlier this week at OFA headquarter in Seeb Stadium. The veteran Portuguese tactician highlighted during the interview passionately about his ambitions, strategic approach and message to Oman's audience and fans.

Acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead, Queiroz stated in his initial remarks, "I understand it is a huge challenge and it is not an easy task. However, it can be better challenge through our work and clear commitment. In my definition, it could be easy and simple as well. At the end of the challenges, you will feel the sweat as the reward after achieving the target through hard work in smart way."

As Red Warriors are gearing up for the decisive final round of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to the Fifa World Cup 2026, Queiroz outlined his roadmap to success. "My plan is to study the current situation thoroughly by reviewing the team, assessing the players, gathering detailed information about our opponents beside building the best preparation plan for our squad. In addition to that, Smart planning, clear goals, team discipline, and ambition will form the core of the best technical strategy," he added

Coach Queiroz also delivered a heartfelt message to the Omani fans, calling on them to become an active force in the team's journey. "Be the player No. 12. Wear the national team shirt not only during matches but also during training moments. You are the power behind the team."

Carlos Queiroz, who signed a one-year contract with OFA earlier this week, will bring with him a wealth of global coaching experience. Under his leadership, Red Warriors will enter the forthcoming playoff stage of the Asian qualifiers – Road to 26 with top ambitious as Oman aim for its first-ever appearance at the Fifa World Cup. A press conference has been scheduled for the new coach and his assisting team on August 5 where Coach Queiroz will unveil his full technical program and plans leading up to October's qualifiers.

# OTA launches intensive summer training in Egypt

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

AS part of the Oman Tennis Association's (OTA) efforts to prepare players for international competitions and enhance their technical levels, 14 male and female players are currently participating in a summer training camp in the Arab Republic of Egypt. This camp is part of the association's comprehensive preparation program, which targets various age groups. The camp will be conducted in two phases. The first phase runs from July 26 to August 15, while the second phase will be held from August 2 to 15. The training sessions are hosted at the "Shamas Tennis Club Academy," which is recognised as one of the top training institutions in the region.

This camp falls under the association's broader strategy, led by President Mutasim al Zadjali, to develop and refine the skills of national team players, with the goal of enabling them to compete effectively in regional and international tournaments and increase their continental and global ranking points.

The first phase includes players from the Under-14 and Under-18 categories. The Under-14 roster features Azan al Busaidy, Moataz al Mazrouei, Abdulrahman al Rahbi, Talia al Busaidy, Areen al Azkawi, and Salma al Riyami. This group is specifically preparing for the Arab Tennis Championship, which will take place in Tunisia from August 16 to 24, 2025.

In the Under-18 category, participants include Waleed al Hashmi and Aisha al Busaidy. The delegation is overseen by coach Sarah al Balushi from the Oman Tennis Association (OTA).

The second phase includes players in the Under-10 and Under-12 categories: Omar al Shaibani, Hatem al Rahbi, Hood al Hashmi, Mundhir al Amri, Imad al Rahbi, and Reema al Hashmi.

The training programme at the Shamas Tennis Club Academy includes both morning and evening sessions, five days a week (Sunday through Thursday). It focuses on technical, physical, and mental development, including



The training sessions are hosted at the "Shamas Tennis Club Academy," which is recognised as one of the top training institutions in the region.



MUNDHIR AL BARWANI

Secretary-General of the Oman Tennis Association

skill drills, physical fitness, cognitive exercises, friendly matches, and nutrition sessions under expert supervision.

Mundhir al Barwani, Secretary-General of the Oman Tennis Association (OTA), stated that the association has consistently organised such training camps annually due to their significant role in enhancing players' technical abilities and preparing them to represent the national teams effectively. He emphasised that age-group players, especially those under 14, benefit from these preparatory programmes. He noted that the current camp serves as preparation for the upcoming Arab Championship in Tunisia and confirmed that

the remaining players will also have opportunities to compete in upcoming regional and international events.

Al Barwani also highlighted the association's commitment to developing national team players by increasing their international exposure and organising high-quality training camps that help refine their talents. He added that Omani teams have participated in several international tournaments across various age groups recently and are preparing for upcoming challenges. He concluded by expressing the association's intention to host more tournaments, building on the successful organisation of several events in past years.

## Oman Kite Festival shares the beauty of Al Ashkharah

MUSCAT: The penultimate leg of the Oman Downwinder, part of the Oman Kite Festival 2025 set off from the Pink Lagoon headed for Al Ashkharah, demonstrating the untapped natural beauty in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. Organised by OMRAN Group in partnership with Oman Sail, Visit Oman, and Oman Adventure Centre, the Oman Kite Festival reflects the commitment of all stakeholders to develop sports tourism and capitalise on Oman's unique coastline as a world-class tourism experience.

Ayman bin Abdullah al Ghafri won the leg, ahead of Al Mukhtar bin Abdulkarim al Mujaini in second and Ahmed Mohammed from Egypt in third. These results puts Al Mukhtar bin Abdulkarim al Mujaini on top, with Ayman bin Abdullah al Ghafri second and



A slalom competition will also take place on July 24 at Ras Al Hadd

Ahmed Mohammed in third. With just one more leg remaining, from Ras Al Jinz to

Ras Al Hadd on July 24, the Oman Kite Festival 2025 has successfully showcased the potential of the

Omani coastline to attract domestic and international tourists as well as reinforced the Sultanate of Oman's position on the international map of adventure and marine sports events.

A slalom competition will also take place on July 24 at Ras Al Hadd, showing the complexity of kite surfing and the visual appeal from a spectator perspective with 90 top-ranked international Kite Festival athletes all taking part. This will be followed by the closing ceremony at Sur Waterfront where the prizes will be presented. In attendance will be the Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Dr Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group, Dr Khamis bin Salim al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, Senior management from both organisations, and representatives

from event sponsors and partners.

Abdullah al Farsi, Operation Manager, said, "The Oman Kite Festival is a key part of OMRAN Group's ongoing efforts to promote adventure tourism and harness Oman's natural assets – especially in coastal destinations like Bar Al Hikman, Ras Al Hadd, Masirah Island, and Al Ashkharah. To be able to do this with such a high calibre of athlete and of competition highlights the potential for Oman's distinctive coastal destinations to become exceptional platforms for tourism experiences.

"The geographic and thematic expansion of this year's festival activities, building on the success of last year's Oman Downwinder, reflects the Group's vision to develop high - quality events that drive tourism movement."

SHORTTAKES



Cameron Norrie in action. — Reuters

NORRIE OUSTS  
MUSSETTI TO  
ADVANCE AT DC OPEN

WASHINGTON: Britain’s Cameron Norrie rallied to defeat world number seven Lorenzo Musetti 3-6, 6-2, 6-3 on Tuesday, reaching the third round at the ATP and WTA DC Open.

Norrie, seeking his sixth ATP title, captured his first victory over a top-10 player in 2 1/2 years by eliminating the second seed at the first hardcourt tuneup for the US Open.

Seven-time Grand Slam singles champion Venus Williams will make her return to singles after a 16-month hiatus later, the 45-year-old American to face compatriot Peyton Stearns. Japan’s Naomi Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, meets Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan in another later match.

Musetti, who had a first-round bye, reached three semi-finals and a final on clay earlier this year, falling to eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz in a French Open semi-final. But he dropped his opener at Wimbledon and suffered his third loss in a row at Washington.

Norrie managed only three winners in the first set, two of them on aces, but dominated the second set to force a third.

Norrie saved five break points to hold in the fifth game of the final set then broke Musetti on his fourth chance in the sixth game, grabbing a 4-2 lead on an errant backhand by the Italian. Musetti fought off two match points in the final game, one on a Norrie double fault, but fell to the 29-year-old left-hander by sending a backhand beyond the baseline after two hours and seven minutes.

Chinese qualifier Wu Yibing beat France’s Gael Monfils 6-3, 6-1 for his first tour-level triumph since last year at Shanghai after the Frenchman ran into a clock at the rear corner of the court in the first set, hitting it with his right ankle.

“I saw him falling down there,” Wu said. I don’t know what happened but after I asked him. He said his foot actually maybe stuck under the clock.

