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20

THE SAMURAI OF DHOFAR: A NEW FACE FOR AN ANCIENT MOUNTAIN IDENTITY

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PRESIDENT OF RWANDA ARRIVES ON MONDAY

MUSCAT: President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda will pay an official two-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman on Monday.

This was announced in a statement issued on Saturday by the Diwan of Royal Court, the text of which is as follows: “In pursuit of strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and

the Republic of Rwanda in all that serves to advance their shared interests across various fields, President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman on September 7-8. The visit stems from the mutual commitment to develop and expand joint ties in a manner that brings goodness and benefit to the peoples of the two friendly

countries.

“The visit will address a set of topics of mutual concern to both countries and means of promoting them in a manner that serves their interests and meets their aspirations.”

Bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda continue to evolve across multiple sectors, reflecting the shared commitment. **SEE P2**

HARWEEB-METEN ROAD OPENS

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology opened the ‘Harweeb-Meten’ road in the Wilayat of Al Mazyouna, and the asphalt road network in the Wilayat of Muqshin in the Governorate of Dhofar, with a total length of about 380 km for the two projects. HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, said: “The governorate is witnessing a broad momentum in developing its infrastructure, as road projects represent one of the main pillars of development efforts, stressing the continuation of work to strengthen and develop the road network in the various wilayats of the governorate. **DETAILS ON P3**

IN BRIEF

‘LIVE OMAN’ INITIATIVE IN LONDON ON SEPT 21

London will host the ‘Live Oman’ initiative on September 21, with the aim of presenting the urban development projects and investment opportunities of the Sultanate of Oman to a wide international audience. The initiative seeks to open a direct window to attract investors and buyers from global markets, in line with the strategic directions of the unified promotional identity of Oman, and in a way that contributes to presenting it to the world as an integrated destination that is attractive for living, investment, tourism, and business growth. The ‘Live Oman’ pavilion showcases a variety of investment options.

BRAIN-DEAD DONOR’S ORGANS SAVE LIVES

The National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital, in collaboration with the Omani Centre for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, successfully performed its fourth heart transplant in Oman. In addition, four organ transplants were performed using organs obtained from a brain-dead donor, thus saving the lives of four patients. This medical achievement reflects the high level of efficiency and preparedness the Royal Hospital has attained as well as the integrated coordination with the government and military health systems in the Sultanate of Oman and the University Medical City. **DETAILS ON P3**

876,117

STUDENTS START NEW ACADEMIC YEAR TODAY

A total of 876,117 students will start their new academic year (2026/2027) on Sunday in 1,298 schools spread across the Sultanate of Oman.

The number of male students enrolled for the new academic year stands at 440,899, while the number of female students reached 435,218. A total of 3,903 students are registered in special educational programmes in the public and private schools. Schools are distributed as follows: 341 schools for grades 1-4, 128 schools for grades 5-8, and 165 schools for grades 9-12, in addition to 664 continuing schools in addition to 115 evening schools.

The total number of teaching, administrative, and technical staff in public schools for the 2026/2027 academic year stands at 68,205. This includes 21,011 male teachers, 47,194 female teachers, and 12,200 administrative and technical staff of whom 4,832 are male and 7,368 are female.

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, congratulated students, teachers, and workers on the occasion of the new academic year.

The minister of education said that the institutional transformation in the education sector, with the merger of the erstwhile ministry of education and ministry of higher education, research and innovation into the Ministry of Education, embodies a national vision for an integrated education system. This system unifies policies and connects the educational pathway from pre-school to higher education

STUDENT ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW

Male 440,899

Female 435,218

Special Education 3,903

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS

Grades	Number of Schools
1-4	341
5-8	128
9-12	165
Continuing	664
Evening	115

thereby enhancing alignment between educational outcomes and labour market requirements to improve the efficiency of the education system. **TURN TO P3**

US military says destroys Iranian oil tankers after missile attacks

WASHINGTON: The United States said it struck and destroyed three Iranian oil tankers on Saturday in response to attempted missile attacks on naval vessels, in the latest exchange of fire since renewed hostilities flared between the countries.

The new clashes, which began with US raids last week, come with both sides deadlocked in the six-month war as Iran keeps a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz and Washington presses its counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it targeted tankers linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), accusing them of unsuccessfully firing at American warships.

“Following Iran’s failed attacks, CENTCOM permanently disabled the IRGC crude oil carriers M/T Downy off the coast of Kharg Island and M/T Stark 1 near Jask,” it said.

“American forces also completely destroyed the unladen crude oil carrier M/T Kylo..., striking the vessel in multiple critical locations to render it inoperable after the crew was directed to abandon ship.”

Video posted by CENTCOM showed large fireballs and billowing flames after projectiles slammed into the ships.

In addition to its renewed military action, Washington is seeking to choke Iran’s economy, announcing sanctions on entities with financial links to the Islamic republic.

After the strikes, CENTCOM commander Admiral Brad Cooper said: “If you shoot at two of our ships, we will impose an even higher economic cost — taking out three of yours.”

Iranian media had reported several explosions earlier on Saturday near the country’s major oil hub of Kharg Island.

Last Thursday, Tehran had said that its armed forces attacked US military bases in the region, vowing to avenge civilian deaths at a wedding that it blamed on an American strike.

US Vice-President J D Vance said the alleged wedding strike, which the Iranian Red Crescent said killed four people in a southern coastal town last Tuesday night, was being investigated but he himself was “sceptical” of the reports. — AFP



OMAN, RWANDA BOLSTER RELATIONS

BILATERAL RELATIONS between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda continue to evolve across multiple sectors, reflecting the shared commitment of both countries to strengthen cooperation and expand the scope of partnership, building upon diplomatic ties, which were established in 1982.

The upcoming official visit of President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman comes within the framework of mutual interest in advancing bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation in the political, economic, and investment spheres, thereby opening new horizons for partnership between Oman and Rwanda.

The two countries share a historical legacy rooted in Oman's longstanding connections with East Africa, which over the centuries have contributed to building bridges of commercial, humanitarian, and cultural exchange. This heritage constitutes a positive foundation for contemporary relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Rwanda, grounded in mutual respect, cooperation and openness to forging future partnerships.

Both countries have worked to strengthen their bilateral ties through official delegation visits. Olivier Nduhungirehe, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda, visited the Sultanate of Oman during 10-11 January 2026, leading a delegation that comprised four other Rwandan ministers, namely the Minister of Information and Communication Technology and Innovation, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, the Minister of State for Infrastructure, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Rwanda Development Board.

The visit facilitated meetings with a number of Omani ministers to exchange views and ideas on enhancing bilateral relations in service of shared interests. It also witnessed the signing of several agreements and cooperation programmes in the fields of transport, communications, and information technology, including a Memorandum of Understanding between the Rwanda Development Board and Oman Airports Management Company, aimed at enhancing cooperation in airport development and management, expertise exchange, and exploring investment opportunities in the aviation sector and related infrastructure.

A cooperation programme was also signed in the field of logistics services and the development and operation of inland ports (dry ports) and supply chain-related services, alongside a cooperation programme in data centres, cloud computing, infrastructure, and artificial intelligence projects and services.

In April 2025, the Sultanate of Oman signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Rwanda concerning the enhancement of cooperation in telecommunications and digital economy development, on the sidelines of Oman's participation in the Global Summit on Artificial Intelligence in Africa, held in Kigali. With a view to strengthening air connectivity between the two countries, the visit also saw the announcement of the launch of direct flights between Muscat and Kigali. SalamAir commenced its inaugural direct flights between Muscat and Kigali, Rwanda, on 21 July 2026, with two weekly flights, thereby enhancing direct connectivity between the two countries and supporting the development of economic, tourism, and investment relations.

At the political level, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, with his Rwandan counterpart Olivier Nduhungirehe in Muscat. — ONA file photo

Minister, met with his Rwandan counterpart in New York in September 2025, on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, as part of ongoing communication between the two countries and the exchange of views on various matters of mutual concern.

Rwanda pursues a policy of openness and partnership-building, focusing on promoting stability and sustainable development. Its international relations are anchored in economic diplomacy, investment attraction, and active participation in peacekeeping efforts. Rwanda is a member of several international and regional organisations, including the United Nations, the African Union, and the East African Community, in addition to its membership in the Commonwealth.

Diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda date back to 1982 and were established at the level of non-resident ambassadors. Oman's diplomatic representation to Rwanda is currently conducted through the Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in Nairobi, while Rwanda's diplomatic representation to Oman is conducted through its Embassy in Cairo.

President Kagame's visit to the Sultanate of Oman is expected to further strengthen economic relations and increase the volume of bilateral trade, as current indicators open the door for its development and expansion, particularly in light of enhanced air connectivity and the signing of several agreements and cooperation programmes in logistics and supply chain integration.

Numerous opportunities for cooperation and investment exist between the two countries, encompassing trade, energy, renewable energy, mining, inland ports, airports, hospitality, healthcare, and education.

Economic and trade relations between the two countries have witnessed several milestones, including the participation of over 80 Omani companies from various industrial sectors in the Omani Products Exhibition (OPEX 2020), held in Kigali in March 2020, to promote trade exchange and target

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN OMAN AND RWANDA WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1982

RWANDAN FOREIGN MINISTER OLIVIER NDUHUNGIREHE LED A DELEGATION TO MUSCAT IN JANUARY

DIRECT FLIGHTS BETWEEN MUSCAT AND KIGALI WERE LAUNCHED BY SALAMAIR ON JULY 21

OMAN AIRPORTS AND THE RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD SIGNED AN MOU FOR AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

BOTH NATIONS FINALISED AN AGREEMENT FOCUSING ON JOINT PROJECTS IN DATA CENTRES, CLOUD COMPUTING, TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

INITIATIVES LIKE THE OPEX 2020 EXHIBITION IN KIGALI—TARGETS KEY GROWTH SECTORS INCLUDING TRADE, ENERGY, MINING, HOSPITALITY, HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION



80 Omani firms showcased products at OPEX 2020 held in Kigali.

the Rwandan market. Exhibited products included food items, plastics, building materials, and others. Two trade agreements were signed, the first between Tatronk Middle East Technical Services and Al Rashidi General Trading Company, concerning the export of the "Oman Tak" product for hot and cold pipes; and the second between the National Pharmaceutical Industries Company and Sun Enterprises Rwanda, concerning product registration, marketing, and distribution in the Rwandan market through various pharmacies and hospitals.

An Air Services Agreement was signed in 2023 and entered into force on 12 January 2026, in addition to the Memorandum of Understanding on telecommunications, information technology, and digital economy development signed in April 2025, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Rwanda Development Board and Oman Airports Management Company, and the two cooperation programmes in logistics services and inland ports, and in data centres, cloud computing, infrastructure, and artificial intelligence projects and services, all of which were concluded in January 2026.

Rwanda, located in East Africa, is a country that has undergone rapid

transformation and achieved relative stability after decades of turmoil.

Rwanda is known for its mountainous terrain, which has earned it the sobriquet "Land of a Thousand Hills." The tourism sector, particularly nature-based tourism, constitutes a cornerstone of its economy, with national parks that are home to rare mountain gorillas.

Rwanda's economy is among the fastest-growing in Africa. Traditionally reliant on agriculture—with key crops including coffee, tea, maize, and potatoes—the country is increasingly focusing on the services sector, particularly information technology, tourism, and financial services, as part of the implementation of "Rwanda Vision 2050", which aims to transform Rwanda into a knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy, achieve high-income country status, and strengthen its position as a regional hub for business, investment, and conferences in East Africa.

Rwanda offers investment opportunities across a number of sectors, including agriculture, livestock, tourism, hospitality, mining, information and communications technology, industry, energy, and pharmaceuticals, in addition to the development of special economic zones and infrastructure. — ONA

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SHORT TAKES



Female students account for 5,868, compared with 4,695 males.

UTAS welcomes over 10,000 students for 2026-27 academic year

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) has welcomed more than 10,000 students across its branches and academic programmes for the 2026/2027 academic year, with the number of admitted and registered students reaching 10,563.

Data on registered students showed that all admitted students are Omani nationals, with female students accounting for 5,868, compared with 4,695 males.

The newly registered students are distributed among the university's branches across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Ibri branch recorded the highest number with 1,935 students, followed by Muscat with 1,581 students, Shinas with 1,337 students and Salalah with 1,313 students. The remaining students are distributed among the university's branches in Nizwa, Ibra, Al Musannah, Suhar, Sur, Al Rustaq and Musandam.

At the academic programme level, Business Administration and Commercial Studies programmes attracted the largest number of new students, with 3,372 students, followed by Engineering programmes with 3,077 students and Computer and Information Science programmes with 2,947 students.

Creative Industries programmes recorded 530 students, followed by Education programmes with 358 students, and Applied Sciences and Pharmacy programmes with 279 students. The university also recorded demand for a number of specialised programmes, including Applied Sciences, Applied Biotechnology, Media and Mass Communication, Design and Teacher Preparation programmes, reflecting the range of academic options offered by the university.

The registration process took place from 20 to 25 August 2026, during which the university registered more than 10,000 students, with 10 withdrawals recorded. UTAS continues to develop its learning environments, infrastructure and modern educational technologies, while expanding partnerships with the government and private sectors.

380 KM OF ROADS OPENED TO TRAFFIC IN DHOFAR

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, on Saturday, opened the Harweeb-Mitn Road in the Wilayat of Al Mazyouna and the tarmac road network in the Wilayat of Muqshin in Dhofar Governorate with a total length of nearly 380 kilometres.

HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, who inaugurated the projects, said that the Dhofar Governorate is witnessing significant development to its infrastructure, as road projects represent one of the main pillars of the comprehensive development process. Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said, "The Harweeb-Metin road project is crucial for enhancing the connectivity and transportation system in the Dhofar Governorate.

It connects the centre of Wilayat of Al Mazyouna with its sub-districts, enhances its link to the Al Mazyouna dry port and free zone, and provides access to the land border crossing with the sisterly Republic of Yemen."

This will enhance the wilayat's role as a hub for trade and logistics, facilitate the smooth flow of goods, stimulate economic and commercial activity, and enhance investment, tourism and related services.

The minister said that the asphalt

“The Harweeb-Metin road project is crucial for enhancing the connectivity and transportation system in the Dhofar Governorate. It connects the centre of Wilayat of Al Mazyouna with its sub-districts, enhances its link to the Al Mazyouna dry port and free zone, and provides access to the land border crossing with the sisterly Republic of Yemen

ENG SAID
AL MAAWALI
Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology



HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, inaugurates the projects in Al Mazyouna on Saturday. — ONA



network project in the Wilayat of Muqshin aims to improve connectivity between the wilayat's centre and its sub-districts and surrounding areas.

The Harweeb-Miten road project

involves the construction and paving of a total road length of 210 kilometres, distributed as follows: Harweeb-Andat (45 km), Andat-Tusnat (26 km), Tusnat-Al Mazyouna (39 km), Al Mazyouna-Miten (90 km), and the Andat-Habrut (10 km).

The tarmac network project in the Wilayat of Muqshin involves the construction of a road network with a total of 170 km starting from the wialayat's centre, passing through Mandar Al Dhibyan, Al Mashash, Marsudd, Al Manadir, and Shajaj, and ending in Marsudd. This will enhance connectivity between the wilayat's centre and its sub-districts and surrounding areas. — ONA

18 new school buildings to open across governorates this year

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, the minister of education, said the ministry has a priority to improve the quality of school and higher education through several pillars, the most prominent of which is ensuring quality education.

Within the framework of education sector governance, the ministry attaches great importance to the results of external evaluations of public

and private schools, as well as the institutional and programme accreditation procedures for non-governmental higher education institutions, which are implemented by the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education. The ministry is committed to utilising the outcomes of these processes to empower institutions to develop their performance and improve the quality of graduates.

The minister of education stressed that investing in

teachers is an investment in the future of the nation being the cornerstone upon which the quality of education and its lasting impact are based.

She noted that the ministry is proud of its qualified teachers who are dedicated to their profession and their country.

The minister commended the Specialised Institute for Vocational Training for Teachers for its high-quality programmes that enhance professional development and

performance excellence. "This year will witness the opening of 18 new school buildings in various governorates, in order to meet the growth in the number of students, reduce the number of schools with two shifts, replace old buildings, and add educational facilities, educational technologies and scientific laboratories with the aim of providing a more suitable and attractive environment for teaching and learning," the minister said.

Organs from a brain-dead donor save lives of four patients

MUSCAT: The National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital, in collaboration with the Omani Centre for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, successfully performed its fourth heart transplant in the Sultanate of Oman. In addition, four organ transplants were performed using organs obtained from a brain-dead donor thus saving the lives of four patients.

This medical achievement reflects the high level of efficiency and preparedness the Royal Hospital has attained as well as the integrated coordination with the government and military health systems in the Sultanate of Oman and the University Medical City. It also highlights the progress made by national specialised

health services in the field of organ transplantation and confirms the competence of national medical professionals in performing complex procedures.

