

OMAN
عمان
DAILY

Observer

ARE WE GOOD PARENTS?

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INBRIEF

WORLD BANK
SLASHES GLOBAL
GROWTH FORECAST

WASHINGTON: The World Bank on Tuesday slashed its global growth forecast for 2025 by 0.4 percentage point to 2.3 per cent, saying that higher tariffs and heightened uncertainty posed a “significant headwind” for nearly all economies.

In its twice-yearly Global Economic Prospects report, the bank lowered its forecasts for nearly 70 per cent of all economies — including the United States, China and Europe, as well as six emerging market regions - from the levels it projected just six months ago before US President Donald Trump took office.

The World Bank is the latest body to cut its growth forecast as a result of Trump’s erratic trade policies, although US officials insist the negative consequences will be offset by a surge in investment and still-to-be approved tax cuts.

Trump has upended global trade with a series of on-again, off-again tariff hikes that have increased the effective US tariff rate from below 3 per cent to the mid-teens — its highest level in almost a century — and triggered retaliation by China and other countries.

The World Bank is the latest body to cut its growth forecast as a result of Trump’s erratic trade policies, although US officials insist the negative consequences will be offset by a surge in investment and still-to-be approved tax cuts. The bank stopped short of forecasting a recession, but said global economic growth this year would be its weakest outside of a recession since 2008. **SEE P15**

PROTESTS BOIL OVER



Members of the California National Guard stand watch outside the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building on Tuesday, following another day of protests in response to federal immigration operations in Los Angeles. **REPORT ON P7**



SHABAB OMAN II TAKES PART
IN ITALIAN MARITIME SHOW

The Royal Navy of Oman’s vessel “Shabab Oman II” participated in the naval parade marking the annual Italian Navy Day celebrations, held under the auspices of the President of the Italian Republic. The Italian Navy organises this annual maritime display, known as “Festa della Marina”, celebrated every year on 10 June. The event features a fleet of modern and historic Italian warships, alongside international participation from friendly nations’ naval vessels, underscoring mutual military cooperation. **SEE ALSO P3**

Oman hits zero poverty as
SDG progress gains pace

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

OMAN HAS ELIMINATED extreme poverty and achieved near-universal access to electricity, safe drinking water, and essential healthcare, marking a major milestone in its pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), according to a new national report.

The SDG Statistical Report — May 2025, issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), confirms that zero per cent of the population lives below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day — a target met well ahead of the 2030 deadline.

Average monthly household income was reported at RO 1,174, with per capita income at RO 234. Meanwhile, maternal mortality fell to 17.1 per 100,000 live births and under-five child deaths to 11 per 1,000, in line with global benchmarks.

In education, Oman maintained a 95.6 per cent primary school completion rate, with literacy among adults reaching 97.9 per cent. However, gender gaps persist in post-basic education, with 74 per cent of females completing compared to 50.4 per cent of males. The report also highlighted growth in clean energy: renewables now account for 4 per cent of final energy consumption, up from zero in 2020, following the launch of the Ibri solar plant.

Public spending on education represented 15 per cent of government expenditure in 2023, while social protection coverage reached 36.9 per cent, supported by the rollout of the new Social Protection Fund.

Oman has also reduced disaster-related deaths to 0.06 per 100,000 and achieved 100 per cent wastewater treatment, reinforcing



Zero per cent of the population lives below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day — a target met well ahead of the 2030 deadline.

its resilience strategy. The report indicates that 72 per cent of SDG indicators now have national data, with continued alignment between Oman’s development policies and the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

Titled, ‘Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals,’ the May 2025 report uses inputs from more than 50 international and regional organisations to assess progress made since 2015 against the global SDG

indicator framework. It finds that the world is on track to meet or is making “moderate” progress on 35 per cent of the 137 SDG targets with available data. It also shows that progress on 47 per cent of the targets is insufficient, and 18 per cent of the targets have regressed from the 2015 baseline. The report “reaffirms the imperative to intensify efforts to reverse these trends” in the five years that remain until the 2030 deadline.

UK and four nations sanction two far-right Israeli ministers

LONDON: Britain and four allies joined forces on Tuesday to sanction two Israeli ministers for “repeated incitements of violence” against Palestinians, upping their condemnation of Israel’s actions around the war in Gaza. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir will be banned from entering the UK and will have any assets in the country frozen, Britain’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

The announcement

was a rare joint action alongside Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway and comes as the Israeli government faces growing international criticism over its conduct of the conflict with Hamas.

The sanction sees the five countries break from Israel’s closest ally, the United States.

Ben Gvir and Smotrich “have incited extremist violence and serious abuses of Palestinian human rights”, the foreign ministers of the five countries said in a joint statement.



Mourners react during the funeral of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in Gaza City on Tuesday. — **Reuters**

“These actions are not acceptable. This is why we have taken action now — to hold those responsible to account,” they added.

Ben Gvir has also called for Gazans to be resettled from the besieged territory.

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy said the pair have used “horrendous extremist language” and that he would “encourage the Israeli government to disavow and condemn that language”.

Meanwhile, Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg

was deported from Israel on Tuesday, the day after the Israeli navy prevented her and a group of fellow pro-Palestinian activists from sailing to Gaza.

Israeli forces seized their small aid ship, which was seeking to break a longstanding naval blockade of Gaza, and the 12-strong crew were brought to Israel.

Four of the group, including Thunberg, agreed to immediate deportation, while the eight others contested the repatriation order. — **SEE ALSO P6**

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



THE MILITARY HAJ MISSION BACK FROM SAUDI ARABIA

MUSCAT: The Military Haj Mission returned home from the Holy Land after performing the pilgrimage, on Tuesday. The mission was received upon arrival at Seeb Air Base by retired Maj Gen Hamad bin Sulaiman al Hatmi and a number of senior officers from the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security agencies.

A number of Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) aircrafts transported the members of the Military Haj Mission. The mission comprised pilgrims and administrators from the SAF and other military and security bodies.

The Military Haj Mission is organised annually on Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Supreme Commander, under the supervision of the Moral Guidance and Military Ceremonies Department at the Office of Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces.

The administrative and health measures related to the mission were taken in coordination with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Oman Haj Mission, the Embassy of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Sultanate of Oman as well as other relevant authorities.

The Military Haj Mission was accompanied by an integrated administrative team comprising administrative, medical, media and technical staff. — ONA

SPF redefines equity with social, economic changes

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

IN line with Oman Vision 2040, which places citizens at the core of development, Social Protection Fund (SPF) is emerging as a pioneering model in building a responsive, inclusive, and transparent welfare system. Far from being a top-down provider of benefits, the Fund engages directly with society to shape its policies and adjust to evolving socio-economic realities.

In this exclusive interview, Oman Observer spoke with Malik bin Salim bin Suleiman al Harthy, Director-General of Entitlements at the SPF, who shed light on the Fund’s mechanisms for identifying benefit priorities and how public participation translates into more equitable and efficient outcomes.

Al Harthy began by emphasising the importance of the Royal Decree No 52/2023, which marked a turning point in Oman’s welfare reform.

“The law reflects a shift toward a holistic model of protection, combining social insurance and cash benefits to offer life-cycle coverage,” he said.

The executive regulations of the law (R/7/2023) clearly outline eligibility conditions and



We are not merely providing assistance — we are building a modern social contract. Justice is not shaped from offices but forged with people, in the field, by listening and adapting.”

MALIK AL HARTHY,
Director-General of Entitlements, Social Protection Fund

entitlements, providing the legal basis for a sustainable and inclusive protection system.

According to Al Harthy, interaction is not limited to feedback collection.

“We use advanced tools — social media, traditional media, in-person meetings, and field visits — to understand public needs. All this data is methodically analysed to inform our policies.”

This participatory approach has already led to tangible results. For instance, the Family Income Support Benefit was introduced for households whose income falls below the legally defined threshold. The application process is streamlined through a digital platform, integrated with national data sources to ensure accurate eligibility assessments.

The impact of this engagement is evident in several newly introduced benefits.

“The Senior Citizens Benefit was developed after careful demographic study and public input,” Al Harthy said, noting that the benefit now supports over 170,000 individuals.

Similarly, the Maternity and Paternity Leave Insurance — a first in Oman and rare in the region — was launched based on international best practices and

national studies.

“It’s an investment in families. Mothers are entitled to 98 days of paid leave, and fathers to 7 days, which strengthens family bonds and promotes gender equality.”

The SPF’s commitment to transparency underpins its public credibility. “We clearly publish the eligibility rules, application procedures, required documents and payment timelines,” said Al Harthy.

Beyond administrative clarity, the Fund ensures consistent public communication through outreach events, media appearances, and feedback forums across all governorates. Civil society representatives also sit on the SPF Board of Directors, ensuring community perspectives are embedded in the decision-making process.

Unlike traditional systems that review policies every few years, the SPF applies continuous impact evaluation.

“We analyse economic indicators, inflation, household structures and labour market shifts to regularly review and adapt benefit schemes,” Al Harthy explained. This agile model prevents resource misallocation and ensures support reaches those who genuinely need it, even as conditions evolve.

وزارة المالية
Ministry of Finance

11 June 2025

Auction Announcement

The Ministry of Finance is pleased to announce the sale of movables, through the website of Safqa Auctions (safqaauctions.om), as per the following details:

Auction	Quantity	Preview Location	Preview Date & Time	Auction Period
Used vehicles	(164) vehicles	Ministry of Finance's warehouse, Ghala Industrial & General Directorate of Finance, Dhofar Governorate	19-17 June 2025 8:00 am - 2:00 pm	Open: 23 June 2025
Used Furniture and Devices	Used Furniture and Devices			Close: 25 June 20245

Interested persons/companies shall comply with the following:

1 A bidder must register and sign up on the website (safqaauctions.om).

2 A bidder shall pay a security deposit of RO 1000 for vehicles, and RO 200 for Furniture and Devices (refundable in case of non-purchase).

3 A bidder shall pay the total value of the movables via the website within five working days after the end of the auction.

4 A 5%-VAT shall be added to the purchase value and 1.45%-auction fees to each movable value.

5 A bidder is required to pick up the movable within five working days after paying the purchase value. In case the movable is not picked up, the Ministry shall not be responsible for any losses or damage that may occur to the movable.

6 If a bidder fails to pay the purchase value or transfer the movable within the specified period, the security deposit shall be confiscated.

7 The mechanical condition of the vehicle, vehicle safety driving on the road, or the possibility of it being licensed by the Royal Oman Police will not be guaranteed in any way, as well as the Ministry is not obligated to guarantee any defects in the movables being sold, and the buyer must inspect the movables to verify their condition.

8 The interested bidders can inspect the movables during the period starting from 17 June 2025 to 19 June 2025 at the Ministry of Finance's warehouse in Ghala Industrial and the General Directorate of Finance, Dhofar Governorate, from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm.

N.B:

The movable is sold as is.

If the participant is not awarded the auction, the insurance amount will be refunded.

The Ministry of Finance reserves the right to delay or cancel the auction without justification.

For more details and information, please visit (safqaauctions.om) or telephone number: (22099009).

For vehicle inspections, please contact the Administrative Affairs Department, Ministry of Finance, during working hours at: (24746131 - 24746112)

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www.mof.gov.om

وزارة المالية-سلطنة عمان

ministry of finance - Oman

'Memory Grid' explores the ideas of memory, value and preservation in a fast-changing world.

Omani pavilion wins award at London Design Biennale

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

Oman's pavilion – titled 'Memory Grid' – won the Best Design Award at the opening of the London Design Biennale 2025 last week. The recognition marks a significant achievement for the sultanate of Oman in its debut participation at the global cultural platform.

The pavilion has been designed by multidisciplinary artist Haitham al Busafi and curated by the Zawraq Collective. Commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the project reflects the ministry's broader efforts to promote artistic and intellectual creativity among Omani youth.

'Memory Grid' explores the ideas of memory, value and preservation in a fast-changing world. Visitors are invited to observe how

Haitham al Busafi with his award

perception shifts with perspective, with meaning transforming depending on how closely or distantly the work is viewed.

Drawing inspiration from Oman's pottery traditions, the installation reimagines ancient clay vessels – once vital for carrying water and connecting communities – as symbols of cultural memory.

The pavilion presents these traditional forms as metaphors for protecting what is valued, both in the past and present.

In a modern context, the installation proposes that data is the new essential resource – requiring safeguarding much like water once did. Through the immersive experience, visitors are encouraged to reflect on how heritage, knowledge and identity are passed through generations.

The project represents how traditional symbols can guide modern questions about preservation. The win at the Biennale highlights Oman's increasing engagement with contemporary art and design on a global stage.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth said the pavilion represents the strategic direction to elevate creative output by young Omanis to international platforms.



Shabab Oman II docked at the Port of Genoa on Tuesday

SHABAB OMAN II DOCKS AT GENOA

ROME: The Royal Navy of Oman’s vessel “Shabab Oman II” participated in the naval parade marking the annual Italian Navy Day celebrations, held under the auspices of the President of the Italian Republic.

The Italian Navy organises this annual maritime display, known as “Festa della Marina”, celebrated every year on 10 June. The event features a fleet of modern and historic Italian warships, alongside international participation from friendly nations’ naval vessels, underscoring mutual military cooperation.

Shabab Oman II docked at the port of Genoa, Italy, as part of its 7th International Voyage “Glories of the Seas” to the European Continent. During this voyage, the vessel will drop anchor at several destinations and ports. — ONA



More projects to diversify tourism options in Oman

THE Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is implementing an ambitious plan in 2025 to diversify tourism sectors and enhance recreational offerings through a series of high-quality projects. These initiatives, coordinated with the governors’ offices across Oman’s various governorates, fall under the broader framework of the comprehensive tourism development plan. They aim to strengthen tourism infrastructure and expand the range of experiences available to visitors.

The ministry highlighted some of the most prominent projects, including the Recreational Slides Project, Al Ashkhara Gateway Project, Recreational Fishing Project, Mountain Slopes Project, Aromatic Tourism Experiences Project, Falaj Experience Activation Project, Adventure Tourism Initiatives and the Great Oman Journey Experience Project.

Fakhriya al Ghassani, Director of the Product and Tourism Experiences Development Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, stated that these projects align with the objectives outlined in the comprehensive tourism development plan. They seek to enhance the quality of tourism offerings, boost competitiveness and provide unique opportunities and experiences across various destinations, she explained.

She added that these efforts support increasing the contribution of non-oil sectors to the GDP, attract local and foreign investments to Oman and offer exceptional experiences for domestic, regional and international tourists while appealing to diverse demographic groups.

She affirmed that the ministry continues to promote cultural tourism as a cornerstone for diversifying the tourism product and reinforcing national identity. The ministry launched the “Omani Cuisine and Culinary Arts Tourism” programme, which includes multiple initiatives such as documenting Omani cuisine and developing dedicated culinary tourism routes. These routes feature visits to traditional kitchens and restaurants serving authentic recipes, elevating Omani



Visitors set to enjoy the Recreational Slides project, Al Ashkhara Gateway project, Recreational Fishing project, Mountain Slopes project, Aromatic Tourism Experiences project, Falaj Experience Activation project, Adventure Tourism Initiatives and the Great Oman Journey Experience project

gastronomy as a key element of the tourism experience.

Al Ghassani lauded the pivotal role of Omani museums in showcasing history, culture and living heritage. The ministry, she said, is enhancing museum content through interactive digital displays, allowing visitors to engage deeply with Oman’s rich civilisation. Museums serve as both educational and tourism institutions, blending physical exhibits with modern technology to present historical

narratives in an engaging manner.

She noted that statistics indicate significant growth in heritage site visitors. For instance, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate — home to landmarks such as Nizwa Fort and Jibreen Castle — welcomed over 415,000 visitors in 2024, marking a 32% increase compared to the previous year. This surge, she explained, is attributed to the development of heritage neighbourhoods, improved services and diversified tourism experiences. — ONA



“Omani Cuisine and Culinary Arts Tourism” programme includes multiple initiatives such as documenting Omani cuisine and developing dedicated culinary tourism routes. These routes feature visits to traditional kitchens and restaurants serving authentic recipes, elevating Omani gastronomy as a key element of the tourism experience.