“Hopefully he’s OK. I didn’t feel any difference (in his game). He was still reaching balls and good rallies.” — AFP



Italy's Michela Cambiaghi in action with England's Alex Greenwood. — Reuters

England down Italy to  
reach Euro 2025 final

CHLOE Kelly fired home the rebound from her own penalty to net a 119th-minute winner as reigning champions England pulled off a stunning comeback to beat Italy 2-1 after extra time on Tuesday and reach the Women's European Championship final. England fell behind in the first half but hit back to level through Michelle Agyemang six minutes into second-half stoppage time and when Emma Severini pulled down Beth Mead in the box in extra time, Kelly grabbed the chance to decide the game.

Her first effort was saved but she was quick off the mark to rifle in the rebound and send England through to the final where they will face either Spain or Germany.

After a come-from-behind penalty shootout win over Sweden in the quarterfinals, England again flirted with disaster, but their late surge floored Italy, whose hopes of reaching a first final since 1997 were crushed.

The win propelled England into a third successive major final after their Euro 2022 success and World Cup loss to Spain the following year.

With the Italians riding a wave of confidence after a last minute winner against Norway in their

Kelly goal  
sends  
defending  
champions  
into final

Agyemang  
equalises for  
England in  
96th minute

England will  
face Spain or  
Germany on  
Sunday

quarterfinal, they defended brilliantly and attacked incisively on the break. Their persistence paid off in the 33rd minute of a gritty semifinal when a ball from the right found its way to Barbara Bonansea, who took a touch before lashing it into the roof of the net.

England then dominated possession and created a slew of chances as the Italians rode their luck, but too often the English attackers unleashed shots from distance that were easily dealt with or flew harmlessly over the bar.

With their hopes of defending their title slowly slipping away, 19-year old substitute Agyemang snapped up a loose ball in the box and fired home to send the game to extra time.

Agyemang almost scored again with an effort deep into the second half of the extra period, outsprinting and outmuscling the Italian defence only to see her deft lob towards goal bounce back off the crossbar.

Sensing that they could avoid a repeat of their quarterfinal penalty shootout against Sweden, England poured forward and reaped their reward when Mead was fouled in the box, but there was one more twist in the tale.

Kelly took her usual prancing run-up, but Italy keeper Laura Giuliani

kept her nerve and saved, only for the England winger to score from the follow-up and seal her side's spot in Sunday's final in Basel.

“I just tried my best for the team. It wasn't supposed to go like that, that penalty, but I was ready for the rebound and ready for any opportunity given to me wearing an England badge,” a delighted Kelly said. England defender Lucy Bronze said they had been forced to dig deep to reach the final.

“Yeah, we don't know if it's the easy way it seems this tournament, but we find a way to win,” she said.

“I think it was the 96th minute and then the 118th minute... we just... found a way to get the goals and get the ball in the last minute.” For Italy, who had defended superbly until England's equaliser, the loss was a devastating blow.

“Obviously, going out like this hurts a lot. Having stood up to the champions should give us a lot of confidence for the future. There are no words to describe the emotions we have experienced on this journey,” coach Andrea Soncin said.

“This evening, for as hard as the girls fought, we definitely deserved a different ending. Many difficult situations to comment on. It's sad, but I am and we are very proud.” — Reuters

Sudharsan’s maiden half-century takes India to 264/4

MANCHESTER: Shardul Thakur and Ravindra Jadeja stay unbeaten for India at the end of Day 1 in the fourth of the five-match Test series at Manchester as India close the day at 264/4.

On fourth ball of the 68th over that was bowled by Chris Woakes, Rishabh Pant attempted a reverse-sweep. He just nicked the ball before the fast delivery hit his right foot, leaving him badly injured. The area that copped the blow soon got swollen and it also started bleeding. Pant was grimacing in pain and he could not even stand on his foot. An ambulance had to be brought inside the playing area to take the player out. He was retired hurt while

Ravindra Jadeja replaced him in the middle.

Apart from the Pant injury, India had a good outing on the opening day of the fourth Test against England at Old Trafford, Manchester. They reached 264 for 4 at Stumps. Yashasvi Jaiswal (58) and KL Rahul (46) stitched a 94-run stand for the opening wicket after India got an invitation to bat first. Meanwhile, Sai Sudharsan too contributed with a fine-tuned knock of 61. Ravindra Jadeja and Shardul Thakur were at the crease on the score of 19 each when the umpires called for early Stumps due to poor light. For England, Ben Stokes was the pick of the bowlers



Sai Sudharsan too contributed with a fine-tuned knock of 61.

with figures of 2 for 47.

Earlier, Ben Stokes won the toss and opted to bowl first on a fairly flat wicket. Although Chris Woakes did bowl a lovely spell and picked up the wicket it was skipper himself like at Lord's who changed the course of the game through the day by picking two crucial wickets. First, it was skipper Shubman Gill, and then it was Sai Sudharsan late in the day.

India has made three changes in the side with Sai Sudharsan, Shardul Thakur, and Anshul Kamboj, who have come in for Karun Nair, Nitish Kumar Reddy, and Akash Deep. As per England, they had to replace injured Shoaib Bashir with Liam Dawson. — Agencies

# MILAN WINS CRASH- MARRED SPRINT AT TOUR DE FRANCE



*This was a second stage win for Milan, who won Italy's first stage since 2019 on stage eight.*



# ITALY'S

Jonathan Milan won a crash-marred finale to stage 17 of the Tour de France in lashing rain on Wednesday, extending his lead in the sprint points race.

Overall leader Tadej Pogacar and his closest rival Jonas Vingegaard (4min 15sec behind) finished safely despite a mass fall 800m from the finish line at Valence at the foot of the Alps.

On the rain-slick roads at Valence once one rider had fallen his interminable slide across the tarmac sent riders flying like skittles leaving only 10 to contest the sprint.

This was a second stage win for Milan, who won Italy's first stage since 2019 on stage eight. The 24-year-old Lidl Trek rider now has 312 points, and is in a powerful position to win the battle for the green jersey in Paris as Pogacar is second at 240 with only two possible sprints left at 50pts each.

As the remaining 164 riders embarked from the sleepy Provence village of Bollène, the collective will of the peloton made for a slow approach of the Alps.

Billed as a sprinters stage on an unusually mild (22C) day the riders were also spared the 50kph winds that had been forecast.

But the rain deprived the stage a full bunch sprint due to the horrid fall. The three massive climbs culminating with the ascent to the 2304m altitude Col de la Loze on stage 18 will sort the wheat from the chaff on Thursday's Queen stage.

While Friday's hellishly designed five mountains of madness on stage 19 sound the final call for any pretender to knock Pogacar off his high perch.

Unless that is the three ascents of the cobbled roads to the Sacre Coeur Basilica in old Montmartre descend into chaos on Sunday. Milan prevailed in a 10-man sprint after the peloton was held up behind a massive crash with just one kilometre to go as riders went down on slippery roads in a rainy finish in southeastern France.

Eritrean Biniam Girmay was attended to by race doctors.

"I'm really happy and without words, I have to say. After surviving (the ascent to the Mont Ventoux on Tuesday) I didn't survive alone," said Milan, who holds the green jersey for the points classification.

"I survived all this with the help of my teammates. I really have to practice this because without all this I would not be here. Maybe I would have already dropped in one of the climbs (of the day).



**STAGE WINNER**

|    |                                                                                                                   |     |                  |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. |  <b>JONATHAN MILAN</b>       | LTK | <b>05h25'50"</b> |
| 2. |  <b>JORDI MEEUS</b>          | RBH | + 00"            |
| 3. |  <b>TOBIAS LUND ANDRESEN</b> | TPP | + 00"            |

**COMBATIVITY AWARD**

|    |                                                                                                             |     |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. |  <b>QUENTIN PACHER</b> | GFC |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

**RANKINGS AFTER STAGE 17**



**INDIVIDUAL RANKING**

|    |                                                                                                               |     |                  |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. |  <b>TADEJ POGACAR</b>    | UAD | <b>61h50'16"</b> |
| 2. |  <b>JONAS VINGEGAARD</b> | TVL | + 4'15"          |
| 3. |  <b>FLORIAN LIPOWITZ</b> | RBH | + 9'03"          |
| 4. |  <b>OSCAR ONLEY</b>      | TPP | + 11'04"         |
| 5. |  <b>PRIMOZ ROGLIC</b>    | RBH | + 11'42"         |



**POINTS RANKING**

|    |                                                                                                             |     |                |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------|
| 1. |  <b>JONATHAN MILAN</b> | LTK | <b>312 PTS</b> |
| 2. |  <b>TADEJ POGACAR</b>  | UAD | 240 PTS        |
| 3. |  <b>BINIAM GIRMAY</b>  | IWA | 179 PTS        |



