

OMAN

عمان

DAILY

Observer

SUNRISE 05:27 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:01 AM

DHUHR 12:17 PM

ASR 03:37 PM

MAGHRIB 07:02 PM

ISHA 08:24 PM



VOL. 44, NO. 238
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200



12
CHELSEA BEAT FLUMINENSE TO REACH CWC FINAL

INBRIEF

GLOBAL HONOUR FOR SULTAN QABOOS CANCER CENTRE

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) at the University Medical City has received official recognition for excellence in supportive cancer care, marking a first-of-its-kind achievement in the Middle East.

This recognition confirms the centre’s inclusion among an elite group of 20 leading medical institutions worldwide dedicated to providing the highest levels of comprehensive support and care for cancer patients.

Granted by the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC), the accreditation acknowledges the centre’s adherence to the highest global standards in delivering advanced supportive care alongside cutting-edge medical treatments, palliative care, and physical and psychological support for patients. It also highlights the centre’s commitment to implementing best practices that benefit patients and their families, ultimately improving their quality of life throughout the treatment journey.

REPORT ON P5

MUSANDAM TO HOST INTERNATIONAL DIVING FEST



The first Musandam International Diving Festival will take place in the Wilayat of Khasab from August 25 to 28, as part of efforts to boost eco-tourism and marine activities during the summer season.

REPORT ON P3

OIA LAUNCHES \$200M ENERGY TRANSITION FUND

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced the launch of the Sultanate of Oman’s first investment fund dedicated to the energy transition, established through a strategic partnership between the ‘Future Fund Oman (FFO)’ and Templewater, a leading alternative asset management company based in the People’s Republic of China.

The joint fund aims to accelerate the pace of energy transition in the Sultanate of Oman and support efforts to diversify income sources in line with Oman Vision 2040, by investing in innovative projects that advance Net-Zero goals and open new horizons for sustainable economic growth.

This 50:50 joint fund — starting with a total capital commitment of RO 77 million (\$200 million), equally contributed by FFO and Templewater — represents a pioneering initiative in clean energy and the shift towards a low-carbon economy. The initial capital base serves as a catalyst to unlock further capital and attract high-quality, scalable investment opportunities aligned with Oman Vision 2040. All investment opportunities will be located within the Sultanate of Oman, reinforcing its ambition to become a regional hub for renewable energy innovation. FULL REPORT ON P13

TRUCE TALKS GRIND ON, ISRAEL HAMMERS GAZA

US President Donald Trump’s special envoy to the Middle East said on Tuesday that he aims to have a Gaza ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas by the end of the week.

“We are hopeful that by the end of this week, we will have an agreement that will bring us into a 60-day ceasefire,” Steve Witkoff said during a meeting of Trump’s Cabinet members.

Witkoff said the deal would include Hamas releasing 10 living hostages. Efforts to secure a temporary ceasefire have been stalled for months but the mediators in Doha recently presented another proposal, which reports say provides for the cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip for at least 60 days, the staggered release of 10 Israeli hostages, and the return of the remains of dead hostages.



Smoke rises as a Palestinian man inspects the site of Israeli strikes on buildings at Gaza’s Old City market on Wednesday. — Reuters

In return, a large number of Palestinian prisoners would be released from Israeli prisons.

During the ceasefire, the two sides would attempt to negotiate a

permanent end to the war.

Israel’s military chief also said “conditions have been created” for the advancement of a hostage release deal in Gaza, as indirect

negotiations were under way between Israel and Hamas.

“We have achieved many significant results, we have caused great damage to the governance and military capabilities of Hamas,” armed forces chief Eyal Zamir said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his meeting with President Donald Trump had focused on freeing hostages held in Gaza, as Israel continued to pound the Palestinian territory amid efforts to reach a ceasefire.

Trump met Netanyahu on Tuesday for the second time in two days to discuss the situation in Gaza. Hamas official Taher al Nono said they were engaged in a “difficult round” of negotiations.

The top issue for the group’s negotiators was the free flow of aid into Gaza as well as the location of withdrawal lines of Israeli forces. — Agencies

AI GIANT NVIDIA BECOMES FIRST \$4 TRILLION FIRM

NEW YORK: Nvidia became the first company to reach \$4 trillion in market value on Wednesday, a new threshold in Wall Street’s bet that artificial intelligence will transform the economy.

Shortly after the stock market opened, Nvidia, which is led by electrical engineer Jensen Huang, vaulted as high as \$164.42, giving it a valuation above \$4 trillion before retreating slightly.

“The market has an incredible certainty that AI is the future,” said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers. “Nvidia is certainly the company most positioned to benefit from that gold rush.”

Nvidia has now attained a market value greater than the GDP of France, Britain or India, a testament to investor confidence that AI will spur a new era of robotics and automation, potentially boosting productivity while also challenging incumbent sectors and companies.

The California chip company’s latest surge is helping to drive a recovery in the broader stock market, even as Nvidia itself outperforms major indices. — AFP

Al Jabal Al Sharqi in Al Hamra attracts hordes of visitors

AL HAMRA: Al Jabal Al Sharqi (The Eastern Mountain) is witnessing a qualitative transformation that positions it as a key contributor to domestic tourism and local community empowerment, thanks to ongoing efforts to develop tourism infrastructure and enhance the readiness of natural sites.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, affirmed that the governorate has prioritised the development of the Al Jabal Al Sharqi, working to create an integrated tourism environment that meets visitors’ expectations while adhering to sustainable environmental standards. He noted that the governorate, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and

Tourism, is improving service efficiency, regulating visitor traffic, and ensuring smooth entry and exit to guarantee a balanced and safe tourism experience.

He said the “Al Jabal Al Sharqi Oasis” project as one of the most prominent development initiatives in the governorate. The project’s tender was floated last April, and bids are currently under review. Spanning 10,000 square metres, the project includes a comprehensive range of tourism and service facilities, such as prayer halls for men and women, a 300-square-metre investment restaurant, an outdoor theatre, 13 seating canopies, pedestrian walkways, open spaces and service amenities designed



Al Hamra Tourism 2025 event will kick off on August 1 in Al Jabal Al Sharqi and runs until August 30.

to enhance the site’s year-round appeal.

He emphasised that this project embodies the practical implementation of Oman Vision 2040 through high-quality initiatives that leverage the geographical and environmental uniqueness of each wilayat. The focus on sustainable tourism sites goes hand in hand with direct support for entrepreneurs and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), which play a pivotal role in service delivery and generating economic opportunities for citizens.

The Governor of Al Dakhiliyah stated that Al Jabal Al Sharqi is a year-round destination, particularly for camping and adventure enthusiasts, necessitating

infrastructure capable of accommodating this demand. He affirmed that the governorate’s development vision relies on engaging local communities in project implementation and fostering an enabling environment for youth initiatives, thereby promoting an entrepreneurial culture in the tourism sector.

Shaikh Sulaiman bin Said al Azri, Wali of Al Hamra, said that the “Al Hamra Tourism 2025” event will kick off on August 1 in Al Jabal Al Sharqi, running until August 30. The event, he pointed out, features a packed programme of diverse activities catering to all age groups, blending entertainment, adventure and culture. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



CPA has ramped up field inspections to ensure that suppliers and vendors comply with laws.

CPA INTENSIFIES INSPECTIONS AHEAD OF KHAREEF SEASON

SALALAH: As part of its preparations for the upcoming Khareef Dhofar Season 2025, the General Directorate of Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) in Dhofar Governorate has ramped up its field inspection efforts to ensure that suppliers and vendors comply with the relevant laws and regulations.

Dr Taie bin Salem al Junaibi, Acting Director-General of the Directorate, confirmed that a total of 19,582 inspection visits were conducted across the governorate's markets during the first half of this year.

In addition, 14,317 monitoring visits were carried out to cover various commercial establishments as part of a comprehensive regulatory plan designed to create a fair and secure commercial environment.

In addressing consumer complaints, Dr Al Junaibi noted that the directorate received 555 complaints during the same period, with an impressive resolution rate of 97 per cent. Furthermore, 214 reports were handled with a high efficiency rate of 99 per cent.

Dhofar blooms as khareef season brings new charm

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

WHILE much of the Gulf is engulfed in the peak of summer heat, southern Oman quietly welcomes its most beautiful guest: Khareef. But Dhofar's monsoon is unlike any other. It doesn't bring parched leaves or arid winds — instead, it arrives as a gentle whisper of mist and drizzle, waking the land into vibrant life, according to visitors.

“This is something out of a fairytale,” says Elise Kramer, a tourist from Germany visiting Dhofar for the first time. “I read about khareef, but nothing prepared me for the serenity and surreal beauty I’m witnessing here.”

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, over 820,000 tourists visited Dhofar during the 2024 khareef season — a 15% increase from the previous year. Of those, GCC nationals made up more than 65%, while international interest from Europe and Asia continues to rise.

The temperate climate, lush hills and soft monsoon rains attract families, nature lovers and photographers alike, all eager to escape the searing summer elsewhere in the region.

Fog-draped hills and softly gushing waterfalls are among Dhofar's most iconic scenes. Locations such as Wadi Darbat and Ayn Athum offer breathtaking experiences.

Hala Morsi, a visitor from Cairo, said: “The moment I stepped out of the airport



and felt the cool breeze, I knew this place was special. I've never seen such rich greenery in the Gulf. It's peaceful, pure and soul-refreshing.” Data from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism confirms that Salalah's sites are among the most visited during khareef, consistently drawing record numbers each year.

No trip to Dhofar is complete without experiencing its ancient gift to the world: frankincense. This aromatic resin, harvested from native Boswellia trees, has been traded for millennia across the Middle East, Africa and Europe.

At Salalah's traditional souqs, tourists can witness frankincense being burned, smell its earthy arom, and purchase raw resin or fragrant oils.

Maria Lopez, a tourist from Spain, describes it as magical: “It's like stepping back in time. The scent is powerful, sacred

even. I bought several packs and oils to take back to Madrid. This isn't just a souvenir — it's history in a jar.” Tourism-linked sales of frankincense products saw a 30% increase in the last khareef season, reflecting its cultural significance and growing international demand.

Khareef isn't only about misty mountains — it's also a celebration of Dhofari heritage. At Al Haffa Market, visitors are drawn to local handicrafts, spices and traditional clothing, all offered with a generous dose of Omani hospitality.

Amani al Zubaidi from Saudi Arabia said: “I loved the souqs — the colours, the people, the scents. You don't feel like a tourist here, you feel like a welcomed guest.” Cafés, boutique stays and seasonal festivals help bring Dhofar's cultural spirit to life during khareef, turning tourism into a truly immersive experience.



www.mem.gov.om

وزارة الطاقة والمعادن
Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Public Tender for Leasing the Minerals Laboratory Building

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals announces the launch of a public tender for leasing the Minerals Laboratory building, located in Muscat Governorate (Ghala Industrial Area), with a total area of 5,000 square meters, including all laboratory technical equipment and devices. This initiative aims to enhance the laboratory's role in serving the mining sector and improving the efficiency and utilization of its technical capabilities.

Tender Details:

Tender Document Purchase & Site Visit:	15 July 2025	31 July 2025
Deadline for Bid Submission	31 August 2025	
Tender Document Collection Location	Administrative Affairs Department, Ministry of Energy and Minerals	

* Bid value: 25 Omani riyal

Main Equipment and Devices Available in the Laboratory:

• X-Ray Diffraction (XRD)	• X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrograph (XRF)	• Inductively Coupled Plasma Spectrometer (ICP- OES 7300 DV)
---------------------------	---	--

■ Additional Equipment for Rock Sample Preparation:
Rock Cutting Machine, Crushing Machine, Rock Grinding Machine

For inquiries and further information, please contact: 99009754 | 99210440 | 92708920 or email: jamal.a.aladawi@mem.gov.om

Mango crop development research enhances food security

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 9

As part of Oman's efforts to boost agricultural sustainability and food security, the Agricultural Research Centre in Suhar, affiliated with the Directorate-General of Agricultural and Animal Research at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, conducted two vital studies focused on mango cultivation.

These initiatives aim to improve pest management and optimise nursery planting media for mango seedlings — one of Oman's most valuable fruit crops.

Mangoes are the second most cultivated fruit in Oman, covering 3,649 acres and generating over 16,000 tonnes annually. Recognising the crop's significance to national food security and economic growth, the centre undertook targeted research to tackle major challenges facing mango production, such as pest infestations and unsuitable growing environments.

The first study evaluated the effectiveness of seven insecticides in controlling thrips (Frankliniella occidentalis), a pest that causes severe damage to mango seedlings. Using a randomised complete block design, researchers found that products like Plesiva Pro and Tracer achieved mortality rates, 50% maintaining efficacy for up to seven days post-application.

These results offer farmers practical and sustainable pest control solutions that reduce yield losses without



The results offer farmers practical and sustainable pest control solutions that reduce yield losses without over reliance on chemical treatments.

over reliance on chemical treatments.

The second study assessed eight different agricultural media types to determine their influence on seedling growth and vigour. After one year of monitoring and analysis, the research concluded that certain uncomposted media outperformed peatmoss planting media, supporting stronger stem development and improved nutrient uptake.

Dr Ali al Adawi, Director of the Agricultural Research Centre in Suhar, emphasised the strategic importance of the findings: “This research contributes directly to national efforts to strengthen food security and promote sustainable farming practices.”

“By identifying more effective pest control methods and suitable planting media, we are helping farmers produce healthier crops with higher resilience and lower input costs. Our role as a research centre is not only to conduct experiments, but to turn knowledge into impact,” he added.

These studies reflect the centre's commitment to advancing science-based agricultural practices in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. By bridging the gap between research and field application, the Agricultural Research Centre continues to empower local farmers and reinforce the resilience of the country's agricultural sector.

SHORT TAKES



The graduation was held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence.

JOINT COMMAND GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD

MUSCAT: The Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies celebrated on Wednesday the graduation of the 38th Joint Command and Staff College course at its headquarters in Bait Al Falaj, under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence. The ceremony was attended by Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

During the ceremony, the chief guest presented awards to top graduates of the course.

It is worth noting that the 38th Joint Command and Staff College course, which commenced in August last year, comprised officers from the Ministry of Defence, the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security services, as well as a number of officers from the GCC countries and Arab and friendly nations.