Dr Najib bin Zahran al Rawahi, Director of the National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital, said that the success of these complex procedures reflects the Center's commitment to the highest internationally recognised standards of quality and safety in providing advanced cardiac care. He added that heart transplantation is not merely a high-level surgical intervention, but rather an integrated system subject to strict protocols for evaluation and follow-up, and a comprehensive approach to total



Royal Hospital performs 4th successful heart transplant surgery from a brain-dead donor.

quality management in healthcare.

He added that this significant achievement is a testament to the unique harmony and integration among the various subspecialties within the Centre, including cardiac surgery, heart failure, aesthetics, cardiac intensive care, perfusion, and cardiac rehabilitation teams. He explained that collaboration among the various medical and paramedical teams is essential for ensuring the best possible outcomes and the continued success of the National Heart Transplant Programme.

Dr Noreen bint Yousef al Balushi, Director of the Omani Centre for Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, said that the

achievement reflects high level of collaboration and integration among intensive care units, organ donation teams, laboratories, logistics, and heart, liver, and kidney transplant teams. This collaboration ensures the maximum benefit from each donation, transforming the painful loss of life into new opportunities for several patients.

The number of organ transplants performed between January 1 and July 28, 2026, stood at 35 including 23 kidney transplants (15 from living donors and 8 from deceased donors), 9 liver transplants (6 from living donors and 3 from deceased donors), and 3 heart transplants all from deceased donors. The number of corneal transplants was 50. — ONA

OMAN

AI-POWERED
HOUSEHOLD
SURVEY RESULTS
DUE TODAY

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

Oman will today announce the results of its first AI-powered Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), marking a major step in the use of artificial intelligence in national statistical analysis and decision-making. The results will be announced under the auspices of Dr Khalifa bin Hamad al Barwani, CEO of the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). According to NCSI, the initiative forms part of its 'Smart Statistics' programme and represents a shift from traditional

survey methods towards AI-driven data collection and analysis, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the country's digital transformation efforts. Earlier HIES exercises in Oman covered 5,660 Omani and expatriate households across all governorates over a one-year period, generating data on household consumption, consumer prices and living standards. Dr Khalifa said statistical data had become a fundamental pillar of policymaking, with more than 95 per cent of surveys relying on national records. He added that Oman ranked ninth globally in data openness.

"The main goal of the Centre's AI-powered Household Income and Expenditure Survey is to provide timely data and survey results with greater accuracy," he said. He said AI would enable surveys to be conducted and analysed more rapidly while improving data quality and the accuracy of economic and social indicators, thereby supporting policymaking and sustainable development. The project, announced last year in NCSI's annual publication, represents a transition from traditional field-based methods to an AI and machine-learning system for conducting

and analysing the household income and expenditure survey. The system was developed for NCSI by AiSPRY in partnership with Otech Oman, with the aim of modernising economic data collection, accelerating processing and improving the accuracy of national social and financial indicators. NCSI said the system complies with Oman's Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) and is hosted on secure, sovereign domestic cloud infrastructure. The AI engine uses machine-learning models, including time-series, regression and classification techniques, to identify income trends and spending patterns.



THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tenders Advertisement

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

Tender Reference	Subject	Grade	Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable)	Submission Date
07/2026	Consulting Services for Studying and Implementing Digital Transformation Projects	I & above	SME R.O. 10/- L.O R.O. 65/-	12 th October 2026
08/2026	Refurbishment of some facilities at Al Husn Mess, Seeb	III & above	SME R.O. 10/- L.O R.O. 60/-	12 th October 2026
09/2026	Provision for Insurance Policy Covers for year 2027	I & above	R.O. 25/-	12 th October 2026

Specialized companies registered in the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the above-mentioned Grade and the Procurement and Contracts Directorate of the General Directorate of Finance, Royal Guard of Oman, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from **Sunday 06th September to Thursday 10th September 2026.**

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

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

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DHOFAR LOOKS TO SEPT TO SUSTAIN TOURISM MOMENTUM

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 5

Dhofar is entering a different phase of its tourism season — the weeks immediately following the main family holiday rush. Khareef is still under way, but the character of tourism is beginning to change. The Tour of Salalah and the Dhofar International Film Festival began on Saturday, only days after several major family-oriented Khareef programmes concluded at the end of August. The Dhofar International Theatre Festival will follow from September 14 to 22. The timing puts renewed focus on September, a month that falls between Dhofar's family-dominated Khareef peak and the winter tourism period that begins to gather momentum from October. Occupancy at three- to five-star hotels across Dhofar reached 49.3 per cent in September 2025, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), compared with 35.3 per cent in September 2024. That represents an increase of 14 percentage in a month when the reopening of schools removes much of the domestic family market that drives travel during July and August. The figures provide a useful indication of tourism activity as the largest Khareef crowds begin to recede. Nearly half of the available room



capacity in Dhofar's classified hotels was occupied on average during September last year, even as visitor numbers remained well below the August peak. NCSI said 881,424 visitors arrived between June 21 and August 15, up 6.6 per cent from 827,115 during the corresponding period last year. September 2026 visitor and hotel data are not yet available, making it too early to determine whether the month will outperform last year. However, the tourism calendar remains active. The four-stage Tour of Salalah runs until September 9, bringing together 95 riders representing 16 teams and 28 nationalities on routes crossing Dhofar's coastal, mountain and heritage landscapes. Over the same four days, the second Dhofar International Film Festival will screen 32 films from 16 countries. The Dhofar International Theatre

Festival opens on September 14 and continues until September 22, extending the governorate's international cultural programme into the latter part of the month. Abdulaziz Jaaboob, a tour guide and tourism company owner, says the end of the school holidays changes the nature of tourism demand rather than bringing activity to an abrupt halt. "Khareef is an exceptional season for family tourism, and the largest number of families come to Dhofar during July and August," he said. "In September and October, the pattern begins to move towards individual travellers and couples. From October, the European and winter tourism season also begins." Jaaboob said adventure tourism was also attracting greater interest, adding another segment that is less dependent on the school holiday calendar and conventional family-oriented Khareef itineraries.

Grand Millennium Muscat brings Hospitality beyond the Hotel



HOSPITALITY is built around caring for people. Demonstrating this commitment beyond the hotel doors, Grand Millennium Muscat recently brought its colleagues together for a Blood Donation Drive at the Central Blood Bank in Bawshar, Muscat. Organised as part of the hotel's ongoing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, the initiative saw eligible colleagues come forward to donate blood, turning a simple act of generosity into a meaningful contribution to the community. The initiative reflects the wider philosophy of Millennium Hotels & Resorts' Responsible Hospitality approach, which

places people, communities and the environment at the heart of the Group's corporate responsibility efforts. Through Millennium's Green Path, the Group continues to focus on creating a positive impact in the communities in which it operates through employment, development opportunities and support for local community initiatives. "At Grand Millennium Muscat, we believe hospitality goes far beyond welcoming guests. It is also about being present for the community we are part of. We are proud of our colleagues who came together for this initiative and gave something truly meaningful — an opportunity to help save lives and support

those in need," said Aisha Al Rubkhi, Director of Human Resources, Grand Millennium Muscat. The blood donation drive, held biannually, is part of Grand Millennium Muscat's continued commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for colleagues to give back and make a positive difference within the local community. The initiative also served as a reminder that meaningful community impact often begins with individual acts of kindness. For Grand Millennium Muscat, the message is simple: some of the most valuable things we can give cannot be wrapped in a box — but they can help save a life.

Early Alzheimer's diagnosis can improve care and protect rights

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

Early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia can help patients access treatment sooner, maintain independence for longer and allow families to plan for their future, Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Chairman of the Oman Alzheimer's Society, has said. The comments came during a discussion session organised by the Oman Alzheimer's Society's Purple Café for caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's disease. September is observed as World Alzheimer's Month. The official theme for 2026 is "The Earlier You Know, The More You Can Do: A Dementia Diagnosis Matters." Speaking to Observer, Dr Al Sinawi said September is dedicated to raising awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, which affect more than 55 million people worldwide. He stressed that a timely diagnosis is particularly important for people experiencing memory problems. "Early diagnosis brings with it several benefits. First of all, it gives a name to a condition that the family sees when they notice disturbed behaviour," he said. Families may see a loved one becoming confused, failing to recognise relatives or behaving differently. In some cultures, such changes may be attributed to supernatural causes or viewed as difficult behaviour, leading families to seek help from traditional healers rather than medical professionals, he noted. Early diagnosis can also enable patients to benefit from available medications that may slow disease progression and improve quality of life. It can help people remain capable of



Dr Sinawi addressing the session of Oman Alzheimer's Society's Purple Café for caregivers.

managing daily activities independently for longer, reducing the burden on caregivers. Dr Al Sinawi also highlighted the importance of early diagnosis in protecting a person's financial rights. As Alzheimer's progresses, a person may eventually have difficulty understanding the value of money and managing financial transactions. The Purple Café discussion featured two speakers from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and Innova Mental Health Clinic. Dr Ghadeer al Nuaimi spoke about managing difficult behaviour in people living with Alzheimer's, while Dr Qutoof al Kindi addressed the mental-health challenges faced by caregivers. Dr Al Nuaimi emphasised the importance of maintaining emotional connection as cognitive abilities decline. "When cognition declines, connection becomes even more important," she said. She also encouraged caregivers to reflect on their own behaviour and responses. Caregivers may adopt different approaches, including being calm and validating, anxious, critical, overprotective or avoidant.

Zad programme grooms students for study abroad



The programme supports around 550 students pursuing govt-sponsored scholarships.

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

THE THREE-DAY Zad: Promising Omani Leaders Initiative, organised by the Royal Academy of Management (RAM) in partnership with the Ministry of Education, concluded on Saturday at the German University of Technology in Oman (GUTech), bringing together Omani students preparing to pursue higher education abroad.

The initiative seeks to prepare students not only academically but also personally and culturally, equipping them with leadership skills, practical life skills and the confidence to adapt to new environments while representing

Oman and its values overseas.

The programme forms part of a national effort to invest in young Omani talent and strengthen students' readiness for overseas study. Its inaugural edition is supporting around 550 students pursuing government-sponsored scholarships, other scholarship opportunities and approved self-funded study pathways.

Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, President of RAM, said studying abroad represents more than an academic journey, describing it as a formative experience that requires personal maturity, leadership readiness and cultural awareness.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Shibli, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Higher Education, said the initiative

goes beyond academic preparation by developing students' leadership abilities, practical knowledge and life skills.

Salma bint Ibrahim al Wahibi, Supervisor of the initiative, stressed the importance of supporting students as they transition from school to university, particularly as they prepare to live independently and navigate unfamiliar academic and cultural environments.

During the three-day programme, students participated in courses, workshops and interactive activities designed to prepare them for life and study abroad.

Students also shared their experiences of the programme.

Jana bint Fahad al Balushi, who is preparing to study in Britain, said the initiative provided valuable lessons in communication, financial management and personal responsibility.

Issa al Hajri said the sessions addressed practical situations students may encounter abroad, including accessing healthcare, dealing with authorities, interacting with different communities and understanding cultural differences.

Al Sharif al Sarmi described Zad as valuable preparation for life abroad, particularly in helping students understand issues related to visas, accommodation, government services and adapting to new cultures.

India NDC delegation concludes Oman visit

MUSCAT: A high-level delegation from India's National Defence College (NDC) visited Oman from August 30 to September 3 as part of its Strategic Neighbourhood Study Tour.

Led by Air Vice Marshal Manish Vasantkumar Patel VM, Senior Directing Staff (Air) at NDC India, the delegation held discussions with a range of Omani authorities and institutions in Muscat.

During the visit, the delegation visited the Majlis Addawala and Majlis Ash'shura and interacted with members of the Oman Council. It also met Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, with discussions focusing on mutual security interests and broader India-Oman defence cooperation.

The delegation also held talks with Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of NDC Oman, on issues of bilateral importance, including training and academic cooperation.

The programme included exchanges with the Diplomatic Academy of Oman and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones. The visit provided an opportunity for high-level interaction between India and Oman and reaffirmed the two countries' shared commitment to peace, prosperity and regional stability.

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
420/2026	Supplying and installing (2) new external marine engines with all necessary accessories, and carrying out installation, testing, operation and delivery work for the safety boat at Musandam Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of Hygiene, washing and pest control registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with excellent or first or second or third or fourth class.	Sunday 20-09-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 05-10-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
424/2026	Implementig the Advanced Professional Diploma Program in Early Childhood	Companies specialized in the field of education, training, and human resources development services and registered with the Projects, Tenders, and Local Content Authority with an excellent, first, second, third, or fourth grade.	Friday 25-09-2026 02:00 PM	Thursday 15-10-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) . On **Sunday 06/09/2026**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

www.mosd.gov.om

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
30/ 2025	MEP works – Thumrait (Water Network)	First & Above - MEP works	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	1050/- R.O
29/ 2026	Building works – MAM	First & Above	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	368/- R.O
30/ 2026	Building works – MAM	First & Above	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	107/- R.O
31/ 2026	Building works – MAM	First & Above	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	100/- R.O
32/ 2026	Civil maintenance works - Salalah	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	158/- R.O
35/ 2026	Civil maintenance works - Thumrait	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	315/- R.O
36 / 2026	Civil maintenance works – AL-Mussanah	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	315/- R.O
37/ 2026	Civil maintenance works - Masirah	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	420/- R.O
38/ 2026	Civil maintenance works - Khasab	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	158/- R.O
39/ 2026	Building works – Seeb	First and above	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	254/100 R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.

The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).

Bidders shall present the omanization certificate issued by the ministry of labour prior to purchasing the tender documents provide that it meets the approved that it meets the approved minimum omanization percentage as stipulated by ministry of labour.

The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.

Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.

Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.

We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).

You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.

1. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).

2. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.

3. Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:

A. Financial (bill 1&2 separated file from bill 3)

B. Technical files.

4. Confirmation of site visit.

5. All addendums and circulars.

6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.

7. List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.

8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.

9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.

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

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Forces ride in pickup trucks along a road in the Hays district, south of Hodeidah. — AFP

FRESH YEMEN CLASHES KILL MORE THAN 60 PEOPLE

TAIZ: Fighting between Yemen’s government forces and the country’s Ansar Allah group killed more than 60 people on Saturday, including civilians, medical and military sources said. The renewed clashes in Yemen’s southwest over control of a gateway to the Red Sea came after Friday saw some of the deadliest fighting in years, following the collapse in July of a 2022 ceasefire.

According to three Yemeni military sources, 26 government troops were killed during several hours of fighting in the country’s southwest, while medical and military sources from the group said 31 fighters were killed. One medical source in the government-held city of Taiz said a missile strike also killed six civilians travelling by bus and wounded seven others.

In Hays district, 68 kilometres northwest of Taiz towards the Red Sea coast, journalists saw government forces being ferried to the front lines in pickup trucks, some carrying assault rifles and others with rocket-propelled grenades slung over their shoulders. On Friday, the fighting in Yemen killed 129 people. A military official said on Saturday that three air strikes by Saudi Arabia had targeted positions recently captured by the Ansar Allah group in Taiz. — AFP

PHILIPPINE VP POSTS BAIL AFTER ARREST ORDER



Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte shows the media a court order confirming she posted bail at the Quezon City Regional Trial Court. — Reuters

MANILA: Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte posted bail on Saturday after a trial court ordered her arrest on three counts of grave threats linked to comments she made about President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the first lady and a former House speaker.

Dressed in black and surrounded by dozens of police officers, Duterte told reporters outside the court that she did not feel safe and accused authorities of harassment, saying the case involved the president, the first lady, and Marcos’ cousin, heightening her fears. “If I post bail, the harassment won’t stop. If I don’t post bail, I’ll be taken to the police. I have no trust in the police; I have no trust in the courts. I do not feel safe at all,” Duterte said. She asked who would be held accountable “if I die tonight,” saying police would simply “wash their hands and call it an accident.”