**CLIMBERS RANKING**

|    |                                                                                                              |     |               |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| 1. |  <b>TADEJ POGACAR</b>   | UAD | <b>60 PTS</b> |
| 2. |  <b>LENNY MARTINEZ</b>  | TBV | 60 PTS        |
| 3. |  <b>THYMEN ARENSMAN</b> | IGD | 48 PTS        |



**YOUNG RIDER RANKING**

|    |                                                                                                               |     |                  |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. |  <b>FLORIAN LIPOWITZ</b> | RBH | <b>61h59'19"</b> |
| 2. |  <b>OSCAR ONLEY</b>      | TPP | + 2'01"          |
| 3. |  <b>KÉVIN VAUQUELIN</b>  | ARK | + 4'17"          |

**TEAM CLASSIFICATION**

|    |                                  |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 1. | <b>TEAM VISMA   LEASE A BIKE</b> |
|----|----------------------------------|



“So, with the help every single day of my teammates, we achieved this result. Today was a really tough stage ... We controlled it from the beginning, of course, with the help of some other teams. But they helped me also when I dropped. In the first climb, in the second one, they really did a good pace.”

Frenchmen Quentin Pacher and Mathieu Burgaudeau as well as Jonas Abrahamsen of Norway and Italian Vincenzo Albanese broke away early but stood little chance against the collective power of the sprinters' teams.

With the peloton breathing down their necks, Abrahamsen went solo with 11km remaining, only to be reined in 4.3km from the line.

Thursday's 18th stage is a brutal mountain trek between Vif and the Col de la Loze, one of the most feared ascents in the Tour de France. — Agencies



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EXCHANGE  
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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL  
OMAN \$70.52  
BRENT \$68.05  
LIGHT \$64.78



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SHORTTAKES



A gas station attendant pumps fuel into a customer's car at a gas station. — Reuters

OMAN OIL PRICE  
REACHES \$70.52  
PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil for September delivery on Wednesday reached \$70.52. The price of Oman oil decreased by 18 cents compared to Tuesday's price of \$70.70. The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for July delivery reached \$63.62 per barrel, a decrease of \$4.25 compared to the price for June delivery.

Meanwhile, international oil prices fell for the fourth consecutive session on Wednesday, as investors assessed trade developments including a US tariff deal with Japan ahead of a US stocks data announcement. Brent crude futures were down 50 cents, or 0.7%, at \$68.05 a barrel as of 11:19 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were down 47 cents, or 0.7%, at \$64.78 per barrel.

Both benchmarks lost about 1% in the previous session after the EU said it was considering countermeasures against US tariffs. US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that the US and Japan had struck a trade deal that included a 15% tariff on US imports from Japan.

"The slide (in prices) of the past three sessions appears to have abated but I don't expect much of an upward impetus from news of the US-Japan trade deal as the hurdles and delays being reported in talks with the EU and China will remain a drag on sentiment", said an analyst. — Agencies



TENDER  
PROVISION OF SUPERVISORY CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DHOFAR II AND JALAN BANI BU ALI WIND INDEPENDENT POWER PROJECT

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | PWP seeks proposals from eligible and qualified consultants to provide project management and supervisory consultancy services for Dhofar II and Jalan Bani Bu Ali Wind Independent Power Projects (Project) during the construction, commissioning, and testing of the Project                                                                                            |
| Tender Number                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | OPWP/2025/022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Tender Purchase Period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | From 21 July 2025 to 7 August 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Tender Fee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 150 OMR / Free of charges for (SME) with a valid Riyada card                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Submission date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 8 September 2025 at 12:00 PM Oman Time Zone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Collection & Payment Methods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through PWP website ( <a href="https://omanpwp.om/tenders">https://omanpwp.om/tenders</a> ). The payment is done electronically through PWP website. In case of any queries, please send an email to: <a href="mailto:procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om">procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om</a> |
| Bank Guarantee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A Tender Bond (in the form set out in the tender documents) or a bank certified cheque of not less than 1% of the tender value, to be valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline date referred to above. The tender bond or certified cheque shall be enclosed as part of the bid.                                                                        |

TES eyes electric natural  
gas production in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

GLOBAL clean energy specialist Tree Energy Solutions (TES) is actively exploring investment opportunities in large-scale production of renewable natural gas — also known as electric natural gas (e-NG) — in Oman. The initiative aims to support the country's energy transition while also creating an export platform for carbon-neutral fuels targeting international markets.

TES CEO and Co-founder Marco Alverà recently visited Oman for high-level discussions with senior executives from key energy stakeholders engaged in advancing the Sultanate of Oman's green hydrogen ambitions and broader decarbonisation strategies.

The visit marks the latest in a series of engagements between TES and Omani entities, viewed as potential long-term partners in the company's efforts to expand its global footprint into the Middle East. Headquartered in the Netherlands, TES is a pioneer in the production of e-NG — a synthetic methane derived by combining green hydrogen with biogenic or recycled CO<sub>2</sub>. This carbon-neutral gas can be



MARCO ALVERÀ,  
TES CEO

By adding CO<sub>2</sub> to green hydrogen, you get a green product — e-NG — that behaves just like fossil natural gas but with a fraction of the emissions. What's more, it can be distributed through the current infrastructure with little or no modification, making the energy transition more cost-effective

transported using existing natural gas infrastructure from pipelines to LNG vessels, offering a scalable clean-energy alternative to fossil natural gas.

"We had productive discussions on how e-NG can support both Oman's domestic decarbonisation goals and its ambitions to export clean fuels—especially to Europe and Asia, where demand is growing", said Marco Alverà. "Oman has a very ambitious green fuels strategy supported by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, OQ Group (eg OQAE, OQGN) and Energy Development Oman (EDO) through Hydrom. At TES, we view Oman as a uniquely positioned country to lead in the global green gas trade, thanks to its world-class solar and wind resources and robust gas infrastructure", he noted. In mid-2024, TES signed a Joint Study Agreement with OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) — the clean energy arm of OQ Group — to assess the feasibility of establishing an e-NG facility in Oman. "This is a fundamental approach in the way we assess our global opportunities. It is a necessary step that could pave the way for TES to invest in green e-NG production in Oman", said Alverà.

"By adding CO<sub>2</sub> to green hydrogen, you get a green product — e-NG — that behaves just like fossil natural gas but

with a fraction of the emissions. What's more, it can be distributed through the current infrastructure with little or no modification, making the energy transition more cost-effective", he said. "Launching a few e-NG projects here would be like unlocking new gas reserves — millions of barrels of oil equivalent".

TES' modular e-NG production approach combines electrolyzers, methanisers and balance-of-plant systems, enabling efficient, scalable green gas generation which is being implemented across the most promising e-NG locations. TES is further supporting this in Germany, where it is developing a giga-scale import terminal at the Wilhelmshaven Green Energy Hub that will serve Germany and Europe with e-NG produced worldwide.

TES is a founding member of the e-NG Coalition, alongside TotalEnergies, Engie, Semptra Infrastructure, Mitsubishi, Tokyo Gas, Osaka Gas and Toho Gas which aims to accelerate global e-NG adoption.

Oman stands out as a priority destination. "Beyond its transparent regulatory framework and existing infrastructure, Oman enjoys strong geopolitical positioning and is a trusted partner—qualities that matter immensely to markets like Japan", said Alverà.

First coffee farm opens in Jabal Shams

NASRULAH AL AJMI  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

In a strategic move to develop high — altitude agriculture and expand Oman's specialty crop portfolio, Coffee Farm Company, led by founder and CEO Said al Wardi, has launched a commercial coffee cultivation project in Jabal Shams. The initiative aims to plant 6,000 coffee seedlings by 2027, positioning Oman as a potential producer of high-quality Arabica coffee.

The project began with the planting of 300 seedlings of the Yemeni Udaini variety, one of the world's oldest and most prized Arabica strains. The number is expected to rise to 5,000 seedlings in 2026 and reach 6,000 the following year. The crop is being cultivated at elevations considered critical for specialty-grade coffee, with Jabal Shams offering the right combination of altitude, temperature and humidity.

"The climate in Oman's highlands is more suitable for coffee than many people realise", said Al Wardi. "This isn't about hobby farming, it's a serious agricultural and economic opportunity aligned with national goals".