The course curriculum included three main phases, incorporating tactical and operational exercises, as well as lectures by Undersecretaries and Ambassadors.

The course concluded with the 'Determination' exercise, which served as the culmination of a series of training activities. — ONA

NEW AND EXISTING WATER NETWORK PROJECTS



Nama Water has carried out projects in several areas of Al Buraimi Governorate.

AL BURAIMI: Nama Water Services continues to implement a number of vital projects in Al Buraimi Governorate as part of its efforts to ensure water service sustainability and water security. These initiatives include the development of new water networks and the rehabilitation of existing ones. Water network coverage in the governorate, previously implemented, has reached 60 per cent.

Currently, the company is executing six water network projects in new residential plans and areas across the governorate this year. These include Al Ghuraifa (Phase 2), part of the Northern Al Uqda plan, as well as several projects in Hafset and Al Sinainah. The total length of new networks implemented in these projects is approximately 20 kilometres, at a cost of RO 247,000 with an estimated 250 connections benefitting up to 12,000 subscribers. The completion rate has reached around 40 per cent, with Al Ghuraifa expected to achieve 100 per cent water network coverage by the end of this year. — ONA

‘Al Tasteeh’: Traditional way to dry fresh dates

TEXT & PHOTO BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

The history of palm trees in the Sultanate of Oman dates back thousands of years. Products such as dates, honey and palm juice are staples in every Omani household. It is estimated that there are approximately nine million palm trees in the Sultanate of Oman.

Omani farmers traditionally dry fresh dates known as “Al Ratab”

starting from July to ensure a good supply of dried dates for winter.

The traditional drying method, called ‘Al Tasteeh’, involves harvesting dates, exposing them to the sun for up to 12 hours a day for two weeks to a month, cleaning them and storing them in containers made of palm fronds or plastic.

The dried dates are then marketed in local markets in early September.

The ‘Al Tasteeh’ process is a social occasion where men, women and



MUSANDAM INTERNATIONAL DIVING FESTIVAL FROM AUGUST 25 TO 28

KHASAB: In a significant step aimed at reinforcing the position of Musandam Governorate as a premier marine tourism destination, officials announced the launch of the first Musandam International Diving Festival, in collaboration with the Musandam Exploration Diving Centre. The details were revealed during a press conference held this morning at the Atana Khasab Hotel.

Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam and Badr bin Mohammed al Shihi, owner of the Musandam Exploration Centre, addressed the media.

Sayyid Ibrahim confirmed that the festival will take place in the Wilayat of Khasab from August



25 to 28, as part of efforts to boost eco-tourism and marine activities during the summer season. The initiative is designed to attract divers, tourists and investors from around the world through a sustainable and immersive experience.

He highlighted that Musandam’s

waters occupy a strategic junction between the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, creating a unique marine ecosystem rich in biodiversity — an ideal environment for divers of all levels.

Diving tourism, he noted, has the potential to become a key driver of the Governorate’s tourism economy

by attracting a high-value segment of tourists who seek nature-based, immersive experiences.

On his part, Al Shihi noted that the growing trend among underwater photographers to explore new, coral-rich environments makes the festival a timely opportunity to promote Musandam’s potential.

He added that while the centre has regularly participated in international exhibitions to promote Musandam as a diving hub, hosting the festival on local soil marks a significant milestone — reducing the need for external promotion and drawing global attention to the region, especially with the attendance of influential figures in the diving world.

Local medicines: A boost for ‘Made in Oman’ campaign

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

IN a significant leap for Oman’s pharmaceutical industry, Philex Pharmaceuticals Factory in Salalah has successfully reached its full production capacity, now manufacturing over 100 registered medical products across various therapeutic categories.

This achievement not only reflects the growing capabilities of Oman’s industrial sector but also highlights the country’s strategic progress in strengthening national medicine security and reducing reliance on imported pharmaceuticals.

While the volume of production is impressive, the broader impact lies in the factory’s role in ensuring medicine availability during global disruptions — a lesson reinforced by recent international supply chain challenges.

Community pharmacies across Oman have begun to embrace locally produced medicines as reliable alternatives to imported brands. Najla al Harthy, a pharmacist in Muscat, said: “For a long time, we faced periodic shortages of common medications. With Philex Pharmaceuticals products entering the market, we now have consistent availability. Patients are starting to recognise that local does not mean lower quality — in fact, the response has been very positive”.

Patients have also echoed their satisfaction. Samira al Alawi, said, “My doctor prescribed a Philex medication for high blood pressure. I’ve been using it for six months with excellent results. It’s more affordable than the imported version and I can find it easily in pharmacies”.

Similarly, Badr al Ghassani emphasised convenience: “There’s peace of mind in knowing the medicines I need are made right here. They’re effective and readily

Philex Pharmaceuticals Factory in Salalah has successfully reached its full production capacity, now manufacturing over 100 registered medical products



As confidence continues to grow for local pharmaceuticals, international demand increases.

available — that’s what matters most”.

The medical community is also embracing the shift as stated by Dr Khalid al Ghailani, a family physician. “Almost half of the medications I prescribe today are made locally. This is a professional decision based on results I see in my clinic,” he said.

Philex Pharmaceuticals products are effective, well-tolerated and more accessible for my patients”. Philex Pharmaceuticals reach now extends beyond Oman’s borders. The company is actively exporting its products to Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, with ongoing efforts to enter additional markets in Africa and Asia.

Beyond production, Philex Pharmaceuticals success story contributes to broader national goals, such as job creation, technological advancement and sustainable healthcare

development.

With plans to expand production lines to include medications for chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, the future looks promising. The factory is also exploring collaborations with research institutions to develop new formulations and strengthen Oman’s position in regional health innovation.

Philex Pharmaceuticals trajectory showcases what is possible when ambition meets infrastructure, policy and community trust. More than just a factory, it represents Oman’s commitment to self-sufficiency, health sovereignty and industrial excellence.

As local confidence continues to grow and international demand increases, Philex Pharmaceuticals is poised to become a regional pharmaceutical leader — proof that ‘Made in Oman’ can mean trusted and effective.

United Nations, Oman ranks ninth globally and third in the Gulf in date production, with over 377,000 tonnes produced in 2022.

The market value of national date production is estimated at RO 50 million.

Date production is widespread across most governorates, with higher quantities in hot areas and lower quantities in coastal regions.

The Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has the highest production.

SPOTLIGHT



Experience Better

Their future starts today!

Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman

○ **Get Ashel Educational**
Platform for free!

○ **Unlimited data**
for all plans





SUBSCRIBE NOW !
WhatsApp
80001000
Website: [awasr.om](#)



BEWARE OF REAL ESTATE SCAMS



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

AS the Khareef Dhofar Season begins, authorities warn residents and visitors to be extra cautious of rising real estate fraud in Oman, especially scams involving fake rental listings and advance payment traps. With the increase in demand for rental homes and rest houses during the cool, misty Khareef months, scammers are taking advantage by posting attractive — but entirely false — advertisements online. These ads often feature appealing images and unusually low prices to quickly capture

attention and encourage hasty decisions.

Recently, Muscat police arrested a citizen who defrauded several individuals by publishing fake ads offering homes, apartments and rest houses in different governorates. Victims were persuaded to make advance payments as ‘reservation deposits’ via bank transfers. Once the money was received, the fraudster disappeared, leaving the victims with no way to reclaim their funds.

Lawyer Dr Ahmed al Jahwari points out that these fraudsters are skilled at exploiting emotions. They create a sense of urgency and offer deals that seem too good to miss — promising a dream property at an irresistible price, often coupled with pressure tactics to pay quickly before someone else ‘takes the offer’.

The real estate market in Oman, especially during popular seasons like the Khareef, is vibrant and competitive. However, this also makes it a fertile ground for scams targeting both locals and tourists eager to secure accommodation in advance.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

Verify brokers and documents:
Always deal with licensed real estate brokers or well-established agencies.
Insist on verifying ownership

documents, official property records and licences. Avoid engaging directly with individuals who do not have a verifiable office or track record.

Avoid advance payments: Never send money before you have personally inspected the property and confirmed all details in writing. Reliable agents and landlords understand the importance of transparency and will accommodate inspection requests.

Watch for red flags: Be suspicious of deals that seem too good to be true — properties offered at unusually low prices, landlords who avoid showing you the property, or those who pressure you to transfer funds quickly. Fraudsters often refuse in-person meetings, claiming to be ‘out of town’ or ‘travelling abroad’.

Strengthen digital security: Use strong, regularly updated passwords and enable two-factor authentication wherever possible. Avoid using public Wi-Fi when making online transactions and keep antivirus and anti-fraud protection software active on your devices.

The government has introduced strict laws and penalties to deter cybercrime and protect residents. However, prevention starts with public awareness. Understanding your rights and taking practical precautions are key to staying safe.

For added protection, consider working with a registered real estate office rather than individuals. Established offices have a physical presence, a reputation to uphold and agents who are familiar with local laws and market practices.

Above all, remember: if something feels off or too good to be true, it probably is. Taking a little extra time to verify and inspect can save you significant financial loss and stress.

By staying vigilant and informed, you can ensure a safe, enjoyable and worry-free experience during the beautiful Khareef Dhofar Season in Dhofar Governorate.

“

FRAUDSTERS ARE SKILLED AT EXPLOITING EMOTIONS AND CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY OFFERING DEALS THAT SEEM TOO GOOD TO MISS

DR AHMED AL JAHWARI, LAWYER



SHORT TAKES



The exhibition showcased a collection of unique geological heritage pieces

GEOLOGICAL EXHIBITION ATTRACTS 8,979 VISITORS

AL RUSTAQ: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has announced that the fourth edition of the Omani Geological Heritage Exhibition, titled ‘Sustainability and Employment Opportunities’, held at Al Hazm Castle in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, Al Batinah South Governorate, welcomed 8,979 visitors since its launch on December 30, 2024 until the end of June 2025.

Organised in collaboration with the Al Batinah South Governor’s Office, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the Omani Geological Society, the exhibition aimed to diversify the museum sector and enhance heritage and tourism attractions across Oman’s governorates.

The exhibition showcased a collection of unique geological heritage pieces, including an 800-million-year-old fossil, 3D scientific models of the extinct primitive elephant (*Stegodon*), whose fossilised teeth were discovered in ‘Aydim’ in Dhofar Governorate and a model of a dinosaur whose fossilised remains were found in Al Khoudh, the Wilayat of Al Seeb. — ONA

EA ERADICATES 161,410 INVASIVE BIRDS IN DHOFAR

SALALAH: The Environment Authority has successfully eliminated 161,410 invasive birds in Dhofar Governorate, including 88,365 myna birds and 73,046 Indian house crows, since the launch of the National Campaign to Combat Invasive Birds (Myna and Indian Crow) in 2022.

The Environment Authority in Dhofar continues to implement the campaign, with field teams eliminating 10,449 invasive birds in the first half of this year (as of the end of June). These birds pose a significant threat to the local ecosystem, competing with native species for food and habitats, which could lead to the decline or extinction of indigenous wildlife. — ONA

Sultan Qaboos Cancer Centre gains international recognition

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) at the University Medical City has received official recognition for excellence in supportive cancer care, marking a first-of-its-kind achievement in the Middle East.

This recognition confirms the centre’s inclusion among an elite group of 20 leading medical institutions worldwide dedicated to providing the highest levels of comprehensive support and care for cancer patients.

Granted by the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC), the accreditation acknowledges the centre’s adherence to the highest global standards in delivering advanced supportive care alongside cutting-edge medical treatments, palliative



SQCCRC’s recognition paves the way for contributions through scientific research and integrated care programmes

care, and physical and psychological support for patients. It also highlights the centre’s commitment to implementing best practices that benefit patients and their families, ultimately improving their quality of life throughout the treatment journey.

The administration of the University Medical City emphasised that this achievement reflects its

ongoing commitment to medical excellence and leadership in specialised healthcare aligned with the highest international standards. It serves as international validation of the significant efforts made by the medical and administrative teams, noting that the dedication and expertise of the staff at SQCCRC were pivotal in securing this recognition.

OMAN AT UNESCO SESSION OF WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee — a body of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) — currently being held at the Unesco’s headquarters in Paris.

Oman’s delegation at the meeting is led by Amina bint Salim al Balushiya, Permanent Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to Unesco.

The session looks into the registration of more than 30 new sites on the World Heritage List. It also reviews the status of 250 registered sites in order to assess the environmental and development



Oman’s delegation is led by Amina bint Salim al Balushiya

challenges posed to the sites.

The session includes working sessions on various issues related to UN-registered heritage sites, including the impact of climate

change on those sites, ways to engage local communities in protecting the sites, developing sustainable management methods for the conservation of sites at risk and assessing the competitiveness of national and international plans aimed at preserving the exceptional values of sites included in the World Heritage List.

Oman’s participation in the session stems from its commitment to protecting cultural and natural heritage; and passing this dedication over to future generations. It also consolidates Oman’s international presence in cultural forums, supports

the country’s current and future heritage portfolios and affirms its commitment to the principles of the “International Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”.

Omani sites registered in the World Heritage List include Bahla Fort (in 1987), the archaeological sites of Bat, Al Khatm and Al Ayn (in 1988), five aflaj — traditional irrigation systems (in 2006), sites codenamed ‘the Land of Frankincense’ (in 2000) and the ancient city of Qalhat (in 2018).

— ONA

Forum calls for stronger human rights at work

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

THE Business and Human Rights Forum, organised by the Oman Human Rights Commission, concluded its second day with a set of recommendations aimed at embedding fairness, transparency and a culture of human rights within business practices and policies.

Held from July 8 to 9, in cooperation with the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, the forum aligns with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; and Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises a sustainable economy built on empowerment, participation and accountability.

The forum brought together representatives from government agencies, private sector institutions, civil society organisations, UN offices in Oman, academic institutions and experts in human rights and corporate governance. Over two days, participants engaged in five main sessions featuring 16 working papers on human rights issues in the business sector.

Key recommendations included integrating human rights in

Key recommendations included integrating human rights in business-related curricula at private universities and colleges, developing ethical codes within private companies to empower employees in promoting and protecting human rights



The forum emphasised a sustainable economy on empowerment, participation and accountability

business-related curricula at private universities and colleges, developing ethical codes within private companies to empower employees in promoting and protecting human rights; and adopting the UN Principles on Business and Human Rights in corporate policies along with monitoring mechanisms.