Cool respite: Rains draw visitors to Al Rustaq and Al Awabi

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

For the first time, Wadi Bani Ghafir in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq witnessed such severe congestion as rains let the wadis flow, attracting visitors.

The wilayats of Al Rustaq and Al Awabi witnessed heavy traffic due to the influx of visitors to enjoy the rains for the fourth consecutive day.

The rains turned out to be the major attraction.

The temperature had also cooled down but now we are back with the summer temperatures except for the coast of the Arabian Sea, said the Oman Met Office weather forecaster.

This is because along the Arabian Sea coasts winds will be southerly to southwesterly moderate to fresh and along the Oman Sea coasts it will be easterly to northeasterly light to moderate becoming variable light at night, while over rest of the governorates it will be southerly to southeasterly light to moderate occasionally fresh over deserts and



open areas.

The weather experts explained, “The coasts of the Arabian Sea will experience temperatures in the mid-thirties, while the areas across the coast of the Sea of Oman will have temperatures ranging in the mid-forties. The plain regions, desert areas, Al Wusta, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi governorates will experience mid-forties temperatures.”

The weather forecast further states that clear skies are expected over most of the governorates with chance of convective cloud formation and isolated rain over parts of Al Hajar Mountains during afternoon with a chance of dust rising over desert and open areas.

Al Hajar Mountains will continue to develop local cloud formations but rains are not expected at least for the next two days.

There are also chances of low clouds or fog patches at late night and early morning over coastal areas of Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Wusta governorates.

SPOTLIGHT

ARE WE
GOOD
PARENTS?

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, parents admit to have failed to understand their kids which would result in deeper and long lasting repercussions in their future.

Experts say 'one size fits all' is a wrong notion and shouldn't be applied in parenting as each child is unique with strengths and drawbacks and so do IQ level.

The worst thing that a parent can do to his or her child is to compare him/her with their peers and pressurise them resulting in poorer academic performance and weak personality.

Dr Kawthar Hameed Abdullah, an educational psychologist, who counsels students with psychological issues, says that many kids today are struggling in ways that aren't always easy to see.

"I meet with many children who try their best but still fall behind, especially if they have trouble with focus, reading, or remembering instructions. They might feel embarrassed or think something is wrong with them. This can chip away at their confidence, even if they're smart and capable," Dr Kawthar, who is also the co-owner of Creative Centre for Rehabilitation and Creative Therapy, said.

According to her, many kids feel anxious or overwhelmed. Some worry about being liked or accepted. Others carry stress from things happening at home — like parents fighting, being apart, or financial problems. Social media adds another layer. It makes kids compare themselves to others all the time. Even young children are picking up on this need to be perfect, to look a certain way, or to act happy all the time.

Alone in a Crowd Syndrome

And then there are kids who feel alone in a crowd. They go through their day not really feeling seen or understood. Sometimes they act out, and sometimes they just shut down. It's not always obvious they're struggling. But if you look closely, the signs are there — in how they talk, how they play, or how they react to small things.

KIDS FROM ABUSIVE FAMILIES

"Children from abusive or unsafe homes face a different kind of struggle — one that goes deeper than school pressure or social anxiety." Her experiences suggest that when a child grows up in an environment where they don't feel safe, whether it's because of physical harm, emotional neglect, or constant yelling, it changes how they see the world and themselves. They might become hyper-aware, always on edge, waiting for the next bad thing to happen, or they might shut down completely, not because they don't care, but because it's the only way they know how to cope.

These children often carry their pain silently. They may seem angry, withdrawn, overly obedient, or even too mature for their age. Sometimes they avoid talking about home at all. Their trust in adults is often broken, which makes it hard for them to open up or accept help, even when it's offered with kindness.

It is time to identify such children and take good care of them. These children need more than just rules or lessons — they need adults who are patient, consistent and truly willing to listen. For these children, even one safe relationship with a caring adult can make a difference.



*The worst thing
that a parent can do to his
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personality.*

Landmark design contest launches

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

MUSCAT Municipality officially launched the Muscat Municipality Design Competition 2025 with a site visit recently conducted by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality. The visit marked the formal start of this landmark initiative, which is now underway and drawing global attention as leading architecture studios from around the world prepare to submit their visionary concepts.

The selected site, strategically located adjacent to the Mall of Oman and spanning over 8,000 square metres, will serve as the future home of a multi-functional civic building that reflects Muscat’s modern aspirations while honouring its rich architectural heritage. Set between the Sea of Oman and the

Hajar Mountains, the site is a unique canvas that speaks to the evolving narrative of urban Oman.

“Muscat is expecting a growing number of tourists in the near future, and the city is doing everything to welcome them in a sustainable way and to the highest standards of quality and beauty,” said Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality. “This competition represents a commitment to shaping how Muscat is experienced, through architecture that enhances our urban landscape, honours our heritage and reflects the values we hold as a society. We aim to create spaces that foster



HMED BIN MOHAMMED AL HUMAIDI
Chairman of Muscat Municipality



The selected site, strategically located adjacent to the Mall of Oman and spanning over 8,000 square metres, will serve as the future home of a multi-functional civic building that reflects Muscat’s modern aspirations while honouring its rich architectural heritage.

civic pride, set new benchmarks in sustainability and contribute meaningfully to Muscat’s future as a global destination.”

The international competition

invites top-tier architecture studios to design a sustainable, iconic structure rooted in Omani identity and built for modern civic use. Submissions are currently being

prepared, and five shortlisted studios will soon be selected to present their proposals to a distinguished jury comprising local and international experts. The final jury presentations will take place in early July, where the jury will deliberate and narrow the selection down to three finalists. The winning design will be officially announced thereafter.

The Muscat Municipality Design Competition 2025 represents more than a building; it is a public initiative centred on transparency, design excellence and long-term urban impact.

It also reinforces Muscat’s commitment to embedding sustainability, accessibility and cultural authenticity at the heart of its development strategy.

This site visit marks both a symbolic and operational milestone in a competition that will shape the architectural identity of Oman’s capital for generations to come. For updates, visit [www.mmcd.com](#)



TENDER

Manah Power Company (MPC) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Last Date for Proposal Submission
MPC/2025/01	Standard Overhaul and Repair of Two (2) ATLAS COPCO SCF-6 AA Compressors and Standard Overhaul of GT-2A and GT-2B Fuel Oil Pumps	22 June 2025	29 June 2025

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the “Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee” and the envelope shall be marked with the tender name & number. No indication or reference about the bidder is permitted on the envelope.
- Three separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these three envelopes must be marked with the tenderer name and number as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Company Credentials
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person’s name and the company details.

Revenues of 3-5 star hotels tops RO 109m

MUSCAT: Revenues from (3-5) star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman saw a 17.3-per cent increase by the end of April 2025, reaching RO 109,213,000, compared to RO 93,094,000 during the same period in 2024, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The statistics indicate that this growth is attributed to an 8.6-per cent rise in the total number of hotel guests, recording 831,751 guests by the end of April 2025, compared to 766,153 guests in the corresponding period in 2024. Additionally, the occupancy rate increased from 53.4 per cent by the end of April 2024 compared to 61.1 per cent by the end of



This growth is attributed to an 8.6-per cent rise in the total number of hotel guests

April 2025, marking a 14.4 per cent growth.

The number of guests from Oceania surged by 57.8 per cent, totalling 18,124

visitors, followed by Africa with a 57.6-per cent increase, reaching 5,993 guests. European guests rose by 19.9 per cent, totalling 314,535 visitors.

Meanwhile, guests from the Americas increased by 19.1 per cent, reaching 28,843 visitors, while GCC nationals saw a 12.6-per cent increase, totalling 53,642 guests. Asian nationalities recorded a 5.4-per cent rise, with 114,426 visitors.

Conversely, the statistics revealed a 0.7-per cent decline in Omani guests, totalling 238,895 visitors by the end of April 2025. Additionally, guests from other Arab nationalities decreased by 2.3 per cent, recording 32,072 visitors.



Ministry of Health

Announcement

The Ministry of Health (Al Buraimi Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Bidding Document	Last Date for Submission of Tenders	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non Refundable)
2139/ 2025	Supply and Install Portable Video Laryngoscope at Buraimi Hospital	Before 10:00 PM On 22/07/2025	Before 10AM On 27/07/2025	Specialized companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	10 R.O Small & Medium Enterprises 25 R.O Local Companies 25 R.O International Companies

Please note the following:

- Companies wishing to participate in the Tender can purchase the tender documents electronically through the website ([etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#)), provided that they are registered in the system.
- Companies must submit their bids electronically via the above-mentioned website, provided that a **Bid Commitment Declaration**, and bids received without the required Declaration will not be considered.
- The concerned entity is not obligated to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.
- For inquiries related to the above tender, please contact through the website of the Esnad system for electronic tendering: ([etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#))



Sultanate of Oman

The Supreme Judicial Council

Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judiciary Council announces its desire to Submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
12/2025	Renting a building for the Notary Public in Al Awabi	01/07/2025	06/07/2025	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-

The specifications shall be as follows:

- The building's location must be clearly visible, easily accessible, and suitable for security purposes, in an open area, and the building must pass security approvals.
- It is preferable that the building be existing and no more than five years old.
- It must have sufficient parking space for employees and a suitable outdoor area for customer parking.
- The building owner must be fully prepared and agree to make the required changes and additions (whether structural or technical) to the building for the benefit of the work, in accordance with the Council's request.
- The original plans and drawings of the building (PDF + AutoCAD version) must be attached, along with all warranties for building materials, equipment, and appliances, in addition to the Civil Defense certificate.
- Bids must be submitted by the specified date.
- Both parties are committed to implementing the provisions and rules contained in Royal Decree No. 89/6, as amended, regulating the relationship between owners and tenants of residential, commercial, and industrial premises and registering their lease contracts, upon signing the final agreement.
- Establishing a base for the flagpole and a base for installing the department's name.
- All modifications mentioned in this agreement shall be initiated within four months from the date the second party receives all specifications for the modifications from the first party. The original contract shall enter into force after the building is received with all the modifications and requirements stated in this appendix.
- Making all required modifications to the facilities and providing the annexes based on the recommendations and requirements of the security authorities of the Royal Oman Police.

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website:
([https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#))

Bidders shall submit their bids electronically via the aforementioned website. An electronic bank guarantee certified by one of the banks operating in the country shall be delivered at a rate of (1%) of the bid value with each bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of bids and addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in The Supreme Judiciary Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system ([https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#)).
- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: [etenderhd@gstb.gov.om](#)

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Visitors look at a K2 tank at the Hyundai Rotem stall, west of Seoul. — AFP

S KOREA IN ‘FINAL STAGES’ TO SIGN DEAL WITH POLAND

SEOUL: South Korea is in the “final stages” of negotiations to potentially sign a major deal to supply K2 tanks to Poland, according to South Korea’s Defense Acquisition Programme Administration on Tuesday. The negotiations for the potential upcoming deal are “in the final stages, with both governments and companies working to expedite its conclusion”, an official from South Korea’s Defense Acquisition Programme Administration said.

While the agency did not disclose the amount, it said if signed, the deal would be the “largest ever based on a single weapon system”. South Korea’s Yonhap news agency reported that the potential deal is worth around \$6 billion, with the country’s Hyundai Rotem set to manufacture 117 tanks and Poland’s state-owned Polish Armaments Group producing 63 locally.

Yonhap reported that the signing ceremony is scheduled to take place in late June in Poland, but the Defense Acquisition Programme Administration said the “signing schedule for the second contract has not yet been finalised”. “This contract includes provisions such as local production and technology transfer, which have required a significant negotiation period,” it said in a statement. — AFP

ISRAELI STRIKES PERSIST ON HODEIDAH PORT



A bridge crane damaged by Israeli air strikes in the Red Sea port of Hodeidah, Yemen. — Reuters

DUBAI: Israel stepped up pressure on Yemen, deploying its navy to hit targets in the Red Sea port of Hodeidah and threatening with a naval and air blockade if attacks on Israel persist. Yemeni Al Masirah TV said that Israel carried out two strikes on the docks of Al Hodeidah port.

The Israeli military on Monday urged the evacuation of the ports of Ras Isa, Hodeidah and Salif. An Israeli military official said that the operation was a unique long-range strike conducted from hundreds of kilometers away and that the navy had been preparing for it for an extended period of time.

British maritime security firm Ambrey said there was no reported damage to merchant vessels in the port following the Israeli strikes. Ambrey also advised vessels to minimize crew movements on deck and bridge manning to a minimum while operating in the vicinity. — Reuters

LAWMAKERS DEFECTED

Greek electoral court expels far-right MPs



Greece’s electoral court threw out of parliament the leader and two lawmakers of a small far-right party under investigation for vote fraud. Spartans leader Vasilis Stigkas and two more MPs were expelled after the court accepted voter complaints that the real leader of the party was Ilias Kasidiaris, the jailed former spokesman of neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn. This leaves 297 MPs instead of 300 for the first time in modern history. — AFP

HIGH RISK OF FAMINE SOUTH OF KHARTOUM, WARNS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

GENEVA: Areas south of Khartoum, war-ravaged Sudan’s capital, are at high risk of famine, the UN’s World Food Programme warned on Tuesday, appealing for funds to plug a huge food aid shortfall. Laurent Bukera, WFP’s Sudan representative and country director, said the agency had found “severe” levels of hunger in Jabal Awliya, a town around 40 kilometres south of Khartoum.

Bukera was speaking after returning from Khartoum State,

where WFP opened a new office in Omdurman, a part of greater Khartoum. “The needs are immense,” he told a press briefing in Geneva, speaking from Port Sudan. “We saw widespread destruction, limited access to water, healthcare and electricity, and a cholera outbreak. In parts of the city, life is returning — but many neighbourhoods remain abandoned, like a ghost city”.

Tens of thousands of people have died and 13 million have

been displaced, including four million abroad, triggering what the UN has called the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. “WFP is deeply concerned, and meeting basic needs — especially food — is critical and urgent,” said Bukera. “Several areas in the south of the city are at high risk of famine,” Bukera said.

The WFP now has access to the area and and said it was doing everything to bring the local population back from the brink of famine. — AFP

UN experts accuse Israel of ‘extermination’ in Gaza

AN independent United Nations commission said on Tuesday Israeli attacks on schools, religious and cultural sites in Gaza amount to war crimes and the crime against humanity of seeking to exterminate Palestinians. “Israel has obliterated Gaza’s education system and destroyed over half of all religious and cultural sites in the Gaza Strip,” the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory said in a report.

It accused Israeli forces of committing “war crimes, including directing attacks against civilians and wilful killing, in their attacks on educational facilities that caused civilian casualties. “In killing civilians sheltering in schools and religious sites, Israeli security forces committed the crime against humanity of extermination,” the report said. It noted: “While the destruction of cultural property, including educational facilities, was not in itself a genocidal act, evidence of such conduct may nevertheless infer genocidal intent to destroy a protected group.”

Commission chair Navi Pillay said in a statement accompanying the report: “We are seeing more and more indications that Israel is carrying out a concerted campaign to obliterate Palestinian life in Gaza.” “Children in Gaza have lost their childhood,” the senior South African judge said. “They are forced to worry about survival amid attacks, uncertainty, starvation and subhuman living conditions.” The three-member commission said



Palestinians rush to collect aid supplies, in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

Israel has obliterated Gaza’s education system and destroyed over half of all religious and cultural sites in the Gaza Strip. In killing civilians sheltering in schools and religious sites, Israeli security forces committed the crime against humanity of extermination

Israeli attacks “targeted religious sites that served as places of refuge, killing hundreds of people, including women and children”.

The commission was set up by the UN to investigate violations of humanitarian and human rights law in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

In May, UN humanitarian relief chief Tom Fletcher urged the countries of the UN Security Council to take action “to prevent genocide” in Gaza. Israel has denied committing genocide.

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs demanded that Israel lift its aid blockade on Gaza, where the UN says the entire population of more than two million people is at risk of famine.