The project is among the first of



The project began with the planting of 300 seedlings of the Yemeni Udaini variety, one of the world's oldest and most prized Arabica strains. Picture for illustration only.

its kind in the Sultanate of Oman. While coffee is not native to Oman, the country's mountainous regions, especially in Al Dakhiliyah and Dhofar — have shown promising results in experimental cultivation.

One of the early challenges faced by the company was acquiring viable coffee seedlings. "Most countries classify coffee as a strategic crop and restrict seed exports", Al Wardi explained. "We overcame this by propagating seedlings locally in Salalah and Bahla".

To ensure sustainable expansion, the company has partnered with Nakheel Oman Development Company and the Agricultural Research Centre in Qumamah, which are supporting the development

of tissue-cultured plants to scale the operation. In parallel, Coffee Farm Company is investing in agri-tourism infrastructure. Plans are underway to establish a coffee visitor experience site in Jabal Shams, where tourists will be able to tour the plantations, participate in harvest activities and visit a Coffee Museum located near the popular viewpoint Shurfat Al Nakhr.

"This initiative is not just about agriculture. It's about integrating farming, tourism and heritage into one value chain", Al Wardi said.

The company will market its coffee under the name Bunn Al Madar, inspired by the traditional clay dallah used for brewing coffee in Oman. The brand already produces roasted beans and capsules; and aims to build a strong "Made in Oman" identity.

The project supports Oman Vision 2040 objectives, which prioritise agricultural innovation, economic diversification and the development of non-oil sectors, particularly in rural and mountainous areas.

"This is just the beginning", Al Wardi said. "With the right support and continued experimentation, Omani coffee can become a recognised name in the regional and global market".

ADVERTORIALS

SAUD BAHWAN GROUP ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH SUNGROW POWER SUPPLY CO LTD

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Group, through its group company — World Auto Business, recently announced a new strategic collaboration with Sungrow Power Supply, a global leader in renewable technology solutions.

As part of this partnership, World Auto Business and Sungrow Power Supply will jointly introduce a range of advanced AC and DC electric vehicle chargers for residential and commercial use in Oman.

Recognised as the pioneer of renewable technologies, Sungrow offers highly reliable AC and DC chargers that are compatible with 99.8% of all major electric vehicle models. These initiatives aim to bring sustainable, energy-efficient and smart charging solutions to the electric vehicle market and to support Oman's energy transition.

Commenting on the collaboration, an official from World Auto Business shared, “We are excited to join forces with Sungrow Power Supply whose vision for a smarter and more sustainable future aligns with the rapidly growing demand for renewable energy solutions”, he said.

“This initiative reflects the shared vision of both companies to accelerate the adoption of electric mobility and to meet the unique requirements of the new-age customers”.

World Auto Business LLC is committed to driving the transition towards a sustainable, low-emission future by supporting the development of new energy solutions and infrastructure.

As awareness grows around the importance of reducing environmental impact, the company is investing in technologies and services that align with this global shift.

From promoting clean mobility options to facilitating the installation of eco-friendly charging infrastructure, World Auto Business LLC is helping to lay the groundwork for a greener transportation ecosystem.

Its efforts aim not only to enhance the customer experience but also to support broader societal goals for environmental responsibility, energy efficiency and sustainable urban development.

Set to revolutionise the automotive arena, the EV chargers provide up to 96.5% of charging efficiency. Each unit supports ultra-fast charging with OCPP 1.6J and 2.0.1 protocols and includes PV, ESS and EVC charging modes with dynamic load management.

These chargers support a wide voltage range of 200–920V and are designed for carefree maintenance, ease of use and control via app and easy installation, among other advanced features.

Additionally, Sungrow EV chargers feature user-friendly smart load management systems, intelligent charging capabilities, an increased service lifetime and anti-corrosion properties.

Beyond this, their minimalist, sleek design adheres to environmental protection principles, offering low noise emissions of up to 65 dB and low power consumption, all at par with international safety standards.

Sungrow, a global leader in renewable energy technology, has pioneered sustainable power solutions for over 28 years. With a presence in 180 countries, the company is recognised as the world's No 1 in PV inverter technologies. Sungrow is committed to bridging the gap to a sustainable future through cutting-edge technology and unparalleled service.

AMOUAGE OPENS ITS FIRST STANDALONE BOUTIQUE IN JEDDAH

MUSCAT: Amouage, the independent Omani High Perfumery House, has unveiled its first standalone boutique in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, located in the Red Sea Mall in Jeddah.

This milestone marks a new chapter in the history of Amouage, one that deepens its long-standing presence in the region — a place where fragrance is not only a ritual, but an expression of identity.

Conceptualised by Chief Creative Officer Renaud Salmon, the boutique offers a multisensory encounter with the House's vision,



narrative richness and cultural depth.

Amouage has been part of Saudi Arabia's olfactory culture for decades, cultivating a loyal

and growing client base across the Kingdom.

Over the years, iconic creations such as Interlude Man, Reflection Man and Honour Woman have become emblematic of the House's deep connection with Saudi clients — a connection now carried forward by more recent creations such as Guidance and Outlands.

The boutique marks a meaningful new expression of this enduring relationship, offering a space where heritage and artistry are brought to life through a uniquely tailored spatial experience.

Buy the Lexus UX200 with fulfilling summer offer

**DAZZLE** and impress the crowds in the youthful and vibrant Lexus UX200, now available with an unbeatable summer offer from Lexus. Buy the luxury crossover SUV and enjoy the incredible benefits of 7 years/70,000 km of complimentary service and first-year registration, before the offer ends on July 30, 2025.

As pioneers of luxury cars, each Lexus vehicle is crafted to create unforgettable journeys, turning everyday moments into memories.

Equipped with refined features, the SUV is a testament to where luxury meets high performance.

Drive the luxury crossover to live in the moment and enjoy the perfect city life with its captivating futuristic technologies, smooth road response and a ravishing bold exterior. Equipped with a powerful 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine, paired to a direct CVT transmission it delivers an exhilarating response and a



The SUV is a testament to where luxury meets high performance.

smooth road grip.

Aimed at providing an unparalleled luxury experience, the interiors of the UX200 emerge from a traditional Japanese aesthetic of ‘Tazuna’. Depicting true craftsmanship, the spacious driver-focused cockpit, with a colour head-up display, ventilated seats, and premium leather seats, ensures a smooth journey.

Carefully crafted into the dashboard, it features

a 10.3-inch navigation with touchscreen display, Bluetooth voice recognition, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, wireless charging pad for compatible smartphones and four USB ports to charge your devices and keep you connected on the road.

Fitted with the best-in-class Lexus Safety System+ 2.5, a suite of standard advanced safety equipment and convenience features, it brings countless benefits. The built-in Pre-

Collision System with Bicycle and Pedestrian Detection alerts about potential collisions and brakes automatically.

The Full-Speed Range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control helps maintain distance from the vehicle ahead. The Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist issues warnings on risky lane changes and makes minor steering adjustments to help keep the car in the lane.

Moreover, the Lane Tracing Assist centres the vehicle within its lane while Dynamic Radar Cruise Control is active. Another noteworthy feature includes Road Sign Assist, which recognises certain road signs and displays, such as speed bumps or pedestrian crossings, preventing life-threatening situations.

Discover Lexus' premium innovation at Lexus Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms near you. Experience the unique blend of craftsmanship, design and unmatched luxury. Have a closer look and request a test drive of the bold and daring UX200 Luxury Crossover.

BE ONE OF THE 1000 WINNERS WITH BANK MUSCAT CREDIT CARDS

MUSCAT: In line with its pioneering role in providing exceptional offers during summer, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, announced an exclusive offer for credit cardholders.

During the offer period, customers will get the chance to enter a draw to win 50% cashback when they spend a minimum of RO 50 using their Bank Muscat Credit Cards internationally on POS (Point of Sale) machines. There will be



1000 winners by the end of the campaign. The offer continues until August 31, 2025.

Bank Muscat launched this exclusive proposition to offer customers a memorable travel experience with summer credit cards offerings. The Bank is keen to continuously develop its services and products to enhance customer experience.

For those looking to participate in the offer, Bank Muscat offers a variety of credit cards carefully curated to fit the needs of its customers offering

a plethora of benefits that assist cardholders on their journey from booking to arrivals and during their holiday.