Further recommendations called for sharing best practices among entities applying human rights standards, particularly in supply chains, publishing related reports to enhance transparency and raising community awareness on respecting human rights and sustainable development in the workplace.

Additional points focused on encouraging private companies to launch human rights initiatives, promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market and fostering a culture of human rights among law enforcement agencies in commercial judicial processes.

The forum also urged greater private sector participation in future events to share experiences and address challenges.

It concluded with a call to continue holding the forum regularly and to develop an executive plan with dedicated programmes to make business and human rights an integral part of the workplace.

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees In Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
2025/6	Hosting Ministry of Economy Website	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	18/8/2025

First

The bidder must be accredited by the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology in the field of Cloud Services and Hosting.

Second

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender tender from the following website: [www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#)
The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Third

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

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; [https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#)

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

etenderhd@mtc.gov.om

+ 96824402200

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A firefighter stands next to the crashed Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft in Ahmedabad, India. — Reuters

ATTENTION TURNS TO CRASH REPORT ON AI DISASTER

AHMEDABAD: Indian forensic investigators have identified all 260 people killed in last month's crash of a London-bound passenger plane, health authorities said of a hugely anticipated preliminary report into what went wrong. India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau is leading the probe into one of the deadliest air disasters in decades -- with an initial report expected on Friday.

All but one of the 242 people aboard the Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner were killed when it crashed on June 12. It ploughed into housing just after takeoff in the western city of Ahmedabad, and authorities have also identified 19 people killed on the ground. No details have been released about the probe, in which British and US air accident investigation agencies have also taken part. But specialist website The Air Current, citing multiple sources familiar with the investigation, reported it had "narrowed its focus to the movement of the engine fuel switches", while noting that full analysis will "take months -- if not longer".

It added that "the focus of the investigators could change during that time". — AFP

CHINA HIT BY FLOODS, LANDSLIDES



BEIJING: Torrential rains swept across swathes of China on Wednesday as Tropical Storm Danas drenched coastal tech hubs while monsoonal rains further inland unleashed deadly landslides and flash floods over a 1,400-km arc. Compounding the challenge for authorities, a subtropical high-pressure system has been baking the \$19 trillion economy's more north-easterly seaboard and central provinces since last week, straining power grids and parching croplands.

The world's No 2 economy faces growing threats from extreme weather, which meteorologists link to climate change. Each year, the impact threatens to wipe out tens of billions of dollars worth of commercial activity, alongside loss of life, as ageing flood defences are overwhelmed and infrastructure gaps - such as limited access to air conditioning - are exposed.

Chinese weather authorities urged residents to stay indoors as Storm Danas - which has weakened from a typhoon after claiming two lives in Taiwan - began dumping the water it had sucked up over the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait on the coastal provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian. Danas is forecast to deposit up to 300 millimetres of rain in some parts, shutting schools and putting officials along rivers feeding key ports in the cities of Fuzhou and Xiamen on alert for flash floods, according to China's state broadcaster. — Reuters

DEAL FOR ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Macron, Starmer discuss immigration



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosts French President Emmanuel Macron for lunch at Downing Street on the second day of a state visit, with the pair poised to discuss subjects like immigration and Ukraine. During the state visit, the first by a European leader since Britain's exit from the European Union in 2020, Starmer will likely try to persuade Macron to agree to a returns deal for asylum-seekers. — Reuters

POPE SAYS VATICAN COULD HOST RUSSIA-UKRAINE PEACE TALKS

Pope Leo told visiting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that the Vatican is willing to host Russia-Ukraine peace talks.

The pope, meeting the Ukrainian leader for the second time in his two-month-old papacy, also discussed with Zelensky "the urgent need for a just and lasting peace," the statement said. Zelensky and Leo held talks in Castel Gandolfo, a small Italian hill town not far from Rome, where the pope is taking a two-week vacation. The

Ukrainian leader is in Italy to attend a conference on July 10-11 dedicated to Ukraine's recovery and long-term reconstruction following Russia's war. Zelenskiy said on X that holding talks with Russia in the Vatican would be "entirely possible, with the goal of stopping Russian aggression and achieving a stable, lasting, and genuine peace". But he said Moscow had rejected such proposals, "as it has turned down all other peace initiatives". — Reuters



Talks focus on hostages as Gaza offensive continues

PRIME

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday his meeting with US President Donald

Trump focused on freeing hostages held in Gaza, as Israel continued to pound the Palestinian territory amid efforts to reach a ceasefire.

Netanyahu said on X that the leaders also discussed the consequences and possibilities of "the great victory we achieved over Iran," following an aerial war last month in which the United States joined Israeli attacks on the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites.

Netanyahu is making his third US visit since Trump took office on January 20 and had earlier told reporters that while he did not think Israel's campaign in the Palestinian enclave was done, negotiators are "certainly working" on a ceasefire.

Trump met Netanyahu on Tuesday for the second time in two days to discuss the situation in Gaza, with the president's Middle East envoy indicating that Israel and Hamas were nearing an agreement on a ceasefire deal after 21 months of war.

A delegation from Qatar, the host of indirect talks between Israeli negotiators and Hamas, met senior White House officials before Netanyahu's arrival on Tuesday, Axios said, citing a source familiar with the details.

Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, said the number of issues preventing Israel and Hamas from reaching an agreement had decreased from four to one, expressing optimism for a



A Palestinian woman mourns as she holds the shrouded body of a young relative, killed in an Israeli strike, before the funeral procession at Al Shifa hospital in Gaza City. — AFP



The issues preventing Israel and Hamas from reaching an agreement had decreased from four to one, expressing optimism for a temporary ceasefire deal by the end of the week

STEVE WITKOFF

temporary ceasefire deal by the end of the week.

Witkoff told reporters at a Cabinet meeting that the anticipated agreement would involve a 60-day ceasefire, with the release of 10 living and nine deceased hostages.

Netanyahu met with Vice-President JD Vance before visiting the US Capitol on Tuesday, and was due back in Congress on Wednesday to meet US Senate leaders.

"We have still to finish the job in Gaza, release all our hostages, eliminate and destroy Hamas' military and government capabilities," Netanyahu told reporters on Tuesday.

Umm Mohammed Shaaban, a Palestinian grandmother mourning the deaths of three of her grandchildren in the attack, questioned the timing of a proposed

ceasefire. "After they finished us, they say they'll make a truce?" she said. In Gaza City, people removed debris after another overnight air strike, searching through a three-storey house for survivors to no avail.

One resident, Ahmed al Nahhal, said there was no fuel for trucks to help in rescue efforts. "From midnight till now, we have been looking for the children," he said.

Nearby men carried bodies in shrouds while women wept. Some kissed bodies placed in the back of a vehicle.

Hamas has long demanded an end to the war before it would free the remaining hostages. Israel has insisted it would not agree to stop fighting until all hostages are released and Hamas dismantled. — Reuters



10 DEAD AFTER BRIDGE COLLAPSE

Rescuers search for survivors after a bridge collapsed in Vadodara in the western state of Gujarat, India, on Wednesday. Ten people have died in the incident. Located in Muijpur in Padra taluka of the Vadodara district, the bridge connected Muijpur to Gambhira in Anand district as well as Central Gujarat to Saurashtra. — Reuters

PAY DEAL FAILS

UK junior doctors strike over pay demand



Junior doctors in England will go on strike from July 25-30, their trade union said, after the British government said it could not meet their demands for an improved pay deal this year. Junior doctors, also known as resident doctors and who make up a large share of the medical workforce, were offered an average 5.4 per cent pay rise but are asking for 29 per cent, which they say is necessary to address years of salary erosion in real terms. — Reuters

BBC PROBE

Recordings suggest Hasina ordered crackdown



Audio recordings analysed by the BBC suggest Bangladesh's fugitive ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina ordered a deadly crackdown on protests last year, allegations for which she is on trial. In the recording, dated on July 18, 2024, a voice alleged to be Hasina is heard authorising security forces to 'use lethal weapons' against protesters and that "wherever they find (them), they will shoot". — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A farmer with a rifle controls an area for Russian combat drones as an agricultural worker operates a combine during wheat harvesting. — Reuters

RUSSIA ATTACKS UKRAINE WITH 700 DRONES

KYIV: Russia targeted Ukraine with a record 728 drones early on Wednesday, hours after US President Donald Trump pledged to send more defensive weapons to Kyiv and aimed unusually sharp criticism at Russian President Vladimir Putin. The attack was the latest in a series of escalating air assaults in recent weeks that have involved hundreds of drones in addition to ballistic missiles, straining Ukrainian air defences at a perilous moment in the war.

Kyiv’s military downed almost all the drones but some of the six hypersonic missiles launched by Russia had caused unspecified damage, air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said on Ukrainian television. Officials reported one person killed by drone debris in western Ukraine. Russia’s defence ministry said it had struck military airfields.

Closer to the battle zone, eight people were reported killed by drones and guided bombs in the Ukrainian-held part of the frontline Donetsk region. President Volodymyr Zelensky, due to meet US envoy Keith Kellogg in Rome ahead of a gathering of countries friendly to Ukraine, said the strike showed the need for “biting sanctions” on Russia’s income, including on countries that buy Russian oil. Trump said on Tuesday he was considering supporting a bill that would impose steep sanctions on Russia, including 500 per cent tariffs on nations that buy Russian oil, gas, uranium and other exports.

“We get a lot of bullshit thrown at us by Putin ... He’s very nice all the time, but it turns out to be meaningless,” Trump said at a cabinet meeting.

When asked by a reporter what action he would take against Putin, Trump said: “I wouldn’t tell you. We want to have a little surprise.”

Separately, Europe is working on a new sanctions package against Moscow.

Trump, who returned to power this year promising a swift end to the war that began in 2022, has taken a more conciliatory tone toward Moscow in a departure from predecessor Joe Biden’s administration’s staunch support for Kyiv.

But initial rounds of talks between Russia and Ukraine have so far borne little fruit, with Moscow yet to accept an unconditional ceasefire proposed by Trump and accepted by Kyiv. The US president’s promise to supply more defensive weapons appeared to reverse a Pentagon decision days earlier to stall some critical munitions supplies to Ukraine, despite Russian attacks that have killed dozens in recent weeks. — Reuters

SPAIN’S SANCHEZ OFFERS NEW MEASURES TO ROOT OUT GRAFT

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez unveiled a plan to root out corruption on Wednesday, seeking to maintain parliamentary support for his government after senior members of his governing Socialist Party were accused of taking bribes.

A Supreme Court judge last month ordered the pre-trial detention of Santos Cerdan, the former number three in the party, over allegations that he received and distributed kickbacks in

exchange for awarding public works contracts. Cerdan denies the allegations, which are part of a wider corruption inquiry that has led to opposition calls for a snap election that threaten to destabilise Sanchez’s government.

Sanchez, who is Secretary General of the Socialist Party, told parliament at an extraordinary session on the case that he had briefly considered quitting but decided to stay on, arguing that he himself had done no wrong.

Sanchez, who again rejected calls for an early election, announced 15 measures including preventing companies found guilty of bribery from winning government procurement contracts and working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s anti-corruption team to crack down on graft. Alberto Nunez Feijoo, leader of the opposition People’s Party, urged Sanchez to assume responsibility for his party’s actions, — Reuters

Greek ship sinks in Red Sea after attack; 4 dead

RESCUERS

pulled seven crew members alive from the Red Sea on Wednesday and were searching for 14 still missing from the second of two freighters sunk within two days by suspected Ansar Allah attackers.

Four of the 25 people aboard the Eternity C cargo ship were killed before the rest of the crew abandoned the vessel, which sank on Wednesday morning after being attacked on Monday and Tuesday, sources at security companies mounting the rescue said.

The seven seafarers who were rescued had spent more than 24 hours in the water, they said.

There was no comment from the Ansar Allah on the fate of the Eternity C, but the group claimed responsibility for a similar attack on Sunday targeting another ship, the Magic Seas. All crew from the Magic Seas were rescued before it sank.

The attacks on the two ships renew a campaign by the fighters, who had attacked more than 100 ships from November 2023-December 2024 in what they said was solidarity with the Palestinians, but had halted their campaign this year.

“We will continue to search for the remaining crew until the last light,” said an official at Greece-based maritime risk management firm Diaplous.

“We aim at a peaceful operation,” the official said earlier.

Both of the ships that were attacked flew Liberia flags and were operated by Greek firms. Eternity C was first attacked on Monday afternoon with sea drones and rocket-propelled grenades fired from speed boats by suspected Yemen-based Ansar Allah, maritime security sources said.

Lifeboats were destroyed during the raid. By Tuesday morning the vessel was adrift and listing. Two security sources said on Wednesday that the vessel was hit again with sea drones on Tuesday, forcing the crew and armed guards to abandon it for the sea.

The Ansar Allah stayed with the vessel until the early hours of Wednesday, one of the sources said.

There were fears that some of the crew



Medics transfer a migrant to an ambulance, after Greece rescued hundreds of migrants off the islands of Gavdos and Crete in separate incidents, according to the Greek Coast Guard, in the port of Agia Galini, Greece. — Reuters

who jumped into the water may have been kidnapped by Ansar Allah, the source added. Skiffs were in the area as the rescue efforts were under way.

The crew comprised 21 Filipinos and one Russian. Three armed guards were also on board, including one Greek and one Indian, who was one of those rescued.

The vessel’s operator, Cosmoship Management, has not responded to requests for confirmation of casualties or injuries. But if confirmed, the four reported deaths would

be the first fatalities involving attacks on shipping in the Red Sea since June 2024.

Greece has been in talks with Saudi Arabia, a key player in the region, over the latest incident, according to sources.

The Red Sea, which passes Yemen’s coast, has long been a critical waterway for the world’s oil and commodities. Traffic has dropped since the Ansar Allah began targeting ships in November 2023 in what the group said was solidarity with Palestinians against Israel in the Gaza war. — Reuters

Death toll from Texas flood hits triple-digits, missing tally tops 180

KERRVILLE: The death toll from the July Fourth flash flood that ravaged a swath of central Texas Hill Country rose on Tuesday to at least 109, many of them children, as search teams pressed on through mounds of mud-encrusted debris looking for scores of people still missing.