“For those killed and those whose voices are silenced: what more evidence do you need now?”

Fletcher said on May 14. “Will you act — decisively — to prevent genocide and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law?”

The UN commission’s report paid special attention to Gaza but also focused on Israeli attacks on civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories as a whole, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel itself. It said Israel had “done little” to prevent or prosecute Jewish settlers in the West Bank who “intentionally targeted educational facilities and students to terrorise (Palestinian) communities and force them to leave their homes”.

The report said Israeli authorities had intimidated and, in some cases, detained Israeli and Palestinian teachers and students who “expressed concern or solidarity with the civilian population in Gaza”. — AFP



PHILIPPINE VOTES ON VP CASE

MANILA: The Philippine Senate voted on Tuesday to send the impeachment case against Vice-President Sara Duterte back to the House of Representatives, a decision one senator called a “functional dismissal”.

Tuesday’s 18-5 decision came just hours after senators had taken their oaths as jurors and followed days of wrangling that had raised fears the trial process might be derailed. Senator Ronald dela Rosa, former national police chief and enforcer of ex-president Rodrigo Duterte’s drug war, on Tuesday introduced a motion to dismiss the impeachment case against the former leader’s daughter. — AFP

GRINDING CONFLICT

Myanmar guerrillas claim downing of jet



Myanmar anti-coup guerrillas claimed to shoot down a junta jet, declaring a rare victory over the air force which has kept them at bay in a grinding civil war. The military denied their claim, saying the plane crashed near the village of Min Taing Pin around midday because of “sudden engine failure” while on a “practice flight”. Images showed opposition fighters travelling towards a flaming wreck in an area littered with metal debris. — AFP

PLUMES OF SMOKE

Indian coastguard battles blaze on ship



India’s coastguard said it was battling to stop a fierce blaze that has engulfed a Singapore-flagged container ship listing off the southern coast that broke out a day earlier. Indian Coast Guard said on Tuesday that “fires and explosions persist” on the vessel, which was tilting at around “10-15 degrees”. They issued photographs that showed flames leaping from the stacked containers, with the ship surrounded by thick plumes of billowing black smoke. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A Ukrainian prisoner of war (POWs) looks on as he stands with others after a swap. — Reuters

RUSSIA, UKRAINE COMPLETE SECOND ROUND POWs SWAP

KYIV: Russia and Ukraine said on Tuesday they had exchanged captured soldiers, the second stage of an agreement struck at peace talks last week for each side to free more than 1,000 prisoners. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday’s exchange saw “the return of our injured and severely wounded warriors from Russian captivity.” Neither side said how many soldiers had been freed in the swap — the second in as many days following another exchange on Monday.

The two sides had agreed in Istanbul last week to release all wounded soldiers and all under the age of 25. Russia’s defence ministry said: “In accordance with the Russian-Ukrainian agreements reached on June 2 in Istanbul, the second group of Russian servicemen was returned.” Zelensky said further exchanges would follow. “The exchanges are to continue. We are doing everything we can to find and return every single person who is in captivity.” The agreement had appeared in jeopardy over the weekend, with both sides trading accusations of attempting to thwart the exchange. — AFP

POLICE REPORT 16 BOMB ATTACKS



Southwest Colombia was rocked by a string of explosions and gun attacks that left at least three people dead Tuesday, police said, in what appeared to be a coordinated attack designed to sow terror. The attacks hit Cali — the country’s third largest city — and several nearby towns, targeting police stations and other municipal buildings, the head of police Carlos Fernando Triana told local radio station La FM. A journalist witnessed the tangled wreckage of a car that had exploded next to a scorched and badly damaged municipal building. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attacks, but guerrillas who broke away from the now once-powerful FARC militia are known to operate in the area. — AFP

COLOMBIA PRESIDENT HINTS AT CONSPIRACY AFTER CANDIDATE SHOT

BOGOTA: Colombia’s leftist leader claimed on Monday that a gravely injured presidential candidate’s security detail was “strangely reduced” before he was shot, stoking suggestions of an elaborate plot. Conservative senator Miguel Uribe, 39, was shot twice in the head at close range by a 15-year-old alleged hitman while campaigning on Saturday in Bogota.

The brazen attack has stunned Colombians and prompted febrile speculation about who was

responsible. Authorities allege the suspect was a hired gun, but admit they still have few clues about who hired him or their motive. The Glock pistol he is alleged to have used was purchased legally in the US state of Arizona in 2020, according to police chief Carlos Triana.

With Uribe fighting for his life in the hospital, Petro did little on Monday to lower the political temperature. The president took to social media to accuse some opponents of politicizing the

tragedy.

He also claimed that the number of bodyguards assigned to Uribe had been “strangely reduced” from seven to three on the day of the attack, while calling for a full investigation.

Petro said he himself was the subject of a bounty taken up by “dark forces” and neo-nazis, and was the target of an “extraction” plot. Petro’s opponents have accused the pugilistic left-wing leader of creating fertile ground for political violence. — AFP

Marines arrive in LA as more protests spread

HUNDREDS of US Marines arrived in Los Angeles overnight and more were expected on Tuesday under orders from President Donald Trump, who has also activated 4,000 National Guard troops to quell protests despite objections from California Governor Gavin Newsom and other local leaders. The city has seen days of public outrage since the Trump administration launched a series of immigration raids on Friday, though local officials said the demonstrations on Monday were largely peaceful.

About half of the roughly 700 Marines that Trump ordered to Los Angeles arrived on Monday night, and the remaining troops will enter the city on Tuesday, a US official said. The US military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass told KABC that more than 100 people had been arrested on Monday but that the majority of protesters were non-violent.

The Marines will protect federal property and personnel alongside Guard troops, US Northern Command said in a statement announcing the move. There were approximately 1,700 Guard troops in greater Los Angeles as of Monday, with more on the way.

Trump has justified his decision to deploy active military troops to Los Angeles by describing the protests as a violent occupation, a characterisation that Newsom and Bass have said is grossly exaggerated. Newsom accused Trump of sending troops to deliberately inflame the situation and said the president’s actions made it more difficult for local law enforcement to respond to the demonstrations.

In a social media post on Tuesday morning, Trump said Los Angeles would be “burning to the ground right now” if he had not deployed troops to the city. Since protests broke out on Friday they have been largely peaceful, although there have been isolated clashes, with some demonstrators throwing rocks and other objects at officers, blocking an interstate highway and setting



Members of the National Guard stand watch outside the Edward R Roybal Federal Building. — AFP

several cars ablaze. Several businesses were looted, including an Apple store and a CVS pharmacy.

Police have responded by firing projectiles such as pepper balls, as well as flash-bang grenades and tear gas. Police said they had arrested 21 people on Sunday on charges including attempted murder with a Molotov cocktail and assaulting an officer, and officials said they expected more arrests after reviewing video. In a statement on Monday, Los Angeles Police Chief Jim McDonnell said the department had not been notified that any Marines were travelling to the city and that their arrival “presents a significant logistical and operational challenge.”

Trump’s Marine deployment escalated his confrontation with Newsom, who filed a lawsuit on Monday asserting that Trump’s activation of Guard troops without the governor’s consent was illegal. The Guard deployment was the first time in decades that a president did so without a request from a sitting governor.

The use of active military to respond to civil disturbances is extremely rare. “This isn’t about public safety,” Newsom wrote on X on Monday. “It’s about stroking a dangerous President’s ego.”

The top Democrat on the Senate Armed

Services Committee, Senator Jack Reed, said he was “gravely troubled” by Trump’s deployment of active-duty Marines. “Since our nation’s founding, the American people have been perfectly clear: we do not want the military conducting law enforcement on US soil,” he said.

US Marines are trained for conflicts around the world and are also used for rapid deployments in case of emergencies, such as threats to US embassies. In addition to combat training, which includes weapons training, some units also learn riot and crowd control techniques.

The raids are part of Trump’s sweeping immigration crackdown, which Democrats and immigrant advocates have said are indiscriminately breaking up families. US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem pledged on Monday to carry out more operations to round up suspected immigration violators. Trump officials have branded the protests as lawless and blamed state and local Democrats for protecting undocumented immigrants in sanctuary cities. Hundreds of demonstrators gathered on Monday outside a federal detention center in downtown Los Angeles where immigrants have been held, chanting “free them all” and waving Mexican and Central American flags. — Reuters

Austria declares national mourning after school shooting

VIENNA: Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker on Tuesday declared three days of national mourning after a school shooting in the southeastern city of Graz reportedly by a former student left nine people dead and several seriously injured.

“During three days of national mourning, all of Austria” will remember the victims, Stocker told a press conference in Graz. “This is a dark day,” he said, standing alongside Interior Minister Gerhard Karner, adding that the Alpine country had seen “an act of unimaginable violence”.

An attack on a school in southeastern Austria by a former student has left nine people dead, authorities said, in a rare case of deadly gun violence in the Alpine country.

Heavily armed police, a helicopter and paramedics descended upon the school in Graz, where 10 people

including the alleged lone shooter were killed, regional police said.

Six of the victims were female and three male, authorities later confirmed without specifying their ages. Twelve people suffered severe injuries. Police said the situation was “secure” and support was being provided to witnesses and those affected.

The suspect acted alone and took his own life in the school toilet, police said, adding his motive remained unknown. According to the police, the alleged perpetrator is a 21-year-old Austrian from the wider Graz region. The perpetrator used two weapons he had owned legally to carry out the attack.

The suspected shooter was a former student at the school, but had not finished his studies, Interior Minister Gerhard Karner told reporters. “It’s a disaster, simply terrible. After all, it’s about children,” Hasan Darsel, a



Police officers stand as children are evacuated from the school, in Graz. — Reuters

restaurant owner in the area, told the newspaper Kronen Zeitung.

The European Union’s top diplomat Kaja Kallas said she was “deeply shocked” when she heard about the shooting. “Every child

should feel safe at school and be able to learn free from fear and violence,” Kallas posted on X. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said “our thoughts are with our Austrian friends and neighbours

and we mourn with them” after the school shooting he called “horrific”. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban offered his “deepest condolences to Chancellor @CStocker and the people of Austria” via social media. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said “the news from Graz touches my heart” while Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed her sympathies to the families of the victims following the “tragic news”.

Attacks in public are rare in Austria, which is home to almost 9.2 million people and ranks among the 10 safest countries in the world, according to the Global Peace Index. School shootings are also much more uncommon in Europe than in the United States but in recent years Europe has been shaken by attacks at schools and universities, that were not connected to terrorism.

— AFP

OPINION

The art of integration: honouring the lull after learning



HYESHA BARRETT

The author is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat

I've just come through an intense couple of weeks of deep learning which has been soul-shifting, expansive and exhausting. The kind of training that not only informs but transforms. Now, in its wake, I find myself in a strange stillness. One part of me wants to keep going. She's inspired, restless and eager to translate insight into action. However, another part equally as valid, more quieter and more tender, just wants to lie down. To breathe. To let everything settle. In the past, I might have interpreted this lull as a loss of momentum or motivation. A sign that I had somehow slipped out of alignment. Nonetheless, I am beginning to understand it differently now. This is integration. We often mistake post-learning fatigue for a lack of discipline, when it is often the body and mind asking for space and time to absorb. Just as the body does not grow stronger during a workout, but in the

recovery afterward — equally does the brain need rest and recovery to consolidate what it has just taken in. It is not just poetic, it is biological. Intense learning opens new neural pathways; and the brain, in its brilliance does not complete the process during the input phase. It completes it afterwards, during the times of quiet and ease, when we are day-dreaming, when we stop trying so hard to do something with what we have learned. Neuroscience calls this “offline processing” which is the quiet, essential work the brain does when we step away. During sleep, reflection and stillness, the brain weaves together the fragments of our experiences and lays down the foundation of true understanding. So, when you find yourself in a state as I currently am in, if you feel a dip in energy after a big leap, you are not regressing — you are recalibrating. Your system is catching up to the shift. No doubt, this can feel disorientating, especially in a culture that

If you feel the ache of stillness after the rush of learning, let it be. You don't need to chase the next thing just yet. Allow what you have learned to settle inside you.

worships output. We are trained to believe that values live in the doing. Thus, when we pause, we worry we are falling behind. However, real transformation is rarely loud or visible. It happens in the quiet, internal spaces where no one is watching. Without integration, we are just collecting — certificates, insights, techniques. However, collection without digestion leads to spiritual indigestion. Too much input with too little reflection can create a kind of cognitive inflammation: brain fog, irritability, disorientation, even self-doubt. It is similar to feeding a plant without allowing the roots to absorb the nutrients. Integration is not inactivity — it is the silent stitching together of all we have gathered. So, if you feel the ache of stillness after the rush of learning, let it be. You don't need to chase the next thing just yet. Allow what you have learned to settle inside you. Let it become part of who you are — without forcing it to mean anything too soon.

EDITORS DECRY HUNGARY BILL TARGETING MEDIA

ANDRAS ROSTOVANYI

The Hungarian government's decision to delay a vote on a controversial bill which penalises “foreign-funded” media and NGOs does not mean that the danger to freedom of the press is over, top editors warn. The government is still committed to a “campaign to shut down, destroy or discredit certain media outlets, NGOs or people”, Peter Uj, editor-in-chief of news site 444, said. Critics say the bill, which they compare to Russia's foreign agent legislation, is the latest attempt by nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban to tighten his control over the central European country of 9.5 million people since his return to power in 2010. Tens of thousands have protested against the bill in Budapest, with another rally to take place on Tuesday. The European Commission has also called on Hungary to withdraw the draft, while representatives of more than 80 media outlets from 22 countries — including Britain's The Guardian and France's Liberation — have slammed it. The bill was introduced last month and a vote was scheduled for this week, but the ruling coalition last week put it off, saying that debate would continue in the autumn and that it wanted to review “substantive comments received” from “serious organisations” other than those protesting. The legislation would blacklist organisations that “threaten the sovereignty of Hungary by using foreign funding to influence public life”. Any kind of support from non-Hungarian citizens, EU funds, or even advertising revenues from companies based abroad constitutes foreign funding, according to commonly accepted legal interpretations. Blacklisted groups would need permission to receive foreign funds. The legal changes could affect any independent Hungarian media outlets, with 444, Internet TV Partizan and news site Telex explicitly targeted. Partizan editor-in-chief Marton Gulyas, 39, described the new bill as “devious”. The online channel, which was founded in 2018 and has a staff of 70, was the top beneficiary last year of the income tax contribution scheme, receiving more than one million euros (\$1.1 million) from over 35,000 supporters. Gulyas rejected the notion that Partizan is “foreign-funded”, stressing that the channel had only applied for EU-based grants in the past two years. Telex editor-in-chief Tamas Nemet, 44, said that advertising and reader support make up 92 per cent of the outlet's revenue. Orban says the law is needed to fight the alleged spread of foreign interference and disinformation. Uj of 444, along with his colleagues from Telex and Partizan, described the bill as “absurd” and “a political weapon designed to keep independent media in constant fear and to take us out”. — AFP

The silent SME killer: The late payments challenge

If you raise this issue, you will never do business with our entity again.” This stark threat, shared with me by a determined entrepreneur, didn't come from a shadowy figure. It came from a director at a government entity — punishment for simply asking about a payment her small business was owed for work completed, over a year prior. Across the emerging Sultanate of Oman's business environment, a silent challenge festers: the systemic, damaging culture of late payments to SMEs and start-ups. Having worked alongside Omani founders for years, I've witnessed the hidden toll. The talented innovator sweating over payroll. The promising start-up owner draining personal savings just to survive while waiting for a client to finally settle an invoice. With SMEs making up a colossal 98 per cent of registered companies in Oman, this isn't a minor irritation, it's an economic stranglehold. As we push hard for economic diversification, smoother business processes and attracting investment, allowing this cash flow crisis to continue is like trying to win a race with concrete blocks tied to our feet.