Benefits include free travel insurance, rewards on spends and discounted offers across a wide range of categories including, lifestyle, health and beauty, entertainment, travel and hotel stays, as well as up to 15% cashback on international brands when registering their Visa credit cards through [www.visacashbacks.com](http://www.visacashbacks.com) (Valid until December 31, 2025).

LuLu Exchange & LuLu Money partner with Argentine Football Association

MUSCAT: LuLu Exchange, a leading cross-border payments provider in Oman, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar; and LuLu Money, its flagship remittance app, have announced a partnership with the Argentine Football Association (AFA), signing on as their Regional Fintech Partners.

This sponsorship is part of a larger global agreement through which the various entities under LuLu Financial Holdings, across 10 countries, will become official AFA partners within their respective regions. In India, LuLu Forex, a leading foreign exchange provider and LuLu Finserv, the group's microlending and financial services arm, will represent the brand. Meanwhile, LuLu Money will take on the partnership role in Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The partnership, which initially runs through mid-2026, was officially unveiled at an event held in Dubai on Tuesday, in the



This sponsorship is part of a larger global agreement through which the various entities under LuLu Financial Holdings will become official AFA partners within their respective regions.

presence of Argentina's World Cup-winning coach Lionel Scaloni, senior LuLu Financial Holdings leadership and AFA executives.

The agreement spans a key period in global football, culminating in the 2026 Fifa World

Cup in the USA, Canada and Mexico, where the reigning champions will defend their crown.

Over the next twelve months, customers of various LuLuFin entities can look forward to a range of exciting campaigns and fan-centric activations, both digitally and through their 380+ customer engagement centres.

“For countless fans, the Argentine team represents more than football — it symbolises hope, resilience and joy”, said Adeeb Ahamed, Founder and Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings. “These are the same emotions that shape the everyday journeys of our customers, who use our services to care for their families and build better futures. This partnership is a celebration of that shared spirit”.

Claudio Tapia, President of the AFA, said: “We are delighted to have the LuluFin family as a new regional sponsor of the Argentine Football Association for the Middle East, APAC

and India.

AFA's international expansion continues to grow, incorporating prestigious groups in important territories for our national team. We celebrate this new agreement, which has a strong bond with the Indian community, printing such affection for our team. We share the same values and the importance of teamwork. Today we welcome the LuLuFin family as new regional sponsors of the Argentine national team”.

Leandro Petersen, Commercial and Marketing Director of AFA, said: “This new regional sponsorship with Lulu Financial Holdings, through its flagship brands in strategic territories such as India, APAC and the Middle East, marks a new step in the global expansion of the AFA brand. Since we arrived in the Middle East and India, we have seen strong support for the Argentine National Team.”

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



Supervised by Riyada, SafaQat is a pioneering venture launched by four brothers from Nizwa.

SafaQat secures investment to scale digital procurement

MUSCAT: The Omani digital procurement platform SafaQat — meaning “Deals” — has successfully closed a funding round with Future Fund Oman and Idrak Group, signalling growing investor confidence in homegrown tech ventures that support the Sultanate of Oman’s digital economy goals.

Supervised by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada), SafaQat is a pioneering venture launched by four brothers — Majed, Sulaiman, Ibrahim and Al Moatasem al Saifi — from the Wilayat of Nizwa. The idea for the platform was born during the Covid-19 lockdowns, initially inspired by the simple act of exchanging quotations through messaging apps, which revealed market readiness for a streamlined digital solution.

The brothers used their combined expertise, particularly in tendering, to develop a comprehensive and competitive digital platform. Each of them managed a core function based on their respective specialisations, contributing to the project’s structured growth. According to co-founder Al Moatasem, SafaQat faced several early-stage hurdles, notably in building market trust and shifting user behaviour. However, the team tackled these through adaptive development, user feedback and by demonstrating the platform’s flexibility and value to institutions.

Al Moatasem described the investment from Future Fund Oman and Idrak Group as a strategic milestone, saying the support goes beyond financial backing. “These partners believe in the vision of investing in Oman’s future economy and in empowering Omani youth”, he said.

The new capital will be used to enhance SafaQat’s technical infrastructure, improve the user experience, recruit local talent, expand services to the public sector and support regional and international expansion.

To date, SafaQat has recorded 2,486 users, 1,260 tenders and procurement opportunities; and 2,784 registered suppliers and companies, reflecting its fast-growing presence in Oman’s digital procurement landscape.

The platform has earned multiple accolades, including second place in the Omani Startup Accelerator’s live pitch, recognition as the Best Growing Company and top rankings among Omani e-commerce stores. It also won in the Jadarah 2024 initiative. SafaQat has represented Oman at major regional and global events such as Comex 2024, Biban 24 in Riyadh, the Web Summit in Doha; and LEAP 25 in Saudi Arabia, further reinforcing its position as a key national tech player.

Built with smart tools such as real-time dashboards, bidding algorithms and automated alerts, the platform is currently working on AI-based bid analysis and price forecasting tools, aligning with Oman’s digital transformation objectives. Beyond business, SafaQat has launched social initiatives to train jobseekers as sales representatives through online practical courses, helping create self-employment pathways. It also offers free registration, technical support and awareness programmes for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), contributing to a more inclusive digital economy. — ONA

CLUTCH AGREEMENTS

Trump strikes tariff deal with Japan



US President Donald Trump struck a trade deal with Japan that lowers tariffs on auto imports and spares Tokyo from punishing new levies on other goods in exchange for a \$550 billion package of US-bound investment and loans.

It is the most significant of a clutch of agreements that Trump has bagged since unveiling sweeping global levies in April, though like other deals, exact details remained unclear. — Reuters

TIT-FOR-TAT LEVIES

China to ‘strengthen cooperation’ with US



China said on Wednesday it will seek to “strengthen cooperation” with the United States at next week’s trade talks in Stockholm.

Washington and Beijing slapped escalating, tit-for-tat levies on each other’s exports earlier this year — even reaching triple-digit levels — stalling trade between the world’s two biggest economies as tensions surged, and affecting other economies. — AFP

OVERALL LABEL

Green bond issuance dives almost a third



The amount of “green” bonds sold by governments, banks and companies has slumped by almost a third this year amid the rollback of climate change policies in the United States and Europe.

Data published by Fitch Ratings agency showed overall “labelled” bond issuance, which also includes other types of sustainability-focused bonds, was down 25% year-on-year to \$440 billion. — Reuters

FFO approves RO 1.2 bn projects in first year

THE Future Fund Oman (FFO) has recorded strong performance in its inaugural year, approving 44 projects with a combined investment value of around RO 1.2 billion. Of this, RO 333 million was contributed by the Fund itself, while the remaining RO 885 million came from foreign investors — reflecting growing international confidence in Oman’s investment climate, according to the Oxford Business Group (OBG).

Established by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) with a capital allocation of RO 2 billion over five years, the Future Fund Oman is a key instrument in advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The Fund is designed to stimulate economic diversification and expand the country’s investment base by targeting high-potential sectors such as industry, renewable energy, ICT, agriculture, fisheries and tourism, as well as emerging sectors like e-commerce, fintech and electric vehicles.

OBG’s 2024 review of the Fund noted its broader mission beyond capital deployment. The Fund also supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), venture capital firms and the development of a national innovation ecosystem. To that end, 90% of its capital is allocated to large-scale projects, while the remaining 10% is earmarked for SMEs and venture capital, aligning with the goals of the National Development and Generations portfolios.

The report commended Oman’s recent regulatory reforms aimed at making the country more attractive to international investors. Key reforms include legislation allowing 100% foreign ownership in most



sectors, the launch of the unified “Invest Oman” digital platform to streamline licensing processes and the reduction of the list of prohibited foreign ownership activities to 123. The implementation of the Privatisation Law was also seen as a critical step, enabling the transfer of state assets to private and international investors via public offerings.

These reforms have helped the Future Fund Oman channel investments into a variety of impactful projects. These include both large-scale national initiatives and ventures led by SMEs and startups. Notable examples of the Fund’s international partnerships include two joint investment funds with Chinese firms.

OQ Trading expands LNG supply role in Bangladesh

JOMAR MENDOZA  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

OQ Trading International, the energy trading arm of Oman’s OQ Group, has strengthened its position in Bangladesh’s energy market with the signing of the country’s first-ever short-term liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply agreement. The landmark deal marks a strategic shift in Bangladesh’s LNG sourcing approach, aimed at ensuring greater energy security and reducing exposure to the volatile spot market. According to Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd (RPGCL), the agreement represents a critical step in enhancing supply stability during peak demand periods.