According to figures released by Governor Gregg Abbott, authorities were seeking more than 180 people whose fate remained unknown four days after one of the deadliest US flood events in decades.

The bulk of fatalities and the search for additional victims were concentrated in Kerr County and the county seat of Kerrville, a town of 25,000 residents transformed into a disaster zone when torrential rains struck the region early last Friday, flooding the Guadalupe River basin.

The bodies of 94 flood victims, about a third of them children, have been recovered in Kerr County alone as of Tuesday, Texas Governor Greg

Abbott said at a late-afternoon news conference after touring the area by air.

The Kerr County dead include 27 campers and counselors from Camp Mystic, a nearly century-old all-girls Christian summer retreat on the banks of the Guadalupe near the town of Hunt. The camp director also perished.

Five girls and a camp counselor were still unaccounted for on Tuesday, Abbott said, along with another child not associated with the camp.

As of Tuesday, 15 other flood-related fatalities had been confirmed across a swath of Texas Hill Country known as “flash flood alley,” the governor said, bringing the overall tally of lives lost to 109. Reports from local sheriffs’ and media have put the number of flood deaths outside Kerr County at 22.

But authorities have said they were bracing for the death toll to



A man searches to locate bodies near the Guadalupe River in Hunt, Texas following severe flash flooding over the July 4 holiday weekend. — AFP

climb as flood waters recede and the search for more victims gains momentum. Law enforcement agencies have compiled a list of 161 people “known to be missing” in Kerr County alone, Abbott said. The

roster was checked against those who might be out of touch with loved ones or neighbors because they were away on vacation or out of town, according to the governor. He said another 12 people were missing

elsewhere across the flood zone as a whole, a sprawling area northwest of San Antonio. “We need to find every single person who is missing. That’s job number one,” Abbott said.

On Tuesday, San Antonio-born country singer Pat Green disclosed on social media that his younger brother and sister-in-law and two of their children were among those “swept away in the Kerrville flood.”

Hindered by intermittent thunderstorms and showers, rescue teams from federal agencies, neighboring states and Mexico have joined local efforts to search for missing victims, though hopes of finding more survivors faded as time passed. The last victim found alive in Kerr County was last Friday.

“The work is extremely treacherous, time-consuming,” Lieutenant Colonel Ben Baker of the Texas Game Wardens said at a press conference. “It’s dirty work. The water is still there.” — Reuters

OPINION

The \$232-billion opportunity hiding in plain sight



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

WHAT if you were offered \$232 billion to shape the future of your region? No contest. No catch. Only a choice. To act with care, with courage and with creativity.

That figure is real. It is the projected gain for the Middle East by 2035 if climate action and artificial intelligence are pursued in tandem. Alone, they offer progress. Together, they reshape how we live, work and adapt. Technology that learns. Environments that recover. Societies that grow with more clarity, more fairness and more resilience.

It can be easy to treat numbers like that as distant. But their meaning lives close to the ground. In how much food costs. In whether air conditioning becomes a necessity or a lifeline. In how many young people feel they have a place in the future that is arriving. And something is beginning to shift.

In Riyadh, national investments are nurturing local AI talent. In the UAE, machine learning is already managing how energy flows through the grid. Algorithms forecast electricity demand and reduce waste. In coastal cities, AI tools help predict floods and alert responders. These are not future possibilities. They are happening now,

across the region. In Cairo, a public school turned its courtyard into a garden. Teachers and students built shade from scrap wood, planted citrus trees in cracked pots and coded moisture sensors using secondhand tools. No fanfare. Just steady hands working in the heat, trusting that care can create change.

In Muscat, a group of university students recently led a climate storytelling workshop. They gathered poems, field notes and oral histories. This was not data analysis, but its own kind of intelligence. One rooted in memory, place and attention. Their work moved through the room like wind through tall grass, soft but certain, mapping what still matters. Across the region, the conditions are here. The sun. The wind. The ambition. The memory of how to thrive with limits.

Beyond the region, momentum is building. At the BRICS summit this week, Brazil proposed a global climate fund. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and China responded. The Global South is no longer waiting for signals from others. It is offering direction on its own terms. As the world looks towards COP30 in Belém later this year, more of the agenda will rise from places long underestimated. Still, money is just one tool. Code can calculate, but it cannot care.

It is the projected gain for the Middle East by 2035 if climate action and artificial intelligence are pursued in tandem. Alone, they offer progress. Together, they reshape how we live, work and adapt.

The rise of artificial intelligence also brings a cost few see. It devours energy to operate and learn. Progress calls for more than programming. It asks for discernment. For design that honours both people and planet. For the will to build systems for lives we may never live, in climates we may never feel. Artificial intelligence can optimise. Climate action demands vision. Together, they offer more than solutions. They offer a new way of seeing. One that centres relationships as much as results.

A child sketching a wind turbine in a school notebook deserves more than a gesture. So does the grandmother who watches the patterns of heat shift year by year. So does the young woman building Arabic-language AI tools because she believes her voice belongs in the systems shaping tomorrow.

This region has always known how to endure. But this is not only about survival. It is about imagination. The kind that led our ancestors to read wind, carve shade from stone and follow stars before maps had names. That instinct has not disappeared. It is still waiting. So what would you do with \$232 billion? Build another skyline? Or rewrite the horizon itself?

Indonesia free meal plan stunted by delays, protests, poisonings

DESSY SAGITA

When an Indonesian mother dropped off her daughter at school in May, she did not expect her to become violently sick after eating lunch from the government’s new billion-dollar free meal programme. “My daughter had a stomach ache, diarrhoea and a headache,” the woman said in the Javan city of Bandung. “She also couldn’t stop vomiting until three in the morning”.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto touted the populist scheme as a solution to the high rates of stunted growth among children, as he carved his way to a landslide election victory last year.

But its rollout since January has stumbled from crisis to crisis, including accusations of nepotism, funding delays, protests and a spate of food poisonings. It was slated to reach as many as 17.5 million children this year and cost \$4.3 billion.

But so far it has only served five million students nationwide from January to mid-June, according to the finance ministry. The poisoning issues were not isolated to that girl’s school — five others reported similar incidents.

But Prabowo has lauded the number of illnesses as a positive. “Indeed there was a poisoning today, around 200 people out of three million,” he said in May. “Over five were hospitalised, so that means the success rate is 99.99 per cent. A 99.99 per cent success rate in any field is a good thing”.

Large-scale aid programmes in Indonesia have a history of allegations of graft at both the regional and national levels. Experts say this programme is particularly vulnerable, with little in the way of accountability. “A big budget means the possibility of corruption is wide open and with lax monitoring, corruption can happen,” said Egi Primayogha, a researcher at Indonesia Corruption Watch. “Since the beginning, the programme was rushed, without any good planning. There is no transparency”. The local investigative magazine Tempo reported that “several partners appointed” were Prabowo supporters in the election.

Agus Pambagio, a Jakarta-based public policy expert, said Prabowo rushed the plan, with critics saying there was little public consultation.

“Japan and India have been doing it for decades. If we want to do it just like them within a few months, it’s suicide,” he said. “We can’t let fatalities happen”. The plan’s stated aim is to combat stunted growth, which affects more than 20 per cent of the country’s children and reduce that rate to five per cent by 2045.

Prabowo’s administration has allocated \$0.62 per meal and initially set a budget of 71 trillion rupiah (\$4.3 billion) for this year. — AFP

Heeding the lessons of India’s ‘Emergency’

ON June 25, 1975, India awoke to a new reality. The airwaves crackled not with the usual government pronouncements, but with a chilling decree: a state of emergency had been declared. For 21 long months, fundamental rights were suspended; the press was muzzled; and political dissent was brutally suppressed. The world’s largest democracy held its breath, as the very essence of its constitutional promise — liberty, equality, fraternity — was severely tested.

Fifty years on, the period remains etched in Indians’ collective memory as the “Emergency”. I was in India when the Emergency was declared, though I soon left for graduate studies in the US and observed the rest of it from afar. At its onset, I was struck by the profound sense of disquiet. The vibrant cacophony of Indian public life, so accustomed to vigorous debate and free expression, had been replaced by an eerie silence. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi insisted that the draconian measures were necessary: only a state of emergency could combat internal disorder and external threats; and bring discipline and efficiency to a chaotic country.

The judiciary buckled under immense pressure to back the move, with the Supreme Court even upholding the suspension of habeas corpus and citizens’ fundamental right to liberty. Journalists, activists and opposition leaders found themselves behind bars. Torture in detention and extrajudicial killings — though less publicised at the time — were dark realities for those who dared to defy the regime. In fact, the quest for “discipline” and “order” often translated into unspeakable cruelty, exemplified by the forced vasectomy campaigns led by Gandhi’s son, Sanjay and concentrated in poorer and rural areas, where coercion and violence were used to meet arbitrary targets. Slum



SHASHI THAROOR

The writer is a member of India’s Parliament and a former UN under-secretary-general

The state of emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi 50 years ago showed how the erosion of freedom often happens — subtly at first, with the chipping away of seemingly minor liberties in the name of virtuous-sounding causes. It should thus serve as a potent warning: democratic stalwarts must be eternally vigilant.

demolitions, carried out with ruthless efficiency in urban centres like New Delhi, rendered thousands homeless, with little to no concern for their welfare. The silencing of dissent, the curtailment of fundamental rights to assemble, write and speak freely; and the blatant contempt for constitutional norms left an indelible scar on India’s polity. Though the judiciary eventually found its spine, its initial faltering would not quickly be forgotten. And the period’s “excesses” caused deep and lasting harm to countless lives, leaving a legacy of trauma and mistrust in affected communities — which they demonstrated by overwhelmingly voting Gandhi and her party out of power in the first free elections after the Emergency was lifted, in March 1977.

The 50th anniversary of the declaration of the Emergency — which comes at a time of deep polarisation and challenges to democratic norms in many countries — is an occasion for historical reflection and introspection. The Emergency offered a vivid demonstration of how fragile democratic institutions can be, even in a country where they are ostensibly robust. It reminded us that a government can lose its moral compass and sense of accountability to the people it purports to serve. And it showed how the erosion of freedom often happens: subtly at first, with the chipping away of seemingly minor liberties in the name of virtuous-sounding causes, until “family planning” and “urban renewal” become forced sterilisations and arbitrary home demolitions.

The lessons of this experience are manifold and enduring. First, freedom of information and an independent press are of paramount importance. When the fourth estate is besieged, the public is deprived of the information it needs to hold political leaders accountable. That said, the

cravenness of many media outlets in the face of intimidation remains inexcusable.

Second, democracies depend on an independent judiciary able and willing to serve as a bulwark against executive overreach. Judicial capitulation — even when temporary — can have severe and far-reaching consequences.

The third lesson is that an overweening executive, backed by a legislative majority, can pose a grave danger to democracy, especially when that executive is convinced of its own infallibility and impatient with the checks and balances that are essential to democratic systems.

The India of today is not the India of 1975. We are a more confident, more prosperous and, in many ways, a more robust democracy. Yet the lessons of the Emergency remain alarmingly relevant. The temptation to centralise power, to silence critics and to bypass constitutional safeguards can emerge in many forms, often cloaked in the rhetoric of national interest or stability. In this sense, the Emergency should serve as a potent warning: democratic stalwarts must be eternally vigilant.

All of us — in India and around the world — who believe in democracy must ask ourselves: are we sufficiently attuned to the subtle erosion of democratic values? Could we recognise, let alone resist, the advent of strongman rule? Are we doing enough to protect the institutions, from the press to the judiciary to civil society, that safeguard our freedoms?

Let us not merely remember the Emergency as a dark chapter in India’s history, but instead internalise its lessons. Let it be a constant reminder to people everywhere that democracy cannot be taken for granted; it is a precious inheritance that must be constantly nurtured and fiercely defended.

© Project Syndicate, 2025

AI is starting to wear down democracy



STEVEN LEE MYERS



STUART A. THOMPSON

The authors cover misinformation for NYT

SINCE the explosion of generative artificial intelligence over the last two years, the technology has demeaned or defamed opponents and, officials and experts said, begun to have an impact on election results.

Free and easy to use, AI tools have generated a flood of fake photos and videos of candidates or supporters saying things they did not or appearing in places they were not — all spread with the relative impunity of anonymity online.

The technology has amplified social and partisan divisions and bolstered anti-government sentiment, especially on the far-right, which has surged in recent elections in Germany, Poland and Portugal.

In Romania, a Russian influence operation using AI tainted the first round of last year's presidential election, according to government officials. A court there nullified that result, forcing a new vote last month and bringing a new wave of fabrications. It was the first major election in which AI played a decisive role in the outcome. It is unlikely to be the last.

As the technology improves, officials and experts warn, it is undermining faith in electoral integrity and eroding the political consensus necessary for democratic societies to function.

Madalina Botan, a professor at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Romania's capital, Bucharest, said there was no question that

the technology was already “being used for obviously malevolent purposes” to manipulate voters.

“These mechanics are so sophisticated that they truly managed to get a piece of content to go very viral in a very limited amount of time,” she said. “What can compete with this?” In the unusually concentrated wave of elections that took place in 2024, AI was used in more than 80%, according to the International Panel on the Information Environment, an independent organisation of scientists based in Switzerland. It documented 215 instances of AI in elections that year, based on government statements, research and news reports. Already this year, AI has played a role in at least nine more major elections, from Canada to Australia. Not all uses were nefarious.

In 25 per cent of the cases the panel surveyed, candidates used AI for themselves, relying on it to translate speeches and platforms into local dialects and to identify blocs of voters to reach.

In India, the practice of cloning candidates became commonplace — “not only to reach voters, but also to motivate party workers,” according to a study by the Center for Media Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin.

At the same time, however, dozens of deepfakes — photographs or videos that re-create real people — used AI to clone voices of candidates or news broadcasts.

According to the International Panel on the Information Environment's survey, AI was

The technology has amplified social and partisan divisions and bolstered anti-government sentiment, especially on the far-right, which has surged in recent elections in Germany, Poland and Portugal

characterised as having a harmful role in 69 per cent of the cases.

There were numerous malign examples in last year's US presidential election, prompting public warnings by officials at the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the FBI.

Under Trump, the agencies have dismantled the teams that led those efforts.