The police accorded the vice-president the respect she deserved, Interior Minister Jonvic Remulla said when asked to comment on Duterte’s remarks. “It’s very unfortunate that all the pressure in her life is affecting her perception,” Remulla said in a phone message. — Reuters

INTENSIFYING BATTLE

Indonesia uses water bombing over wildfires



Indonesian authorities carried out a water bombing operation on Saturday to prevent wildfires from spreading in the future capital city Nusantara, a city official said. Fires have been intensifying since mid-August in buffer areas outside the core area in Nusantara, where the city’s development is concentrated, Nusantara authority environment and natural resources deputy Myrna Asnawati Safitri said. The operation will last until Sunday, but Myrna said it can be extended if necessary. — AFP

DAYS-LONG OPERATION

Rescue ongoing for trapped boy in Algeria



Rescuers were working on Saturday to free a 10-year-old boy who fell into an 80-metre-deep well in southwestern Algeria. The rescue operation has drawn widespread attention across the country, and social media has been awash with calls to save the boy, whom authorities have identified only as Ayoub. Teams have been working for four days to reach Ayoub after he fell into the well near his home in the desert municipality of Brezina. — AFP

DEVASTATING EPIDEMIC

Bangladesh measles toll nears 1,000



Bangladesh’s deadliest measles outbreak in decades is nearing the grim milestone of 1,000 child deaths, as a devastating epidemic sweeps through the country and crowded hospital wards fill with struggling babies. At least 986 children have died since March, while suspected and confirmed cases have surged past 180,000, according to the latest health ministry figures. The South Asian nation of 170 million has rolled out a mass vaccination drive to combat the outbreak. — AFP

Nepal tunnel rescue revives hopes 10 days after floods

RESCUERS IN Nepal pulled alive on Saturday a Chinese national from a tunnel and a local woman from her partially submerged home, as emergency response teams searched with renewed vigour for thousands missing since catastrophic flooding 10 days ago. A rescue team comprising personnel from the Nepal Army and foreign experts rescued the Chinese man from 225 metres inside the tunnel of the Upper Trishuli-1 Hydropower Project in Rasuwa district, a military statement said.

A picture of the rescue published on the army’s Facebook page showed the man, identified only as Luhaitao, with his arms around the shoulders of two camouflage-clad rescuers. He appeared alert, but his hands were covered in thick, wet mud. “His health is currently being assessed and further search and rescue operations are continuing,” the army said.

The man was among hundreds of hydropower workers who went missing after a tsunami-like wall of water and mud swept through the China-Nepal border following a vast glacial and rock collapse on August 26. Authorities later in the day said members of Nepal’s Armed Police Force pulled alive Chandrika Shrestha, 64, from her buried home in Nuwakot district. “A police team found her as they were clearing the area. She has been airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment,” police deputy superintendent Iqbal Hawari said.

A video released by Nepal’s Armed Police Force showed only part of her house visible, with the lower floors submerged by thick sludge. On Friday, two Nepali hydropower workers were rescued at the Trishuli 3A tunnel, where searches continued alongside multiple other sites, with at least 12 hydropower projects destroyed by the floods. Both men were reported to be in stable condition in a Kathmandu hospital.

So far, 1,344 bodies have been



Rescue personnel look through the window of a damaged building in Devighat, Nuwakot, Nepal. — Reuters

So far, 1,344 bodies have been recovered in Nepal, with around 5,000 people missing. In China, state media said 31 people had been killed and 531 were missing. That takes the overall death toll to 1,375 people, and more than 5,500 missing

recovered in Nepal, according to the national disaster agency, with around 5,000 people missing. In China, state media said 31 people had been killed and 531 were missing. That takes the overall death toll to 1,375 people, and more than 5,500 missing

The government initially said it believed more than 100 workers could be alive inside multiple tunnels. Experts from India, China, Australia and South Korea have been aiding Nepali rescuers in their search for survivors inside the blocked tunnels. Rescuers have also been relying on drones to deliver medicine, food and other supplies, as well as transporting bodies, in high-altitude areas hard to reach by roads. “We have sent a lot of relief material and right now our team is loading some materials for the hospital in the area,” drone operator Avaya Pokharel

said in Nuwakot.

The United Nations has warned that the “magnitude of the destruction” makes delivering aid an immense challenge, launching a \$50 million appeal to help more than 84,000 people affected by the disaster. With morgues overflowing, some 1,030 bodies have been buried in mass graves after taking DNA samples for future identification, Nepal Police said on Saturday.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah promised to provide “safe and comfortable accommodation” for thousands of people displaced by the disaster and currently living in temporary relief camps. “We know that staying there (in camps) is not easy for you,” he said in a social media post on Friday. He promised to “once again create an environment where you can dream about and build your future”. — AFP

LEBANON RAISES TOLL TO 4 DEAD IN ISRAELI STRIKES

BEIRUT: Lebanon on Saturday raised the toll in Israeli strikes on the country’s south and east overnight to four killed, with Israel saying it was responding to an attempted Hezbollah attack. Lebanon’s health ministry reported four people killed, including an 18-year-old woman, and 32 others wounded, including several women and children, in Israeli strikes on several locations on Friday, particularly in the Nabatieh region.

The raids came after Israel said on Thursday that it had taken control of the strategic Ali Al Taher ridge near south Lebanon’s Nabatieh. Hezbollah, which has not claimed any attacks on Israeli targets for weeks, on Saturday condemned the strikes, in its first statement since Israel announced it had captured the Ali Al Taher ridge.

The strikes also came after the International Committee of the Red Cross facilitated the transfer to Lebanon of four people detained by Israel, a day after another person was freed. Hezbollah called Israel’s release of the five detainees this week “significant”, but said the move “cannot serve as a pretext for overlooking the continuation of aggression, occupation and killing.” “Nor can it justify pursuing a course that has proven incapable of protecting Lebanon and its people,” Hezbollah added, referring to Lebanon’s direct negotiations with Israel. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



People protest in Zagreb over illegally dumped hazardous waste in the Lika region. — Reuters

Tens of thousands rally in Croatia over waste cleanup delays

ZAGREB: Tens of thousands of people gathered in Zagreb’s central square on Saturday to protest the government’s failure to begin cleaning up more than 30,000 tons of waste in central Croatia that environmentalists say is polluting the drinking water in the area. The protest, one of the biggest in Croatia in several years, was dubbed “Walk for Lika”, after the mountainous region where the waste is stored.

Authorities last year uncovered between 34,000 and 37,000 tons of waste, much of it imported from Italy in 2023 and 2024, at a site near the town of Gospic in Croatia’s Lika region. The government pledged to clean up the site, but environmental groups say little progress has been made. Environmentalists say the waste, which they say includes medical and other industrial waste, is contaminating air, soil and water in Lika, a region known for its vast areas of unspoiled nature. They accuse the government of moving too slowly to remove it.

Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic visited Gospic on Wednesday and said the government had selected a contractor for the first phase of the cleanup, which involves removing waste from the site. — Reuters

GREEK JET CRASHES DURING AIR SHOW



A Greek two-seat F-4 Phantom fighter jet crashed on Saturday during an air show at Tanagra airport, near Athens, a Greek Air Force official said. Video footage from public broadcaster ERT, which first reported the crash, showed a column of black smoke rising a few hundred metres from spectators watching the air show. Two helicopters were battling the fire on the spot. The fate of the pilots was not immediately known, and it was unclear whether anyone in the crowd had been injured, the official said. “A search and rescue operation is under way,” the official added. — Reuters

HUNGARY UPHOLDS ASYLUM TO MILITARY-AGE UKRAINIAN MEN

BUDAPEST: Hungary will continue to welcome Ukrainian men fleeing conscription, defying a recently adopted EU policy excluding new arrivals subject to the military draft, according to a government decree that entered into force on Saturday. In July, the European Union extended emergency protections for Ukrainians, which were introduced in the wake of Russia’s 2022 attack, giving them the right to live, work and claim benefits in the 27-nation bloc.

A decree published in Hungary’s official gazette late on Friday noted

that the central European country of 9.5 million voted against the adopted EU policy and continues to oppose it. “Hungary therefore continues to maintain the scope of persons covered under current Hungarian regulations,” read the order, signed by Prime Minister Peter Magyar.

Earlier, Magyar said Budapest would reserve the right to continue granting protection regardless of EU requirements, especially taking into account the sizeable ethnic Hungarian community in the Western Ukrainian region of Transcarpathia. The pro-EU

conservative premier added that he personally opposes the policy and shared his opinion with visiting European Council president Antonio Costa. “I find it disgraceful and incomprehensible that the European Union has decided, in effect, to lock up fathers and grandfathers in a country at war and to offer them no assistance,” Magyar said.

The new EU provisions do not affect military-age Ukrainian men already benefiting from temporary protection in member states, just new arrivals of males aged 23 to 60. — AFP

US envoys arrive in Moscow for new Ukraine peace talks

US SPECIAL representatives Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner landed in Moscow on Saturday for talks on how to end the war in Ukraine, where they were met by Russian presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev. A motorcade, carrying Witkoff, Kushner and Dmitriev, left Moscow’s governmental airport and headed towards the city, a Reuters witness said. Russian spokesman Dmitry Peskov told TASS news agency that President Vladimir Putin would meet Witkoff and Kushner in the Kremlin. US President Donald Trump suggested on Friday the US had a fresh concrete proposal aimed at ending the war, which is now in its fifth year. He did not, however, elaborate on what that proposal would be.

Russian envoy Dmitriev, who said in June that he had remained in contact with the US negotiators during a pause in their visits to Russia, took part in all their previous meetings with Putin alongside Putin’s foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov. He also played a role in negotiating US sanction waivers for Russian oil this year.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Friday the two men would fly to Ukraine on Sunday after visiting Moscow. In an X post on Saturday, Zelensky said Russia hit two Ukrainian airports ahead of US envoys’ visit to Kyiv. Peskov said in a statement posted on the Kremlin’s channel in Max messenger that Putin had ordered the military not to strike Kyiv for three



Russian presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev walks with US special representatives Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff upon their arrival at Vnukovo International Airport in Moscow. — Reuters

days, starting at midnight on Saturday, in connection with Witkoff and Kushner’s visit to the Ukrainian capital.

The Russian Defence Ministry reported 53 Ukrainian drones in Russian airspace on Saturday, significantly fewer than the average seen in recent months. Moscow is celebrating City Day on Saturday, with hundreds of thousands of people taking part in open-air festivities across the city. A vast gulf remains between Russia and Ukraine on

how to end the 4-1/2-year-old war, the deadliest in Europe since World War Two.

A source close to the Kremlin, speaking before reports emerged of a possible trip by President Trump’s envoys, said Putin was still intent on capturing more territory. “There is no chance of reaching an agreement regarding the front line until Putin finishes securing the remaining part of the Donetsk region,” the source said, adding that the Kremlin leader

was confident - based on reports from his commanders - that this would happen by the end of the year.

Western military analysts see such a possibility as remote, given Moscow’s slow rate of progress. Ukraine refuses to surrender land that it has successfully defended at huge cost, and rejects such terms as tantamount to surrender. The Kremlin said on Friday the position that Putin set out in a speech two years ago - that Ukraine should cede the entire territory of four regions claimed by Russia and abandon its plan to join Nato — was “unshakeable”.

Since the last peace talks in February, each side has intensified long-range air attacks deep inside the other’s territory, while the war at sea has also escalated. On the ground, the front lines have remained largely static, with Russia making only gradual gains in its attempt to take the whole of Ukraine’s Donbas region. Ukraine’s drone strikes on Russian oil refineries have led to a summer of fuel shortages and rising prices for Russian motorists, while some 30 attacks on giant warehouses belonging mostly to Wildberries, the country’s biggest online retailer, have affected the consumer economy. A Russian drone attack hit the headquarters of Ukraine’s SBU security service in Kyiv on Friday — the 10th consecutive day of heavy attacks on the capital - and Zelenskiy vowed to retaliate. — Reuters

UN approves map resolution that shows Africa’s true size

NEW YORK: The United Nations on Friday voted for a shift away from the 16th-century Mercator global map towards one more accurately reflecting countries’ true size, a resolution sponsored by African states to counter perceptions that the continent is peripheral.

Togo led the initiative to further the African Union campaign to limit use of the Mercator map, which distorts the relative size of land masses by expanding those nearer the poles. It makes Greenland appear roughly the same size as Africa, though Africa is about 14 times larger. “A fair world begins with a fair map,” Togo’s Foreign Minister Robert Dussey said ahead of Friday’s vote.

The resolution promotes the Equal Earth projection, which more accurately portrays the size of the continents. It is not legally binding and it “in no way challenges the use of the Mercator projection for maritime and aerial navigation, for which it remains fully suited,” the Togolese ministry said in a statement. The resolution passed in the UN General Assembly by a vote

The resolution promotes the Equal Earth projection, which more accurately portrays the size of the continents. It is not legally binding and it “in no way challenges the use of the Mercator projection for maritime and aerial navigation, for which it remains fully suited



People walk towards a sculpture of the African continent, painted with the flags of African nations, at the Place du Souvenir Africain in Dakar, Senegal. — Reuters

of 164 to 1 with 6 abstentions. The United States, the only country to vote against the resolution, said it promoted an “ideological agenda” and was a distraction from the “genuine problems

of international peace, prosperity or good relations”.

The Mercator map remains widely used in classrooms, but Togo hopes to change its school geography materials by

the end of the year, Dussey said. “Togo will be the first country to change our own geography books,” Dussey said. “In the classroom, we need to change it to give an example to all the countries in the world.” Togo will press other governments, schools, international organisations and technology companies to move away from the centuries-old Mercator projection, Dussey said, adding that Equal Earth offers “the best perception” of the world. Togo plans to meet African Union member states and supporters from other regions within the next six months to agree on how to promote wider adoption, Dussey said.

Dussey said the discussion about next steps would need to include companies operating mapping, GPS and other location-based technologies. Dussey linked the campaign to adopt the map to wider African efforts to confront colonial-era legacies, while saying it was not an attack on Europe or any other civilisation. The Mercator map’s widespread use is a consequence of colonisation, he said. “The world is changing. Africa also is changing.” — Reuters

OPINION

Alzheimer’s was not invented last Tuesday



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

LAST WEEK, a friend sent me a video of a young man who works as a personal trainer and nutritionist. The video was posted on Instagram, in which he claims that Alzheimer’s disease is an invention of greedy pharmaceutical companies selling false hope and that he can cure it through diet and a regular exercise programme. What startled me was not the claim itself but the number of likes and comments beneath it, as I saw several people agreeing with him and asking how they could buy his training package.

I felt obliged to reply, so I commented on his post that I believed he was misleading his viewers. Alzheimer’s disease has been with us for a very long time. What has changed is not the existence of the disease but our ability to detect it.

Physicians of earlier generations had few tools to separate it from what was casually believed to be a normal part of ageing, and fewer people lived long enough for Alzheimer’s to become common. I also reminded him that an unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity are documented risk factors for dementia, and I cited medical

journals for him to read. He promised to edit his video but kept trying to sell me what he claimed was an Alzheimer’s treatment package.

The frustrating part is that some of what he was saying was true. Large scientific reviews suggest that a substantial share of dementia cases worldwide are linked to risk factors we can modify. These factors include inactivity, obesity, diabetes, smoking, hearing loss, and social isolation. Exercise and a sensible diet genuinely matter. But there is a big difference in distance between saying “this reduces your risk” and “this cures the disease”, as the latter is clearly misleading.

During my clinical work, I sat with families who stopped a relative’s medication because someone online promised a natural cure and who then blamed themselves when the decline continued. I have also seen households spend their savings on supplements and programmes that do not work.

The Internet has always been a marketplace for bad ideas; some of these are less harmful than others. What troubles me is the newer species of misinformation where people who hold a real qualification

During my clinical work, I sat with families who stopped a relative’s medication because someone online promised a natural cure and who then blamed themselves when the decline continued”

in one field quietly extend its authority into another. A certificate in nutrition and personal training is a genuine achievement, yet it is not a licence to make a diagnosis, prescribe, or to tell a frightened family that a neurodegenerative illness will be cured by a meal plan.

This is why I read with interest that China’s Internet regulator now requires creators posting on medicine, law, finance and education to submit degrees, licences or certifications for verification, with platforms responsible for checking them. While this regulation prevents the public from being scammed, there are those who worry that it allows the government to easily censor independent analysts, economists, or journalists who question official state narratives.

In my opinion, the answer is not to silence the unqualified but to crowd them out. Many professionals who hold the relevant training are not active on social media and then complain about what fills the space they abandoned. If we do not explain Alzheimer’s disease to the public in clear, generous language, someone will certainly be selling false hopes.

MUSK PUSHES REGULATORY LIMITS WITH CYBERCAB

ABHIRUP ROY

Tesla’s race to deploy Cybercab robotaxis will put regulatory limits to the test as the EV maker begins paid rides in the sporty, two-seaters that run without a steering wheel, pedals or mirrors.

Just hours after an event in downtown Austin, Texas, to mark the rollout, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said it opened an audit of about 1,000 Cybercab vehicles to assess how Tesla determined the cars comply with federal vehicle-safety regulations.

US regulators limit commercial deployment of vehicles that do not adhere to decades-old federal safety standards that were written for human-driven vehicles and require manual controls. But industry experts said regulatory gray areas and Elon Musk’s litigious track record could give Tesla a chance to force the Cybercab into broad use anyway.

Amid a frenzy of fans and social media influencers in downtown Austin, Texas, Cybercabs were added to Tesla’s robotaxi fleet that now operates its best-selling Model Y SUVs. Tesla said Cybercab rides were open to everyone and executives described pricing plans.