WHY DO PAYMENTS DISAPPEAR? Large entities, whether public entities or private corporations, understand the vulnerability of smaller suppliers. Adding to this is over-processing quicksand, sometimes referred to as bureaucracy, particularly within the public sector and large companies. Complex approval chains, lost paperwork and outdated procurement systems can turn weeks of waiting into months, or even years. While improvements are happening, Oman's public sector still wrestles with this inefficiency. Sometimes, the delay is deliberate. Cash flow management becomes a weapon, with larger players essentially using SMEs as an interest-free credit line to bolster their own liquidity. This practice isn't just unfair; it's corrosive. Underpinning all this is insufficient enforcement



KHALID ALSAFI AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

Solving the late payment crisis isn't about charity; it's an absolute economic necessity. It demands unwavering policymakers' will, innovative financial mechanisms, rigorous enforcement, and a fundamental cultural shift where paying SMEs fairly and promptly becomes an unquestioned norm.

and a troubling cultural acceptance.

THE CRIPPLING RIPPLE EFFECT Late payments do not only slow down SMEs growth, they also slow down their contribution to Oman Vision 2040 goals. They starve these vital businesses of the working capital needed for daily operations, paying staff, buying supplies, covering rent and investing in growth. Too many potentially successful ventures collapse simply because they run out of money waiting for payments they've rightfully earned. When survival is the overwhelming daily focus, there's no capacity to invest in research, hire new talent, or explore new markets. Ultimately, this creates a significant drag on our entire economy. Unhealthy SMEs mean lower tax revenues, fewer jobs created and slower overall economic progress — directly undermining our national vision. Perhaps most damagingly, it erodes the fundamental trust necessary for a dynamic business environment.

BEST PRACTICES We are not alone in this struggle. Our GCC neighbours face similar challenges, offering valuable blueprints for action. Saudi Arabia took decisive steps with its “Watiq” platform to track government payments and implemented stricter penalties for delays. The Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) also actively champions supply chain finance solutions. The UAE enacted Federal Law No (2) of 2020, mandating 30-day payments for private sector dealings with SMEs (extendable to 60 days only with mutual agreement). Dubai further strengthened this with its “Prompt Pay” policy for government contracts. The European Union's Late Payment Directive sets clear 30-day limits (60 days for public bodies) and empowers SMEs to claim substantial late payment interest and compensation. OMAN NEEDS BOLD SOLUTIONS Mimicking regulations isn't

enough. Firstly, we must mandate and enforce with real teeth. We need a robust Omani Late Payment Law establishing strict maximum payment terms. Critically, this law must impose automatic, significant penalties for late payment. These should include substantial interest and fixed compensation that kicks in without forcing the SME into a costly legal battle. Technology offers powerful tools. We should actively foster “invoice trading platforms”. These fintech solutions allow SMEs to sell verified invoices (especially those owed by government or large corporates) to investors for immediate cash, albeit at a small discount. This transfers the waiting risk away from the vulnerable SME, providing instant liquidity. Globally, such platforms are proving transformative. Leadership must start at the top. The public sector must become the role model. Implement real-time digital tracking for all SME invoices moving through government approval stages, with strict internal deadlines and clear accountability for delays. Creating an official, secure (and initially anonymous) platform where SMEs can safely report chronic late payers would be powerful. THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW Solving the late payment crisis isn't about charity; it's an absolute economic necessity. It demands unwavering policymakers' will, innovative financial mechanisms, rigorous enforcement, and a fundamental cultural shift where paying SMEs fairly and promptly becomes an unquestioned norm. Having sat with founders facing this relentless pressure, I know the human cost is immense. Let's end the silence, stop choking our most vital businesses, and finally unleash the true potential of Omani SMEs. Our economic diversification, our growth, our future, they all depend on it. The time for excuses is over. The time for decisive action has arrived.

It is high time we turn the tide for our oceans and seas



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

EVERY year in June, the world unites to celebrate various international days dedicated to protecting our ecosystems. These observances serve as a reminder of our responsibility to safeguard the environment and to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, both the living and non-living components of our ecosystems – ranging from flora and fauna to air, water and soil – are under threat from human activities such as deforestation, pollution and climate change. These activities disrupt natural processes and diminish biodiversity. World Ocean Day, observed annually on June 8, is a global event dedicated to celebrating and raising awareness about the ocean’s vital role in our lives and the health of our planet. Although this year’s theme does not explicitly focus on sea levels, it implicitly acknowledges the impacts of rising sea levels. We recognise that oceans and seas are vital resources, essential for life on Earth and economic prosperity. They provide oxygen, regulate the climate and support diverse ecosystems. Millions of people rely on marine resources for their livelihoods, including fishing, tourism and shipping. However, this invaluable natural capital is under threat from human-induced factors such as overfishing, plastic pollution and the destruction of marine habitats. Many coastal communities around the world are already

facing the threats of rising sea levels and coastal flooding, where climate impacts can inundate neighbourhoods, endanger lives and cause significant economic disruption. The Arabian Gulf is one of the most severely impacted marine environments in the world, primarily due to a combination of pollution factors, including climate change, oil and gas activities, and human disturbances along the coast. According to a study published in the Pollution Studies Journal, small-scale marine oil spills of unknown origin pose an increasing threat to Oman’s coastal ecosystems, fisheries and economy. Oman, situated along the heavily trafficked Strait of Hormuz, is particularly susceptible to oil pollution. The strait sees daily shipments of oil tankers, which pose significant environmental risks, particularly to Oman’s northern coastlines. The study conducted by Oman’s Environment Authority highlights that oil pollution from unidentified sources is one of the most significant environmental threats to marine life. While large-scale oil spills have garnered considerable attention, the effects of smaller, unreported spills continue to pose a significant risk to the nation’s marine ecosystems. Another study published in the journal of Communications Earth and Environment indicates that by 2050, the total global urban population at risk from sea level rise could

Oil spills of unknown origin pose an escalating threat to Oman’s coastal ecosystems, fisheries, and economy. While large-scale oil spills have received significant attention, unreported spills continue to pose a substantial risk to the nation’s marine environments

surpass 800 million people residing in 570 cities. “Sea level rise will become unmanageable at just 1.5°C of global warming and will lead to catastrophic inland migration,” warn the researchers of the study “The Future We Don’t Want”. Estimates suggest that the global economic costs to cities from rising sea levels and inland flooding could reach \$1 trillion by mid-century. “As with other climate-related hazards, local factors will cause cities to experience sea level rise at varying rates,” the study points out. Reducing emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement would help prevent the most severe climate scenarios from occurring. However, even with limited global warming, sea level rise and coastal flooding are likely to intensify. Unfortunately, when formulating policies and climate action plans, as well as defining investments, decision-makers often overlook the vital role the ocean plays and the solutions it offers. We must always remember that our economic aspirations are built upon the foundations of a healthy ecological system and the protection of the natural assets that provide significant economic value. Beyond mere economic considerations, nature possesses profound intrinsic values that affect multiple generations and are essential for our physical and mental well-being, as well as the health of the planet itself.

Immigration protests turn spotlight on California’s governor

FRANKIE TAGGART

Immigration protests in Los Angeles are proving a stern test of Gavin Newsom’s leadership of California, but the unrest also hands the ambitious governor a unique opportunity, say analysts, as he weighs a presidential run in 2028. Rarely a shrinking violet, the 57-year-old chief executive of the country’s largest and richest state has eagerly taken up the Democratic Party’s cudgel against President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown. Newsom spent the weekend attacking his Republican opponent, accusing him of deliberately stoking tensions by deploying California’s National Guard to downtown LA. A presumed frontrunner for the Democratic leadership, Newsom has made no secret of his political ambitions and appears to be relishing his chance for a public showdown with Trump. As the latest front in Trump’s immigration crackdown played out on the streets, the Democrat was brawling on social media, vowing to sue Trump over a “serious breach of state sovereignty.” Those differences were all too apparent as Trump upbraided the Democrat for a “horrible job,” while the president’s “border czar,” Tom Homan, threatened to arrest Newsom over any interference with deportations. Homan rowed back his comments after the Newsom gave a fiery interview with left-leaning MSNBC mocking his “tough guy” stance and calling his bluff. Le said Newsom’s defiant showing would delight a Democratic base “desperate for a fighter.” But he warned that a prolonged stand-off in LA – and particularly an escalation of violence or vandalism – could erode public sympathy, especially if Trump seeks to target California’s federal funding. A former mayor of San Francisco, Newsom has been at the helm of the Golden State for six years, making it a haven for liberal priorities such as abortion access and anti-deportation “sanctuary cities.” He has been talked of as a future Democratic president for years, and has bolstered his national profile with bold overtures beyond his own state, including debating Florida Governor Ron DeSantis on Fox News. “There’s no question Gavin Newsom is trying to use this moment to elevate his national profile, casting himself as the face of Democratic resistance to Donald Trump,” said veteran political strategist Charlie Kolean. But the analyst cautioned that Newsom would damage his presidential ambitions if voters thought he was taking the side of criminals over security forces in his drive to be seen as a defender of civil rights. “Voters overwhelmingly want law and order -- it’s one of the core issues Trump ran on and won big with,” Kolean said. “Americans want leaders who protect public safety and stand with law enforcement -- not ones who politicise unrest.” — AFP

Come to LA, this is what autocracy looks like

SINCE Donald Trump was elected again, I’ve feared one scenario above all others: that he’d call out the military against people protesting his mass deportations, putting America on the road to martial law. Even in my more outlandish imaginings, however, I thought that he’d need more of a pretext to put troops on the streets of an American city – against the wishes of its mayor and governor – than the relatively small protests that broke out in Los Angeles last week. In a post-reality environment, it turns out, the president didn’t need to wait for a crisis to launch an authoritarian crackdown. Instead, he can simply invent one. It’s true that some of those protesting Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in Los Angeles have been violent; on Sunday one man was arrested for allegedly tossing a Molotov cocktail at a police officer, and another was accused of driving a motorcycle into a line of cops. Such violence should be condemned both because it’s immoral and because it’s wildly counterproductive; each burning Waymo or smashed storefront is an in-kind gift to the administration. It’s important to understand that for this administration, protests needn’t be violent to be considered an illegitimate uprising. The presidential memorandum calling out the National Guard refers to both violent acts and any protests that “inhibit” law enforcement. That definition would seem to include peaceful demonstrations around the site of ICE raids. In May, for example, armed federal agents stormed two popular Italian restaurants in San Diego looking for workers in the country illegally; they handcuffed staff members and took four people into custody. As they did so, an outraged crowd gathered outside, chanting “shame” and for a time blocking the agents from leaving. Under Trump’s order, the military could target these people as insurrectionists.



MICHELLE GOLDBERG

The writer is an American journalist and author, and an op-ed columnist for The New York Times

If you saw all this in any other country – soldiers sent to crush dissent, union leaders arrested, opposition politicians threatened – it would be clear that autocracy had arrived. The question, now, is whether Americans who hate tyranny can be roused to respond.

The administration, after all, has every reason to want to intimidate those who might take part in civil disobedience. Violent protests play into its hands; peaceful ones threaten the absurd narrative it’s trying to bludgeon America into accepting. Just look at the lengths to which it’s going to silence David Huerta, president of the Service Employees International Union of California. Last week, Huerta was arrested after sitting on a sidewalk and blocking a gate while protesting an immigration raid at a work site in Los Angeles. While he was being detained, he was knocked to the ground, resulting in his hospitalisation. On Monday, the Justice Department charged him with “conspiracy to impede an officer,” a felony that carries a maximum prison term of six years. Trump also, on Monday, called for the arrest of Newsom. If you saw all this in any other country – soldiers sent to crush dissent, union leaders arrested, opposition politicians threatened – it would be clear that autocracy had arrived. The question, now, is whether Americans who hate tyranny can be roused to respond. Many people have speculated that the confrontation in Los Angeles will play into Trump’s hands, allowing him to pose as a champion of law and order bringing criminal mobs to heel. Maybe they’re right; Trump is a master demagogue with a gift for creating the scenes of conflict his supporters crave. We now know that TV celebrity Dr Phil McGraw was on the ground with ICE during the raids that set off the Los Angeles unrest, filming a prime-time special. The administration appeared to want a spectacle. Public opinion, however, isn’t set in stone, which is why it’s important for everyone who has a platform – politicians, veterans, cultural and religious leaders – to denounce the administration’s authoritarian overreach. Administration officials like Stephen Miller are pushing the idea that Los Angeles is “occupied territory,” as evidenced by the foreign flags some protesters are carrying. Americans who still have hope for democracy

should be saying, as loudly and as often as they can, that this is an insultingly stupid lie to justify a dictatorial power grab. It’s worth remembering that in 2020, when Trump went to St. John’s Church for a photo op after U.S. Park Police and Secret Service officers had tear-gassed protesters, he was widely condemned by both religious leaders and former high-ranking military officers, forcing the administration onto the defensive. A poll conducted a little later found that two-thirds of Americans blamed him for increasing racial tensions. It is not a given that disorder favors Trump, especially when it’s clear that he’s the one instigating it. But there need to be strong voices countering his blunt fictions. Yes, America has lurched to the right since Trump’s first term, and he can get away with abuses now that would have set off mass outrage then. Plenty of Democrats, burned by the backlash against Black Lives Matter and large-scale illegal immigration, would rather not have a fight over disorder in Los Angeles. “For months, Democrats scarred by the politics of the issue sought to sidestep President Donald Trump’s immigration wars – focusing instead on the economy, tariffs or, in the case of deportations, due process concerns,” reported Politico. But there’s no sidestepping a president deploying the military in a city based on falsehoods about a foreign invasion. Indeed, it’s hard to think of a clearer signpost on the road to dictatorship. This Saturday, on Trump’s birthday, he’s planning a giant military parade in Washington, ostensibly to celebrate the Army’s 250th anniversary. Tanks have been photographed en route to the city, the Lincoln Memorial standing tragically in the background, like an image from some Hollywood dystopia. On that day, there will be demonstrations all over the country under the rubric “No Kings.” I desperately hope that Trump’s attempt to quash protest ends up fuelling it. Those who want to live in a free country may be scared, but they shouldn’t be cowed.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Ferrari's Charles during the race Pool. — Reuters

MADRID TO HOST GP AS FORMULA ONE ANNOUNCES 2026 CALENDAR

HONG KONG: Spain will host two Formula One grands prix in 2026, with the new race in Madrid joining Barcelona, after organisers on Tuesday announced the calendar for a season that could bring big changes on the grid.

The 2026 campaign will open for the second successive season in Australia at Melbourne's Albert Park street circuit on March 6-8.

The race in the Spanish capital Madrid is on September 11-13 and will bring the curtain down on the European segment of the season.

The new Madrid circuit will have both street and non-street sectors.

The 24-weekend campaign will again conclude in Abu Dhabi, on December 4-6.

Montreal in Canada will now follow Miami in May to cut down on travelling for the teams.

The 2026 season promises to look radically different with Cadillac becoming the 11th team on the grid and sweeping new regulations on aerodynamics and power units.

Mohammed Ben Sulayem, president of motorsport's governing body, the FIA, said: "Next year's FIA Formula One World Championship marks a significant new chapter for our sport.

"A new race, new teams, and the arrival of new manufacturers, all ushering in a fresh era of innovation and competition."

FORMULA ONE 2026 CALENDAR:

March 6-8: Melbourne, Australia

March 13-15: Shanghai, China

March 27-29: Suzuka, Japan

April 10-12: Sakhir, Bahrain

April 17-19: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

May 1-3: Miami, United States

May 22-24: Montreal, Canada

June 5-7: Monaco

June 12-14: Barcelona, Spain

June 26-28: Spielberg, Austria

July 3-5: Silverstone, Great Britain

July 17-19: Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium

July 24-26: Budapest, Hungary

August 21-23: Zandvoort, Netherlands

Sept 4-6: Monza, Italy

Sept 11-13: Madrid, Spain

Sept 25-27: Baku, Azerbaijan

Oct 9-11 Singapore

Oct 23-25 Austin, United States

Oct 30-Nov 1: Mexico City, Mexico

Nov 6-8 Sao Paulo, Brazil

Nov 19-21 Las Vegas, United States

Nov 27-29 Lusail, Qatar

Dec 4-6: Abu Dhabi, UAE. — AFP



Driver during Japanese Grand Prix practice. — AFP

South Korea beat Kuwait 4-0 to keep unbeaten record

KOREA REPUBLIC ENDED THEIR CAMPAIGN UNBEATEN WITH 22 POINTS

KOREA REPUBLIC SECURED THEIR 11TH CONSECUTIVE, 12TH WORLD CUP APPEARANCE

KUWAIT FINISHING AT THE FOOT OF THE TABLE

KOREA REPUBLIC closed out their campaign with a resounding 4-0 win over Kuwait in Group B of the AFC Asian Qualifiers — Road to 26 on Tuesday.