The most intensive deceptive uses of AI have come from autocratic countries seeking to interfere in elections outside their borders, like Russia and China.

The technology has allowed them to amplify support for candidates more pliant to their worldview — or simply to discredit the idea of democratic governance itself as an inferior political system.

One Russian campaign tried to stoke anti-Ukraine sentiment before last month's presidential election in Poland, where many Ukrainian refugees have relocated. It created fake videos that suggested the Ukrainians were planning attacks to disrupt the voting.

In previous elections, foreign efforts were cumbersome and costly.

They relied on workers in troll farms to generate accounts and content on social media, often using stilted language and cultural malapropisms.

With AI, these efforts can be done at a speed and on a scale that were unimaginable when broadcast media and newspapers were the main sources of political news.

— The New York Times

WHY MORE YOUNG OMANIS TURN TO CREATIVE CAREERS



JAMELA AL BALUSHI

The author is a student of Majan University College

In Oman, jobs in government, engineering, or medicine were seen not only as stable but also as respectable — the roles families encouraged with pride. But today, more young Omanis are redefining what success looks like. A new generation is shifting from conventional professions to creative ones, driven by passion, and a desire to make something meaningful.

In a world that is constantly evolving, many young people no longer see creativity as a hobby, but as a career. Fashion, content creation, lifestyle, photography, or digital art are no longer on the sidelines. Several factors are fuelling this change. Social media has made it easier to share creative work with audiences globally. An Omani artist on Instagram can now reach followers from New York to Kuala Lumpur. What used to take years of networking can now happen with one viral post.

At the same time, creativity offers something traditional jobs often don't: emotional connection. Whether it's telling personal stories through short films, designing clothes that reflects Omani identity, or capturing unfiltered life moments in photography or vlogs, these choices are powerful forms of self-representation. Still, the path isn't easy. Many creative youth struggle to get support from their families, face uncertainty around income and lack resources. Some work part-time while building their brands, while others struggle to find clients or recognition in local markets. These challenges are real but they haven't stopped the change. Recent local events are helping. Pop-ups, exhibitions and workshops are becoming more common in Muscat and other cities. These allow emerging creatives to collaborate, learn and get seen. They also signal something important: Oman is beginning to recognise the value of creativity not just as art, but as a contributor to the economy, identity and culture.

Parents, educators and decision-makers have a role to play. Encouraging youth to explore creative interests, offering support and building educational programmes around the arts can make a lasting difference. Creativity isn't about leaving tradition behind, it's about telling our stories in new ways. And if young Omanis are choosing that path, it's worth paying attention to.

In the end, this shift isn't just about jobs; it's about expression, innovation and owning our narratives. The question isn't “why are so many youth going into creative careers?” The real question is: why not?

Musk’s third party starts with a good idea

ELON Musk has finally done something predictable (for a gazillionaire with a political itch, that is): He says he's launching a third party devoted to the cause of deficit reduction.

Instead of the quadrennial dream of No Labels, in which high-minded donors put up the money for an imaginary white knight who never materializes, we may get the “America Party,” in which the world's richest man puts his fortune behind, he says, “extremely concentrated force at a precise location on the battlefield.”

If you parse Musk's postings and re-postings, that seems to mean a third party strategy that targets a handful of close Senate and House seats, trying to create a legislative faction that exerts control over both bodies by preventing anything from passing without their crucial votes.

Credit where due: This is a somewhat better plan than just backing a doomed third-party presidential bid in 2028. The most compelling suggestion for would-be third partiers during Joe Biden's presidency was that they should persuade a clutch of discontented senators to caucus as independents, creating a potent Joe Manchin-Mitt Romney-Lisa Murkowski-Susan Collins-Kyrsten Sinema bloc. Musk's concentrated-force idea, presumably, would be an attempt to create this kind of bloc from scratch, discovering the next Murkowskis and Manchins and making it possible for them to fund and win a race without an R or D beside their name. Before the travails of the Department of Government Efficiency, I would have said that it was a mistake to automatically bet against Musk; now it seems safer to just acknowledge up front that this plan is unlikely to work out and that Musk will probably find it too difficult to seriously pursue.

But in the spirit of possibility, and because the House-and-Senate plan is an advance on most third-party fantasias, let's consider the things



ROSS DOUTHAT

The writer is a NYT columnist, writes on religion, politics, and society

that would need to happen for Musk to succeed.

First, the America Party couldn't just target the tightest swing states. You'll notice that of the independent-minded senators and former senators listed above, only Sinema comes from a hotly contested state, Arizona. That's because under polarized conditions, a true swing state is usually the place where both parties make the strongest efforts at persuasion, where the stakes of each election seem highest and the fear of the other party's rule is sharpest among partisans on either side.

Whereas a more reliably blue or red state is more likely to feature a persistent exasperation with the ruling party even among its own registered supporters or an eccentric form of politics (think of anti-Trump Mormonism in Utah or the residue of liberal Republicanism in New England) that doesn't have any place to go in a normal two-party presidential election.

These tendencies explain not just the resilience of politicians like Collins but also how you get popular Republican governors in typically Democratic states and vice versa: A vote for Larry Hogan in Maryland or Andy Beshear in Kentucky is a way to express discontent with one-party rule without giving aid and comfort to the national version of the rival party.

A reasonable goal, then, for the America Party would be to convince more Kentuckians or Marylanders that they could do the same thing with their Senate votes — that they could safely send an independent senator to Washington without effectively empowering Donald Trump or Chuck Schumer.

But to pull that off, you need not just posturing but trust, and that's hard to build from scratch. In 2010, it was easier for Murkowski to run and win as a write-in candidate after she lost a Republican primary in Alaska because she was already a known quantity. In 2018, it was easier for Romney to run and win

Somehow the America Party would need to be Musk-funded without being Muskian. It would need to be perceived as something he had set in motion but declined to micromanage, with its successful candidates as its natural leaders rather than the Tesla king himself

as a heterodox Republican in Utah because he was already America's most famous Latter-day Saints politician. So the second challenge for the America Party would be to find recruits who bring their credibility with them — who could plausibly start at a 15% to 20% floor and build toward the necessary plurality, rather than needing to spend a fortune just to achieve any position in the polls.

But for that kind of recruitment to work, you would also need the party to achieve some distance from the brand of its progenitor and funder. A successful script for the America Party would probably need to be deliberately vague, promising compromise on every front (in ways that would infuriate pundits, of course) while constantly defining itself in the negative, against the woke left and the MAGA right. But Musk himself is associated both with extremely specific cuts to government programs and with full-throated MAGA rhetoric, with a strong dose of billionaire idiosyncrasy (if I may put it mildly) woven in.

Somehow the America Party would need to be Musk-funded without being Muskian. It would need to be perceived as something he had set in motion but declined to micromanage, with its successful candidates as its natural leaders rather than the Tesla king himself. And his funding would need to have a longer time horizon than just the 2026 and 2028 races; electing even one senator in those cycles would be impressive, and the goal would be to shape America in the 2030s, not to upend Trump's second term.

Musk is good at making long-term bets on fronts where naysayers expect swift failure. He's not good at being hands-off or in the background, and on the evidence of the last six months, he's terrible at intuiting what swing voters want. So the test of his third-party ambitions will be whether he can demonstrate a new facility: accepting his own limits and learning from defeat.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Winners of the tournament

ISC OMAN HOSTS BADMINTON TOURNAMENT

MUSCAT: The Indian Social Club (ISC) Oman recently organised a badminton tournament for its members at the club’s courts in Darsait. The event saw overwhelming participation from badminton enthusiasts, especially regular players, which raised the level of competition and showcased impressive skill.

For the first time, participants were divided into two categories: Category A (Advanced) and Category B (Basic), with doubles teams formed by a draw of lots. Both categories featured league rounds, quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals over four days of spirited competition.

The tournament was marked by its smooth execution and electrifying matches, thanks to the exceptional efforts of Kutty, Badminton Coordinator, and Manoj Ranade, Sports Secretary of ISC Oman.

In the Category B final, the young duo Vedic and Paul defeated the experienced pair of Sunil and Gopakumar after three hard-fought sets, demonstrating remarkable grit and agility. The Category A final showcased an intense battle between Jyothilal and Sundar and Dijesh and Moncy. Despite powerful play from Dijesh and Moncy, the deft placement and skillful handling by Jyothilal and Sundar secured them the victory after three thrilling sets.

The prize distribution ceremony was graced by Suhail Khan, Vice-Chairman of ISC; Shakeel K M, General Secretary; Manoj Ranade, Sports Secretary; and Percy Pareira, who sponsored special prizes for the finalists. Their presence highlighted the importance of sports in promoting fitness, teamwork, and camaraderie.

The Indian Social Club has also recently organised a Tennis League Tournament and rank gradings for its Karate Coaching Camp, reinforcing its commitment to encouraging sports and fitness among the Indian community in Oman. The club remains dedicated to fostering an active, healthy lifestyle and looks forward to hosting more such successful events in the future.

OFA to organise friendly tournament in Salalah on July 27

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

The Oman Football Association (OFA) is gearing up to organise a four-team football tournament in Salalah, bringing together elite domestic and national teams in preparation for critical upcoming continental competitions. The tournament will feature: Oman Olympic U-23 team, Seeb Club reigning Omantel League champions, Al Shabab Club – His Majesty’s Cup 2024–25 title holders and Al Nahdha Club – runners-up of the 2024–25 Omantel League.

The event is scheduled to start on July 27. The purpose of this friendly competition is not only to offer high level match experience in a competitive environment but also to strategically blend national team players with their respective clubs, offering coaching staff valuable opportunities for assessment and preparation ahead of the significant events. This setup is particularly beneficial ahead of major international fixtures with players gaining exposure through tightly contested matches.

This initiative is part of OFA’s wider efforts to support Omani



Badar al Maimani

clubs that will represent the Sultanate of Oman in upcoming regional and continental tournaments. Seeb Club will participate in the AFC Champions League 2 beginning in mid-August while Al Shabab Club is set to compete in the AFC Challenge Cup. Al Nahdha Club will take part in the Gulf Champions League. By facilitating this preparatory tournament, OFA will ensure the



Oman Olympic U-23 team

Olympic team and the domestic clubs will have strong opposition and maintain high performance levels leading up to their respective competitions.

The Oman Olympic U-23 national team, led by coach Badar al Maimani, will also use the tournament to sharpen their skills ahead of their campaign in the AFC U-23 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 Qualifiers which is scheduled

to take place during September 1 to 9. Oman is grouped with Iraq, Pakistan, and hosts Cambodia in Group F.

The Olympic team recently began a short domestic camp with 24 players and is set to participate in an international friendly tournament in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from July 17 to 23, alongside teams from Syria, Bahrain, and Kyrgyzstan. These

steps are aimed at fine-tuning the squad ahead of the pivotal qualifiers.

Coach Badar and his technical team will emphasise on building tactical cohesion and developing match fitness to secure a top spot in the qualifiers. The top team in each group and the four best runners-up will qualify for the final tournament alongside host nation Saudi Arabia.

Oman conclude training camp with three wins

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

THE Oman national men’s volleyball team concluded its preparations for the West Asia Championship, which will be hosted in the Bahraini capital, Manama, from July 17 to 27, with positive results from its joint training camp with the Saudi national team. The “Red Warriors” played four friendly matches against Saudi Arabia, securing three wins and suffering one loss in what proved to be a fruitful experience marked by steadily improving performance and growing team cohesion.

The team capped off the series with a 3-1 victory in the fourth match, with set scores of (25–19, 22–25, 27–25, 25–22), confirming their technical and physical readiness ahead of the official competition. The team had earlier won the first and third matches by identical 3-2 scorelines and lost the second match 1-3 in a closely contested and balanced game.

Iranian head coach Mohammad Vakili emphasised that the camp was a crucial preparatory phase. In his statement, he said the objective of these matches was not just to win but to focus on tactical and physical aspects, test team formations, and correct technical mistakes. He added that the team greatly benefited from facing a strong opponent like Saudi Arabia, which highlighted Oman’s strengths such as blocking and serving while also exposing areas needing improvement, like counterattacks and defensive coordination.

Regarding the loss in the second match, Vakili explained that the team was not at its best and made several errors in serving and reception. However, addressing these shortcomings in the third match helped the team get back on the winning track. He also noted that the team has now entered the final stage of preparations and will conclude its camp at the Buraimi Sports Complex on Friday. Some changes will be made to the starting lineup based on player performances during the camp. Team star Saud al Maamari expressed his satisfaction with the team’s performance during the camp, noting that the four matches were beneficial both technically



The team includes 14 players chosen by head coach Mohammad Vakili.

and mentally. He stated, We approached each game as if it were an official match and improved our organisation from one game to the next, particularly in spiking and defensive coordination. Our goal is to be in peak form before the tournament begins.

Younis al Amri, another national team player, added, The performance we delivered during the recent training camp shows that the team is on the right track toward full readiness for the West Asia Championship. The high spirit with which we played against Saudi Arabia and the level we’ve reached reflect the hard work and dedication of both the coaching staff and the players.

THREE TOUGH TESTS IN THE GTOUP STAGE

Oman will begin its West Asia Championship campaign on Saturday, July

19, facing Kuwait at 4:00 pm Muscat time. The second match will be against Qatar on Sunday, July 20, at 6:00 pm a highly anticipated clash given both teams’ strong offensive capabilities.

The team will wrap up the first round on Monday, July 21, with a challenging match against Saudi Arabia at 4:00 pm. All matches will take place at the Isa bin Rashid Hall in Manama.

The squad selected for the West Asia Championship consists of 14 players carefully chosen by the technical staff, led by head coach Mohammad Vakili.

The team includes: Saud al Maamari, Mohammed al Muqbali, Abdullah al Muqbali, Abdullah al Shibli, Ismail al Haidi, Khamis al Jabri, Mahmoud al Saadi, Adam al Juradi, Adam al Jalboobi, Hamad al Maamari, Younis al Amri, Yousuf al Shukaili, Ahmed al Toobi, and Abdulbasit al Balushi.

SHORT TAKES



Fabio Fognini

FOGNINI ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM TENNIS

LONDON: Fabio Fognini announced his retirement from tennis at Wimbledon on Wednesday as one of the sport’s most colourful characters called time on his volatile career.