The golden, butterfly-door Cybercab embodies Musk’s strategy of betting the company on self-driving software and robotics. That bet has pushed its stock valuation to \$1.4 trillion, more than the top several global automakers combined.

Unlike most other countries, where new vehicle models and technology need regulatory clearance ahead of launch, automakers in the U.S. can deploy them on the public roads by self-certifying that they meet federal standards.

“I don’t think there is a reasonable interpretation that can be made to suggest that the Cybercab can comply with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards,” said Michael Brooks, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, a consumer advocacy group.

While NHTSA is pushing faster than usual to change vehicle-safety standards and separately drafting new rules to accommodate driverless vehicles, its efforts, experts have said, are likely to take longer to kick in than what Musk is promising.

Musk is not known to wait for regulations, though. “Tesla historically has tested limits and pushed boundaries on regulations,” said Philip Koopman, a Carnegie Mellon University engineering professor and autonomous-vehicle safety expert. “I fully expect Tesla to test the limits.”

Musk could come up with a “creative interpretation” of vehicle regulation, say that Cybercabs comply with federal standards and “flood the market” with them, Koopman said. “That could take NHTSA or state regulators years to resolve. — Reuters

Peoples of the Middle East must not walk alone

THE MECCA Pact could become one of the most important constructive political developments in the history of the Middle Eastern region. Signed by Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan, with Bangladesh reportedly considering participation and Iran’s possible involvement under discussion, it offers a framework for regional consultation, cooperation and security. Its central purpose should be diplomacy.

The Pact should help countries in the region resolve disputes through dialogue, mediation and regular contact, rather than treating military action as a first response. If it reduces tensions, prevents escalation and encourages negotiation, it could achieve far more than any conventional military alliance. History shows that alliances based primarily on military power often lead to war rather than peace. For decades, regional security in the Middle East has depended heavily on outside powers, temporary coalitions and separate agreements between individual States. The Pact’s first task should be to establish a permanent forum for communication.

Ministers, diplomats, military officers and senior officials who meet regularly are less likely to misunderstand one another. They can exchange information, explain concerns and address problems before small incidents become serious crises. Members could discuss threats to shipping, energy installations, borders and civilian infrastructure. These mechanisms should support diplomacy, not replace it. Military communication should prevent incidents and create space for negotiation, not prepare for confrontation. Mediation and diplomacy should therefore remain central to the Pact.

When members face disputes, the Pact should offer impartial fact-finding, confidential talks



The pact should help countries in the region resolve disputes through dialogue, mediation and regular contact, rather than treating military action as a first response.



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

The Nato model should not be copied. Nato is primarily a military alliance, with diplomacy too often taking a back seat. That philosophy belongs to the past.

and diplomatic good offices before any member considers force. Committees could examine border disagreements, security incidents and disputes over trade or resources, seeking consensus wherever possible. The Nato model should not be copied. Nato is primarily a military alliance, with diplomacy too often taking a back seat. That philosophy belongs to the past.

The future of international relations depends on finding a more civilised approach to resolving disputes. The new Pact’s cooperation may include defence, but defence should remain subordinate to diplomacy. Other countries may consider joining as affiliated members so long as their sovereignty and independence remain fully intact. A looser structure might also encourage wider diplomatic participation beyond the Middle East.

States may be more willing to join provided membership focuses on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime safety and counterterrorism. Iran’s possible participation would give it greater significance. Saudi Arabia and Iran

together with Türkiye are among the region’s most influential states, and their relationship affects security across the Gulf. If Iran joined, the Pact could provide a regular setting for dialogue and help transform rivalry into managed competition benefiting everyone.

Pakistan could play an important diplomatic role. It has close relations with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye while maintaining a long-standing friendship with Iran. Islamabad could help bridge differences between governments that have not always viewed regional affairs in the same way. Members could exchange information about military exercises, establish emergency communication and investigate incidents before accusations led to conflict. They could cooperate against piracy, drug smuggling and organised crime, while coordinating responses to humanitarian emergencies. The Pact should establish clear principles.

No member should use it to impose its political will on another. Military action should not settle disputes between members. Collective defence should be limited to protecting members from attack, not enabling unjustified offensive action. Decisions should be based on consultation, with force used as a last resort. The Pact could also use diplomatic and economic pressure to discourage non-member actors from harming civilians in the region. Communication with non-member states would remain crucial, since an organisation that engages only with its members could deepen divisions.

A flexible organisation built around diplomacy would be more valuable than a rigid alliance centred on military solidarity. Its true test will be whether it makes dialogue more normal, military action less attractive and regional cooperation more reliable. If it achieves those aims, the Mecca Pact could become an important foundation for a more peaceful and secure region.

Born not to rule... but to serve



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

IN GOD we trust... in leadership we offer trust. Yet the qualities of leadership are many; so are we asking too much of those whom we choose ‘democratically’ to lead us?

It is difficult to sustain that perspective, given that as we look around us, we see how few of the current crop of heads of government demonstrate appropriate levels of respect, dignity, and decorum... minimum requirements, one would think. So, let’s check out, in no particular order, to see what history, scholars and societies value as leadership qualities, and whether they are sustainable in today’s grasping political environment.

Humility is one of the first to come to mind. Not of the ‘bowing and scraping’, but that of which the Holy Quran (17:37) reminds us that “You should not walk on the Earth in a haughty style. You can neither tear the Earth apart, nor match its mountains in height,” while J M Barrie simply wrote of life being “one long lesson in humility.” Nor is humility a sign of meekness or weakness; after all, it is well-chronicled, in the ‘other’ book, that “the meek shall inherit the Earth.”

Humility is a strength of character, the ability to recognise the qualities of others, and to be sufficiently self-aware to appreciate them.

Leaders should be, in fact, on a perpetual journey of self-discovery, as the children

of their societies, reverse-engineering societal need, not want. As such, the best of them should be tagged humanist... ethical, compassionate, and empathetic... because they should inspire people to both do, and be, better, and continuously encourage them to be so! Yet, those qualities appear rare, though, as the scholar and poet Abu Al Tayyib Al Mutanabbi wrote, of those who, while living in an environment created through the good graces of those who came before, cannot hide their envy for, or scorn of them.

Maybe in the past, there was little thought of accountability as a quality of leadership; however, if one is to accept responsibility for their actions and decisions, they must also be accountable, therefore measurable for them, in the same way.

Academics often disagree, saying that responsibility is the imperative towards action in leadership, while accountability is where one stands alone, answering to the cost of that action: “uncomfortable,” writes Minaa, “but worth the discomfort,” while Thomas Paine wrote, “Men holding themselves accountable to nobody, ought not be trusted.”

Societies need leaders, and not everybody is putting their hand up! They want role models to be creative, innovative and visionary; to be collaborative and communicative, as agile, strong, and courageous as a warrior, to have the wisdom of ages, confident, and decisive. But mostly,

Leaders should be, in fact, on a perpetual journey of self-discovery, as the children of their societies, reverse-engineering societal need, not want

societies need their leaders to be resilient, not petulant, and for arrogance to be a memory of something left behind, along with nappies, skinned knees and elbows, crocodile tears, and teen angst.

Genuine leaders are born, not made, but during their perpetual tenures are educated and trained to be wiser and more compassionate, and significantly less full of their own importance. If only for this reason, we can look towards the established historical orders of monarchy and sovereignty for the best examples today’s world can offer.

For example, the title of ‘Sultan’ refers to wisdom and authority; ‘Shaikh’ to their elders, respected and beyond reproach; ‘Kings’ and ‘Queens,’ are hereditary monarchs with life tenure; ‘Pharaoh,’ refers to the lineage of their great houses; ‘Khan’ is symbolic of authority, even power; ‘Tsars’ held claim to entire Byzantine civilisations; ‘Emperor,’ was once the definition of supremacy and victory; ‘Shah’ is King of Kings; even ‘Ayatollah’ as a sign of God has an allusion to greatness.

And there, only by any other name, can today’s chosen democrats, as if by design and demand, appear and be, and behave with petulance, arrogance, and entitlement, lacking the dignity, grace, and gravitas of the older orders. Give me a king, or a shaikh, any day of the week.

EXPERTS TOUT ‘CONSCIOUS’ FOOD SYSTEMS TO FIX FARM WOES

SARA HUSSEIN

Farmers around the world are struggling with the impact of climate change, financial pressures and depleted soil - and industry experts say bringing consumers closer to the people who produce their food could provide a solution.

A group of farmers, scientists and development specialists are pushing for “conscious food systems”, arguing that many of the problems in today’s food production are the result of people being “alienated” from nature and each other.

Current food production systems are “not really fit for purpose,” said Andrew Bovarnick, head of food systems at the United Nations Development Programme. “It’s causing huge environmental problems... we have more food in the world, but there are more than ever people who are malnourished and starving,” he said.

Bovarnick spent years looking at technical solutions to food production challenges, but believes technology alone cannot solve the problem. Instead, he and other members of the Global Conscious Food Systems Alliance, meeting in Bhutan last week, want more “mindful” food production focused on protecting the environment, farmers and consumers, rather than maximising profit or output.

The problems in food production are well-documented. Intensive agriculture, the application of chemicals and extreme weather linked to climate change have degraded up to 40 per cent of land globally. Intensive farming practices themselves contribute to climate change, and farmland is increasingly being abandoned by producers who cannot make ends meet or survive harvests lost to extreme weather.

These are problems farmer Ashish Gupta confronts daily on his smallholding in India’s Himachal Pradesh, which he farms as part of a cooperative. “The markets are very cruel,” he said on the sidelines of the conference, lamenting the barriers that smallholders producing organic food face in reaching consumers.

Organic food might look more expensive, but Gupta urged shoppers to consider the environmental and social impacts of industrial agriculture, which can squeeze farmers and harm the soil and water.

His community struggles to survive a single harvest ruined by floods, and sees that “the farmers are getting more and more aged, and the newer generation is not interested in farming.”

For Gupta, a conscious food system is about making consumers consider who grew their food and how, building a connection that encourages people to pay fair prices and support sustainable farming. “We have to adopt certain principles of conscious food systems to make it more mindful, so young people can relate to the connection to the land in their hearts, not just the economics,” he said. — AFP

Nepal seeks climate justice after disaster

WHEN A WALL of icy debris from a glacial collapse on the China-Nepal border tore through his village last week, Pemba Chhring Tamang watched the landscape he had known all his life disappear.

“The flood was one like I had never seen before,” said the 57-year-old, rescued from his Himalayan village in Nepal’s devastated Rasuwa district. “It destroyed everything, our homes, our village.”

The August 26 disaster, one of Nepal’s worst climate-linked catastrophes, brought grief but also anger.

“What has Nepal done to deserve this?” asked Tashi Lhazom, a Nepali climate activist and politician.

“It is among the most climate-vulnerable countries, but at the same time, it is also the most climate-friendly.”

The huge wave of debris killed more than 1,200 people and left more than 4,750 missing in Nepal and China’s Tibet region, smashing towns, roads, bridges and multiple hydropower dams.

Rescuers are still searching for survivors and the dead, while helicopters ferry food and medicine to those left with nothing.

While the exact cause of the glacial collapse is unclear, climate change is causing glaciers to melt worldwide, heightening the risk of such disasters.

“We have been hearing news about climate change, and there have been floods before - but never like this,” said Tamang.

Nepal, a largely rural nation of 30 million people that has contributed little to the greenhouse gas emissions driving global warming, says reconstruction could cost “billions” of dollars.

“We are suffering for a crime that we did not commit,” Lhazom said.

Nepali glaciologist Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa said wealthy industrialised countries driving global emissions should accept their role.

“They should take some responsibility, and there should be some accountability,” he said.

Scientists say the warming climate



People hold onto a cage on a makeshift zipline as they cross the Trishuli River from Koloni following deadly flash floods in Nuwakot district, Nepal, on Thursday. — Reuters



PAAVAN MATHEMA

The writer is Bureau Chief, Agence France-Presse (AFP), and is based in Kathmandu

Nepali glaciologist Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa said wealthy industrialised countries driving global emissions should accept their role. They should take some responsibility, and there should be some accountability

is already altering the risks facing the Himalayan region.

Disaster specialist Saswata Sanyal, at Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), said the region is warming roughly “at twice the rate” of anywhere else in the world. “We have seen cascading disasters, like what we saw on August 26, where one event triggers multiple events,” he said.

Nepal’s leaders say the country needs long-term international support to adapt to a rapidly changing mountain environment.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah said Nepal must “strongly raise” with the international community the disasters it has experienced as a result of climate change.

Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal called it a “warning signal”.

He said that the support to Nepal should not be viewed only “from an angle of aid or charity, but should be seen from a perspective of climate justice as well”.

For communities living beneath the world’s highest mountains, a seemingly small rise in global temperatures can bring devastating consequences, Lhazom said.

“Just a degree increase in temperature may not seem much to most people, but it has a very different meaning in the mountains,” Lhazom said. “A change in a degree

can translate to the loss of thousands of lives and livelihoods.”

Lhazom pointed at richer countries.

“Are those who are causing it doing enough for Nepal and other vulnerable countries? No,” Lhazom said.

The United Nations launched a “loss and damage” fund in 2025 to aid the impacts of climate change, though it has not yet begun distributing its limited cash.

A UN preliminary assessment estimated building damage from Nepal’s floods at \$158 million alone, warning that total losses - including damage to roads and bridges, agricultural land and humanitarian costs — would be far higher.

Khanal said the disaster underlined the “impetus and urgency” needed to build data-sharing mechanisms to help warn of future disasters, noting that neighbouring China had shared key data after the flood.

Glaciers across the wider Hindu Kush-Himalayan region are a vital water source for 240 million people in the mountains and another 1.65 billion downstream across South and Southeast Asia.

“With climate change intensifying, there is no indication that such hazards will stop,” said Dhondup Wangmo, a research fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute.

“In fact, they are more likely to occur in the future, potentially with even more tragic consequences.”

For Nepal and its neighbours, the danger does not end in the mountains. “It impacts the entirety of the Himalayan region’s civilisation,” Khanal said. In neighbouring India, Rushati Das, from the New Delhi-based Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSAs), said the Nepal disaster showed that climate change is “knocking on our doorsteps”.

“What happens high in the mountains does not remain confined there,” Das said.

“A disaster originating in one part of the Himalayan region can have consequences far beyond national boundaries, affecting river systems, ecosystems, livelihoods and communities across South Asia.”

SPORTS

Oman Cricket’s infrastructure growth key to host major fixtures: ICC chief

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
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OMAN Cricket could upgrade its infrastructure in order to host major international fixtures, according to International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman Jay Shah, who made a private visit to Oman at the weekend.

“With a better and upgraded infrastructure, Oman Cricket will be able to host major international fixtures. Importantly, they need to strengthen the existing permanent infrastructure,” Shah said during his visit to the Oman Cricket (OC) headquarters on Thursday.

The ICC chief toured the Oman Cricket Academy and met the all-Omani national squad preparing for the Asian Games, as well as the under-19 boys, women’s and under-19 girls’ teams.

Shah praised Oman Cricket’s progress and backed further investment in infrastructure, saying Oman has the potential to host more international cricket.

Shah hinted that the ICC could explore ways to support Oman’s infrastructure plans and expressed confidence that permanent facilities, including spectator stands, would be developed.

Shah was briefed by OC Chairman Pankaj Khimji, Vice-Chairman Paul Sheridan, Treasurer Alkesh Joshi, Secretary Madhu Jesrani, board officials including Syed Anwar, Chaitanya Khimji, Damodar Katti and chief development officer Duleep Mendis, on the organisation’s development plans.

He later held discussions with the OC board on the development of cricket in Oman and opportunities to host international and regional cricket.

Shah recalled that Oman has proved its credentials to host high-level cricket during the Covid-19 pandemic, when Oman and the UAE stepped in to host matches in 2021 after the ICC Men’s T20 World



ICC Chairman Jay Shah with the all-Omani team for the Asian Games. — Pictures by Hussain al Maqbali



ICC Chairman Jay Shah meets the Oman national teams.



ICC Chairman Jay Shah meets the Oman national teams.



ICC Chairman Jay Shah being received at the Oman Cricket headquarters in Al Amerat.

Cup was moved from India. “Oman did a fantastic job,” Shah said, praising the country’s ability to stage international cricket at short notice.

The possibility of Oman hosting more bilateral cricket

was also discussed. Shah pointed to an upcoming Future Tours Programme (FTP) bilateral workshop in Dubai later this month, where member boards can explore potential fixtures.

While bilateral series remain

primarily a matter between individual boards, Shah said the ICC could assist where required.

He also identified opportunities for Oman to host training camps for teams from the Gulf, noting that the country has developed strong infrastructure and can provide a suitable environment for both senior and junior players.

DEBT-FREE BOARD

Shah was encouraged by Oman Cricket’s financial position after Khimji informed him that the board is debt-free.

“For Oman today, funding is not a problem,” Shah said.