The win meant Korea Republic ended their campaign unbeaten with 22 points, with Kuwait finishing at the foot of the table.

Having already secured their 11th consecutive and 12th overall Fifa World Cup appearance, Korea Republic dominated the proceedings but Lee Han-beom, Oh Hyeon-gyu and Bae Jun-ho attempts fell off target.

Kuwait remained calm under pressure as Korea Republic maintained the intensity with Oh seeing his attempt from distance blocked, while Bae brought the best out Kuwait custodian Sulaiman Abdulghafoor following Lee Kang-in's set-up in the 19th minute.

Korea Republic finally broke the deadlock in the 30th minute after Hwang In-beom's corner bounced off Kuwait captain Fahad Al Hajeri before sailing past keeper Abdulghafoor.

The Al Arabi SC custodian had to be on his toes moments later to deny Won Du-jae's close range header before foiling Lee's dangerous cross into the area.

Kuwait, whose hopes of advancing to the playoffs were dashed following a 2-0 defeat to Palestine last Thursday, struggled to settle in the second half as Korea Republic turned up the intensity with Lee again threatening from outside the box.

The East Asian side doubled their tally in the 50th minute after Bae played a through ball for Lee, who finished brilliantly past Abdulghafoor for his 11th goal for Korea Republic.

The momentum carried Korea Republic further in front three minutes later after Bae Jun-ho nodded down Hwang In-beom's deep ball into the box for Oh Hyeon-gyu to finish on the turn.

Abdulghafoor denied Won's headed attempt from close range in the 72nd



South Korea's Son Heung Min applauds fans after the match. — Reuters

minute before Kim Ju-sung saw his header from inside the six-yard-box denied by the bar.

But there was no denying Korea Republic as they went 4-0 up moments

later after Kuwait failed to clear the ball with Lee Jae-Sung striking home a low shot which took a deflection before settling in the back of the net to seal the emphatic victory. — AFC

Man City sign Rayan Ait-Nouri from Wolves for £31m

LONDON: Manchester City have completed the signing of left-back Rayan Ait-Nouri from Wolves. The 24-year-old Algeria international has signed a five-year contract at the Etihad Stadium after the clubs agreed a fee of £31 million(\$42 million). He becomes City's first major signing of the summer, with AC Milan midfielder Tijjani Reijnders also set to join.

Ait-Nouri will be eligible for the upcoming Club World Cup later this month, with City also looking to get Reijnders done in time.

"I am incredibly happy and honoured to have joined Manchester City.

City are one of the biggest clubs in the world and the chance to play for the club is a dream come true," he said.

"I am also so excited about working with and learning from Pep Guardiola and his coaching team and getting to train and play alongside such a world class group of players.

"I'm young and I came here to improve a lot. I need to learn and improve my football for sure — it's why I chose this big challenge.

"I know I can improve my football and being in these kind of conditions with this team and this manager, for sure I will improve my football."



Rayan Ait-Nouri

Ait-Nouri has spent five years at Wolves, initially arriving on loan from Angers before signing permanently for £14.9 million in 2021.

He is City's first left-back specialist since Benjamin Mendy, who played his final game for the club almost four years ago.

Oleksandr Zinchenko, Joao Cancelo, Nathan Ake, Josko Gvardiol and -most

recently — Nico O'Reilly have been among the players to fill the position since.

"Rayan is a player that as a club we have been following closely for quite some time and we are delighted he has joined us," said director of football Hugo Viana.

"He already has extensive Premier League experience and has also demonstrated his quality at international level with Algeria.

"We feel sure that he will be an excellent addition to our squad and that working alongside Pep and his coaching staff will help develop his game even further.

"And at just 24 he is someone we feel sure will help us in our objective to bring more success to the club."

Veteran goalkeeper Scott Carson is to leave the club when his contract expires this summer. The 39-year-old made just two senior appearances in a six-year stint but was involved in squads that collected 12 trophies, including the Champions League in 2023. A statement from the club read: "Everyone at Manchester City would like to thank Scott for his hard work and dedication and wish him the very best of luck for the future."

Carson initially joined the club on loan from Derby in 2019 before making the move permanent in 2021. — dpa

SHORTTAKES

NICHOLAS POORAN
RETIRES FROM
INTERNATIONALS



Nicholas Pooran in action. — Reuters

FORMER WEST INDIES white-ball captain Nicholas Pooran announced his retirement from international duty on Monday.

Pooran hit 13 half-centuries in 106 Twenty20 Internationals and amassed 2,275 runs to become West Indies' leading scorer in the shortest format.

One of the world's most explosive batters, the 29-year-old smashed 149 sixes in T20 Internationals to stand fifth overall.

He served as West Indies' limited overs skipper but gave up the captaincy after their first-round exit from the 2022 T20 World Cup.

"This game we love has given and will continue to give so much — joy, purpose, unforgettable memories, and a chance to represent the people of the West Indies," the Trinidadian said in a social media post on Monday.

"Wearing that maroon, standing for the anthem, and giving everything I had each time I stepped on the field... it's hard to put into words what that truly means to me.

"To have led the team as captain is a privilege I will always hold close to my heart."

Pooran last played for West Indies in their 3-0 T20 series defeat by Bangladesh in December last year, while his most recent ODI appearance came in July 2023 against Sri Lanka.

"Nicholas officially informed the leadership of his decision to retire from international cricket, bringing to a close a significant chapter in his career," Cricket West Indies said in a statement.

"His performances on the field and influence within the team have made a lasting impact on West Indies cricket."

Pooran opted to skip West Indies' ongoing T20 series against England, requesting to be rested after playing for the Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League.

He is likely to remain active on the lucrative global T20 league circuit. — Reuters



Daichi Kamada (R) is challenged by Indonesia's defender Yance Sayuri (front L). — AFP

Kamada hits double as
Japan thrash Indonesia 6-0

CRYSTAL PALACE forward Daichi Kamada scored twice as Japan rounded off their successful World Cup qualifying campaign with a 6-0 thrashing of Patrick Kluivert's Indonesia in Osaka on Tuesday.

Kamada, an FA Cup winner with Palace in England this season, struck twice in the first half as already qualified Japan finished the campaign as Group C winners, scoring 30 goals in their 10 matches.

Takefusa Kubo, Ryoya Morishita, Shuto Machino and substitute Mao Hosoya were also on target against Indonesia, who finished fourth in the group.

Kluivert's side, who were backed by a large travelling support in Japan, advance to a further round with five other teams to decide two more Asian qualifiers for next year's tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Japan lost their unbeaten qualifying record in a 1-0 defeat away to Australia last week, with coach Hajime Moriyasu fielding an experimental line-up with qualification already in the bag.

He started with two more debutants against Indonesia, handing first caps to defender Junnosuke Suzuki and winger Shunsuke Mito.

Kamada opened the scoring in the 15th minute, heading home from a Mito cross.

The Palace forward turned provider for his team's second, combining with Kubo



Japan's midfielder Wataru Endo (L) clashes with Indonesia's midfielder Beckham Putra Nugraha (C). — AFP

before the Real Sociedad man fired past Indonesia goalkeeper Emil Audero.

Indonesia lost defender Kevin Diks to injury midway through the first half and his replacement Yakob Sayuri lasted only 15 minutes before he also had to go off after a clash of heads.

Kamada scored Japan's third on the stroke

of half-time, waltzing through the Indonesia defence before tucking the ball over Audero.

Morishita volleyed home at the back post in the 55th minute for his first international goal.

Machino and Hosoya also got on the scoresheet as Japan continued to squeeze Indonesia until the final whistle. — AFP

Milan grabs Dauphine stage victory and overall lead

ISSOIRE, FRANCE: Hulking Italian sprinter Jonathan Milan surged away from the pack to win the second stage of the Criterium de Dauphine in Issoire on Monday to take the overall lead from Tadej Pogacar.

The 1.93m (6-foot-4) 87kg Milan had to battle to keep up on a hilly 204.6km run through central France from Premilhat. When the pack hit the home straight, he rocketed away from his rivals to collect a 10-second victory bonus and the yellow jersey.

"That was really tough," said Milan. "I was dropped at one point and I was really on the limit, but I have to say thanks to my teammates because they brought me back and

guided me until the last metres."

Briton Fred Wright was second and Dutchman Mathieu van der Poel third.

Pogacar and his main rivals for overall victory, both in the Criterium and the Tour de France, Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel, rolled home safely in the main pack just behind Milan.

Pogacar, who collected a 10-second bonus on Sunday, has the same overall time as Mian, but braked hard in the final metres to surrender places and hand the Italian the tie-break edge and the daily media responsibilities that go with the yellow jersey.



Lidl-Trek's Jonathan (L) celebrates after crossing finish line. — AFP

The eight-day race, with four hilly stages, a time trial and three final days in the Alps, has attracted an A-list roster of 154 riders from 22 teams.

It offers Tour de France contenders a chance to hone their form and gain a psychological edge before the main event starts on July 5.

Pogacar, who won his third Tour de France last year ending Vingegaard's two-year reign, had struck the first blow the previous day, edging the Dane to take the opening stage and the overall lead.

On Monday, support riders for Pogacar's Team UAE and Vingegaard's Visma spent much

of the stage jostling, sometimes angrily, for position at the front of the pack.

The stage was briefly animated when local-boy Romain Bardet, riding the final race of his 14-year professional career, launched an attack on the last small climb just before a corner where his fan club was waiting with a huge banner.

The 34-year-old was caught with 10 kilometres to go as Milan's Lidl-Trek team took control.

The Frenchman will have another chance on Tuesday when stage three starts from his home town Brioude for a hilly 207.2km run to Charantonnay. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Sandesh Dhuri

DHURI: CRICKET JOURNEY ACROSS CONTINENTS

MUSCAT: Sandesh Dhuri’s cricketing journey spans decades, continents, and generations of aspiring athletes. From a First-Class cricketer in India to a pioneering coach in Oman and now a youth development leader in the United States, Dhuri’s legacy continues to inspire.

Born in Goa, India, Dhuri represented his home state in the prestigious Ranji Trophy between 1993 and 1998. A right-handed batsman and wicketkeeper, he also featured in the South Zone squad for the Duleep and Deodhar Trophies in 1997, playing under legends like WV Raman and Robin Singh.

In 1998, Dhuri moved to Oman, contributing to the Omani cricketing family. His playing career culminated with a national team tour to Malaysia in 2006 under coach Sandeep Patil.

Transitioning to coaching, Dhuri became an Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Level 3 coach and an ICC-certified trainer. He played a key role as an ACC educator in Oman, training future coaches and players alike. In 2023, he was appointed Elite Coach of the Oman A team and led a U19 high-performance camp under Gary Kirsten.

Dhuri was also Head Coach at the Bausher Olympic Centre (BOC) in Muscat, where he developed world-class cricket facilities and led community outreach programmes. His leadership turned BOC into a hub for youth development, managing 10 pitches across Muscat and organizing international tours to the UK, India, UAE, Sri Lanka, Australia, and the USA.

A landmark came in 2023 when a U17 team under Bausher Sports Centre toured the USA—marking the first cricket tour from the Gulf to the United States. This milestone reflected Dhuri’s vision for exposing youth to global competition.

In 2024, Dhuri moved to Texas, USA, where he took over as Head Coach of Texas Cricket Club (TCC). Under his guidance, TCC won the U17 International Tour Tournament and the US Junior League Championship. He also helped develop infrastructure at Dallas Sports Center, including turf grounds and pitches.

Beyond coaching, Dhuri actively promotes cricket at the grassroots level, organizing youth tournaments, school workshops, and serving on regional selection panels. His efforts continue to shape young cricketers both on and off the field.



Italy's Giovanni Di Lorenzo in action with Moldova's Ion Nicolaescu. — Reuters

Italy win over Moldova, Croatia thrash Czechia

LUCIANO

Spalletti finished his spell as Italy manager with a 2-0 win over Moldova to get their first points of the World Cup qualifying campaign.

Former Napoli boss Spalletti had announced on Sunday that the Group I fixture in Reggio Emilia would be his last, having seen his side slump to a 3-0 defeat away Norway in their opening game.

Moldova had an early header from Ion Nicolaes curled out offside following a video assistant referee review.

Italy broke the deadlock five minutes before half-time through Giacomo Raspadori’s strike from the edge of the penalty area and Andrea Cambiaso added another soon after the restart.

Norway strengthened their position at the top of the table with a 1-0win away over Estonia to maintain their perfect start through four games. Manchester City forward Erling Haaland got the only goal just after the hour.

Belgium started their Group J campaign with a battling 4-3 win over Wales in Brussels — where the visitors had fought back from 3-0 down.

Romelu Lukaku put the hosts ahead from the penalty spot in the 15th minute.

Belgium captain Youri Tielemans added a second just four minutes later before Jeremy Doku curled in a third.

Wales reduced the deficit from Harry Wilson’s penalty in added time at the end of



Wales' Connor Roberts in action with Belgium's Romelu Lukaku. — Reuters



Croatia's Andrej Kramaric celebrates scoring their first goal with Josko Gvardiol. — Reuters

forward Brennan Johnson headed Wales level with 20 minutes left.

Belgium thought they had scored a late winner through Lukaku — but the goal was eventually chalked off following a lengthy VAR review because the ball had gone out in the build-up.

There, was, though no reprieve for Wales when Kevin De Bruyne volleyed in at the far post with two minutes of normal time remaining.

North Macedonia sit a point clear of Wales after a first-half goal from Aleksandar Trajkovski secured a 1-0 win away to Kazakhstan.

Croatia thrashed the Czech Republic 5-1 in Osijek to make it two wins from two in Group L. After Manchester City defender Josko Gvardiol saw his early goal from a free-kick ruled out for offside, Andrej Kramaric broke the deadlock three minutes before half-time. Czech captain Tomas Soucek headed in an equaliser just before the hour from a corner.

Luka Modric, though, swiftly put Croatia back in front from the spot with Ivan Perisic adding a third in the 68th minute.

Croatia — who had thumped Gibraltar 7-0 on Friday — then put the result beyond doubt with two goals in the space of three minutes. Ante Budimir converted another penalty before Kramaric slotted in a fifth.

The Czech Republic remain top, having suffered a first loss after three straight wins.

The Faroe Islands came from behind to beat Gibraltar 2-1 in Torshavn with a late goal from Patrik Johannesen. — dpa

Dortmund sign Jobe Bellingham five-year deal

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund have signed English midfielder Jobe Bellingham from Sunderland until 2030, five years after bringing older brother Jude to the club. Dortmund announced the signing on Tuesday, the final day of the Club World Cup transfer window.

“The England U21 international put pen to paper on a five-year deal with the eight-time German champions on Tuesday morning,” Dormund said in a statement. Dortmund reportedly paid a fee of around 33 million euros (\$37 million), with five million in additional bonuses, to secure the midfielder’s services, the most the club has paid up front for a player.

“I’m very happy to be a Borussia Dortmund player now and to fight for titles together with this great club,”

said 19-year-old Bellingham. “I want to play my part in celebrating success with these great fans here and will work on myself and with the team everyday. And I’m very happy that I’ll be wearing the black and yellow jersey at the FIFA Club World Cup.”

Dortmund’s transfer record remains the 35 million euros paid to bring Ousmane Dembele from Rennes in 2018 although this was originally 15 million euros which rose by 20 million in sell-on fees once the player transferred to Barcelona.

“Jobe is an extremely talented footballer with an impressive level of maturity and intelligence on the pitch for someone so young,” said Lars Ricken, BVB Managing Director for Sport.