Fognini had revealed ahead of the Rome Masters in May that he planned to retire in the next 12 months.

The 38-year-old Italian has brought forward that decision, with his last match ending in a five-set loss against defending Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz in the first round at the All England Club last week.

“Today is something official. I say goodbye to everybody,” Fognini told reporters.

Fognini’s career-high in the ATP rankings was ninth place in 2019, while he won nine ATP Tour titles, including his only Masters 1000 triumph in Monte Carlo in 2019.

He enjoyed a memorable five-set comeback win against Rafael Nadal at the US Open in 2015 and beat then world number one Andy Murray in Rome in 2017.

Fognini was renowned for his unpredictable behaviour on court, willingly describing himself as a hothead.

He was fined at Wimbledon in 2019 for saying during a match that he wished “a bomb would explode at the club”.

That outburst came after he was suspended from the 2017 US Open for insulting a female chair umpire.

In 2014, Fognini was fined \$27,500 for unsportsmanlike conduct at Wimbledon.

Now ranked 138th, Fognini, whose best Grand Slam run was a quarterfinal appearance at the 2011 French Open, said his battle with injuries had taken a toll.

“The last three years of my career I was suffering a lot with injuries,” he said.

“After that match (against Alcaraz), I don’t want to come back on some stage where I don’t want to be. After this tournament, I will drop in the rankings.

“I will still love this sport. I have a lot of memories in my head. I played against Roger (Federer), Rafa, against Nole (Novak Djokovic). Winning a Slam for me was impossible.

“I told my wife (former female star Flavia Pennetta) two days ago that this was my decision. I’m happy the way I said goodbye to the professional tennis career. I did my best. I’m leaving today.” — AFP



Ahmed al Harthy during training session

AL Harthy planning good start in Brazil race

SOUTH

America is the destination for Ahmad al Harthy this week when the FIA World Endurance Championship resumes for round five of the season, the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo, which will take place this coming Sunday, 13th July.

Oman’s Al Harthy, who has been in tremendous form throughout the 2025 campaign along with Team WRT team-mates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde, is very much hoping for a boost to the squad’s fortunes in Brazil off the back off a frustrating non-finish in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Well on course to challenge for the LMGT3 class win, a podium at least, during the championship’s biggest race of the year just three weeks ago, a luckless electrical issue forced retirement of the rapid No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3 part way through the twice-round-the-clock French encounter.

Al Harthy, supported by prestigious partners OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and Experience Oman, is hungrier than ever to be back on the FIA WEC podium and will be working as hard as possible to achieve that aim. During last year’s visit to Interlagos, the Omani’s maiden trip to the Brazilian venue, he and then team-mates Rossi and Maxime Martin achieved a strong top five result from 12th on the grid,



Ahmed al Harthy

- *Globe-trotting Omani Ahmad al Harthy heads to Interlagos for Rd5*
- *Team WRT driver focused on fighting for podium return after Le Mans DNF*
- *World-famous Brazilian F1 venue hosts big 6hr FIA WEC race this Sunday*

almost snatching fourth – less than a second shy at the chequered flag after six intense hours of action. As has been a hallmark of Al Harthy’s endurance racing career to-date, his opening stint in last year’s Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo was immensely impressive. Gaining no fewer than six places during the first hour of action, this set the scene for the pleasing result on his Interlagos debut. His second stint was equally strong with fantastic speed, racecraft and overtaking skills on show for all to witness.

This time around, Oman’s number one racing driver is hoping for more still as the team strives to begin the second half of the FIA World Endurance Championship season on the front foot, and climb back up the LMGT3 points table.

Competition, as always in FIA WEC, will be fierce in Brazil with 18 cars entered in LMGT3 alone and a combined grid of 36 entries expected including those from the Hypercar class. Going into the event Al Harthy, Rossi and van der Linde are 12th in the LMGT3 driver standings with a season-best finish of second place from round two at Imola in Italy.

“I can’t wait to be back in Brazil this week for my second attempt at the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo, we had a great weekend last year and the top five result from 12th on the grid was a satisfying result on my first ever visit to the track. We’re all determined, every single member of the team, to be in a position to challenge for the podium on Sunday and that will be our focus with our

preparation.

“Everyone was obviously very disappointed we had to retire the car at Le Mans, but the strength of the performance we showed before then – the pace, the strategy and our individual performances as well – gave us a lot to take away and be very positive about. We’re aiming to put all we learned and that experience into practice and hit back as strongly as we can in Sao Paulo.” Al Harthy said.

The first two free practice sessions at Interlagos will take place on Friday, 11th July, with the third session following on Saturday, 12th July, ahead of LMGT3 qualifying at 14.45 Sao Paulo time. The Hyperpole session is immediately after opening qualifying at 15.05 local time.

On Sunday, 13th July, the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo will get underway at 11.30 local time and the action can be followed through [www.fiawec.com](#)

2025 FIA WEC LMGT3 Driver Standings (after Rd4):
1st Riccardo Pera / Ryan Hardwick / Richard Leitz, 81pts
2nd Alessio Rovera / Francois Heriau / Simon Mann, 76pts
3rd Ben Keating / Daniel Juncadella / Jonny Edgar, 60pts
12th Ahmad al Harthy / Valentino Rossi / Kelvin van der Linde, 21pts

2025 FIA WEC LMGT3 Team Standings (after Rd4):
1st Manthey 1ST Phorm (Porsche 911), 81pts
2nd Vista AF Corse (Ferrari 296), 76pts
3rd TF Sport (Corvette Z06), 60pts
12th Team WRT (BMW M4 LMGT3), 21pts

Bencic and Swiatek reach first Wimbledon semifinal

LONDON: Switzerland’s Belinda Bencic said her dream had come true after she reached a first Wimbledon semifinal with a 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/2) win against Russian seventh seed Mirra Andreeva on Wednesday.

The former Olympic champion is enjoying her best run at the All England Club just over a year after giving birth.

The 28-year-old had her daughter Bella in April 2024, but has already risen to 35 in the world since returning from maternity leave.

Wimbledon appears to be child’s play for Bencic this year and she dispatched Andreeva in just over two hours of enthralling quarterfinal action on Centre Court.

Bencic, a former world number four, will face five-time Grand Slam

champion Iga Swiatek for a place in Saturday’s final.

Bencic’s only other Grand Slam last-four appearance ended in defeat at the US Open in 2019, two years before she won singles gold at the Tokyo Olympics.

She is the first Swiss woman semifinalist at Wimbledon since Martina Hingis 27 years ago, having failed to make it past the last 16 in her previous eight visits to southwest London.

The rising star of the WTA Tour, 18-year-old Andreeva was the youngest women’s Wimbledon quarterfinalist since Nicole Pietrangeli in 2007.

Under the wing of former Wimbledon winner Conchita Martinez, the Russian had breezed



Belinda Bencic

through the first four rounds without dropping a set.

Andreeva said she was so focused on each point during her fourth-round tie against Emma Navarro that she did not realise when she won on match point.

But Bencic proved equally locked

in and the Swiss veteran defied a painful cracked toe-nail in the second set to seal her memorable triumph.

“They always crack. It is the life of a tennis player. I didn’t want to take a medical time-out so you don’t have to see this,” she said.

SWIATEK ADVANCES

Iga Swiatek reached the Wimbledon semifinals for the first time in her illustrious career on Wednesday, beating Russia’s Liudmila Samsonova 6-2, 7-5.

The Polish eighth seed will face Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva or former Olympic champion Belinda Bencic for a place in Saturday’s final.

Swiatek has won four titles on the clay at the French Open, as well as the US Open in 2022, but has

struggled on the lawns of the All England Club. Her previous best result at Wimbledon was a run to the quarter-finals in 2023.

Swiatek broke her opponent twice in the opening set to take a firm grip on the match, benefiting from a flurry of unforced errors from her opponent and winning 100 percent of her points on first serve.

Two double faults from Russian 19th seed Samsonova handed Swiatek an early break in the second set and she snuffed out a clutch of break-points in the following game to go 3-0 up. The 24-year-old was pegged back by two breaks of serve as her level dipped and Samsonova pulled level at 4-4.

But Swiatek regrouped and broke again to seal the win. — AFP



Chelsea’s Joao Pedro scores their second goal. — Reuters

CHELSEA BEAT FLUMINENSE TO REACH CWC FINAL

NESTO
All that you need.

فروض نهاية الاسبوع
WEEKEND
IRRESISTIBLE
DEALS

The most irresistible deals of the weekend are happening right now at Nesto!

WOW! OMR 0.190 بطيخ ايران بالكيلو Watermelon Iran Per Kg	OMR 0.490 مانجو سندي بالكيلو Mango Sindhi Pakistan Per Kg	PRICE BLASTER OMR 0.490 برتقال جنوب افريقيا بالكيلو Orange Navel South Africa Per Kg
10 OMR 7.290 دجاج فرانسوز بالكيلو Frangosul Chicken 10x800Gm	PRICE BLASTER SAVE 43.048% OMR 2.990 لوز خام بالكيلو Almond Raw Per Kg	Half Price SAVE 56.761% OMR 2.590 مكسرات مشكلة بالكيلو Mix Nut Per Kg
WOW! SAVE 39.000% OMR 5.490 زيت صن المكر مكنة بالليل Sloan Refined Oil Blend Extra Virgin Olive OILSL	SAVE 28.182% OMR 0.790 بسكويت نابل بالكيلو Nabil Biscuit Glucose Milk & Honey 2x10x40g	WOW! SAVE 24.889% OMR 1.690 طحين البكر نابل بالكيلو At Baker Chakki Fresh Atta 5kg
6 SAVE 25.000% OMR 0.990 صابون امبريال ليذر 6x125Gm Imperial Leather Soap Asstd 6x125Gm	2 SAVE 31.200% OMR 1.875 صابون غسيل الاطباق فيري بالليل Fairy Ultra Dish Wash Asstd 2x600ml	2 SAVE 39.474% OMR 0.690 كريم دابر ماتيك بالليل Dabur Vatika Hair Cream Asstd 2X140Gm

HYPERMARKETS | SUPERMARKETS | DEPARTMENT STORES

OMAN | BAHRAIN | SAUDI ARABIA | KUWAIT | U.A.E | INDIA

www.nestoapp.com | [instagram/nesto](#) | [hypermarket_oman](#) | [facebook.com/nestohyperman](#)

NEW signing Joao Pedro scored twice on his first start as Chelsea eased to a 2-0 win over Fluminense on Tuesday to seal a spot in the final of the Club World Cup.

The Brazilian striker opened the scoring in lethal fashion in the 18th minute of the last-four clash at the MetLife Stadium and struck again shortly before the hour mark as Chelsea set up a showdown with either Real Madrid or Paris Saint-Germain in the final on Sunday. Signed from Brighton and Hove Albion just last week for a reported £60 million (\$79 million), the 23-year-old cut short an off-season holiday and made his debut off the bench in the quarterfinal win over Palmeiras. He was then given his first Chelsea start up front here in place of the suspended Liam Delap.

Joao Pedro refused to celebrate after either goal against the club with whom he started his career and made 36 top-team appearances before moving to England with Watford in 2020.

The result ends Fluminense’s impressive run at the tournament after the 2023 Copa Libertadores winners had held Borussia Dortmund in the group stage, beaten Inter Milan in the last 16 and knocked out Manchester City’s conquerors Al-Hilal in the quarterfinals. With their exit go the prospects of a South American winner of the first 32-team edition of the Club World Cup, with Chelsea claiming back-to-back victories against Brazilian opposition to reach the final.

As always seemed most likely, the trophy will be claimed by one of Europe’s superpowers, with the final now guaranteed to be between two of the last five winners of the UEFA Champions League.



Chelsea’s Reece James in action with Fluminense’s Keno. — Reuters

“It is a great achievement. It has been a fantastic season — top four in the league, (winning) the Conference League and now in the final in this competition. We are so, so happy,” Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca told broadcaster DAZN.

“Now finally it is the last game of the season, we can say that, and hopefully we can win the tournament.”

Fluminense coach Renato Portaluppi had described his team as the “ugly duckling” of the tournament due to the enormous difference between their budget and those of the other three sides left in the United States.

This game ultimately proved to be a step too far for their team, captained by 40-year-old former Chelsea centre-back Thiago Silva.

CAICEDO BACK

Chelsea were without the suspended Levi Colwill and Delap but

midfield lynchpin Moises Caicedo returned after sitting out the win over Palmeiras in Philadelphia due to a ban.

The Premier League side were simply too strong for their opponents in a game watched by 70,556 fans on a hot afternoon just outside New York City.

They went ahead thanks to a wonderful strike by their new forward, who controlled the ball on the edge of the box after Silva had cleared a Pedro Neto cross.

Joao Pedro took a touch and curled a shot beyond veteran goalkeeper Fabio into the far corner, before holding up his hands apologetically towards the Fluminense fans massed behind the goal.

The team from Rio de Janeiro were an intermittent threat, and Hercules — match-winner against Al Hilal in the last eight — almost equalised in the 25th minute.

He played a one-two with German Cano and lifted the ball over goalkeeper Robert Sanchez, but Marc Cucurella got back to clear off the line.

Fluminense were then awarded a penalty 10 minutes before the interval when a set-piece delivery by Rene struck the arm of Trevoh Chalobah in the box.

However, French referee Francois Letexier overturned the decision following a VAR check.

Chelsea got their second on 56 minutes, just after Fluminense had sacrificed one of their three centre-backs to send on an extra attacker.

Enzo Fernandez released Joao Pedro on the break, and the forward who scored 10 goals in the Premier League last season for Brighton produced another clinical finish in off the bar. — AFP



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,596.692

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$72.17
BRENT \$70.42
LIGHT \$68.65



TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO NEW HEIGHTS

Discover the benefits of the SME Account by BankDhofar.

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

Visit [bankdhofar.com](#)

HEALTHCLUSTER



Raysut Industrial City occupies a combined area exceeding 72,000 sqm.

Medical sector investments in Raysut Industrial City surpass RO 55 million

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 9

Raysut Industrial City, an affiliate of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), is making significant strides in expanding its medical industries and supplies cluster, marking a significant step towards enhancing health and pharmaceutical security in the Sultanate of Oman and meeting growing demands across local and regional markets.