The ICC chairman also highlighted the progress of women’s cricket in Oman and noted the significant improvement

in the national team’s ranking.

“Women’s cricket is very close to my heart,” Shah said, reiterating his support for greater opportunities for women players. He also recalled initiatives during his tenure at the BCCI to strengthen recognition and financial support for women’s cricket, including the introduction of pay parity.

Shah welcomed cricket’s growing presence in multi-sport events, particularly the Asian Games and the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

With cricket returning to the Olympic programme, Shah said both the ICC and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were excited about the sport’s future on the global multi-sport stage.

Senior board official Alkesh Joshi termed the visit of ICC supremo Jay Shah as “historic” and said that Oman Cricket was honoured by the visit.

“The visit of Shah demonstrates the commitment of ICC towards the game’s development of Associate nations,” said Joshi.

He added that the ICC chief was “impressed by the growth of the game among local Omanis” and congratulated the all-Omani team that will make their historic debut at the forthcoming Asian Games in Japan.

Oman show fight against Japan in Asian opener

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

Oman produced a spirited performance against defending Asian champions and world No 6 Japan before going down 3-1 in their opening match of the 2026 AVC Men’s Volleyball Asian Championship in Fukuoka, Japan.

Despite the defeat, the national team delivered one of the surprises of the opening round by taking the third set from the hosts, forcing Japan into a fourth set after the Asian heavyweights had established a commanding 2-0 lead.

Japan eventually sealed the contest 25-18, 25-13, 20-25, 25-9, but Oman showed encouraging signs, particularly in the opening and third sets, where they matched the hosts for long periods with disciplined defence, effective blocking

and confident attacking.

Oman began the opening set positively, with Falah al Jaradi scoring the first point before Mahmoud al Saadi and Majid al Shibli helped the national side establish an early advantage.

Osama al Maamari also contributed as Oman stayed level with Japan during the opening exchanges. The sides traded points before Oman moved 8-6 ahead, but Japan gradually increased the tempo and began exploiting their speed and attacking efficiency.

Oman remained within touching distance and reduced the deficit to 16-17 before Japan regained control, restricting the attacking threat of Al Saadi and Al Jaradi to close out the first set 25-18.

The hosts stepped up their intensity in the second set, using their experience, quick transition and strong blocking to open a



Oman players try to block a smash from Japan.

comfortable advantage.

Oman head coach Nizar al Shukaili responded with changes, introducing Adam al Jaradi and Ismail al Hidi in an effort to inject fresh momentum. Falah al Jaradi, Osama al Maamari and Mahmoud al Saadi continued to search for openings in the Japanese defence, but the

hosts maintained control to take the set 25-13 and move within one set of victory.

OMAN HIT BACK

Oman responded impressively in the third set and produced their best volleyball of the night.

Osama al Maamari opened the scoring with

a powerful attack before Saud al Maamari added an important point at the net as Oman moved 3-1 ahead.

Majid al Shibli then emerged as a major attacking threat, repeatedly finding gaps in the Japanese defence as Oman raised their intensity in both attack and reception.

The national side moved three points clear at 12-9 before Japan recovered to level at 13-13, setting up a tense second half of the set.

Rather than allowing the hosts to take control, Oman maintained their composure. Al Shibli struck again with a powerful finish, while Al Maamari continued to make his presence felt at the net.

Oman regained a three-point cushion at 19-16 and refused to surrender the initiative despite Japan’s attempts to respond. Strong blocking, disciplined defence and greater

attacking confidence carried the national side through the decisive exchanges as they secured the set 25-20.

Japan, however, responded emphatically in the fourth set. The hosts established an early advantage and used their powerful serving and blocking to disrupt Oman’s rhythm.

A series of errors also cost Oman valuable points as Japan steadily stretched their lead. Al Shukaili attempted further changes, but the national side were unable to reproduce the intensity of the previous set.

Japan eventually closed the fourth set 25-9 to complete a 3-1 victory.

After a spirited performance that included a deserved set against the world No 6 side, the team now turns its attention to the remaining Pool A matches against Australia and Bahrain.

ACC PREMIER CUP



Bilal Tahir celebrates his century against Oman.

TAHIR TON POWERS KUWAIT TO THRILLING WIN OVER OMAN

MUSCAT: Oman went down fighting in a thrilling finish against Kuwait, suffering their first defeat of the ongoing ACC Men's Premier Cup after Bilal Tahir's unbeaten century guided Kuwait to a four-wicket victory with just two balls to spare in their Group B encounter in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Oman, defending a competitive 252/8, made Kuwait work hard for every run after reducing their opponents to 37/3 inside the opening 10 overs. But Tahir stood firm under pressure, producing a superb unbeaten 103 to steer Kuwait to 256/6 in 49.4 overs.

Oman's innings was built around useful contributions through the middle order, with Jiten Ramanandi providing the biggest individual score. He struck 53 from 55 balls, including four fours and two sixes, after reaching his half-century from 44 deliveries.

Oman made a steady start, reaching 47/2 after 10 overs. Karan Sonavale (43) and Hammad Mirza (22) then added 50 to rebuild the innings and take Oman beyond the early setbacks.

The hosts passed 100 in the 21st over and moved beyond 150 in the 31st, but Kuwait continued to chip away at the batting order. Mohamed Shafeeq claimed 3/56 from his 10 overs, while Abdullah Zaheer returned 3/54, including a maiden.

Oman reached 200 in 42.3 overs before Jay Odedra (39) and Shakeel Ahmed (22) added another important 50-run partnership to push the total towards the 250 mark. Oman eventually finished on 252/8 from their 50 overs, leaving Kuwait with a demanding chase.

And Oman appeared to have seized control early in the reply. Kuwait slumped to 37/3 during the powerplay, giving Oman a major opening in the defence. But Tahir and Mohammed Aslam Nawfer refused to allow the pressure to build further.

The pair added 50 from 67 balls, with Aslam reaching his half-century from 62 deliveries. He eventually fell for a valuable 62 from 77 balls, having struck six fours.

Tahir, meanwhile, remained the constant presence at the crease. He reached his fifty from 61 balls and continued to anchor the chase as Kuwait moved to 150 in 32.6 overs and 200 in 41.5.

With the asking rate beginning to climb, Oman continued to stay in the contest, but Tahir found another crucial partner in Yasin Patel. Their 50-run stand came from just 46 balls and shifted the momentum back towards Kuwait.

Tahir completed his century from 103 deliveries, hitting nine fours and three sixes, and his unbeaten innings under mounting pressure ultimately proved the difference.

Kuwait crossed 250 after 49.1 overs before completing the chase at 256/6 in 49.4 overs.

Following Kuwait's win, UAE, Oman and Kuwait have all four points with UAE having a game in their hand.

Oman conclude their group engagements with a match against the UAE on September 8, Tuesday.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman: 252/8 (Jiten Ramanandi 53, Karan Sonavale 43, Jay Odedra 39 ret'd out; Mohamed Shafeeq 3/56, Abdullah Zaheer 3/54) lost to Kuwait: 256/6 in 49.4 overs (Bilal Tahir 103 not out, Mohammed Aslam Nawfer 62, Yasin Patel 37; Shah Faiza;l 2/37, Jay Odedra 2/41).



Jiten Ramanandi and Jay Odedra made decent scores for Oman.



Oman's latest international appearance came at the 2025 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup in Seychelles.

Oman team under pressure ahead of Asian beach soccer

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

OMAN'S beach soccer team is currently facing time pressure and lack of motivation to prepare for the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2026, which will also serve as the qualification event for the 2027 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup.

With the continental championship scheduled for November 18-28 in Thailand, Oman's preparations are yet to begin, with the current plan understood to start with an internal camp in early October. This would leave the team with just over a month to complete its preparation programme before heading into a tournament that carries major importance for Oman's ambitions of returning to the world stage.

According to a private source close to the team who spoke to Oman Observer, the proposed preparation programme will begin with an internal camp from October 6 to 12, followed by an overseas camp in Belarus from October 13 to 19, where Oman is expected to play two friendly matches against Belarus and the UAE. The team would then return to Oman for another internal camp from October 25 to November 11, with Saudi Arabia expected to be present in Muscat for part of the preparation period. Oman will travel to Thailand on November 12 ahead of the Asian Cup. The draw for the competition is scheduled for September 10.

"The upcoming Asian tournament is very significant because it is also the qualifier for the 2027 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup," the source said. "The preparations are not started yet, and the planned programme is expected to begin in early October. The preparation period is therefore quite short considering the importance of the competition."

STRONG ASIAN COMPETITION

The timing is a particular concern given that several of Asia's leading beach soccer nations have already begun their preparations. Only three spots are available for Asia in the 2027 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iran, Japan and the UAE are among the teams expected to compete strongly for Asian qualification places, with several having already arranged internal and overseas camps.

"I am concerned about the team's preparation because many of the other Asian teams have already started their programmes, including internal and external camps," the source said. "This can



With the continental championship scheduled for November 18-28 in Thailand, Oman's preparations are yet to begin.

have an impact on the players' readiness. We need to maintain Oman's strong presence in Asian and international beach soccer."

Oman will enter the Asian Cup with considerable experience and expectations. The team currently occupies 10th position in the latest world rankings of September, underlining its status as one of the established sides in international beach soccer.

The upcoming tournament is particularly important after Oman's recent success at the sixth Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, in April, where the team claimed the silver medal. Oman had reached the final before losing 6-2 to Iran, securing their place among the continent's leading beach soccer teams.

MOTIVATION ALSO IMPORTANT

While preparation remains the immediate priority, player motivation has also become an important consideration following the team's Asian Beach Games achievement in China last April. The players are still awaiting the financial rewards associated with their silver-medal success, according to the source. The issue, however, is viewed in the context of the wider process for recognising sporting achievements rather than as a criticism of any particular authority.

"The Oman Football Association recently honoured the players for their Asian achievement, and we appreciate that support," the source said. "We understand

that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth's recognition of sporting achievements made during 2026 will take place during the annual ceremony in 2027."

"However, the players need motivation and encouragement ahead of this important tournament. They worked hard to finish second in Asia at the Asian Beach Games, and maintaining that motivation is important as we prepare for the next challenge."

Oman's latest international appearance came at the 2025 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup in Seychelles, where the team had participated in its sixth world championship. Oman had opened their campaign with a 7-4 defeat against Italy before drawing 4-4 with El Salvador and winning the match through a penalty shootout. However, the result was not enough to secure qualification for the knockout stage. Oman then suffered an 11-1 defeat against eventual world champions Brazil in its final Group D match. The experience nevertheless provided another opportunity for Oman's players to compete against the world's best.

With the 2027 World Cup qualification pathway beginning in Thailand, Oman face another demanding challenge. The team's ability to maximise its limited preparation period, ensure player readiness and build on its recent Asian Beach Games success could prove crucial in determining whether Oman extend its long-standing presence on the world beach soccer stage.

SPORTS

SEPULVEDA CLINGCHES DHOFAR CLASSIC HONOURS

Sessler second, Callejas third; Tour of Salalah first stage today

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ARGENTINE cyclist Eduardo Sepulveda of Li Ning Star claimed the opening Dhofar Classic race on Saturday ahead of the first stage of Tour of Salalah 2026.

Sepulveda completed the 98-kilometre one-day road race in two hours 23 minutes and 11 seconds to win the title.

Brazilian rider Nicolas Sessler of Victoria Sports Pro Cycling finished second in 2:23:35 while Colombian cyclist Edinson Alejandro Callejas of Roojai Insurance Winspace took third spot (2:23:52).

Swiss rider Simon Pellaud (2:12:17) of Li Ning Star was fourth and Tegshbayar Batsaikhan (2:12:39) of Roojai Insurance Winspace completed the top five positions.

Saif bin Sebaa al Rashidi, Chairman of the Oman Cycling Association, presented the awards to the winners.

Li Ning Star team was named the best team of the race after three of their riders coming in the top 10 including the champion. Apart from Sepulveda (first) and Pellaud (fourth), Calum Johnston (ninth), Cameron Scott (20), Nils Sinschek (31) and Cang Yang (37th) also made impressive outing for Li Ning Star among the 69 cyclists who made the finish.

The race started at Al Haffa Market, proceeding along Sultan Qaboos Road toward Al Dahariz and Al Maamoura Roundabout. The route passed through the Darbat Waterfalls tunnel before returning to Al Maamoura Roundabout, heading toward Al Dahariz Roundabout, and continuing via Umm Al Ghawarif Road toward Al Rabat Roundabout and Al Mansoura Street. It then proceeded along Al Rabat Street—passing the Radisson Hotel—toward the Wadi Jarziz Dam, passing Hajif Roundabout, and concluding with a climb to the finish line in the Hajif district.

Dhofar Classic race is classified as a Class 1 event among one-day races in Asia, with the winner earning 125 world-ranking points. The Oman Cycling Association seeks to elevate the race's classification in future editions from Class 1 to 'Pro' status; this upgrade would increase



Riders during the start of the one-day Dhofar Classic race.



Top three winners of the Dhofar Classic race pose with the officials.

the winner's points from 125 to 200, thereby attracting a greater number of elite cyclists to compete for the title.

OPENING STAGE
The first stage of the sixth edition of Tour of Salalah will start on Sunday from Mughsayl to Mirbat Castle, covering 127 km.

The second stage will cover 108 km from Dhazarez Beach to Wadi

Darbat on September 7. The third stage will run from Taqah Castle to Jabal Samhan for the longest of the Tour with 156 km on September 8. The fourth and final stage for 105 km will cover Ain Razat to Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex on September 9.

A technical meeting for the participating teams was held at the Plaza Salalah Hotel & Resort on Friday. The meeting was attended

by Saif al Rashidi, OCA Chairman, Ishaq bin Abdullah al Balushi, OCA Vice-Chairman and Race Director; Alexandre Nouhad (France), the Tour's Chief Commissaire; as well as representatives from the participating teams and race officials. Welcoming the participating delegations, Saif al Rashidi expressed hope that Tour of Salalah would achieve its intended technical objectives. He emphasised the organising committee's commitment to scheduling the event to align with the International Cycling Union (UCI) calendar. For their part, Ishaq al Balushi and Frenchman Alexandre Nouhad detailed the various stages of the tour, expressing their hope that all participants would make the most of the race stages.

Li Ning Star team's Eduardo Sepulveda affirmed that Tour of Salalah would serve as a comprehensive test of the cyclists' abilities, given the diverse field of participants and the nature of the competition, which demands a blend of physical strength, experience, and tactical intelligence. "Multi-stage races require more

than just physical readiness; a cyclist must know how to manage their energy and respond to the moves of their competitors. I am ready to take on the challenge, and I am participating in this edition of the tour with the aim of competing strongly and achieving a top result."

He added: "Experience is certainly important, but it doesn't guarantee results on its own. Once the race begins, decisions made on the road are what count. There is a strong field of riders, and the competition is clearly wide open; I anticipate an exciting tactical battle, especially as time gaps begin to emerge."

TACTICAL COMPETITION
Victoria Sports Pro Team's Nicolas Sessler explained that the Tour would be a "tactical competition" requiring a careful reading of each stage. He noted that the large number of teams and the diverse backgrounds of the participating cyclists would make controlling the race difficult, giving the advantage to those who can make the right decision at the crucial moment. Sessler said: "In stage races, you can't reveal all your cards from the very first kilometers. You have to know when to make a move, whom to watch, and when conserving energy is more important than joining a chase that could cost you dearly later on. That's why I believe the Tour of Salalah won't just be a test of physical strength; it will be a race of intelligence and tactics as well."

DHO FAR CLASSIC TOP 10 RESULTS
1. Eduardo Sepulveda (Argentina) Li Ning Star 02:11:22
2. Nicolas Sessler (Brazil) Victoria Sports Pro Cycling 02:11:35
3. Edinson Alejandro Callejas (Colombia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 02:11:52
4. Simon Pellaud (Switzerland) Li Ning Star 02:12:17
5. Tegshbayar Batsaikhan (Mongolia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 02:12:39
6. Callum Ormiston (South Africa) The Joyrun & Hurricane Cycling Team 02:13:04
7. Carter Bettles (Australia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 02:13:34
8. Jeroen Meijers (Netherlands) Victoria Sports Pro Cycling 02:13:40
9. Calum Johnston (Great Britain) Li Ning Star 02:13:54
10. Antoine Huby (France) 7Eleven Cliq Roadbike Philippines 02:14:04

Alcaraz, Sabalenka into US Open last 16 as Williams sisters lose

NEW YORK: Defending singles champions Carlos Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka sailed into the last 16 of the US Open on Friday as tennis icons Serena and Venus Williams suffered an agonising defeat on their long-awaited return to Grand Slam doubles.

Alcaraz, coming off a four-month injury absence, beat China's Wu Yibing 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 to book his place in the fourth round while Sabalenka was similarly dominant in a 6-3, 6-4 defeat of Kamilla Rakhimova.