“We have no doubt that he’s the



Newcastle United's Miguel Almiron in action with Sunderland's Jobe Bellingham (L). — Reuters

perfect fit for our philosophy of developing talented youngsters and giving them the opportunity to improve and establish themselves at the highest level.

“His professionalism, his dynamism and his hunger to succeed will make him a real asset for our team.” At 19, Jobe is two years younger than his Real Madrid and England midfielder brother.

In moving to Dortmund, Jobe will follow in Jude’s footsteps of trading the Championship for the Bundesliga and the Westfalenstadion.

After leaving Birmingham City, Jude spent three seasons at Dortmund and has become one of the most recognisable players in world football since joining Real in 2023.

As he did at Sunderland, the

younger Bellingham will wear ‘Jobe’ on his jersey at Dortmund rather than his last name in a bid to distinguish himself from his brother.

Jobe scored four goals and laid on three assists in 40 games for Sunderland this season as he helped the club win promotion to the Premier League.

Jobe’s signing means the two brothers could face off in this season’s expanded Club World Cup in the United States, if Dortmund meet Real Madrid during the knockouts of the competition. Jude Bellingham joined Dortmund from boyhood club Birmingham in 2020 aged 17 for around 23 million euros, a fee which rose to 30 million euros when a sell-on fee was added after his 100 million euro move to Real Madrid. — AFP



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Farmed livestock at the new facility in Al Suwaiq.

Integrated livestock farming and meat production project launched in Al Suwaiq

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

SEEKING to contribute to food security goals in Al Batinah North Governorate, Omani entrepreneur Hamood al Mahrazi has launched an integrated livestock farm and meat production facility in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq aimed at producing premium-quality meat from a mix of local and international livestock breeds.

The venture, which employs advanced farming technologies, is supported by a farm with a capacity of 1,250 heads of livestock annually. The facility blends Omani traditions with global expertise to ensure high standards in animal care, hygiene and meat quality.

“Our project combines Omani authenticity with global expertise,” said Hamood al Mahrazi. “We rely on the latest technologies to ensure meat quality and safety, contributing to the sustainability of Oman’s agricultural sector.”

The project is expected to help meet growing domestic demand and reduce reliance on meat imports, aligning with national goals under Oman Vision 2040.

“The expected production capacity will reach 1,250 heads annually,” Al Mahrazi added. “This reflects our commitment to fulfilling local demand and boosting the supply of high-quality meat.”

Oman’s non-oil exports fall as refined oil surges

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

OMAN’S non-oil exports declined by 16 per cent in 2024, even as refined oil shipments surged, underscoring the economy’s continued dependence on hydrocarbons, according to a new report by Enjaz Consultancy.

The May 2025 edition of Enjaz’s Economic Analysis Series, authored by well-known Omani business personality Dr Mahmood al Balushi, reveals that crude oil still accounts for 45 per cent of total exports.

Refined oil exports, fuelled by the Duqm refinery, doubled to reach 17 per cent of export volume, partially offsetting a sharp downturn in non-oil sectors.

“Excluding crude, Oman’s trade balance continues to register deficits despite oil price gains,” said Dr Al Balushi.

Non-oil exports declined for a second consecutive year — down 1.1 per cent in 2023 and 16.3 per cent in 2024 — while overall imports rose by 12 per cent, adding pressure to the current account.

The UAE remained Oman’s largest trading partner, with both exports and re-exports rising over 10 per cent in 2024.

Imports from the UAE also topped RO 4 billion, according to the report.

Trade with Kuwait strengthened, reflecting increased demand for minerals



Non-oil exports declined for a second consecutive year — down 1.1 per cent in 2023 and 16.3 per cent in 2024.

Trade with Kuwait strengthened, reflecting increased demand for minerals and equipment linked to Duqm’s industrial expansion.

Imports and re-exports surged, making Kuwait one of Oman’s fastest-growing trade routes. Meanwhile, trade with Saudi Arabia weakened, with exports and imports down 19 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

New coastal infrastructure, including Al Suwaiq Port, helped boost re-export activity with Iran.

Despite spikes in energy-linked exports, Oman’s trade deficit (excluding oil and gas) has remained consistent over the past decade.

The report shows non-oil exports now account for just 28

per cent of total export value — highlighting a key vulnerability as the country implements Vision 2040 economic reforms.

Imports surpassed RO 6.5 billion last year, with the top sources being the UAE and China.

The report calls for intensified export diversification to address structural imbalances.

Analysts say Duqm’s refining and logistics capacity could anchor future non-oil growth if matched by industrial policy and foreign investment.

“Refining gains are clear, but sustainable trade surpluses require broader value-added exports,” Dr Al Balushi noted.

Oman’s sports economy ambition: From grassroots to global arena

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

THE Sultanate of Oman is actively pursuing a strategy to transform its sporting landscape, not just for the love of the game, but as a significant driver of economic growth and diversification.

Recent discussions from the “Tejarah Talks” podcast, featuring Pankaj Khimji, Adviser for External Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Joe Rafferty, Director, Events, Oman Sail, highlight a multifaceted approach focusing on grassroots development, experiential tourism and strategic international events.

The vision is clear: to cultivate a deep-seated sports culture within the Sultanate of Oman that will naturally foster a thriving sports economy.

“Unless we develop our grassroots of sports culture, whether it’s in schools or on the beaches of Oman, unless we promote this in our family or



PANKAJ KHIMJI
*Adviser for
External Trade
and International
Cooperation at
the Ministry
of Commerce,
Industry and
Investment
Promotion*

from a very young age.

Oman’s inherent “DNA” for sports, as noted by Alya al Hosni of Tejarah Talks podcast and corporate affairs director at Muriya, is evident in its success in areas like beach football. The goal is to leverage this natural aptitude and build a robust ecosystem.

The economic ripple effects

of a thriving sports sector are extensive, extending far beyond direct participation. From equipment sales and coaching to media coverage, hospitality and related services, the opportunities for private sector involvement are immense.

The recent explosion of padel in Oman serves as a prime example of organic growth and private sector engagement. Padel clubs have sprung up across the country, becoming new social hubs.

This phenomenon illustrates the potential for smaller, multi-purpose sporting centres in wilayats and non-urban areas to encourage widespread participation.

“What it shows is that you probably want to build youth centres in wilayats in non-urban townscapes to encourage people to participate and play in sports,” Khimji observed, advocating for practical, state-of-the-art facilities over mega-stadiums.

Beyond domestic engagement, Oman is strategically positioning itself as a destination for sports

tourism.

The concept of “experiential travel” – where tourists not only see but actively do – aligns perfectly with adventure sports and unique terrains. The country’s diverse landscape offers unparalleled opportunities for activities like aqua trekking in wadis, 4x4 off-roading and altitude training for athletes.

“This mix of adventure sports and tourism is a huge investment opportunity,” stated Khimji, highlighting the potential for automobile manufacturers to use Oman as a hub for vehicle trials.

The economic benefits of hosting international teams are also gaining recognition. Khimji recounted a recent visit by Indian state cricket teams, who, after playing matches, extended their stay to explore Oman’s tourist attractions like Nizwa and witness dolphins.

This accidental discovery has led to a surge of interest from other Indian teams keen to tour Oman, demonstrating the power of sports to drive ancillary tourism

revenue.

Looking ahead, Oman has its sights set on attracting prestigious international events that align with the nation’s brand.

“I’d like to see a tennis tournament whether we start with the 250 or with the 500 and probably in 10 or 7 years time to do a tennis 1000 as well ATP,” Khimji articulated, emphasising the high television and media coverage such events attract.

The ultimate ambition for Oman, according to Khimji, would be to host a Formula 1 Grand Prix. While acknowledging the presence of F1 tracks in neighbouring countries, he sees it as a complementary venture, not a competitive one.

“It’s not about competing with them, it’s about participating in the sport because the sport is basically viewed on television,” he explained. An F1 track, he added, would serve as a multi-purpose venue for corporate events, community gatherings, concerts and car exhibitions, creating significant leverage.

ADVERTORIALS

IMPROVING RETAIL



The collaboration introduces flexible financing and EMI options for Extra customers.

TAAGEER FINANCE AND EXTRA OMAN ANNOUNCE STRATEGIC TIE-UP

MUSCAT: In a move aimed at enhancing affordability and improving the retail experience in Oman, Taageer Finance Company SAOG has announced a strategic partnership with Extra, one of the region's leading electronics and home appliance retailers. The collaboration introduces flexible financing and Equated Monthly Installment (EMI) options for Extra customers, enabling easier access to a wide range of consumer electronics and premium products from world-renowned brands.

The partnership underscores both companies' shared mission to promote economic inclusivity by making high-quality technology and home appliances more financially accessible. Whether customers are purchasing smartphones, televisions, kitchen appliances, or home entertainment systems, the new financing solution is designed to provide a seamless, value-driven shopping experience.

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Fahad Khamis al Bulushi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, said: "We are pleased to partner with Extra, a trusted name in consumer electronics and lifestyle products.

This collaboration reflects our continued efforts to empower consumers by offering practical financing solutions that meet their lifestyle needs. Together, we aim to elevate the customer journey by combining innovation in retail with ease of finance." Extra, known for its expansive product portfolio and commitment to customer satisfaction, will now be able to provide added value to its shoppers through convenient, tailored finance options delivered by Taageer Finance.

The initiative is expected to benefit a wide demographic - from tech-savvy professionals and homemakers to small business owners - who are looking for smart, affordable ways to upgrade their homes and lifestyles.

Fadi Shbaro, Country Manager of Extra mentioned, "At Extra, we are committed to offering more than just great products - we aim to enhance the overall customer experience. This partnership with Taageer Finance helps us do just that by enabling more people to access the latest in technology and appliances through affordable and responsible financing." Through this collaboration, Extra customers across Oman can enjoy enhanced purchasing power while staying within their budgets. By bridging the gap between affordability and aspiration, the partnership is set to strengthen both consumer empowerment and the local retail ecosystem.

Taageer Finance offers a diverse range of financial and leasing solutions for businesses and individuals.

AUDI OMAN UNVEILS FUTURE-FORWARD LINEUP IN A LANDMARK SHOWCASE

MUSCAT: Audi Oman, represented by Premium Motors, recently staged a landmark event that set a new benchmark in the Sultanate of Oman's premium automotive scene. Held under the esteemed auspices of Shaikh Sabaa bin Hamdan bin Sabaa al Saadia, the secretary General of the Higher Committee for National Day Celebrations, this exclusive event marked a significant milestone in Audi's journey in the region. The grand reveal at the Premium Motors showroom



This event marked a significant milestone in Audi's journey in the region.

featured the highly anticipated unveilings of the new Audi A5, Audi A6 Avant, and the all-electric Audi A6 e-tron.

In addition, several other models, including the Audi Q6 e-tron, Audi Q7, Audi Q8, and the high-performance Audi S8, were prominently displayed for attendees to explore. Four classic Audi models were also on display, offering a nostalgic nod to the brand's storied heritage while celebrating its forward-looking vision.

Be a proud Kia owner and receive a welcome bonus

IT'S the welcoming season at Kia! Become a proud Kia owner and receive a welcome bonus worth RO 500 on the purchase of any Kia vehicle, including stress-free car service up to 100,000 km with first-year insurance, and registration. Plus, all Kia customers get a chance to win iPhone 15 (256 GB) in the raffle.

Furthermore, step into the era of electric mobility and buy Kia's futuristic range of electric vehicles to reap more benefits this summer season.

Buy the EV9 or EV6 and get an exclusive bonus of up to RO 3,000 with free service up to 105,000 km & free insurance. Don't miss out and explore Kia's dynamic range of SUVs and sedans at showrooms across Oman, before the offer ends on July 16, 2025.

To make each family moment memorable, experience the spacious, high-tech, and stunning Kia Telluride.

Built to cater to larger families seeking weekend getaways to the desert or a mountain retreat to enjoy the cool, fresh air.

Experience Kia's finest SUV, the Telluride, boasts a powerful,



All Kia customers also get a chance to win iPhone 15 (256 GB) in the raffle.

high-performance 3.8L GDI V6 engine. This 8-seater SUV offers unmatched utility, space, and performance.

Kia places great emphasis on passenger safety. The Telluride is equipped with front and rear seat airbags, side and curtain airbags, an electronic stability Program (ESP), an anti-lock braking system (ABS), an Electric Parking Brake (EPB) with Auto hold, and a driver's knee airbag, among other advanced safety technologies, making it a perfect all-rounder in the SUV league.

Designed for a new era of innovation and sustainability, the EV9 is Kia's all-electric SUV. With an impressive driving range of up to 500 km on a full charge, and fast-charging capability that delivers an 80% charge in just 24 minutes, it's built for those who live life at a full charge.

Compared to gasoline-powered vehicles, EVs have fewer moving parts, reducing maintenance needs.

The EV9 also comes with a battery warranty of 160,000 km or 8 years, and includes a free AC charging unit with installation for all customers

along with the RO 3,000 welcome bonus as part of the summer offer.

Demonstrating Kia's commitment to meet evolving customer needs, the brand-new Kia Sportage L comes with the 'Make Space for Adventure' concept.

It features a longer 2,755 mm wheelbase and a 543-litre luggage compartment, delivering more space for every journey. Whether you're navigating city streets, off-road terrain, or long highways, there's a Sportage that fits your lifestyle.

BANKDHOFAR UNVEILS MOTOR INSURANCE SOLUTION FOR WOMEN

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, Oman's second-largest bank by branch network, has introduced 'Laha', a unique motor insurance product created exclusively for women.

This launch underscores BankDhofar's commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and customer-centric financial services.

Developed in partnership with Dhofar Insurance, one of the largest insurance providers in the Sultanate of Oman, Laha delivers comprehensive coverage, exclusive lifestyle



Laha delivers comprehensive coverage, exclusive lifestyle benefits, and round-the-clock support.

benefits, and round-the-clock support. Positioned as both premium and cost-effective, Laha redefines the insurance experience for women drivers in Oman. At the core of Laha is a focus on safety, confidence, and convenience. The plan includes 24/7 emergency roadside assistance covering situations such as flat tyres, battery issues, vehicle lockouts, and mechanical breakdowns.

It also features accident recovery and vehicle towage up to 100 kilometers or provides RO 55 as compensation in lieu.

Sohar International receives 'CX Team of the Year' award for innovation

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its position as a leader in redefining service excellence within the Sultanate's banking landscape, Sohar International has been awarded the title of 'CX Team of the Year' at the CX Awards 2025. The recognition was presented during the prestigious Oman CX Forum, held recently at the St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim al Said.

This accolade underscores Sohar International's unwavering dedication to enhancing the customer experience through a progressive approach that



This accolade underscores Sohar International's unwavering dedication to enhancing the customer experience.

blends innovation, real-time responsiveness, and personalised service delivery.

Grounded in digital transformation and an in-depth understanding of evolving customer expectations, the bank continues to set new benchmarks in customer-centric banking across the region.

Commenting on the recognition, Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated, "In an increasingly dynamic and competitive landscape, customer experience has emerged as a critical differentiator.

At Sohar International, we have

embedded customer-centricity into the core of our strategy — leveraging intelligent digital capabilities, data-driven insights, and a deep understanding of evolving customer expectations to deliver proactive and personalised service experiences.

This award is a testament to the unwavering commitment and agility of our teams who consistently go beyond the conventional to create meaningful value for our clients. As we move forward, we remain committed to setting new benchmarks in service excellence, driving innovation and empowering customers to thrive in a fast-changing world."

BUSINES

TRUMPEFFECT



The bank lowered its forecasts for nearly 70 per cent of all economies — including the United States, China and Europe, as well as six emerging market regions.