The city is currently finalising contracts for three new projects focused on the production of eye drops, blood bags and a range of medical supplies. Additionally, a veterinary related facility is currently under development in Raysut Industrial City.

Raysut Industrial City is currently home to three operating projects in the medical sector with a total investment volume surpassing RO 55 million. Occupying a combined area exceeding 72,000 square metres, the operating projects are specialised in producing antibiotics, hormones, topical preparations, effervescent tablets, solid and liquid oral dosage forms, intravenous solutions, dialysis fluids, medical gloves, masks, cotton products, bandages, adhesive tapes, and more.

By attracting and localising investments in the medical sector, Madayn aims to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's pharmaceutical security, encourage local and foreign investments in the sector, reduce reliance on imported pharmaceuticals and boost local production capacity. These efforts align with Oman Vision 2040 objectives to advance industrial development and achieve self-sufficiency in key sectors.

OIA launches \$200 million JV energy transition fund

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

OMAN Investment Authority (OIA) launched a \$200-illion joint energy transition fund here yesterday, July 9, 2025. 'The Energy Transition Fund' is the result of a partnership between OIA's Future Fund Oman (FFO) and Chinese investment firm Templewater, and is "designed to accelerate Oman's shift to a low-carbon economy while unlocking scalable, investor-ready opportunities that reinforce the country's long-term development goals."

In his keynote address, the Deputy President of OIA, Mulham bin Basheer al Jarf, underscored the significance of the partnership, saying: "Today, we are pleased to launch an investment fund with a capital of \$200 million, equally contributed by the Oman Future Fund and the Templewater Fund."

"This partnership comes at a time when the world is witnessing rapid transformations in the energy sector and a global and national shift towards sustainability and carbon neutrality. At the Oman Investment Authority, we believe that smart and targeted investment in this field not only contributes to achieving our environmental goals, but also opens up new horizons for economic growth and strengthens Oman's position as a regional hub for renewable energy solutions."

According to the Deputy President, the Fund will focus



Top officials representing OIA and Templewater at the launch of the Energy Transition Fund on Wednesday.

on channelling investments into sectors critical to the energy transition, "This will serve as a true platform to stimulate high-quality investments in sectors related to energy transition — such as green fuels, data centres, stations and hubs, storage, smart transportation and mobility, and other vital sectors that will shape the future economy."

He added that the partnership represents an "effective model of synergy and collaboration between the public and private sectors — both local and international."

"It will enable us to transfer and localise advanced technologies and build national capabilities," he noted.

Cliff Zhang, Chairman and CEO of Templewater, shared the following about the partnership: "We are truly thankful to the Future Fund Oman and the Oman Investment Authority for their partnership and vision. Their commitment to driving Oman's role in the global energy transition is not just forward-

thinking — it is shaping real, tangible changes. From day one, FFO and OIA championed a collaborative approach — one that values innovation, global impact and mobilising capital at scale.

"That ethos is what made this project possible, laying the foundation for an investment vehicle that is both scalable and globally viable. We are proud to stand with FFO and OIA in bringing this vision to life."

Zhang added that the Energy Transition Fund is focused on high-impact investments in areas like clean molecules, energy storage, e-fuels, smart mobility and clean data centres.

"These are central not only to Oman's Vision 2040 and Net-Zero 2050 goals, but also to building a more diversified, resilient economy for the great nation of Oman. At Templewater, we are proud to be part of powering that future," he stated.

Significantly, Templewater is also set to establish an office in

Muscat. "As part of our long-term commitment to Oman, Templewater is establishing a local presence in Muscat, with local offices and dedicated team members on the ground.

"We look forward to working closely with our partners at FFO and OIA — not only as investors, but as partners and collaborators — embedding ourselves in the ecosystem and contributing to Oman's energy transition and economic diversification from within," the chairman said.

According to officials, the Energy Transition Fund will operate with a deployment period of five years, focusing on strategic and high-impact investments ranging between \$20 million to \$40 million per ticket, aiming to build a portfolio of five to ten companies.

The initial capital base serves as a catalyst to unlock further capital and attract high-quality, scalable investment opportunities aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Furthermore, all investments will be deployed within Oman, with the Fund committed to a 100-per cent in-country deployment strategy. It will focus primarily on identifying and investing in mature technologies with a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 8 and above.

Moreover, the fund will leverage effective public partnerships to create opportunities for training and capacity building within the sector, in addition to contributing to research, development and knowledge transfer.

Oxy Oman reveals 10 new hydrocarbon finds in 2024

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 9

OXY OMAN, a wholly owned subsidiary of the US-based independent oil and gas firm Occidental, announced a haul of 10 new oil and gas discoveries across its expansive portfolio of eight upstream hydrocarbon concessions in the Sultanate of Oman in 2024.

Notable among them was a first-ever oil discovery, along with a significant gas find, in Block 62 in central Oman. The Maradi Huraymah East and Baqiyah discoveries are expected to "open up other oil potential in the block," the Ministry of Energy and Minerals noted in its 2024 Annual Report on the country's energy landscape.

Oxy has equity interests in Blocks 9, 27, 30, 65, 62 and 51 in north Oman, and Blocks 53 and 72 in central Oman. Commenting on the US company's sizable presence in Oman, the ministry stated: "Oxy Oman has been operating in the Sultanate of Oman for more than 40 years, where it has steadily



Another significant highlight of 2024 was Oxy's success in leveraging its carbon management expertise to advance low-carbon initiatives

increased production and reserves and is honoured to partner with the Government of Oman.

"Today, Oxy Oman is the largest independent oil producer operating in the country, covering more than 6 million gross acres. Oxy Oman's major operations are located in northern Oman, primarily in the Safah and Wadi Latham fields in Block 9, Khamilah Field in Block 27, Maradi Huraymah gas field in Block 62,

and in south-central Oman in Block 53 at Mukhaizna Field."

In addition to the 10 discoveries made in 2024, Oxy completed processing of 2,107 km² of 3D seismic in Block 51 and began a reprocessing programme for 8,155 km² of 3D seismic in Blocks 9, 27 and 53. The company also reported record gross production, supported by a new Initial Production (IP) programme, in Blocks 9, 27 and 65.

Leveraging its decades-long global expertise in enhanced oil recovery (EOR) using carbon dioxide (CO₂), the company launched its first CO₂ injection trial in the Safah Field in northern Oman. The pilot project aims to determine the feasibility of CO₂ flooding as an EOR technique following water flooding.

Another significant highlight of 2024 was Oxy's success in leveraging its carbon management expertise to advance low-carbon initiatives designed to sustainably enhance its business and achieve Net-Zero targets. A year earlier, in 2023, the company had launched a pilot project using CO₂ for

EOR in Block 9.

This initiative followed a thorough evaluation of mature waterflooding assets, identifying favourable conditions for CO₂-based EOR, the report stated.

Importantly, Oxy Oman has been utilising its global expertise in EOR and Direct Air Capture technology to lead the carbon capture and EOR scope of the Oman Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) Steering Committee, spearheaded by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

Additionally, the company is exploring technologies to decarbonise heavy oil development, including CO₂ point source capture and renewable energy plants.

Furthermore, as part of its long-term strategy to reduce methane and CO₂ emissions, Oxy is implementing projects that measure and quantify methane leaks, including LDAR and stack testing at all sites. The company stated it is committed to eliminating routine flaring by 2027, having already achieved an 80% reduction from the baseline.

ADVERTORIALS

PREMIUMDESIGN



More than just an upgrade, the new MG ZS represents a confident shift towards premium sensibilities.

MG ZS CONTINUES TO SET STANDARD FOR COMPACT SUVs IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The next-generation MG ZS has quickly cemented its place as one of the most compelling compact SUVs in Oman. Since its debut, the all-new ZS has resonated deeply with urban explorers, young professionals and design-forward families, delivering exactly what they need: style, performance and substance in one smart package.

More than just an upgrade, the new MG ZS represents a confident shift towards premium sensibilities, offering a design-led experience backed by intuitive tech and everyday practicality.

The 12.3-inch infotainment screen, jet-wing-inspired console and panoramic sunroof elevate every drive, while its MG Pilot ADAS suite ensures drivers stay protected and in control.

Under the hood, the MG ZS continues to impress with two versatile engine options, a 1.5 L engine with 112 HP for daily ease and fuel efficiency & a 1.3 L turbocharged variant with 168 HP for those who want extra punch in city or weekend drives.

Both variants offer three drive modes, giving drivers the flexibility to switch from relaxed cruising to responsive performance at will.

Visually, the ZS commands attention. From the Hunter-Eye LED headlamps to the aerodynamic lines and 18-inch alloy wheels, it's designed to stand out, whether navigating narrow alleys in Muttrah or heading out on a coastal road trip.

Inside, the refined interior strikes a balance between utility and sophistication.

Premium fabric or leather-trimmed seats, a driver-focused cockpit and thoughtful additions like wireless phone charging, ambient lighting and connected tech create a truly modern driving environment.

Safety remains a core focus. Adaptive Cruise Control, Forward Collision Warning, Speed Assist, Lane Assist and a 360-degree camera system ensure every journey is secure, whether in the city or beyond. As customer interest continues to rise, the MG ZS is proving to be one of the smartest choices in the compact SUV category, delivering a future-ready design, tech-forward features and outstanding value for money.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO MHD ACERE remarked, “At MHD ACERE, we believe the all-new MG ZS represents more than just a compact SUV — it embodies the spirit of the modern Omani driver.

With its elevated design, intelligent features and driver-focused performance, the MG ZS is perfectly tailored for today’s dynamic lifestyles. It’s a vehicle that speaks to ambition, youth and a future-forward mindset — all while delivering exceptional value”.

PEUGEOT OMAN LAUNCHES THE ALL-NEW 3008

MUSCAT: As a flagship of the French industry, Peugeot continues to elevate the French legacy, expertly blending world-class sophistication with cutting-edge innovation, embodying the essence of French craftsmanship in every detail. The Peugeot 3008 is a best-seller that has charmed more than 1,570,000 customers in 130 countries over the past 9 years.

The next-level Peugeot 3008 is produced exclusively at the Sochaux plant in France. The range is based



on two trim levels, Allure and GT. Both the Allure and GT trims of the new Peugeot 3008 are equipped with a 1.6L turbocharged petrol engine delivering 180 hp,

paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission.

This powerful yet efficient engine is designed to elevate the driving experience, ensuring robust performance while maintaining optimal fuel efficiency, aligning with Peugeot’s commitment to innovation and performance.

The new 3008 is recognisable by its fastback SUV styling. With its dynamic and aerodynamic shape, the new 3008 combines elegance, efficiency and spaciousness.

Kia Sorento AWD with welcome bonus and more

THE Kia Sorento 3.5L is one SUV that fits your budget and your needs. Customers looking to upgrade to an SUV this summer, are welcome at Kia showrooms to experience its modern, futuristic and utility-based vehicles at Kia dealerships across Oman.

Buy the full-size Kia Sorento and receive a welcome bonus worth RO 500 on the purchase, including stress-free car service up to 50,000 km with first-year insurance and registration.

All the included perks are a part of Kia's latest summer campaign. Designed for convenience and a chance to win exciting gifts, all Kia customers can win an iPhone 15 (256 GB) in the raffle before the campaign ends on July 16, 2025.

Seek adventure beyond limits or get ready for an errand-packed day, the Sorento drive is pure pleasure, delivering impressive fuel efficiency.

The 3.5L V6 engine produces



The Sorento drive is pure pleasure, delivering impressive fuel efficiency.

an exceptional 268 HP and 33.8 kg/m of torque paired to an 8-speed transmission.

Underscoring Kia’s commitment to innovation, the Sorento is based on Kia’s next-generation powertrain, the Smartstream, which creates a fun, dynamic and eco-friendly driving experience. Also, the SUV stands apart with its

sensual design, bold contours and Kia’s signature vertical Star-Map DRL graphics that project a futuristic appeal.

The Sorento is a complete family, accommodating large 7-member families. Those looking for premium comfort during long-haul trips or to perform daily chores. The Sorento makes every trip seen

like a breeze. Sorento’s spacious, premium leather-fitted interiors and horizontal air vents enable a sense of wideness and coolness. Front ventilated seats provide the driver & co-passenger a feeling of comfort even in the hottest of days.

The roomy leg and headroom make an ideal seating for passengers of all sizes. Carved inside the dashboard, the curved display infotainment system integrated with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay makes connectivity easier and user-friendly.

Furthermore, the USB ports spread across all three rows for device charging are an excellent way to entertain the family.

Other useful features include the power tailgate option for effortless luggage keeping and seamless connectivity features such as the wireless charging tray. Accelerate your journey and build joyful memories with Sorento’s cutting-edge safety features. Safety is a top priority at Kia.

VODAFONE OMAN LAUNCHES MAKANI INTERNET FOR BUSINESS

MUSCAT: Building on the success of Makani Internet, Vodafone Oman is expanding its mobile broadband portfolio with the launch of Makani Internet for Business, a dedicated solution designed to meet the growing needs of enterprises across the Sultanate of Oman.

Offering high-speed connectivity without relying on fibre infrastructure, it empowers organisations that depend on mobile access to maintain smooth, stable operations. As business requirements evolve, fast, simple and scalable internet has become essential. Makani Internet for Business delivers a plug-and-play service that gets companies online from day one, with flexible terms that support easy relocation.

True to its promise of ‘Unlimited internet that goes wherever your business takes you’, it removes traditional barriers and gives teams the freedom to stay productive anytime, anywhere.



Makani Internet for Business delivers a plug-&-play service that gets companies online from day one.

Powered by Vodafone Oman’s 5G network, the service provides high speeds and consistent performance, to meet even the most high-demand requirements.

From managing daily workflows to supporting

advanced platforms, Makani Internet for Business ensures the responsiveness and dependability today’s enterprises require.

“The expectations of enterprises have fundamentally changed, as access, speed and flexibility are no longer optional,” said Eng Mohammed al Alawi, Head of Enterprise at Vodafone Oman.

“Makani Internet for Business is our response to these changing demands, offering a solution that removes long-standing constraints and allowing organisations to work the way they need to, without compromise. It’s part of our mission to strengthen operational resilience for companies across Oman”.

Aligned with Vodafone Oman’s broader strategy for enterprise growth, this new service addresses market gaps with practical, future-ready solutions.