Alcaraz will face 20th-seeded American Tommy Paul for a place in the quarter-finals after Paul beat 15th-seeded Alexander Bublik 6-4, 3-6, 6-7 (4/7), 6-1, 6-3.

"The way he plays is unbelievable, the rhythm he has on every shot — forehand, backhand," Alcaraz said of Wu. "His balls skid a lot on the court and, for me, it's really difficult to control sometimes.

"But I think I stayed there. I played aggressive. I played smart in



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz serves to China's Wu Yibing during their third round match on day six of the US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. — AFP



Serena Williams and Venus Williams of the US react during their match against Australia's Maya Joint and Taiwan's Chan Hao-ching. — Imagn Images

the toughest moments." Wu recovered an early break in each of the first two sets, but Alcaraz pocketed both with breaks in the final games and after saving a pair of break points in the first game of the third the Spaniard rolled home. "I think my level is really good," he said. "I've got into the rhythm of the competition. I'm getting there." World number one Sabalenka

didn't face a break point in her dismissal of Rakhimova, firing 29 winners with 10 aces.

The numbers didn't tell the whole tale of a match that saw 92nd-ranked Rakhimova challenge Sabalenka in a second-set slugfest.

Sabalenka was also unimpressed by the pervasive smell of marijuana — an increasingly common issue at the US Open — wafting down from the stands during her match. "It's a bit tricky to handle that smell while you're trying to compete at your best," said Sabalenka, who at one point complained to the umpire about the issue.

Sabalenka, who must repeat as champion to have a chance of remaining number one, next faces Taylor Townsend, the 96th-ranked American who beat 15th-seeded Russian Diana Shnaider 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 6-3.

All eyes on the evening session were on the Williams sisters, partnering in a Grand Slam doubles

event for the first time since 2022. The duo returned to the US Open stage comes after 23-time Grand Slam singles champion Serena came out of a four-year retirement to play at Wimbledon.

But the most famous sister act in tennis — who won 14 Grand Slam doubles titles together along with three Olympic gold medals — were beaten 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (10/7) by 14th seeds Chan Hao-ching of Taiwan and Australia's Maya Joint in a marathon three-hour battle.

In other singles action, third-seeded American Jessica Pegula, one of the players with a chance to knock Sabalenka off her No 1 perch, mounted a desperate fightback to beat Canadian Leylah Fernandez 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 in a battle of former finalists.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk beat Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-3, 6-2 and American Emma Navarro upset seventh-seeded Czech Karolina Muchova 6-3, 7-5. — AFP

BUSINESS

OMAN ADVANCES ROUND-THE-CLOCK CLEAN POWER

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 5

OMAN is moving beyond simply adding solar and wind capacity towards developing renewable electricity that can be supplied more reliably around the clock, as rapid demand growth increases the need for storage and flexible generation.

The shift was highlighted at last week's 5th Salalah Engineering Forum where Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), presented a renewable-energy roadmap combining solar and wind generation with battery storage and other technologies aimed at improving the reliability of clean power.

The presentation placed the expanding project pipeline within Oman's targets for renewable sources to account for 30–40 per cent of electricity generation by 2030 and 60–70 per cent by 2040, alongside the national net-zero target for 2050.

The direction outlined in Salalah is also reflected in the latest planning documents of Nama Power and Water Procurement (PWP).

PWP plans a large-scale 1,000-MW round-the-clock renewable energy project combining solar photovoltaic generation, wind power and battery energy storage.

The project is designed to provide more dispatchable renewable electricity with an annual capacity factor exceeding 70 per cent, according to PWP's 2025 report.

The model addresses one of the main constraints facing renewable electricity: solar output declines after sunset, while wind generation varies according to weather conditions.

Combining complementary renewable sources with storage allows electricity to be supplied more consistently, making clean power better suited to industrial loads requiring dependable supply throughout the day while reducing the need for conventional generation to balance fluctuations.

Battery storage is already beginning to enter Oman's utility-scale procurement programme.

The 500-MW Ibri III Solar IPP incorporates 100 MWh of battery energy storage, marking PWP's first renewable project to integrate utility-scale battery storage.

The next wave of solar procurement is expected to deepen

that shift.

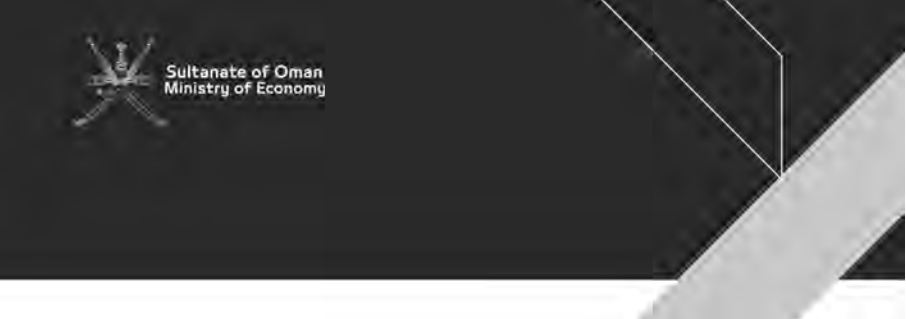
PWP plans projects at Al Kamil II, Sinaw and Adam, with combined solar capacity of around 2,500 MW, while storage is being considered alongside selected developments to strengthen grid stability and improve the ability to deliver renewable electricity when required.

The increased focus on reliability comes as electricity demand is forecast to rise substantially.

Peak demand in Oman's Main Interconnected System is projected to increase from 7,503 MW in 2024 to 12,198 MW by 2031, representing average annual growth of 7.2 per cent, according to PWP's latest seven-year outlook.

Peak demand in the Dhofar Power System is forecast to rise from 801 MW in 2024 to 1,469 MW in 2031, an average annual increase of 9.1 per cent, driven by economic activity, infrastructure development and the addition of major industrial and commercial loads.

The forecasts underline a dual challenge for Oman's electricity sector: adding sufficient generation to support economic expansion while simultaneously increasing renewable penetration without compromising system reliability.



**The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:**

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees in Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
3/2026	Security license Renewal	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	15/ 10/ 2026

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the project, Tender and Local Content Authority from the following website: Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om. The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

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

Third

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

Fourth

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



etenderhd@ita.gov.om
+96824402200

Duqm emerges as regional vehicle distribution hub

VINOD R NAIR
MUSCAT, SEPT 5

The Port of Duqm is emerging as a major vehicle distribution hub for the GCC, with increasing numbers of Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) vessels arriving with thousands of vehicles for onward distribution across the region.

One of the region's youngest ports, Duqm is located within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), the Middle East's largest special economic zone. Its location on the Arabian Sea, outside the Strait of Hormuz, provides a strategic advantage for regional logistics and trade.

The port recently received the BYD Changsha, one of the world's largest Ro-Ro vessels, carrying more than 1,200 vehicles.

Speaking to Observer on the occasion, Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm, said the vessel's arrival demonstrated the port's ability to handle large car carriers and reflected growing confidence among shipping operators.

"As this is one of the largest roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) vessels in the world, it demonstrates the capability of the port in handling large vessels. It is a testimony to our growth and the confidence carriers have in our capacity to handle these types of ships and operations," he said.

He said Oman, and Duqm in particular, had the potential to become a key regional hub for vehicle distribution.

"Oman in general — and Duqm in particular — can



REGGY
VERMEULEN

CEO, Port of Duqm

serve as a highly suitable hub for future vehicle distribution across the broader region," he added.

Vermeulen said the port was receiving Ro-Ro vessels approximately every two days, with some carrying up to 5,000 vehicles.

"If we receive 5,000 cars, they take around three days to unload; otherwise, it takes less than a day. In two days, another ship with 5,000 cars on board will arrive to deliver its cargo to the port," he said.

To accommodate the growing volumes, the port is adding 25 hectares of vehicle parking space, which will increase its on-site capacity to around 30,000 vehicles.

The port currently works with BYD, as well as major carriers including COSCO and other global vehicle shipping operators.

"We are receiving vessels capable of carrying up to 5,000 vehicles at a time," Vermeulen said.

Vermeulen said developing Ro-Ro handling capacity had always been part of the Port of Duqm's master plan.

The port had previously handled smaller volumes of Ro-Ro vessels, alongside services supporting the oil, gas and construction

sectors. The current expansion into the consumer market, particularly cars and buses, represents a significant development.

"The terminal was ready and the ground prepared; however, given the current surge in volume, we are continuing to scale up our capacity to receive and store vehicles at the port," he said.

To support the growing operations, more than 140 drivers have been employed, the majority of them Omanis. The drivers can unload around 1,000 vehicles in less than a day.

Vermeulen said all new drivers undergo a half-day safety induction and are required to wear specialised protective clothing and observe a maximum speed of 15 km/h while handling vehicles.

"It requires cautious, controlled driving, and they are fully trained for it," he said.

Vermeulen said the port's relationship with BYD was at an early stage but was developing rapidly.

"Our relationship with BYD is just beginning, and we are actively building on it," he said, adding that the port was also in advanced discussions with other car carriers on long-term cooperation and structural agreements with major global players.

China remains an important economic partner for Oman and the wider GCC, he said, noting that the port maintains discussions with logistics providers to facilitate the movement of goods to and from the region efficiently.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (ر.ع.م)
NESC/ 2026/036	Supply & Implementation of Privileged Access Management (PAM) & Privileged Access Governance (PAG) Solution	01/09/2026	09/09/2026	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming Omanization achievement, bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization. - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
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ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



EXPERIENCE MODERN SEDAN EXCELLENCE WITH THE KIA K4 THIS SEASON

As part of the ongoing “New Identity, New Savings” campaign, Kia Oman is turning the spotlight on the K4 sedan, giving customers even more reasons to make the switch this season. The campaign brings a reduced interest rate of 2.22% on financing deals from two to four years and 3.33% for five-year agreements, with the first two EMIs covered by Kia. Customers who choose the K4 this season can also take advantage of a Welcome Bonus of up to RO 800, adjusted directly against the vehicle price. The K4 further comes with a service package of 30,000 km or three years, whichever comes first, along with one year of complimentary registration, giving customers continued value well after purchase (Terms & Conditions apply).

The K4 features a forward-looking design with sharp, sculpted surfaces and a confident stance from every angle. Its fastback-inspired silhouette lends the cabin a spacious, airy feel, well suited to both daily commutes and longer family drives. Power comes from a 2.0-litre, 4-cylinder MPI engine producing 150 HP. Exterior highlights include LED head and tail lamps, 17-inch alloy wheels, a power sunroof and electrically folding mirrors.

Inside, the K4 offers an artificial leather-wrapped cabin, push-button smart entry, a power-adjustable driver’s seat with lumbar support and a centre armrest for added comfort. A 4-inch digital instrument cluster works alongside a 12.3-inch touchscreen with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay support. Drive Mode Select, Cruise Control, automatic headlight control and Remote Engine Start round out the everyday convenience features.

On the road, the K4 delivers smooth power distribution and agile, responsive handling, making it equally comfortable in city traffic or on longer drives beyond town.

CELEBRATE THE VIBRANT RUMANA SEASON AT JABAL AKHDAR

PERCHED 2,000 metres above sea level on Oman’s iconic Green Mountain, Hotel Indigo Jabal Akhdar Resort & Spa invites travellers to experience the vibrant Rumana Season, celebrating the harvest of Jabal Akhdar’s renowned pomegranates. As the orchards come alive in rich shades of red, the season presents a unique opportunity to discover the region’s agricultural heritage, distinctive flavours and breathtaking natural surroundings.

As part of the seasonal experience, the resort has introduced a specially curated Rumana Season package starting from OMR 145 inclusive of taxes, including a one-night stay with breakfast for two and the opportunity to visit and experience Rumana Farm. Guests can also enjoy a Rumana-inspired mocktail at Vue Rooftop & Lounge, celebrating one of Jabal Akhdar’s most treasured seasonal harvests.

The package further includes a 20% discount on Jala Spa & Wellness treatments, an upgrade to a Canyon View Room subject to availability, and exclusive IHG dining discounts. Families can also enjoy added value, with up to two children below the age of 12 staying and dining free, while IHG One Rewards members can earn points throughout their stay.

The Rumana Season experience brings together authentic local experiences, wellness and family moments, inviting guests to discover Jabal Akhdar during one of its most colourful seasons. From exploring the pomegranate orchards and discovering the region’s agricultural



traditions to enjoying panoramic mountain views and seasonal flavours, every element offers a meaningful connection to the destination. Available for a limited time until **30th September 2026**, the Rumana Season

package offers a distinctive way to experience the flavours, traditions and natural beauty of Oman’s Green Mountain. For reservations: indigojabalakhdar@ihg.com

Al Mouj Muscat adds new waterfront experiences

AL MOUJ Muscat continues to strengthen its position as one of the Sultanate of Oman’s leading lifestyle destinations with the introduction of a series of new wellness, leisure, retail and dining experiences across its precincts. The latest additions reflect its continued evolution as it marks 20 Years of Distinction this year, reinforcing the vision that has shaped Al Mouj Muscat into one of Oman’s most vibrant integrated developments.

Over the past two decades, Al Mouj Muscat has grown into a destination where residential, hospitality, retail and leisure experiences come together to create a connected community. The destination now brings together 98 retail units and welcomes four million visitors a year. The latest additions build on that legacy, reflecting evolving lifestyle preferences while reinforcing the destination’s long-term vision for integrated waterfront living.

Ahmed al Massan, Acting CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “The way people choose to live, work and spend their leisure time continues to evolve and successful destinations must evolve alongside them. At Al Mouj Muscat, our role extends beyond developing places. We are curating an environment that supports wellbeing, fosters social connection and creates long-term value for our residents, businesses and visitors alike. As we mark Twenty Years of Distinction, these latest additions demonstrate our continued commitment to enhancing the quality and diversity of experiences across the destination, ensuring Al Mouj Muscat remains a dynamic and relevant place for the community



New additions reinforce the destination’s continued evolution in its twentieth year

today and for generations to come”. The destination’s growing wellness offering now includes the opening of RISTO MMA & Fitness and Stretch & Go at Al Mouj Walk Mall, expanding opportunities for health, fitness and active living. They join The Wellness Centre, an established part of Al Mouj Muscat’s health and wellbeing offering. At Liwan, Le Chic has opened a new ladies-only salon, complementing its existing branch at Kempinski Hotel Muscat and broadening the destination’s personal care offering. Across Marsa Plaza and the wider destination, the retail and

dining mix continues to diversify. PappaRoti Oman has opened its newest café, while Al Meera has introduced a new store overlooking the marina, bringing fresh produce, groceries and everyday essentials closer to the community. New additions also include July Café, Woodland and Rosso, alongside Finland Optical Centre and a new branch of MOLA MOLA Diving Centre. Together, they add to the everyday services, dining choices and specialist experiences available across Al Mouj Muscat, with further openings set to join the destination in the months ahead.

Alongside this growing mix of places to shop, dine and spend time together, Al Mouj Muscat continues to invest in recreational spaces dedicated to the residents who call the community home. These facilities have expanded with the opening of the new Al Mouj Community Tennis Courts, complementing the community’s existing padel and basketball courts, beach volleyball court, 27 kilometres of running and cycling trails, 17 parks, 14 swimming pools, eight play areas and more than 466,000 square metres of green space. Together, these spaces encourage residents to stay active, spend time outdoors and connect with their neighbours as part of everyday life at Al Mouj Muscat.

As Al Mouj Muscat enters its third decade, it remains committed to shaping a destination that evolves alongside the needs of its residents and visitors. Through the continued enhancement of its 61 amenities, experiences and public spaces, Al Mouj Muscat is enriching everyday life, creating enduring value and fostering a stronger sense of community, while reinforcing its position as one of Oman’s leading integrated destinations.

Muriya expands tourism development across Oman

MUSCAT: Across Oman, Orascom Development and its platform, Muriya, are moving forward. While parts of the region grow cautious, Muriya has paused nothing, building and delivering across all three destinations: Hawana Salalah, Jebel Sifah and As Sodah Island.

The same steadiness runs through everything Samih Sawiris and Orascom have built, from El Gouna to Andermatt to Mamula Island: identifying extraordinary places and developing them for the long term.

“Oman has everything we look for as a long-term developer: stability, natural beauty, and a clear direction for its future. Our continued investment across all three destinations reflects that conviction — we build for decades and Oman is a country we intend to grow with in all circumstances”. — Naguib S Sawiris, Chairman of Orascom Development

At Hawana Salalah, Amazi’s first phase is close to 80% complete, on track for handover in Q1 2027, with Lubana Islands in the pipeline. At Jebel Sifah, new phases are advancing, and across both destinations



Muriya plans around 1,000 additional hotel rooms within three to five years. In total, Muriya, the Orascom Development and OMRAN partnership, has invested more than \$750 million in Oman.