World Bank slashes global growth forecast as trade tensions bite

WASHINGTON: The World Bank on Tuesday slashed its global growth forecast for 2025 by 0.4 percentage point to 2.3 per cent, saying that higher tariffs and heightened uncertainty posed a “significant headwind” for nearly all economies. In its twice-yearly Global Economic Prospects report, the bank lowered its forecasts for nearly 70 per cent of all economies — including the United States, China and Europe, as well as six emerging market regions - from the levels it projected just six months ago before US President Donald Trump took office. Trump has upended global trade with a series of on-again, off-again tariff hikes that have increased the effective US tariff rate from below 3 per cent to the mid-teens — its highest level in almost a century — and triggered retaliation by China and other countries.

The World Bank is the latest body to cut its growth forecast as a result of Trump’s erratic trade policies, although US officials insist the negative consequences will be offset by a surge in investment and still-to-be approved tax cuts. The bank stopped short of forecasting a recession, but said global economic growth this year would be its weakest outside of a recession since 2008. By 2027, global gross domestic product growth was expected to average just 2.5 per cent, the slowest pace of any decade since the 1960s. The report forecast that global trade would grow by 1.8 per cent in 2025, down from 3.4% in 2024 and roughly a third of its 5.9 per cent level in the 2000s. The forecast is based on tariffs in effect as of late May, including a 10 per cent US tariff on imports from most countries. It excludes increases announced by Trump in April and then postponed until July 9 to allow for negotiations. The bank said global inflation was expected to reach 2.9 per cent in 2025, remaining above pre-Covid levels, given tariff increases and tight labour markets.

“Risks to the global outlook remain tilted decidedly to the downside,” the bank wrote. It said its models showed that a further 10-percentage point increase in average US tariffs, on top of the 10% rate already implemented, and proportional retaliation by other countries, could shave another 0.5 percentage point off the outlook for 2025. Such an escalation in trade barriers would result “in global trade seizing up in the second half of this year ... accompanied by a widespread collapse in confidence, surging uncertainty and turmoil in financial markets,” the report said. Nonetheless, it said the risk of a global recession was less than 10 per cent. “Uncertainty remains a powerful drag, like fog on a runway. It slows investment and clouds the outlook,” World Bank Deputy Chief Economist Ayhan Kose said in an interview. But he said there were signs of increased dialogue on trade that could help dispel uncertainty and supply chains were adapting to a new global trade map, not collapsing. Global trade growth could see a modest rebound in 2026 to 2.4 per cent, and developments in artificial intelligence could also boost growth, he said. “We think that eventually the uncertainty will decline,” he said. — Reuters

NEW OUTLOOK

US small business sentiment improves



US small-business confidence improved in May, likely because of a de-escalation in trade tensions between US and China, though uncertainty over the outlook mounted amidst worries over the fate of President Donald Trump’s tax-cut agenda. The National Federation of Independent Business said its Small Business Optimism Index increased three points to 98.8 last month.— AFP

GOVERNMENT TREASURY BILLS ALLOCATION REACHES RO 44.37M

MUSCAT: The total allocation of government treasury bills this week hit RO 44.37 million. The 91-day bills accounted for the entire amount, with an average accepted price of RO 98.953 and a minimum accepted price of RO 98.930 per RO 100. The average discount rate stood at 4.19883 per cent and the average yield was 4.24326 per cent. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) stated that the interest rate for

repurchase operations (repo) with the CBO on these bills is 5.00 per cent, while the discount rate for treasury bills with the CBO is 5.50 per cent. Treasury bills are short-term, guaranteed financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance. They serve as an investment avenue for licensed commercial banks. The CBO manages their issuance. These bills offer quick liquidity

through discounting with the CBO and through repo transactions. Licensed commercial banks can also conduct repo transactions on treasury bills within the interbank market. Furthermore, treasury bills help establish a benchmark for short-term interest rates in the local financial market and provide the government with a smooth and flexible way to finance some expenditures.— ONA

Drone-based cargo deliveries before year-end

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 10

In a breakthrough for aerial logistics via unmanned aircraft in the Sultanate of Oman, Esbaar — an Omani provider of artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems — is gearing up to launch heavy-duty drone-based cargo services for key sectors across the country. According to a senior project official, Esbaar aims to roll out the service — a first for Oman — before the end of this year. Esbaar, one of the first Omani companies to launch drone-based inspection and survey services in 2017, has since been developing cargo delivery capabilities through newly engineered unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) designed to carry payloads to specific destinations in the Sultanate of Oman, said Hamadi Ben Ftima, Cargo Drones Project Manager. “Our service offers a modern solution to logistics challenges, as our drones can operate at any time, above traffic and terrain, including in remote or time-critical areas. This will enable our customers to expand their operations, reduce non-productive time, cut their



Hamadi Ben Ftima, Cargo Drones Project Manager — Esbaar, pictured with a drone capable of carrying 50 kilo payloads over a distance of 360 km.

carbon footprint and achieve their business objectives,” he noted. Speaking to the Observer, Ben Ftima said the initiative centres on deploying a fleet of heavy-duty drones capable of handling cargo ranging from as little as 500 grammes up to 700 kilogrammes. “We are initially targeting an operational area encompassing Haima, Qarn Al Alam, Adam, Nizwa and Muscat. However, to be fully prepared, we will need to establish centralised hubs from which the drones will collect payloads for delivery to customer sites. The

locations of these hubs and the flight paths will depend on customer profiles and specific requirements — matters currently under discussion,” he explained. Esbaar is targeting potential clients in the oil and gas, renewable energy, mining, agriculture and fisheries, healthcare; and emergency response sectors. The company also plans to serve the offshore sector, including oil rigs and platforms, Ben Ftima added. Currently, Esbaar operates a fleet of around 30 drones used primarily for inspection,

surveying and 3D modelling services. The company employs both Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) and Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations. BVLOS enables drones to operate beyond the pilot’s direct visual range, allowing for extended coverage and efficient performance in tasks such as long-range pipeline inspections and remote infrastructure surveys. VLOS, by contrast, requires the pilot to maintain visual contact with the drone throughout its flight. In preparation for the cargo service launch, Esbaar has been conducting at least eight hours of continuous BVLOS flights to build in-house expertise. The company also anticipates significant job creation for Omanis, who will be trained to operate drones, manage logistics hubs and provide supporting services. Asked about the timeline for the service launch, Ben Ftima said it depends on several factors: signing contracts with customers, finalising flight plans and operational protocols; and securing approval from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The goal, he emphasised, is to launch Oman’s first drone cargo delivery service before the end of the year.

OIL RISES AMIDST OPTIMISM OVER US-CHINA TRADE TALKS

SINGAPORE: Oil prices rose on Tuesday as investors awaited news from US-China trade talks in hopes a deal could boost the global economic outlook and subsequently fuel demand. Brent crude futures rose 12 cents to \$67.16 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose 13 cents to \$65.42. The contract reached \$65.38 a barrel during the session, the highest since April 4. On Monday, Brent had risen to \$67.19, the highest since April 28, buoyed by the prospect of a US-China trade deal. US-China trade talks were set to continue for a second day in London as top officials aimed to ease tensions that have expanded from tariffs to rare earth curbs, risking global supply chain disruptions and slower growth. A trade deal between the US and China could support the global economic outlook and boost demand for commodities including

oil. Global stocks and the dollar held steady on Tuesday as trade talks between the United States and China continued into a second day, giving investors some reason to believe tensions between the world’s two largest economies may be easing. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said discussions between the two sides in London were going well, while President Donald Trump on Monday put a positive spin on the talks. Any progress in the negotiations is likely to provide relief to markets given that Trump’s often-shifting tariff announcements and swings in Sino-US ties have undermined the two economies, disrupted supply chains and threatened to hobble global growth. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.06 per cent, to 42,788, the S&P 500 added 0.16 per cent, to 6,015 and the Nasdaq Composite advanced 0.12 per cent, to

19,616. World stocks, as reflected by the MSCI All-Country World index, traded near record highs, while the dollar steadied against a range of currencies. “While market participants are clearly taking a glass half-full view of the outlook, both on trade policy and more broadly, we don’t think that should be interpreted as a view that tariffs will be fully unwound,” said Jonas Goltermann, deputy chief markets economist at Capital Economics. Goltermann anticipates US duties on Chinese goods to settle at around 40%, while most analysts have said that the universal 10% levy on imports into the United States is here to stay. In Europe, the STOXX 600 edged higher, constrained by UBS, whose shares dropped 5.5% as investors worried about the impact of new government proposals to force the Swiss bank to hold \$26 billion in extra capital. — Agencies

SECURITY TARGET

UK pumps £14 bn into nuclear plant



The UK government on Tuesday said it will invest billions of pounds in the new Sizewell C nuclear power plant as it strives to meet net-zero and energy security targets. The £14.2-billion (\$19-billion) investment will end “years of delay and uncertainty”, the UK Treasury said in a statement, adding it would unlock a “golden age” of nuclear power to “boost the UK’s energy security”.— AFP

SEEKING BREAKTHROUGH

US-China trade talks go well on 2nd day



US commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said on Tuesday trade talks with China were going well as the two sides met for a second day in London, seeking a breakthrough on export controls that have threatened a fresh rupture between the superpowers. The two sides are now seeking agreement after they accused each other of trying to throttle supply chains with a raft of export controls.— Reuters

OPINION

Does Oman need blue-green-yellow-grey trash bins?



DR AISHA
AL SARIHI

The writer is an expert at the Centre for Strategic Energy and Resources.

OMAN is ready to embrace the economic and environmental opportunities that come with waste segregation and circular economy practices. The shift towards circularity is not just about sorting waste into coloured bins — it's about rethinking how we design, produce, consume and dispose materials across the entire economic cycle, from resource extraction and processing to production and end-of-life management. A useful example of circularity in Oman is the growing effort to capture and reuse associated gas produced during oil extraction. Previously flared — and thus wasted — this gas is now being redirected to productive use. This not only reduces emissions but also captures economic value that was once literally going up in smoke. It's just one example of many untapped opportunities Oman can harness along the value chain. At its core, the circular economy promotes reducing the use of raw materials and minimising waste at every stage of economic cycle. It encourages us to keep materials in use for as long as possible, extract maximum value from them and then regenerate them at the end of their service life. This stands in stark contrast to today's dominant linear model of “take-make-use-dispose,” which sees the global economy consuming about 60% more resources than the Earth can regenerate each year — the equivalent of using 1.6 Earths annually. If current trends continue, we could be

using the equivalent of 3 to 4 Earths by 2050. The potential benefits of transitioning to a circular economy are enormous. Globally, this shift could unlock \$4.5 trillion in economic value by 2030. The EU Circular Economy Action Plan is expected to generate between EUR 0.7–1.8 trillion annually and contribute an additional 7% to GDP by 2030, rising to 12% by 2050. Similarly, China's Circular Economy Development Plan is projected to contribute USD 1 trillion per year by 2030, adding 14% to its GDP. These figures are intriguing our curiosity about the potential economic opportunity Oman can tap into should it shift from a linear to a circular economy. By embracing other countries' experiences with circular economy — such as Ireland, the Netherlands, Chile, China, Japan and many others — we can see that circular economy offers not only environmental imperatives but also fresh ground for innovation, entrepreneurship, job creation and supply chain resilience. For Oman, these added values fit squarely in the context of Oman Vision 2040, which calls for a knowledge-based, diversified, competitive and sustainable economy. Circularity fosters innovation — from sustainable product design and advanced materials science to digital platforms that support reuse and smarter waste management systems. It promotes systems thinking and research-based solutions, nurturing a culture of learning and adaptation. One local example is Omani scientists turning oil from date

At its core, the circular economy promotes reducing the use of raw materials and minimising waste at every stage of economic cycle. It encourages us to keep materials in use for as long as possible, extract maximum value from them and then regenerate them at the end of their service life.

kernels into biodiesel — an innovation with potential applications in other sectors. The emergence of new industries associated with circular economy such as remanufacturing, repair, refurbishment and bio-based materials will expand Oman's economic base beyond hydrocarbons. This shift also opens up meaningful opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and youth entrepreneurship. From designing eco-friendly products to launching digital platforms connecting suppliers, young Omanis can lead this transformation. Wakud, which converts used cooking oil into biodiesel, is one of the local examples of how local innovation can support circular business models. For businesses, adopting circular practices often translates to greater efficiency, reduced input costs, stronger brand loyalty and resilience to volatile supply chains. As global markets place increasing value on sustainability (ESG), Omani firms that lead in circularity will be better positioned to attract international investment and compete in export markets. Ultimately, a circular economy is key to long-term sustainability — it reduces greenhouse gas emissions, conserves natural ecosystems, and builds resilience against global supply chain disruptions. It offers Oman a path that shapes Omani citizens' relationship with the environment and hence does not compromise future generations' ability to meet their own needs.

CHINA'S RARE-EARTH LEVER IS BEST USED CAREFULLY

ROBYN MAK

In a card game, it is easy to overplay a hand by being too aggressive. China's negotiators face a similar temptation in London this week in trade talks with US officials, who have signalled that Washington would ease chip export controls on the People's Republic in exchange for Beijing accelerating rare-earth shipments. That's the result of President Xi Jinping's government shrewdly leveraging its dominance in these critical minerals. Its next challenge is to exercise restraint. Thanks to decades of state-led investment, China has a stranglehold on the supply chain for rare earths, a group of metallic elements vital to consumer electronics, electric-car batteries, missile guidance systems and more: 70% of global mining, 85% of refining capacity and about 90% of metal alloy and magnet production involving them are controlled by the country, according to consultancy AlixPartners. The automotive sector is particularly vulnerable: rare earths are used in dozens of components, including side mirrors, stereo speakers, windshield wipers and even glass-polishing agents. Little wonder auto executives and government officials across Europe, Japan and India have been sounding the alarm. In April, Beijing placed seven rare earths under export restrictions as part of its response to US tariffs. That has resulted in delays as Chinese regulators work through a backlog of applications, though Washington has accused them of dragging their feet. Japan's Suzuki, Ford Motor in the United States and some European suppliers have been impacted as a result. There are valid reasons for panic. In 2010, China effectively halted rare-earth shipments temporarily to Japan after a diplomatic dispute. And since 2023 Beijing had already restricted overseas sales of at least 16 other minerals and related products before the recent action. However, it is also not in Beijing's interest to be overly restrictive. Sure, it would take years and hefty outlays for other governments to develop alternative sources. But it will not be lost on Xi that US chip controls and tech sanctions are precisely what accelerated the development of his country's own semiconductor industry. That is the criticism Jensen Huang, CEO of artificial intelligence chipmaker Nvidia, lobbied at Washington last month. The same may happen with global rare earths supply chains. Japan, the world's top importer of such metals, has shown progress is possible: the country has cut its dependence on Chinese rare earths to 60% from 90% in 2010, partly thanks to international cooperation and investments in overseas mines. — Reuters

Real estate market and its role in economic growth

OMAN'S real estate sector is undergoing a dynamic transformation, playing a crucial role in the nation's economic growth. The sector's evolution has positioned it as a cornerstone of Oman's economic development strategy, contributing significantly to job creation, attracting investment and boosting the national GDP. A significant impact of Oman's thriving real estate sector is its contribution to job creation. The industry generates employment across various sectors, from construction and architecture to property management and real estate broking. The ripple effect extends to supporting industries, creating a robust employment ecosystem. Market analyses suggest that for every direct job in real estate development, approximately three indirect jobs are generated in related sectors. According to the 7th edition of the Al Habib Annual Property Market Report series that provides latest up to date insights for the economy and Oman real estate market, a soft optimum in a period of continued stability. The government's Oman Vision 2040 strategy recognises real estate as a key pillar in reducing the country's reliance on oil revenues. By developing a strong property market, Oman is building a more diverse and resilient economy. This transformation is evident in the growing number of mixed-use developments and integrated tourism complexes (ITCs) across the country, creating new lifestyle opportunities for residents and visitors. Oman's progressive policies have made it increasingly attractive to both foreign and domestic investors. The government's new investor visa programmes, offering residency options for property investors, have been highly effective in attracting foreign capital. The real estate



Oman Vision 2040 strategy recognises real estate as a key pillar in reducing the country's reliance on oil revenues.