RPGCL, a fully owned subsidiary of Petrobangla and the government’s LNG importing agency, is the official partner of OQ Trading in Bangladesh.

The newly signed Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA) allows Bangladesh to import one LNG cargo per month from August 2025 through December 2026, totalling 17 cargoes. This deal marks Bangladesh’s first short-term LNG arrangement



Under the agreement, Bangladesh will receive five LNG cargoes in 2025 and 12 in 2026. Image for illustration only.

with any global supplier and complements its existing long-term contracts.

Under the agreement, Bangladesh will receive five LNG cargoes in 2025 and 12 in 2026. The SPA also introduces a new pricing mechanism, shifting from the traditional Brent crude-linked pricing model to one based on the Japan Korea Marker (JKM), which is widely used for LNG deliveries to Northeast Asia. The country will pay a premium of 15 cents per MMBtu above the JKM benchmark, offering an alternative structure to previous

negotiations where suppliers demanded up to 17 per cent of Brent plus fixed charges.

OQ Trading has long been a key LNG supplier to Bangladesh. Its first long-term agreement, signed in 2018, remains in effect through 2029, providing up to 1.5 million tonnes of LNG per year. A second long-term contract, signed in 2023, will run from 2026 to 2035. Under this contract, Bangladesh is set to import 250,000 tonnes of LNG in 2026, 1 million tonnes in both 2027 and 2028 and 1.5 million tonnes annually from

2029 onwards. As of June 2025, Bangladesh has imported 124 LNG cargoes from OQ Trading, totalling around 7.74 million tonnes.

The latest short-term deal is designed to reduce Bangladesh’s dependency on high-priced spot cargoes, which are frequently used to meet surges in demand — especially in summer and during Ramadhan. Spot market offers often come with hefty premiums due to long validity periods and perceived payment risks, with mark-ups sometimes exceeding \$1.50 per MMBtu over JKM.

This strip contract with OQ Trading provides Bangladesh with a fixed premium pricing structure and shields the supplier from market risks associated with fluctuating prices and tender uncertainties. It also offers much-needed breathing room ahead of increased deliveries under future long-term supply deals.

Bangladesh is projected to import around 52 spot cargoes in 2025 — the highest volume for any single year. The agreement with OQ Trading is expected to ease that pressure by securing a portion of supply under predictable pricing terms.

OPINION

Plea for heightened vigilance as electronic fraud is uncovered



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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI.

THE recent arrest of a female tourist in Muscat, found carrying out a complex electronic fraud operation using advanced transmission and communication devices, has sparked strong reaction on social media platforms. According to authorities, the tourist used these devices, which functioned as miniature transmission stations and placed them in a rented car to steal money from citizens and expatriates by coordinating with international gangs outside Oman. These devices would temporarily disrupt local telecommunications networks and send fake text messages bearing fictitious names of local banks and telecommunications companies containing links that appeared to be trustworthy and official, from which they would steal the victim's banking information and money. The Royal Oman Police, through its tireless efforts to raise public awareness of these attempts, posted a video clip on its website, the X platform and in local media outlets. The footage shows the woman's

movements from the moment she entered the country via Muscat International Airport. The footage also included comments from responsible members of the police force who revealed the details of the case and the complex fraudulent operations carried out by the tourist. Footage of the operation revealed that the tourist used advanced equipment to carry out the operation in a manner that demonstrates the precision and high level of professionalism in such operations. The tourist roamed public and side streets, broadcasting fraudulent messages in an attempt to catch her victims. The police statement indicated that she was arrested while she was carrying out electronic fraud operations in cooperation with an organisation specialising in transnational fraud crimes, using complex technical means to broadcast fake messages to surrounding phone numbers. This operation reveals that it is one of the most novel electronic fraud cases the country has witnessed recently. With the aid of these devices, the culprit transformed the rented vehicle into a

These devices would temporarily disrupt local telecommunications networks and send fake text messages bearing fictitious names of local banks and telecommunications companies containing links that appeared to be trustworthy and official, from which they would steal the victim's banking information and money.

mobile electronic broadcasting station that disrupted local networks. This enabled her to create a temporary fake network that broadcast deceptive messages to nearby phones, bearing the names of Omani banks and telecommunications companies, along with fake links aimed at stealing users' banking data through the continuous transmission of fraudulent messages. The Royal Oman Police has requested citizens and residents to be cautious and vigilant in the face of such cybercrimes. The general public represent the first line of defence against such criminal activities. We should also become aware of apps which, combined with the abuse of AI applications, can contribute to the growth of financial fraud. Not all technological processes have positive benefits and advantages in their use. Some even harm individuals in their daily lives, as hackers use them to commit fraud and financial extortion, harming numerous individuals and financial institutions. This is something to be wary of in all cases, especially as cyber fraud cases are increasing in the region year after year.

JAPAN TRADE DEAL BREAKS US TARIFF TEMPLATE

UNA GALANI

Everything is up for grabs. That's the takeaway from the US-Japan trade pact Donald Trump and Shigeru Ishiba revealed on Wednesday. By setting tariffs on US imports from the Asian country at 15%, including autos, the US president is handing Japan's prime minister a decent win but also beating a big retreat on his flagship "sectoral tariffs". It further complicates Washington's regime of wildly diverging levies. With reports of his resignation swirling after a bruising election result for his coalition at the weekend, Ishiba declared that his country, which shipped \$150 billion in Japanese goods to America

Ishiba declared that his country, which shipped \$150 billion in Japanese goods to America last year, had secured the best deal among those that have a trade surplus with the United States.

The surprise is that Japan's deal breaks Trump's tariff template. He pledged there would be separate levies for autos, pharmaceutical goods, steel and semiconductors. Handing the Asian giant a 15% flat rate on auto exports, which comprise nearly 30% of Japan's US shipments, rather than the 25% sectoral rate, suggests nothing about Trump's tariff regime is set in stone besides the 10% baseline duty he has imposed on all of America's global trading partners. The outlook for Japanese carmakers will further brighten if Trump sets equal or lower tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico. Take Toyota Motor. The world's largest carmaker sold 2.3 million cars in the US last year — 23% of its global total — and produced more than half that amount there. But it also made around 800,000 vehicles in Canada and Mexico. Honda Motor and Nissan Motor will find it especially painful if auto tariffs on those two countries remain at 25%. South Korea, another big Asian auto exporter, also will now hope to win an exemption. It's enough to justify a relief rally. An 11% jump in the Topix Autos Index led a broader jump in stocks. Meanwhile, the yield on five-year government bonds rose 9 basis points to 1.11%, the highest since April 1. The Bank of Japan unsurprisingly struck a more sober tone because, in the end, it is still a blow for the struggling \$4 trillion economy: last year, 53% of Japan's exports to the US crossed the Pacific tariff-free, BNP Paribas analyst William Bratton notes. Other sops in the deal look less material and well-designed for Trump to tout to an American public. These include a \$550 billion commitment for Japan to invest in the US. This is nearly four times the value of Japan's exports to America, but SoftBank had already pledged to invest \$100 billion stateside over the next four years. — Reuters

UK wealth manager SJP expanding in Middle East

WEALTH management company St James Place (SJP) is expanding and planning to have at least 55 advisors in Dubai by the end of this year, as the UK wealth giant deepens its ties to the Middle East.