The most ambitious step is As Sodah Island, a private-island destination off Dhofar. More than \$25 million has been invested in infrastructure and construction, with \$65 million or more anticipated, taking total investment beyond \$90 million. Backed by shareholder capital and institutional support rather than off-plan sales, construction is progressing.

“We have not paused a single project in Oman. We are long-term believers in this country and our continued investment across Salalah, Sifah and As Sodah reflects real confidence in its future. Orascom investing in Oman currently is good for the country”. — Eng Ashraf Nessim, CEO, Muriya Tourism Development Under Oman Vision 2040, tourism anchors economic diversification and investment attracts visitors, creates jobs and draws capital into the Sultanate of Oman. When a developer of Orascom’s standing keeps building, the market takes note.

SHORTTAKES



The directorate is involved in preparing and reviewing about 1,567 draft unified GCC standards

OMAN EXPANDS STANDARDS WORK INTO AI, EVS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 5

Oman is extending its technical standards programme into artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, renewable energy, logistics and tourism as new technologies reshape production and market requirements.

More than 80 per cent of projects included in the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology's 2026 plan had been completed by the end of the second quarter, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said.

The directorate is involved in preparing and reviewing about 1,567 draft unified GCC standards. This includes approximately 325 projects prepared by Oman, in addition to 16 draft national standards.

Among the new projects are proposed GCC standards covering the environmental sustainability of artificial intelligence systems and data quality for analytics and machine learning. Other work addresses asset management and lifetime extension for wind-power systems, facilities performance and cold-chain logistics.

Several proposed standards focus on products and activities specific to Oman, including frankincense essential oil, distilled frankincense water used in cosmetics and fishing boats measuring less than 14 metres.

Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director-General of Standards and Metrology, said technical standards establish requirements for quality, safety and efficiency while helping products comply with conditions in domestic and export markets.

He said linking standardisation with the requirements of industry and trade could reduce technical barriers and give producers and investors greater clarity over product specifications.

OQ Alternative Energy, Asyad sign hydrogen deal

BUSINESS REPORTER
SALALAH, SEPTEMBER 5

OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) and Asyad Group have signed an offtake term sheet to advance the deployment of green hydrogen for mobility applications in Oman, marking an important step in connecting the country's emerging green hydrogen capabilities with low-carbon transport solutions. Under the term sheet, Asyad will explore the use of green hydrogen produced through OQAE's green hydrogen deployment project in Al Duqm, supporting the development of hydrogen-powered mobility applications and contributing to the foundations of a hydrogen mobility ecosystem in Oman.

The collaboration brings together two strategic national players with a shared objective: translating Oman's growing renewable energy and green hydrogen capabilities into tangible applications that can support the decarbonisation of transport and other hard-to-abate sectors while creating a pathway towards wider commercial adoption.

"The next phase of Oman's hydrogen journey is about moving from potential to practical application. This partnership with Asyad is an important step in that direction, connecting green hydrogen production with a real mobility use case and creating an opportunity to build experience across the full value chain", said Salim al Kamyani, CEO of OQ Alternative Energy. "At OQ Alternative Energy, we see demonstration projects such as this as essential to building the capabilities, infrastructure and market confidence required



Oman has significant potential to become a competitive producer and exporter of renewable energy and green hydrogen. At the same time, developing a strong domestic market is critical to building a resilient hydrogen ecosystem.

for the hydrogen economy to scale. By working with strategic partners such as Asyad, we can experience technologies and business models in real operating environments, generate local knowledge and identify the conditions needed for broader adoption".

He explained, "Oman has significant potential to become a competitive producer and exporter of renewable energy and green hydrogen. At the same time, developing a strong domestic market is critical to building a resilient hydrogen ecosystem. Our ambition is to help create an environment where Oman's hydrogen potential can translate into competitive projects, new industries and sustainable value for the nation".

Ahmed al Bulushi, CEO of

Asyad Drydock & Infrastructure Services, said, "Decarbonising transport requires practical solutions that can be deployed at scale and supported by a reliable energy ecosystem. Our collaboration with OQAE provides an opportunity to explore green hydrogen as part of that transition and to translate Oman's emerging hydrogen capabilities into applications across the logistics and mobility value chain. Asyad is committed to supporting the development of more sustainable logistics solutions and to strengthening Oman's position as a globally connected logistics hub. We are helping build the operational experience, partnerships and infrastructure needed to support the next generation of low-carbon transport in the

Sultanate of Oman".

Located within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, the project provides a platform to explore the integration of renewable energy, hydrogen production and end-use applications within a single industrial and logistics ecosystem. It supports Oman's broader ambition to establish a competitive and sustainable hydrogen sector in line with Oman Vision 2040 and Oman's net-zero targets.

The project is designed to deliver value beyond hydrogen production. By connecting production with end use, it will generate practical insights into operations, certification, infrastructure, safety, demand and support the development of Oman's broader hydrogen economy.

Coastal Power launches work on 890 MW Duqm IPP

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 5

Construction has commenced on the Duqm Independent Power Project (IPP), a major 890 MW gas-fired combined-cycle power plant being developed in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), marking the start of implementation of one of Oman's newest large-scale generation projects.

The project company is Coastal Power SAOC representing a multinational consortium comprising South Korea's Korea Western Power Co (KOWEPO), Qatar's Nebras Energy, UAE-based Etihad Water and Electricity Company PJSC and Oman's Bahwan Infrastructure Services LLC.

The project was awarded by Nama Power and Water Procurement

Company (Nama PWP), Oman's single procurer of power and water capacity and output, in January 2026 as part of a wider programme to strengthen firm generation capacity amidst rising electricity demand and the rapid expansion of renewable energy across the Sultanate of Oman.

Significantly, the project is being developed under a long-term power purchase arrangement with Nama PWP and forms part of a roughly RO 1 billion investment programme covering new CCGT capacity at Al Duqm and Misfah.

The plants will use high-efficiency combined-cycle technology, enabling greater electricity output from natural gas while reducing emissions relative to conventional thermal generation. Provision is also



Visualisation of Coastal Power's 890 MW CCGT power plant under construction at Al Duqm.

envisaged for the potential future integration of carbon-capture technology.

The Al Duqm project has now progressed into its engineering,

procurement and construction phase. Power Construction Corporation of China Ltd (PowerChina), a major Chinese state-owned engineering and construction

group and Doosan Heavy Industries Muscat SPC have been named as EPC contractors. South Korea's Doosan Enerbility announced in June that it had secured a KRW 530 billion contract, valued at around \$350 million, for its role in the development. Its scope includes the supply of key generating equipment, notably steam turbines and generators. WSP International is serving as project consultant.

The new plant is targeted for completion in 2029 and will provide a significant source of dispatchable electricity for Al Duqm and the wider national grid.

Its development comes as the industrial hub attracts energy-intensive investments spanning refining, petrochemicals, minerals, green steel and downstream manufacturing.

SURPASSING RECORDS

Gas prices hit record high for Labour Day



With the war in the Middle East still raising energy costs, Americans face record-high gasoline prices for Labour Day weekend, just as political campaigns kick off for midterm Congressional elections. The national average gasoline price will probably hit \$4.03 on Labour Day, far surpassing the previous record of \$3.83 per gallon set in 2012, said GasBuddy analyst Patrick De Haan. — Reuters

MARKETING BLITZ

Anthropic IPO postponed to October



Anthropic is expected to begin marketing its initial public offering in mid-October at the earliest and complete the listing days before the US midterm elections in November, people familiar with the matter said on Friday. Now that is not expected until late September, the people added, cautioning that the plans, including the timing, are subject to change.

WALL STREET

Investors to pore over inflation data



Investors will zero in on inflation data next week that they say could determine whether the US Federal Reserve hikes interest rates later in the month. After dropping on Friday, the benchmark S&P 500 ended the week with a slim gain and was about 1% shy of its mid-August record high. Equities were jostled by changes in rate-path expectations and concerns that rising US Treasury yields could trip up Wall Street's rally.

OPINION

CSR: From community support to economic value in Oman



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

THE role of the private sector as Oman moves towards the goals of Oman Vision 2040 is shifting beyond the typical functions of investment, jobs, and conventional activities. Now, businesses have a role to play in the sustainable growth of the economy and society. For that reason, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should not be limited to charitable or sponsorship activities, but should be able to provide long-term economic and social benefits.

Over the years, CSR activities in Oman have included various forms of giving such as donations, community activities, education, health, environmental campaigns, and support of charitable organisations. While such activities are appreciated, Oman's economy is now at a stage where CSR should be geared towards strategic national programmes where the outcomes are measurable.

CSR linked to local content development is one of the best areas that can be targeted for growth. Towards this end, some of a company's CSR initiatives can be channeled to develop Micro-, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Oman, local businesses seeking employment, students, and local suppliers. Rather than offering short-term financial assistance, businesses can sponsor training and provide technical assistance, entrepreneurship programmes, digital tools, and capabilities.

Supporting an Omani SME through training, certification of quality, digital

transformation, or market access, for example, can create numerous long-term benefits which go beyond the original investment. An SME that has been strengthened can create employment, purchase local goods and services, innovate, and compete to win contracts and sell in export markets. In this context, CSR can be considered an economic multiplier.

Another area is human capital. Oman possesses a young, populous, workforce which offers a competitive edge in the future. You can use corporate social responsibility (CSR) to cover scholarships, vocational programmes, professional certifications, entrepreneurship, digital skills, and job-specific training. The cooperation of companies, universities, vocational education & training (VET) providers, and communities is necessary to ensure that the CSR funds cater to the demands of the labour market.

Additionally, CSR can have a role in advancing Oman's economic diversification agenda targeting priority sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, logistics, fisheries, agriculture, renewable energy, and the creative as well as technological industries. Initiatives in these sectors can promote community development while enhancing the capabilities for sustainable growth of the sectors.

The geographical dimension is also important. The disparities in economic opportunities and development needs are evident across Oman's governorates.

CSR can have a role in advancing Oman's economic diversification agenda targeting priority sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, logistics, fisheries, agriculture, renewable energy, and the creative as well as technological industries

Consequently, CSR initiatives must be tailored to meet the needs of different communities and priorities at the governorate level. Programmes for entrepreneurship, tourism and local product development, skills, environment, and community enterprise can become governorate-level economic opportunities and help make the benefits of development more equitable.

However, strengthening measurement is equally important. Organisations should move beyond reporting the costs of CSR expenditures to measuring what is achieved by those costs. Sustainable job creation, community enterprise establishment, new businesses, increase in local purchasing, improvement in the environment, and measurable economic wellbeing of beneficiaries are possible outcomes.

A stronger national initiative would inspire more stakeholder collaboration and greener CSR programmes that incorporate goals related to Oman Vision 2040, local content, ESG, and United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Such collaboration would enable corporate goals to interlock, create positive synergy, and contribute to greater, more impactful sustainable goals on a national level.

The future of CSR in Oman must be built on the three pillars of alignment, measurability and sustainability. While previously the central preoccupation for organisations had been "How much did we spend on CSR?" the focus should now be on "what impact did our CSR investments in Oman create?"

BEYOND DAYLIGHT:
THE RISE OF 24/7
RENEWABLE POWER

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

For years, the renewable energy conversation has largely been about how much solar and wind capacity countries can install. Now, the focus is beginning to change. The next challenge is not simply producing clean electricity, but making it available whenever it is needed.

This is giving rise to the concept of 24/7 renewable power, sometimes described as "firm" renewable energy. Instead of treating solar and wind as intermittent sources that must be backed up by conventional power plants, new energy systems are being designed to combine renewable generation with storage, smarter grids and complementary sources of electricity.

The International Renewable Energy Agency has identified this shift as an important part of the next phase of the global energy transition. Its 2026 work on the economics of firm solar and wind explores how renewable projects paired with battery storage can increasingly provide electricity around the clock rather than only when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing.

The timing is particularly relevant for Oman. The Sultanate of Oman is preparing for a major expansion in renewable generation. Four solar projects, each planned at around 1 GW, are envisaged at Adam, Al Kamil W'al Wafi, Thamrait and Mahadha from 2028 onwards. Together, they form part of Oman's effort to generate at least 30 per cent of its electricity from clean energy sources by 2030.

Wind power is also moving forward. In Al Duqm, two wind projects with a combined capacity of 58 MW are under development, demonstrating how different renewable resources could increasingly work together within the same energy system.

This combination matters because Oman's renewable resources do not all peak at the same time. Solar production is strongest during daylight hours, while wind conditions in certain parts of the country can remain favourable beyond sunset. Pairing the two can reduce the periods when neither resource is producing enough electricity.

Storage can then fill shorter gaps by absorbing surplus power and releasing it when demand rises. The result is a different way of thinking about renewable infrastructure. Instead of asking how much electricity a solar farm can generate during the day, planners increasingly ask how much dependable power an entire renewable system can deliver over 24 hours.

Globally, this question is becoming more important as renewable capacity grows rapidly. According to the International Energy Agency, the world added around 800 GW of renewable capacity in 2025, a 16 per cent increase from the previous year.

Gulf connectivity emerges
as economic insurance

THE war that began on February 28, 2026 exposed a structural weakness in the Gulf economy that high oil prices could not conceal.

When shipping through the Strait of Hormuz slowed to a fraction of normal levels, the shock moved rapidly beyond energy. Freight became more expensive, supply chains were disrupted and exporters were forced to look for other routes.

The lesson is no longer simply that Hormuz must be kept open. It is that no critical economic system should depend excessively on one route.

The Gulf does not need one substitute for Hormuz. It needs a network of alternatives.

Saudi Arabia demonstrated the principle during the crisis. The Kingdom increased crude flows through its East-West pipeline for export from Yanbu on the Red Sea. The International Energy Agency, based on Kpler data, said Saudi oil exports from Yanbu rose from around 2 million barrels per day before the war to more than 5 million barrels per day in early June 2026.

The pipeline did not eliminate the geopolitical crisis. It gave the economy another option.

The UAE offers a second version of the same logic. Its Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline carries crude from Habshan to Fujairah, outside the Strait of Hormuz. The IEA puts the line's current capacity at close to 1.8 million barrels per day. ADNOC is also accelerating construction of a second pipeline intended to double export capacity through Fujairah, with completion targeted for 2027.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE therefore illustrate two different forms of energy redundancy: one reaches the Red Sea, the other the Sea of Oman.

Oman adds a third geographic dimension. Its principal ports at Al Duqm and Salalah face the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, while Suhar sits close to the entrance to the Gulf.



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics dept at Observer

The disruption of Hormuz exposed a larger vulnerability: Resilience will depend on whether the Gulf can connect its alternative ports, pipelines, grids and land corridors into one working system

Oman does not need a new coastline outside Hormuz; it already has one.

The strategic question is whether these separate advantages can function as parts of one Gulf system.

That question has become less theoretical in 2026.

During the disruption, GCC states activated alternative logistics corridors and redirected shipments from Arabian Gulf ports towards ports on the Red Sea and Arabian Sea, supported by joint customs and logistics facilitation.

In May 2026, the Sharjah Ports, Customs and Free Zones Authority, working with Oman Customs, launched an integrated logistics corridor linking Sharjah with Omani ports by land. The corridor covers Suhar, Al Duqm and Salalah and was designed to expand logistics options and support continuity in regional supply chains.

Rail is beginning to add another layer. Hafeet Rail is intended to connect Suhar with the UAE network, and a preliminary commercial agreement signed in 2025 envisages seven container trains a week between Suhar and Abu Dhabi once the line is completed.

Taken together, these developments suggest a more useful way to think about Gulf integration.

For years, connectivity has largely been discussed as an efficiency project: shorter journeys, bigger markets, cheaper transport and greater intra-GCC trade.

Those benefits remain important. But 2026 has added another purpose. Connectivity is now also a form of economic insurance.

The engineering principle is redundancy. Critical systems are designed with alternatives because even the best-protected component can fail.

The objective is not to predict every disruption but to ensure that failure at one point does not stop the entire system.

Economies need the same discipline.

A Gulf resilience network would mean energy able to reach different coastlines, cargo able to switch between ports and land corridors, electricity able to cross borders during shortages, and strategic food or medicine stocks held in more than one location.

The electricity sector already provides a working model. The GCC interconnection has for years allowed member states to support one another during power contingencies. The new direct Oman-GCC link now under development will add roughly 530 kilometres of 400-kV transmission lines and up to 1,600 MW of capacity between the UAE side of the GCC grid and Ibri in Oman.

This is important not because another cable is being built, but because it demonstrates what genuine regional resilience looks like: spare capacity in one part of a network can support another part under pressure.

Meanwhile, the UAE-Oman logistics corridor and Hafeet Rail create a different axis between Emirati logistics networks and Suhar, Al Duqm and Salalah.

Saudi Arabia provides access to the Red Sea. The UAE has built an oil export route to Fujairah outside Hormuz. Oman has ports open to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

What is missing is the connective tissue that allows these assets to operate as one system rather than as national alternatives sitting beside one another.