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sector's influence extends far beyond property development. The tourism industry has experienced significant growth through the construction of hotels, resorts and leisure facilities. The banking sector has benefitted from increased demand for mortgages and property financing products, contributing to the overall development of Oman's financial services industry. This interconnected growth has created a robust ecosystem that supports sustainable economic development across multiple sectors. The construction sector has also seen substantial growth as demand increases for residential, commercial and tourism properties. This growth has created a positive cycle of economic activity, supporting various auxiliary industries and services, from building materials suppliers to interior design firms. The Ministry of Housing is playing a significant role in improving the business environment in the real estate sector in the Sultanate of Oman to encourage local and international investors. Market performance has been notably strong, with trading volume experiencing a 6 per cent rise in 2023. In the first quarter of 2024,

the total value of real estate trading reached RO 587.5m, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Foreign investment has been particularly robust, with Kuwait leading the charge in 2023 (RO2 6.7m across 319 deals), followed by India (RO 12.2m in 70 transactions) and the United Arab Emirates (RO 5.3m across 319 transactions). The government's progressive policies have enhanced Oman's appeal to both foreign and domestic investors. The Investor Residency Programme, offering 5 to 10-year residency options for property investors, has proven highly effective in attracting foreign capital. This success is evident in the increasing number of international investors choosing Oman as their preferred regional investment destination. Several major developments are driving sector growth: - Sultan Haitham City and new city projects in the Wilayats of Salalah, Suhar and Sur. - Development of new economic zones and industrial hubs. - Expansion of integrated tourism complexes (ITCs) and luxury hospitality projects. - Significant infrastructure investments in road networks, airports and planned public transportation systems. These projects are strategically positioned to meet rising regional and international demand while creating new lifestyle opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The sector is expected to attract approximately 70 per cent of total foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman in the coming years. The government's focus on infrastructure development has been particularly noteworthy. Major investments in road networks, airports and planned public transportation systems are enhancing connectivity and creating new growth corridors for real estate development.

CLASSIFIEDS

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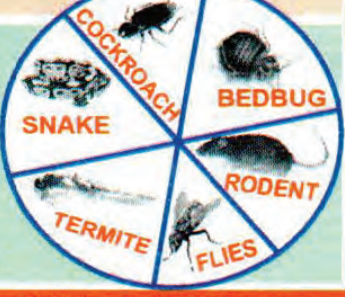
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ART/LIFE



T R A V E L

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ENTERTAINMENT

Rapper Kendrick Lamar lands the biggest wins at the 2025 BET Awards



KENDRICK LAMAR was the top winner on Monday at the BET Awards, an awards ceremony honouring actors, singers and sports stars.

The “30 For 30” rapper won the best male hip hop artist award, best album of the year as well as the video of the year award for “Not Like Us.”

Lamar and filmmaker Dave Free also took home the video director of the year award at the event, which was held at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles and broadcast on the BET cable channel.

“BET has always made sure they’re representing the culture right and always put me in the midst of the cycle of what we represent,” Lamar said on stage when accepting his award.

Host comedian Kevin Hart opened the ceremony by recognising the BET Awards’ 25th anniversary and all of the “history that has been made” on the stage.

The ceremony traversed the evolution of music, starting with a performance by R&B artist Ashanti that featured a compilation of songs, including her 2002 song “Foolish.”

Additional performances included other 2000s songs “Ballin’” by Mustard, “1 Thing” by Amerie and “Like You” by Bow Wow.

Hart led with jokes while also highlighting the BET Ultimate Icon Award winners of the night, including Kirk Franklin, Mariah Carey, Jamie Foxx and Snoop Dogg.

The special award was given to those that have paid homage to music, entertainment, advocacy and community impact.

Presented by Stevie Wonder, Foxx accepted his award and reflected on his recovery journey after having a stroke in 2023.

“I gotta be honest, when I saw the in memoriam, I was like, ‘Man, that could have been me,’” he said.

Another honour included the best female hip hop artist award for rising rapper Doechii.

“Trump is using military forces to stop protest,” Doechii said in her acceptance speech, addressing the anti-ICE protests in Los Angeles, where the National Guard and US Marines are being deployed.

“I want y’all to consider what kind of government it appears to be, when every time we exercise our democratic rights to protest, the military is deployed against us,” she added. — Reuters

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



FASHION

A model presents a creation of students from the bachelor’s and master’s degree of the fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts during the ‘Show 2025’ end of year, in Antwerp. — AFP



FILM

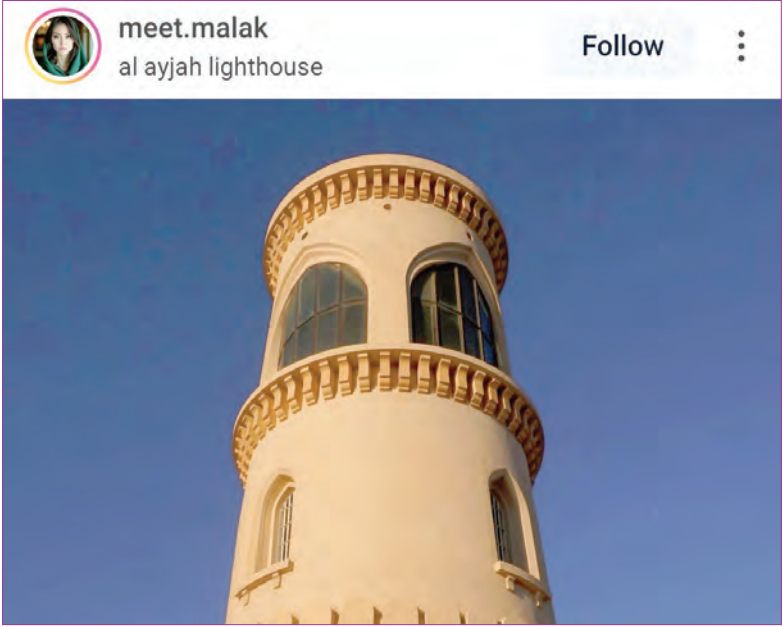
Scottish actor Gerard Butler attends the premiere of Dreamworks’ live-action version of “How To Train Your Dragon” at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A man poses for pictures next to a life-sized Labubu figurine displayed before an auction in Beijing. The figurine was later sold for 820,000 yuan at an auction by Yongle International Auction on Tuesday. — Reuters

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‘Largest Princess Diana auction’ features frocks, hats and bags



FROM COLOURFUL frocks and hats to handbags and shoes, items belonging to the late Princess Diana go under the hammer this month in what Julien’s Auctions says is the largest collection of her fashion to go to auction. The live and online “Princess Diana’s Style & A Royal Collection” sale will take place on June 26 at The Peninsula Beverly Hills, offering an array of fashion items Diana wore. “This is the largest Princess Diana auction because we have over 100 items from her amazing life and career... keeping in mind Diana herself... sold over 70 of her dresses... back in 1997 to raise money for her charity,” Martin Nolan, executive director and co-founder of Julien’s Auctions, said on Monday. He was speaking at the Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge in Ireland during a pre-sale exhibition. Among the highlights is a 1988 silk floral dress by

Bellyville Sassoon, dubbed the “caring dress” because Diana wore it several times on hospital visits, with a price estimate of \$200,000-\$300,000. A cream silk embroidered evening gown Catherine Walker designed for Diana’s 1986 Gulf tour has a similar price tag, while a Bruce Oldfield two-piece yellow floral ensemble she wore for Royal Ascot in 1987 is estimated at \$100,000-\$200,000. Other sale items include a Dior handbag gifted to her by former French first lady Bernadette Chirac in 1995, a sketch of Diana’s 1981 wedding dress with tulle fabric cut-offs from when she married then Prince Charles in 1981 and a peach hat she wore for her honeymoon send-off. Nolan said Julien’s Auctions had previously sold a dress belonging to Diana for \$1.14 million. The pre-sale exhibition in Newbridge will run until June 17. — Reuters



Lost Donatello sculpture discovered in Slovakia raises questions about authenticity and heritage

A BUST attributed to Renaissance master Donatello has re-emerged in Slovakia after falling into obscurity following World War II, but the country’s nationalist government has sparked anger by stowing it away in a ministry building. The sculpture of Italian noblewoman Cecilia Gonzaga spent centuries in a manor house in central Slovakia, whose owners, the noble Csaky family, left it behind when they fled the advancing World War II front in 1945. Moved about and ultimately forgotten in the aftermath, it was sitting in a depository at the Spis Museum in the eastern town of Levoca when art historian Marta Herucova [inset] stumbled across it. The bust had been marked “unknown author”. But Herucova noticed the base was inscribed with the words: “Ceciliae Gonzagae opvs Donatelli” (Cecilia Gonzaga, a work by Donatello). If confirmed, it would be only the eighth artwork signed by the Italian Renaissance sculptor to be discovered worldwide. Herucova made the find in 2019, but it was only announced in February — surprising the country. “Who would expect an original Donatello to appear in Slovakia?” former museum director Maria Novotna said. But the bust is now a subject of controversy. Nationalist Culture Minister Martina Simkovicova decided to remove it from the museum and bring it to an unknown location in late May, citing security concerns. The move dismayed critics and art historians, who say the bust needs expert conservation and research to confirm if it is really by Donatello (1386-1466).

- ‘SECOND EXPROPRIATION’ - A group of cultural sector representatives including Count Moritz Csaky has meanwhile lobbied for the bust to go on display. Csaky said in a statement on



Monday that his family did not make any claim for restitution but cautioned “against individual artefacts becoming the plaything of power-political or commercial speculations”. “I hope that the bust will not become the victim of a second expropriation and will once again find a dignified and honourable place in the Spis Museum,” he added. The bust has an epic backstory. After the Csaky family fled, Soviet troops looted their house, which then became a juvenile detention centre for girls after the communist government took over what was then Czechoslovakia in 1948. The girls played with the bust and even defined its eyes with blue pen, said Peter Cizmar, the son of a former guardian. In 1975, artwork still surviving at the centre was moved to the nearby Spis Museum. Attributed to an unknown 19th-century artist, the bust “was put in a depository and had not left it since”, said former director Novotna, an art historian. Novotna was in charge of the museum catalogue as a young woman, and now regrets she did not have time to research the item as she was swamped with work.

- DINNER COMPANION - In 2019, Herucova was working on the museum’s 19th-century collection when she found the piece. “The bust just came up,” she said. After noticing the inscription, she started in-depth research. She suspected forgery, but the material, details and inscription were all too telling, she said. “Even artists who made Renaissance-style busts never signed them in the name of the original author,” Herucova said. She wrote about the finding in the French art history magazine Revue de l’Art, waiting for someone to contest the bust’s origin — which has not happened. Herucova also contacted Csaky, who had no clear recollection of its origin either, as his family left for Vienna when he was 11. But he did recall seeing the bust on a porch where the family dined in summer. “He said there used to be two original Gothic statues next to it, which are also in the museum today,” Herucova said.

- ‘SAFE AND PROTECTED’ - Herucova also contacted Italian art history professor Francesco Caglioti, who voiced doubt about the authorship but declined to elaborate. She is now pinning hopes on research in cooperation with foreign institutions. But for now, the bust is hidden away. Simkovicova, the culture minister who ordered it be moved with the help of a police commando, said it was “now safe and protected”. Police chief Jana Maskarova later said the bust was at an interior ministry centre in Topolcianky, central Slovakia. Simkovicova promised to display the bust when “conditions are favourable”. Herucova hopes the ministry will not try to revamp the bust, which should retain its patina, she said. “It’s supposed to go to a professional place where they know how to do lab analyses.” — AFP

FEATURES



more accessible than other mountain destinations in Oman like Al Jabal Al Akhdhar or Jabal Shams. Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, famous for its terraced farms and luxury resorts, often requires a four-wheel-drive, while Jabal Shams — which is about two hours away — demands a bit more planning and preparation. Jabal Hatt doesn't have that strict requirement, making it a favourite among many families who just want a quick, easy getaway. People bring along everything they need — tents, food and drinks — and settle in for a few days amidst nature.

In recent years, Oman has become more popular for wild camping, especially among the younger crowd. Unlike Europe, where permits and strict regulations often restrict outdoor camping, Oman offers a freer experience. The landscape is open for those seeking adventure, with plenty of spots for wild camping — just pitch your tent and enjoy the serenity of the mountains. However, Jabal Hatt itself is starting to develop more facilities. There are a couple of small hotels like Shorfet Al Ameen, which offers private rooms with pools overlooking the canyons, as well as some camping grounds equipped with dome tents, toilets and basic kitchens. It's a step in the right direction, but there's still room for improvement.



HOT SUMMER MAKES JABAL HATT THE PERFECT MOUNTAIN RETREAT

BY YERU EBUEN

LAST WEEKEND in Oman was a lively mix of tradition, family and adventure, all wrapped up in the celebration of Eid Al Adha. It's one of the most important religious festivals in the country and Omani families took it as an opportunity to reconnect with their roots and loved ones. Most headed off to their villages, where the entire week was mapped out with prayers, family gatherings and the preparation of shuwa — a slow-cooked, aromatic meat dish that's a highlight of Eid festivities. The days are filled with sharing meals, catching up and celebrating together — a true reflection of the close-knit community spirit Oman is proud of.

Once those family and religious obligations are fulfilled, many turn to leisure activities and one of the most popular spots lately is Jabal Hatt. Tucked away in the rugged mountains outside the capital, Muscat, Jabal Hatt has become a favourite for weekend

getaways. It's a stunning mountain area, known for its dramatic landscape — rugged cliffs, lush greenery and sweeping views. The mountain itself rises about 1,300 metres above sea level and offers a cooler escape from the heat of the city. Visitors describe it as a place where the air is fresher and the scenery is truly breath-taking.

Jabal Hatt is located around 220 kilometres from Muscat, in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. It's an area gaining reputation for its natural beauty, attracting not just locals but tourists from outside Oman as well. What makes it appealing is its accessibility; unlike some other mountain areas in Oman, going to Jabal Hatt doesn't require a four-wheel-drive. A regular car or even a sedan can make the drive to the viewpoints, which is a big draw for families and casual explorers alike. Near the top, there are spots perfect for pitching a tent, enjoying the cool mountain breeze and just relaxing away from the city's hustle.

Throughout the long Eid weekend, thousands of Omanis headed to Jabal Hatt. It was quite the sight — as if the entire city of Muscat had decided to escape to the mountains. Tents and cars filled nearly every available viewpoint, creating a lively, vibrant scene. A visitor told us that the mountain was packed with families, all celebrating Eid in their own way — some camping under the open sky, others just enjoying the panoramic views. It's become a yearly tradition for many, especially during summer when the weather is just right — warm enough during the day but pleasantly cool at night. Stories from locals say that families often plan their summer trips months in advance, eager to escape the city's heat and enjoy the mountain's fresh air.

What's especially popular about Jabal Hatt is that it's

The main challenge facing Jabal Hatt is infrastructure. With thousands of visitors every year, the lack of sufficient toilets and bathroom facilities becomes obvious. Many campers have to drive 10 to 20 minutes down the mountain to find proper amenities. Food options are limited too — there are very few shops or restaurants on-site, so visitors usually bring everything they need or drive to nearby towns for supplies. This, along with the area's seasonal status, means that further development and investment are needed to make it truly popular year-round.

But what made this weekend truly memorable was the weather. The last couple of months in Oman has been humid and hot. During the Eid holiday, Jabal Hatt experienced some unexpected rainfall and the rolling fog that settled over the mountain was something campers loved.

That unexpected rain and fog turned Jabal Hatt into a magical playground for families. The mist rolling over the peaks created an almost surreal atmosphere — a perfect backdrop for photos and memorable moments.

Jabal Hatt continues to be a top pick for summer holidays. It offers a genuine outdoor experience without the extensive planning or equipment needed for more remote destinations. Families can arrive with minimal fuss, set up a tent, enjoy the scenery and spend quality time together, all within a short drive from Muscat. The combination of easy access, scenic views and pleasant weather has cemented its status as a beloved spot for both locals and visitors seeking a quick escape from the city's pace.

If you're planning to camp over this weekend and eye Jabal Hatt as your destination, you might need to go early so you can pick the right spot.