SJP opened its Dubai office back in May 2023 and it has since more than doubled the number of advisors it has there from 20 to 43, according to Daniel George, head of business for SJP Middle East. It is now planning to recruit another dozen wealth managers to its 'partnership' in the region — a group of self-employed advisors who sell SJP's products. "The business is rapidly growing. Today, we've got 43 advisors and partners on the ground; and we're looking to get to 55 by the end of this year", George said. Dubai and Abu Dhabi have been big beneficiaries of an exodus of British millionaires in the past year. George said he has seen an "influx" of SJP clients relocate to the United Arab Emirates over the past six months, as the UK changes tax rates and dismantles Britain's non-domiciled regime. He added that he has also seen an uptick in enquiries from SJP's UK-based advisors about relocating to the Middle East. George said: "I probably get phone calls or meeting invites probably two to three times a week from some of the UK practices that are curious about what it takes to get a licence out here". He said SJP would consider further expansion in the Middle East but for now is concentrating on making Dubai a "real success". Also, Standard Chartered is looking to hire bankers to cover financial sponsors as part of a broader plan to boost income within its corporate and investment bank. The UK lender said in a presentation to analysts that it was set to reorganise the way it covers private equity clients. It will also "invest in talents with the right skill set" as it looks to bolster revenue from financial institutions. The bank is hiring a new global head of financial sponsors who will report to global co-heads of financial institutions coverage Molly Duffy and Jerry Zhang. It will build a team initially comprising around 25



General view of Dubai Downtown, showing the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa. — Reuters



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

bankers, based out of New York with hubs in Dubai and London. Roberto Hoornweg, co-head of StanChart's corporate and investment bank, said that the bank sees "more growth potential" by serving financial sponsors clients as it looks to bolster returns in the unit. "We have added talent that will drive origination and distribution volumes significantly higher", he said at the presentation. StanChart has shaken up the structure of its investment bank, rebranding it last year to a new corporate and investment bank led by global markets head Hoornweg and Sunil Kaushal, who heads its business in Asia. Gaining more work from financial institutions is core to the bank's ambitions to drive income up by between 5 per cent and 7 per cent, as it outlined in the investor update. It wants the proportion of revenue from these

clients to increase from 50 per cent to 60 per cent. In October last year, StanChart announced plans to dump around 3,000 of its smaller clients within its corporate and investment bank. It has ambitions to do more business with financial institutions, which are more likely to provide bumper fees by using more of its services. The bank is around 40 per cent of the way through the process, it said. Kaushal said that these moves had "created capacity to invest in revenue generating roles" within the corporate and investment bank. In the first quarter of 2025, StanChart's corporate and investment bank posted revenue of \$1.7 billion, which was an increase of 7 per cent on the prior year. However, it pointed to "double digit" growth in banking and markets, as trading revenue surged during the period.

BUSINESS

NON-BANK FINANCING SPURS OMAN'S PRIVATE SECTOR GROWTH

**HIBBA AL KINDI**  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

**THE** alternative financing sector is gaining traction in Oman, emerging as a key catalyst for private sector development, according to Olivier Karno, Global Editor-in-Chief at Oxford Business Group.

In a televised interview with CNBC Arabia, Karno emphasised the increasing role of non-bank financial solutions, “In addition to traditional bank loans and credit facilities, the main sources [of funding] are linked to an increase in finance and leasing from the non-banking sector,” he shared.

“This area is essential because it frees up cash and allows companies to reduce the direct cost of obtaining credit and financing.

So, if you're in an industry that needs capital — for example, in mining, where the equipment needed to start operations is expensive — instead of turning to traditional lenders, using finance

According to the analyst, alternative financing not only aligns with Oman's economic transformation, but also represents an emerging sector of finance.



In addition to traditional bank loans and credit facilities, the main sources of funding are linked to an increase in finance and leasing from the non-banking sector.

and leasing becomes a flexible and essential solution.

It requires a lower volume of initial capital.”

Karno noted that these solutions are valuable especially for start-ups and SMES, which often face barriers to accessing traditional financing, “This is critical for start-ups and for small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in line with Oman Vision 2040.

These companies can now access new types and forms of financing.”

According to the analyst, alternative financing not only aligns with Oman's economic transformation, but also represents an emerging sector of finance.

“What's important about this sector is that it not only aligns with the growth recorded in Oman in terms of strategy, industrialisation, renewable energy and technology, but also because it represents a fast-changing, dynamic and emerging area of finance.

Without a doubt, this is essential for the growth of the private sector, and also for overall economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman.”

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T R A V E L

## EFTALQOT: A HIDDEN COASTAL GEM FOR TREKKERS, STARGAZERS, AND NATURE LOVERS

> 20

### CHANGING WORLD

#### Navigating ‘me time’ when I am home alone



**SHADDAD  
AL MUSALMY**  
*The writer is a  
Senior Editor at  
Oman Daily Observer*

**IT HAS** been a while since I last appeared in this column. Don’t blame me, but rather the busy circumstances. However, I am back because I am now completely alone at home with some free time. The question of a husband’s solo time, especially when the family is away, touches on crucial aspects of modern family life, including individual needs, marital dynamics and the division of labour.

Starting earlier this week and for about a month, the woman of my house and the children are on a trip to explore other parts of the world, leaving me to enjoy ‘me’ time at home alone. However, whenever the woman of my house travels, I always have this fear of being home alone, and my mind becomes entirely disorganised because I know it is never easy without her in the house.

Nevertheless, the desire for solo time is a common and valid need, often overlooked in the context of family responsibilities. As a health expert pointed out to me, couples, especially those with children, need to nurture separate units: the couple, the family and each partner as an individual. When any of these areas lacks attention, the others suffer.

Open communication is vital in addressing the need for solo time. The health expert emphasised the importance of expressing what one wants and discussing how to achieve it within the family. This involves understanding the root of the feelings, such as resentment and finding solutions that work for both partners. The husband could benefit from a direct conversation with his wife, expressing his needs and seeking a compromise.

Several strategies can help facilitate solo time for husbands. One approach is to proactively schedule and plan for it. The husband could organise his work schedule to align with his wife’s time off, ensuring he has time for himself. Another strategy is to embrace the opportunity for self-care and personal interests. Many men who are home alone use this time for relaxation, hobbies and personal projects.

The issue of solo time extends beyond the immediate situation. It reflects the broader challenges of balancing individual needs with family responsibilities. The husband in this scenario is not wrong for wanting a break or solo time. The key is to communicate his needs, negotiate with his wife, and find a solution that respects both partners’ needs and the family’s well-being.

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



#### FASHION

Aleksandar Bracer holds a handmade luxury shoe with carbon fibre insoles and heels, decorated with artisan porcelain and gold, in Novi Sad, Serbia. — Reuters



#### FILM

Bollywood actress Mrunal Thakur poses during the promotion of her upcoming Hindi-language film ‘Son of Sardaar 2’ in Mumbai. — AFP



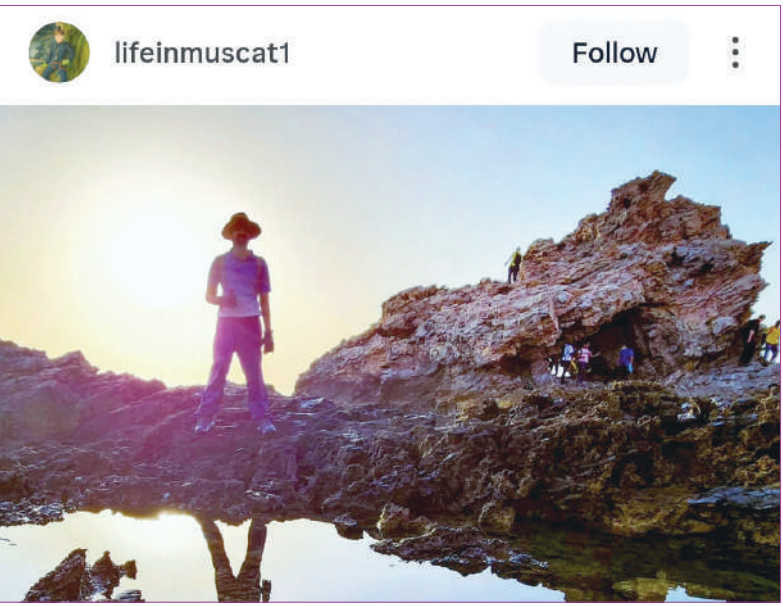
#### LIFESTYLE

A Tesla Optimus robot scoops popcorn and waves at attendees during the opening of the Tesla Diner and Drive-In restaurant and Supercharger on Santa Monica Blvd in the Hollywood neighbourhood Los Angeles. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Italy receives back ancient mosaic stolen during WWII