That is also why the September 1, 2026 Oman-Saudi discussions in Jeddah matter beyond bilateral trade. Oman's Foreign Ministry said the leaders discussed ways to advance relations across various sectors and exchanged views on regional and international developments, including solutions aimed at de-escalation and peace while safeguarding states, peoples, economies and interests.

But the argument should not stop with Oman and Saudi Arabia. The deeper issue is Gulf-wide.

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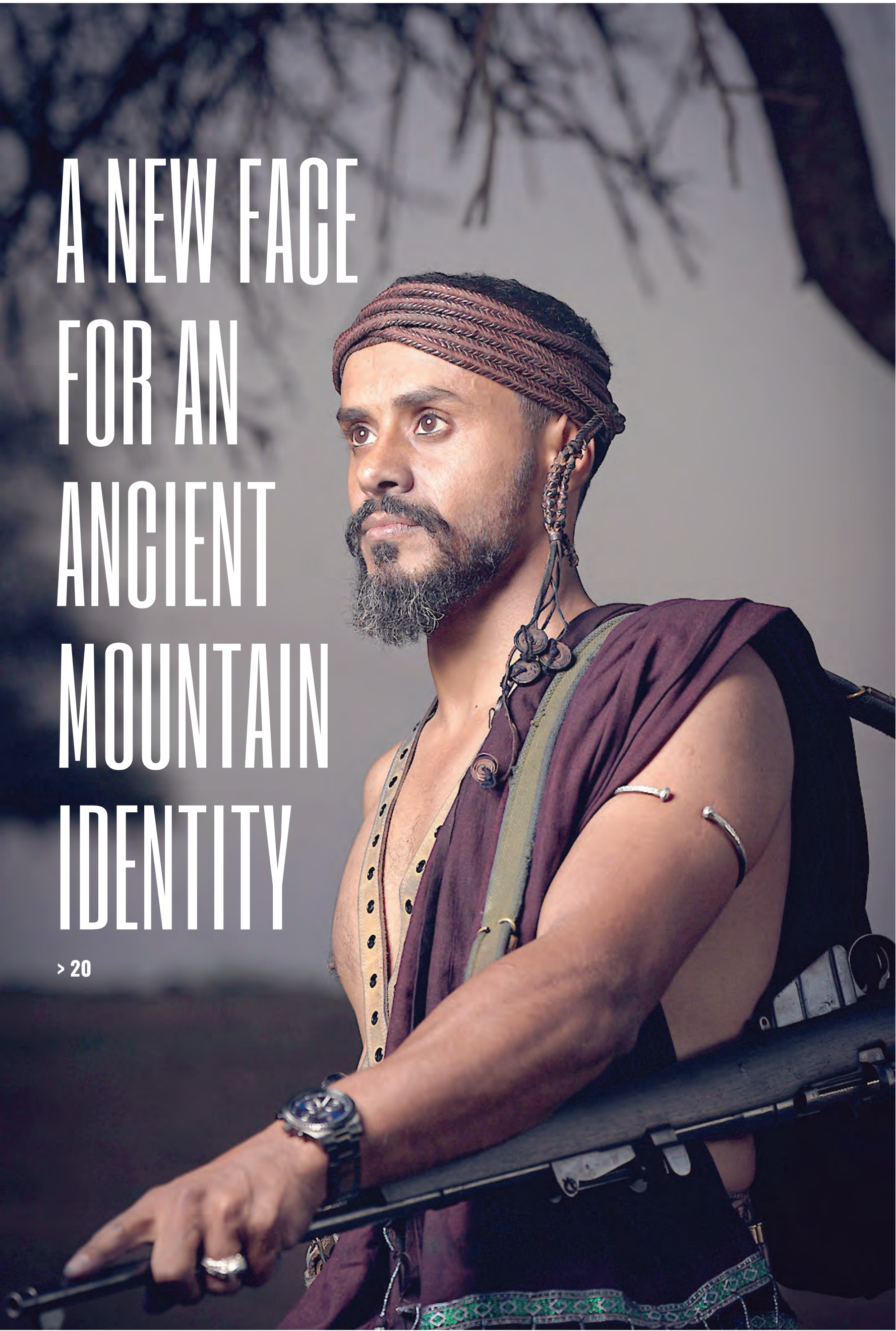
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ART/LIFE

THE SAMURAI OF DHOFAR



A NEW FACE FOR AN ANCIENT MOUNTAIN IDENTITY

> 20

HIGHTECH

VENICE FILM FESTIVAL HEAD STRESSES AI POTENTIAL



AI could enable artists and directors “to achieve things that until now were not possible”, said the director. — AFP

The Venice Film Festival’s artistic director has stressed the creative potential of artificial intelligence ahead of the premiere of a documentary made entirely using the technology at the prestigious Italian event.

In an AFP interview on the eve of the festival, Alberto Barbera acknowledged the dangers surrounding the emerging technology, but argued that the debate should also consider its creative possibilities. AI has caused both panic and excitement across a wide range of industries, with the film sector among those most concerned about its rapid development.

“There’s both danger and advantage. The fact is that up to now we’ve seen a great many interventions on artificial intelligence driven by fear, by concern over the negative impact AI might have on the whole of humankind, on professional aspects, on copyright, on artists’ image and so on and so forth”, Barbera said.

He said that, alongside understanding how to control such a powerful technology, people also needed to consider how they could “begin to harness the extraordinary potential of this unprecedented technology”.

AI could enable artists and directors “to achieve things that until now were not possible”, he added.

This year’s festival on the Venice Lido has programmed “Be Brave”, a documentary made entirely with AI by Italian director Francesco Carrozzini. The film centres on Renzo Rosso, the founder of jeans brand Diesel and Barbera described the production as “a very interesting experience”. In the film’s notes, Carrozzini said using AI to tell the story of the fashion “provocateur” made sense, describing the project as an experimental and provocative encounter with what he called the ultimate frontier of the present era: artificial intelligence.

The festival, will also host an international symposium examining what the technology could mean for the movie industry. Hollywood star George Clooney is among those due to take part in the panel.

Many movie industry workers remain opposed to AI, fearing that it could eventually eliminate jobs for animators, scriptwriters and actors.

Cannes Film Festival director Thierry Fremaux spoke out against AI at this year’s event in May, saying the festival stood with industry professionals whose livelihoods were at risk.

However, Cannes also screened a documentary by Oscar-winning “Traffic” director Steven Soderbergh about John Lennon and Yoko Ono that featured some visually jarring AI-generated graphics.

“Lord of the Rings” director and special-effects specialist Peter Jackson also offered a contrasting view. He told festival-goers that he believed AI was “going to destroy the world”, but added that, when it came to its use in film, “I don’t dislike it at all”.

— AFP

QUICK FEATURES



DANCE

European champions Sebastian Avedano and Tania Gutierrez perform during the final of Stage Tango World Championship in Buenos Aires, Argentina. — AFP



MUSIC

US jazz musician and singer Cassandra Wilson performs during a Skopje Jazz Festival in Skopje, Macedonia. — AFP



GATHERING

A Drum Major throws their Mace as they compete during the annual Braemar Gathering in Braemar, central Scotland. — AFP

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DOLLY PARTON TO GET NEW HOLLYWOOD STAR



A replacement star honouring Dolly Parton is being installed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame after the original was vandalised. — AFP

Late country music legend Dolly Parton will get a new star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Friday, after the original one was vandalised, officials have announced.

The United States has been in mourning since the death of the beloved singer last week at the age of 80.

Fans flocked to her home state of Tennessee to pay homage to the musician, philanthropist and entrepreneur, as President Donald Trump ordered flags on government buildings be flown at half-staff.

They also laid flowers and left candles on the star in the heart of Hollywood that commemorates her decades-long career.

But on Monday, vandals scratched the star, which was

dedicated in 1984, leaving Parton's name badly defaced, with video on social media showing the damage.

Ana Martinez of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce said the tribute items left on the star had been cleared in anticipation of already-scheduled work to repair cracks when it was vandalised.

The Hollywood Historic Trust and Hollywood Chamber of Commerce are proud to honour the legacy of Dolly Parton with a replacement of her star", the organisation wrote on Instagram. — AFP

Japan’s kaleidoscopic, ‘polka dot queen’



Kusama’s kaleidoscopic mirror rooms are a global hit. — AFP

THE dotty pumpkins and kaleidoscope rooms of Yayoi Kusama, who has died aged 97, were as vibrant as the artist herself, but her exuberant work was the expression of a long battle with mental illness.

Her larger-than-life paintings, sculptures and installations — inspired by vivid hallucinations — sold for millions of dollars and packed out top galleries.

Kusama, instantly recognisable in her bright red wig and bold spotted outfits, worked well into old age from the psychiatric hospital in Tokyo where she lived voluntarily for the second half of her life.

Born in 1929, the youngest daughter of a wealthy but troubled family, Kusama began producing her signature dot and net patterns aged 10.

“One day, after seeing a tablecloth with a red flower pattern on a desk, I saw the same red flower pattern all over the ceiling, windows and pillars. It filled the room and covered my body”.

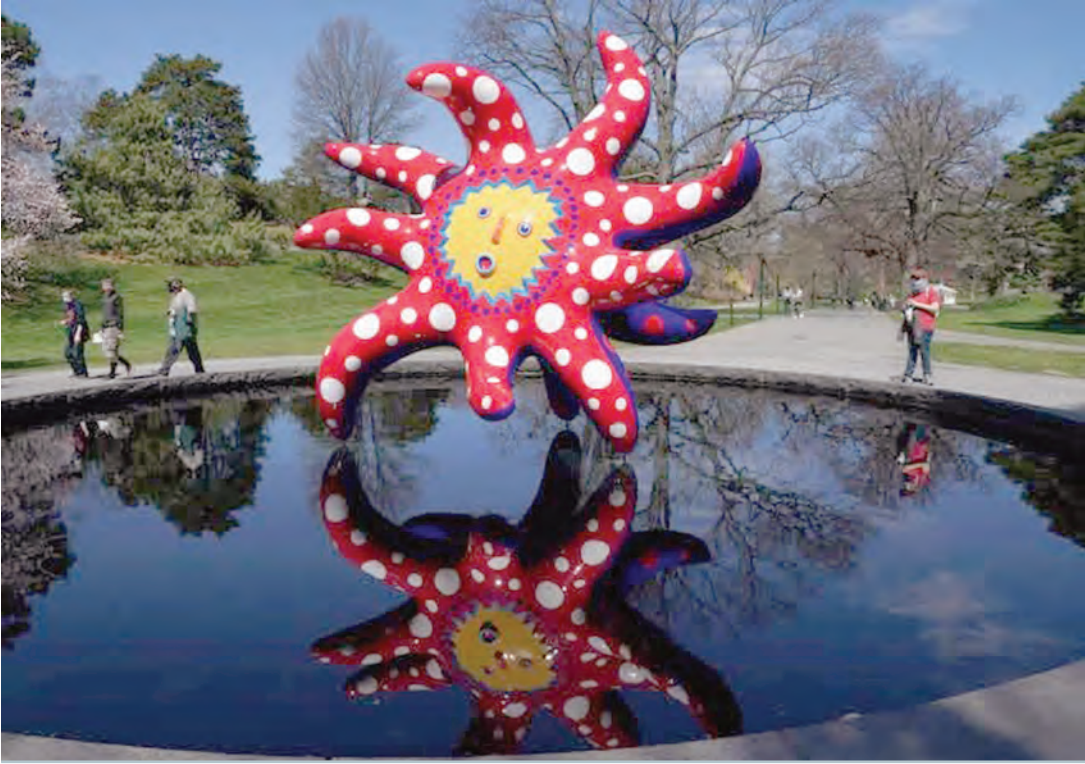
Art provided a release for the young Kusama, whose father, a seedling merchant, was unfaithful to her mother.

“When I was sad or lonely, everything would be cured when I drew pictures”, she said.

In the book, Kusama explained her concept of “self-obliteration” — a recurrent theme throughout her career.

“I put dots all over my body and make all the surroundings dot patterns. By creating the same thing over and over, my own existence is buried in the art”.

Kusama studied Japanese painting in Kyoto, against her parents’ wishes and held her first solo exhibition in



Kusama became a prominent name in the avant-garde world. — AFP



Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. — AFP

Pumpkins are Kusama’s most famous motif, featuring heavily in her paintings and giant sculptures

1952 in her hometown of Matsumoto in central Japan.

The decisive push to pack her bags came when she wrote to modernist painter Georgia O’Keeffe, who encouraged Kusama to seek international recognition in the United States.

Kusama moved to Seattle in 1957 and then to New York, where she struggled to find her place as an Asian artist in the city’s largely white, male-dominated creative scene.

“I was at the lowest point of poverty. One time, I couldn’t eat for three days because I had no money”, she once told Japan’s Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

But she persevered and during her 16 years in New York became a prominent name in the avant-garde world.

By the time she returned to Japan in 1973, however, Kusama was burned out and checked herself into a psychiatric ward where she lived for the rest of her life.

And it was not until the 1990s that her vivid patterns, bold floral shapes and shiny steel orbs hit the mainstream, later providing the backdrop to countless selfies.

Pumpkins are her most famous motif, featuring heavily in her paintings and giant sculptures.

The artist called them her “life partners”, saying she had first grown to love their “generous, unpretentious looks” as a child.

She was also one of the most expensive, with one of her “infinity net” paintings fetching nearly \$8 million at a 2019 auction.

She published several novels in her later years, while her exhibitions continued to draw huge crowds. — AFP

The SAMURAI of Dhofar

A NEW FACE FOR AN ANCIENT MOUNTAIN IDENTITY



SIHAM AL SAIDI

AT first glance, he looks as if he has walked out of another era. Standing in the rugged heights of Tawi Atair, dressed in distinctive dark traditional clothing of Dhofar, the young man appears almost cinematic against the mountains of Jabal Samhan. Visitors have come to know him as “the Samurai”, an unusual name for a young Dhofari man, but behind the striking character lies a clever idea, making an ancient identity visible to a modern audience.

The Samurai does not simply wear Dhofari heritage. He embodies it.

Behind the character is Amer bin Mahad bin Said al Omari, a young Dhofari who has transformed his connection with mountain life into an authentic tourism experience through the Mountain Heritage Experience.

“I grew up in the mountains of Dhofar”, Amer says. “I do not simply reflect Dhofar’s heritage. I am an inseparable part of it”.

Visitors are invited to wear traditional rural clothing, participate in local songs and dances, discover aspects of mountain life and experience the preparation of madhbi. They can also witness camel milk being prepared using heated stones, turning a visit from simple sightseeing into genuine participation.

“I want visitors to see our culture not only through explanations, but by actually living it”, he says.

Perhaps the Samurai’s most interesting achievement, however, is helping reintroduce the distinctive personality of Dhofar’s mountains, including its appearance, mannerisms and local language. The experience appeals not only to international tourists but also to Omanis and residents curious to rediscover traditions that may have become less visible in everyday life.

Visitors arrive from across Europe, particularly Germany and France, as well as China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Ukraine and India. During khareef, Gulf visitors form a



“I grew up in the mountains of Dhofar”, Amer al Omari says. “I do not simply reflect Dhofar’s heritage. I am an inseparable part of it. I am simply proud of my culture. My parents taught me never to abandon it, but to be proud of it”. And perhaps that is why the Samurai works. He does not ask visitors to admire Dhofar’s heritage from a distance. He invites them into it.



significant part of the audience.

The Samurai’s image has also travelled far beyond the mountains through social media. Visitors photograph their encounters and share their experiences online, giving the village unexpected international reach. Visits from personalities and content creators, including Japanese celebrity Yuji and travel YouTuber Joe Hattab, have further introduced the experience to audiences beyond Oman.

For Amer, however, the most meaningful response is not measured in views.

“I see the amount of amazement in their eyes”, he says. “When they tell us, ‘You live such a pure, healthy, beautiful and simple life, yet it is enjoyable at the same time’, those are moments I never forget”.

That reaction reflects a growing desire for authentic tourism, where visitors can understand how people genuinely live, eat, dress, speak and celebrate.

Amer also sees the experience as a way of protecting heritage from disappearing.

“The mountains hide a different and unique heritage”, he says. “With the rapid development of modern life, we need to present these customs and traditions in a modern and beautiful way, so they do not disappear over time”.

His vision extends beyond the current experience. Amer and his team hope to develop an integrated rural village in Tawi Atair, allowing visitors to spend more time immersed in Dhofari mountain life while creating opportunities for local youth.

“I am simply proud of my culture. My parents taught me never to abandon it, but to be proud of it”.

And perhaps that is why the Samurai works. He does not ask visitors to admire Dhofar’s heritage from a distance. He invites them into it.

In doing so, a young man in traditional dress has become more than a striking figure in a mountain village. He has become a modern storyteller and an unexpected ambassador for Oman’s living heritage.