A TWO-MILLENNIA-OLD mosaic, which was stolen by a member of the Nazi armed forces, has been returned to Italy more than 80 years after the end of World War II. The piece will now be displayed on the site of the ancient city of Pompeii near Naples, which was buried in the year 79 AD during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, the director of the museum site, Gabriel Zuchtriegel, said. “Every returned stolen artefact is like a wound that heals,” Zuchtriegel, a German national, said. The intricately crafted piece depicts a man and a woman. According to the museum, the mosaic most likely originates from the region around the volcano and may have once adorned the floor of a bedroom. It is believed to have been created in the first century BC or AD. According to the Carabinieri Police Force for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, the mosaic probably came into the “wrongful

possession” of the Wehrmacht member during the German occupation. The soldier gifted it to a German. His heirs approached the Italian state to return the mosaic. They said that the Wehrmacht member was an officer, the Carabinieri spokesman said. Documents regarding the theft, the gifting, names, or similar have not yet been found, he said. The mosaic was brought back to Italy in September 2023 through the Italian Consulate General in the south-western German city of Stuttgart. After the armistice between Italy and the Allies in September 1943, the German Wehrmacht occupied large parts of the country. The approximately 20-month occupation period was marked by violence. At the same time, numerous art and cultural objects disappeared from public collections or archaeological sites. — dpa



Those ugly shoes? She’ll make you love them

IN LATE 2018, a seismic shift took place in footwear — an epochal moment that now feels like a lifetime ago in fashion. Daniel Lee’s debut collection for Bottega Veneta broke the mould, introducing shoes that seemed almost revolutionary. Square-toed clunkers — sandals characterised by exaggerated, spatula-like soles that jutted out beneath the foot — and pumps with bulbous, stubby toes made their debut at fashion month. At first glance, they appeared hideous, almost grotesque; their unconventional shapes challenged notions of beauty and tradition. However, within months, these shoes became a culture-shift phenomenon. They appeared on the feet of nearly every celebrity, editor, influencer and luxury insider. Retailers such as Vince Camuto and Shein swiftly produced their own versions — dupes — of the viral Lido sandal, a simple slide with an enormous, blown-up interpretation of Bottega’s signature intrecciato woven leather. The designer behind these provocative shoes is Nina Christen, a Swiss shoe designer whose distinct vision played a crucial role. “It’s funny what you can make people wear if you do it the right way,” she reflected. For over a decade, Christen’s influence has subtly shaped contemporary shoe design, her work sinking into the industry’s subconscious, trickling from luxury houses to streetwear. She has collaborated with Phoebe Philo at Celine, Jonathan Anderson at Loewe, and the Olsen twins at The Row. Last month, Anderson appointed her as the design director of shoes at Christian Dior — an ambitious role and one of the most coveted in fashion today. Yet, Christen continues to pursue her independent vision simultaneously. In 2022, she launched her own brand — Christen — a move born partly from frustration. She explained that her designs for other houses represented her taste, her perspective, “but they were never 100% myself.” Her opportunity arose when she met Paul Dupuy, an entrepreneur who co-founded Zoi, a health-tech start-up focused on longevity. Christen had designed uniforms for Zoi’s staff and clients,



and Dupuy was so impressed he offered to help her create her own label. His familiarity with industry insiders, thanks to his mother’s fashion background and his network, helped turn her idea into reality. Dupuy raised \$5 million in capital and took charge of logistics, including planning a store in Paris scheduled for 2026. Christen already possessed a comprehensive vision: beyond footwear, she dreamed of perfect Japanese denim jeans, a leather jacket, and fine jewellery — her debut piece being a diamond toe ring. Every detail was mapped out — the packaging, branding, logo and market positioning. Her shoes are produced in Italy by the same factories that serve luxury brands, ensuring impeccable craftsmanship. Price points ranging from \$1,100 to \$3,650 reflect her commitment to quality and her desire to compete at the highest level. In late June, Christen’s Paris studio offered an intimate peek into her universe. The raw cement floor was set with more than 30 of her designs, arranged in a carefully curated grid. Among these, styles from Loewe’s spring 2023 runway stood out: cartoonish, fantastical creations — pumps embroidered with deflated white balloons, sandals blooming with hyper-realistic anthuriums, and red rubber pumps resembling

Minnie Mouse. Christen was candid: “You can’t wear this for more than two hours. But Jonathan Anderson was very open to ideas that crossed the line between art and fashion.” She has a profound love for the geometry of shapes. “When I think about toe shapes, it’s all about the square, rectangle, circle, oval,” she said. “What is the degree?” She wore a pair of pure white sandals that left most of her foot exposed, seamlessly bisected by a single strip of leather that ran through the big and second toes — like a strand of floss. The sole was thin, elongated, almost oversized beneath the toes. “It’s about creating things we’re not used to yet,” Christen explained. “When I make something and I don’t know if I like it — that’s often a good sign.” Her work is driven by experimentation — she strives to redefine norms and challenge perceptions of beauty. She finds inspiration in the mundane, the ugly, even orthopaedic shoes — everyday items that, through her lens, become something more intriguing. Her biggest seller after the first year? A grandpa-style slip-on boot lined with goat shearling. “Once you wear them,” she says, “you can’t wear anything else.” Her designs highlight the power of the everyday, transforming the familiar into avant-garde statements. — NYT

FEATURES



EFTALQUT: A HIDDEN COASTAL GEM FOR TREKKERS, STARGAZERS, AND NATURE LOVERS

BY KAUSHALENDRA SINGH  
@patkaushal

**TUCKED AWAY** along the rugged cliffs west of Salalah lies a hidden slice of paradise — Eftalqut Beach, a tranquil haven where cliffs meet the Arabian Sea. Though not marked by flashy signs or crowded by visitors, this beach and its neighbouring viewpoint have become an open secret among nature enthusiasts, trekkers and weekend adventurers in Dhofar Governorate.

Located just under 40 km from Salalah city centre, Eftalqut is a scenic retreat that offers more than just a picnic spot. With its golden sands visible from the cliffs above and a quiet trekking trail winding down to the beach, the site is rapidly gaining popularity among both locals and expatriates visiting Salalah during the khareef season.

“It’s like stepping into a different world,” says Fatma al Raqi,



**MOONRISE AND MAGIC**

While Eftalqut is inviting during the day, it transforms completely after sunset. The moonrise over the horizon casts a silver glow on the waves, creating a picture-perfect moment that feels almost cinematic.

“It’s like watching nature’s version of a symphony,” says Pierre Dumont, a French expatriate and astronomy enthusiast. “The calm of the sea, the open sky, and then suddenly, the moon appears, rising slowly. I bring my telescope here to watch the stars and planets — it’s ideal with minimal light pollution.”

The ‘Viewpoint’ here is especially alluring, where the sea meets the sky. For those looking to elevate their experience — literally — Eftalqut Viewpoint is a must-visit.

A short 4WD drive from the beach up a rugged hill reveals a panoramic view encompassing both the sea and the city of Salalah. The viewpoint is approximately 43 km from the city centre and is also perfect for catching sunrise scenes.

“I come here often just to breathe,” says Latifa al Mahri, a yoga instructor who uses the space for early morning sessions. “It’s peaceful, elevated, and gives you this incredible feeling of being both above and part of the natural world.”



a college student. “You reach the top of the cliff, and suddenly, there’s this breathtaking view of the beach, stretching far below. We came here for the sunrise but ended up staying until moonrise.”

The journey to Eftalqut is an adventure in itself. Starting from Salalah, visitors drive westward towards Raysut, then take Route 47 through Al Mughsail. At approximately the 34 km mark, a small traffic sign indicates the junction. From there, a paved road leads to the edge of the cliff. A short but bumpy 1 km ride on an unpaved track brings you to the main parking area.

“Most of the road is easy, but that final stretch really needs a good vehicle,” laughs Nasser Said, a seasoned off-roader who often visits Eftalqut with his family.

“I’ve seen people park before the cliff and hike the last bit — totally worth it either way,” he adds.

Visitors can look down from the cliff to spot the narrow, well-trodden trail descending to the beach. It’s a manageable trek — about 30 minutes down and the same back up — making it suitable even for beginners.

“I took my kids along, and they loved it,” Nasser continues. “The sand is soft, the waves are gentle and the whole place feels untouched.”



**TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME VISITORS:**

The best time to visit is early morning for sunrise or late evening for moonrise.

**WHAT TO BRING:** Water, snacks, trekking shoes, flashlight if staying after dark.

**EASY TREKKING:** Suitable for families with older children; easy to moderate.

**LEAVE NO TRACE:** Help keep this gem pristine — carry back all rubbish.

Whether you’re seeking solitude, scenic photography, a gentle walk, or a family picnic spot, Eftalqut is a destination that quietly charms every visitor. With each visit, it offers something new — if not in landscape, then in spirit.

“Eftalqut doesn’t need a billboard,” Fatma adds. “The view says it all.”