Bank Muscat receives global certification for PCI DSS

MUSCAT: In a move that underscores its commitment to adopting the latest cybersecurity standards and investing in advanced protection technologies, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, announced it has obtained the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) Version 4.0 certification, the latest and most robust global standard for protecting payment card data.

This certification was awarded following a rigorous and comprehensive assessment conducted by Panacea InfoSec, the authorised entity for assessing compliance with the PCI DSS. The assessment covered the Bank’s infrastructure, systems and



The assessment covered the Bank’s infrastructure, systems and information security policies.

information security policies. Ajay Kaushik, CEO of Panacea InfoSec, handed over the certification to Ahmed bin Faqir al Bulushi, Deputy CEO of Banking at Bank Muscat, during a ceremony held recently at Bank Muscat’s Head Office, in the presence of several officials and members of the bank’s executive management.

Ahmed bin Faqir al Bulushi, Deputy CEO of Banking at Bank Muscat, said: “We take pride in being granted the PCI DSS certification, a milestone that reaffirms our steadfast commitment to the highest global standards of data security and customer trust.

This recognition reinforces our vision to lead with integrity, innovate responsibly and safeguard every

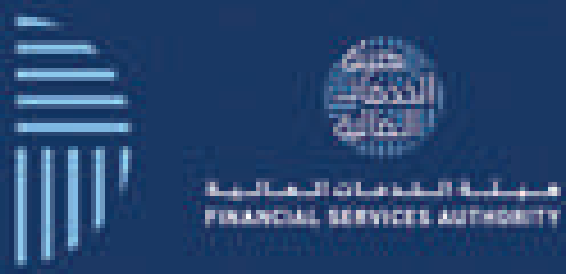
transaction with excellence.

The Bank always strives to be a leader by implementing the latest innovations to ensure speed and security when customers conduct their various banking transactions.

Bank Muscat’s systems also rely on data analysis to detect suspicious activities in a timely manner, supported by the efforts of the information security and information technology teams who continue to work to protect customer data, manage risks and respond to various potential events. This contributes to strengthening a strong security environment. The Bank will continue its commitment to adopting the latest technologies and advanced systems to contribute to the development of the banking sector”.

BUSINESS

NEWSTANDARD



The new system is a step forward in the level of regulatory services rendered by the Authority.

FSA LAUNCHES NEW LICENSING SYSTEM FOR ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 9

THE Financial Services Authority (FSA) announced the launch of a new electronic system for applications for licensing and renewal of the licences to practice the accounting and auditing profession.

The new system allows users to submit online applications with the ability to upload the required documents and follow up the status of the application at its various stages in a swift and transparent manner.

It aims to raise the efficiency of services, facilitate access and reduce time and effort, in addition to enhancing digital supervision and tracking the performance of accounting and auditing firms.

The FSA confirmed that the system is a step forward in the level of regulatory services rendered and reflects the FSA's commitment to providing a high-quality professional environment in accordance with international standards by facilitating licensing and licences renewal procedures and enabling applicants to obtain the service online in a way that enhances the confidence of investors and the financial community in the profession.

The regulation of the profession in Oman is based on the Accounting and Auditing Profession Law issued pursuant to Royal Decree No 77/86.

The FSA is currently preparing the regulations for the profession, which are available as a draft for consultation with the industry and the public within the approach adopted by FSA in applying community participation in the formulation of regulatory schemes.

OMAN CRUDE OIL PRICE CLIMBS TO \$72.17 PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman crude oil for September delivery rose by \$1.28 on Tuesday, settling at \$72.17 per barrel, up from \$70.89 the previous day.

However, the monthly average price for Omani crude in July fell to \$63.62 per barrel, marking a \$4.25 decline compared to June's average.

Meanwhile, international oil prices rose on Wednesday, maintaining their highest levels since June 23, lifted by attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and a forecast for lower US

oil production, while uncertainty over US tariffs loomed in the background.

Brent crude futures gained 10 cents, or 0.1%, to \$70.42 a barrel by 1057 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude was up 15 cents, or 0.2%, to \$68.65 a barrel.

After months of calm in the Red Sea, attacks in the major global shipping lane were renewed in the past week, which sources attribute to Yemen's Iran-allied Ansar Allah militia.

A mission was underway on Wednesday to rescue the crew from a cargo ship which sank in the Red Sea following an attack that killed at least four crew members.

The Ansar Allah have not claimed responsibility for the attack.

Oil prices were also buoyed by an Energy Information Administration forecast on Tuesday that the US will produce less oil in 2025 than previously expected, as declining oil prices have prompted US producers to slow activity. — Agencies

Oman launches space accelerator programme

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 9

In a significant move in furtherance of Oman Vision 2040, the Sultanate of Oman has launched the Oman Space Accelerators Programme—an innovative programme to foster in-country capabilities in the global space sector and establish a knowledge-based economy.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), the accelerator is Oman's first and is being established in partnership with Ankaa Space & Technologies and UK space innovation business Exotopic.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, explained: "It is the first-of-its-kind accelerator programme in Oman that is initiated to serve technology companies that want to venture into the growing space industry. The programme will provide technical guidance,



The first-ever Space Accelerators Programme seeks to empower local tech startups and SMEs.

awareness training and official networking with investors, global corporations and world space industry legends."

He continued, "The long-term vision of the accelerator is to equip 10 Omani companies with the necessary tools and expertise to be path-breaking drivers of the space economy, contributing directly to Oman Vision 2040's innovation and human capital targets."

The 15-week programme, extending from late August through early in December, will support ten Omani startups, small and medium-sized enterprises, entrepreneurs and academics with a fast-track

sequence of training workshops and business development exercises. Dr Saud bin Humaid al Shueili, Head of the National Space Programme, linked the programme to broader national interests: "As part of an effort to realise the ambitious goals of the National Space Programme and Oman Vision 2040, we launched a comprehensive strategy aimed at developing strong national capabilities in the sector." Dr Al Shueili also explained that the project fosters a competitive culture that encourages creative solutions, and the first three entities are awarded to encourage sustainable activities corresponding to

strategic goals of the industry. The programme will focus on key space industry domains such as communications, earth observation, geospatial analytics, navigation, drones, AI and machine learning, advanced computing, data storage, IoT, spacecraft simulations, startup acceleration and technology innovation.

He outlined the three strategic pillars of the programme: institutional capacity, individual skills development and entrepreneurial and commercial capability. "Since January 2023, we've implemented a number of targeted initiatives to strengthen Omani expertise and readiness in the space domain, in line with national aspirations," he said.

Ghaida al Jabri, Project Manager at Ankaa Space & Technologies, highlighted the inclusive and collaborative nature of the project.

"Oman has worked on this programme in partnership with MoTCIT, Al Ankaa and Exotopic in the National Space Programme. It is a demonstration of direct contribution to the innovation and private sector development pillars of Oman Vision 2040."

40 projects worth RO 1.8 billion localised via Invest Oman platform

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 9

A TOTAL of 40 high-value investment projects, valued at approximately RO 1.8 billion, have been successfully localised across Oman's special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities, signalling a major step forward in the country's economic diversification strategy.

According to the latest issue of *Duqm Economist* magazine, these projects were facilitated through the Invest Oman platform, underscoring its growing role as a national engine for investment attraction and execution.

Eng Nasser bin Khalifa al Kindi, CEO of Invest Oman, revealed that nearly 90 investment proposals worth around RO 4.9 billion have been processed through the platform to date.

Of these, 40 projects have reached the localisation stage, covering key sectors such



ENG NASSER BIN KHALIFA AL KINDI
CEO of Invest Oman

as manufacturing, food security and healthcare.

These investments not only reflect strong confidence in Oman's investor climate but also align with Oman Vision 2040 objectives to generate economic value, create jobs and deepen public-private collaboration.

The platform, launched to streamline investment facilitation, integrates 22 key government and private sector entities, including OPAZ, Madayn, the Environment Authority, and major ministries, all working under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

It's one-stop approach allows investors

to complete licensing and regulatory procedures under one roof, significantly reducing processing times and administrative bottlenecks.

Al Kindi noted that among the platform's notable features is an interactive investment opportunity map, enabling investors to identify geographically strategic projects based on factors such as infrastructure proximity, logistics access and available incentives.

This digital tool, combined with real-time support from sector specialists and negotiators, helps convert investment interest into actionable projects more efficiently.

Of the 40 localised projects, many are in the industrial sector, which has emerged as the top destination for investment, especially in areas linked to export manufacturing and supply chain integration.

Food security is another high-performing sector, boosted by national strategies to enhance self-reliance. Healthcare investments are also on the rise, driven by growing demand

for modern medical facilities and services.

Eng Al Kindi said the platform's investor screening process includes evaluation of financial strength, sectoral experience and alignment with sustainable development priorities. Each proposal is vetted through rigorous economic and technical feasibility studies to ensure that only projects with high impact and long-term viability are endorsed. He added that Oman's improving economic fundamentals — such as sustained growth, better credit ratings and rising foreign direct investment — continue to attract global players.

In Q3 of 2024 alone, foreign investment stood at RO 26.677 billion, a 16% rise year-on-year. The manufacturing sector accounted for over half of this total. India, China and Egypt were among the top sources of foreign investment, alongside strong local investor participation, reflecting both regional trust and international confidence in Oman's evolving business ecosystem.

FURTHER DIP

China consumer prices edge lower



China's consumer prices dropped 0.1% month-on-month in June, seasonally adjusted, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Analysts had predicted stable prices following May's 0.2% drop.

Year-on-year, consumer prices rose slightly by 0.1%, defying expectations of a further dip. Meanwhile, producer prices fell 3.6% compared to June last year. — ONA

WORSENED SENTIMENT

Gold slips on strong dollar



Gold prices stayed near a one-week low as the US dollar and Treasury yields strengthened. Spot gold hit \$3,301.50 an ounce, while US gold futures dipped 0.2% to \$3,310.10.

Market sentiment worsened after US President Trump confirmed new tariffs, including a 50% levy on copper and 10% on BRICS countries, adding pressure on semiconductors and pharmaceutical sectors. — ONA

HURTING ECONOMY

UN warns of trade uncertainty



The United Nations said that the US's delay in imposing new tariffs and related statements by President Trump have heightened global trade uncertainty.

Pamela Coke Hamilton of the UN's International Trade Centre noted the pause brings limited relief but prolongs instability and warned that ambiguity around tariff levels and negotiations could hurt economic confidence. — ONA

OPINION

The pros and cons of foreign investment



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

SOME economic reports reveal several violations occurring through foreign investments in countries seeking to expand their economic activities and boost economic growth. We have recently read about some foreign countries hacking into their local systems by collecting important information about various situations, institutions, and individuals, including their contact numbers, private messages, and other matters, and providing it to hostile countries.

This information can be exploited in the event of wars, military and economic skirmishes.

This does not mean that countries should stop attracting foreign investments, but they must monitor these institutions and their employees, especially those that attempt to exclude national cadres from employment.

We have recently witnessed this with the insistence of some countries on excluding national competencies from working in the institutions they establish through foreign investments, which gives them the opportunity to manipulate the data of these companies and avoid oversight from the relevant authorities.

This is something we must be careful about and avoid underestimating during the coming period. The value of foreign investment in Oman currently stands at approximately RO 30 billion. This has been

achieved as a result of the efforts made by relevant authorities in the country over the past decades to transform the national economy into a competitive one based on industry, investment, and innovation, rather than relying on traditional activities.

This was highlighted by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in his recent statement to members of the Majlis Ash'shura.

As is well known, foreign investment in any country plays a pivotal role in supporting economic development, but it also carries with it some challenges and risks.

The positives of foreign investment include the transfer of technology and expertise, that benefit the local market, contribute to the development of the technical skills of the national workforce, and create job opportunities through the launch of new projects. This increases national income, improves project infrastructure, encourages competition, and improves the quality of local products and services.

However, foreign investment also has numerous negatives, including the potential for economic exploitation, as some exploit the natural resources of these countries or exploit cheap labour without providing fair returns to the state.

Today, they exist in some African countries, where rare minerals are extracted to generate huge profits in exchange for

As is well known, foreign investment in any country plays a pivotal role in supporting economic development, but it also carries with it some challenges and risks.

nominal royalties to governments.

Some companies also influence national sovereignty by imposing conditions and offering special privileges, along with occasional political interference. Some companies transfer significant amounts of their annual profits abroad, reducing the net positive impact on the local economy.

Meanwhile, foreign companies possess capital and technology that make it difficult for local companies to compete with them, while others work to weaken environmental or labour laws.

In general, some foreign companies have the ability to violate laws in several ways, including through the complicity of local officials, weak oversight, bribery to obtain contracts or legal exemptions, corruption, tax evasion through accounting manipulation or transferring profits to low-tax countries, and violations of environmental laws and the exploitation of workers, who are forced to work for low wages or in inhumane conditions.

Finally, foreign investment is a double-edged sword, requiring careful regulation and oversight.

Furthermore, it poses a threat if tolerated without strict laws or transparency. This prompts host countries to establish clear and robust legal frameworks that protect their sovereignty and citizens, and ensure a balance between attracting investment and their economic and social interests.

JAPAN INC’S TRADE ATTACK ON ISHIBA RINGS HOLLOW

HUDSON LOCKETT

IT’S A SURE sign of corporate jitters when Japan Inc starts to turn on the business-friendly Liberal Democratic Party. Takeshi Niinami, CEO of Suntory and chair of the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, did exactly that on Tuesday when he told the Financial Times that Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba had made a “mistake” in playing hardball with US President Donald Trump on tariff negotiations.

Niinami said Ishiba had squandered the legacy of the late Shinzo Abe — former prime minister and legendary Trump whisperer — by refusing to open the country’s rice market to US imports and demanding Washington scrap all its new tariffs on Japan, including a 25% levy on auto imports from the likes of Toyota Motor. That may have cost Tokyo the chance to secure 10% base tariffs, he added.

It’s true that the US raised Japan’s prospective tariffs one percentage point to 25% this week when it announced a delay in reciprocal levies until August 1. But South Korea faces the same level of levies, despite only starting proper trade negotiations about a month ago after a snap presidential election.

And though Japan’s maximalist position has not yet yielded results for its \$4 trillion economy, it’s hard to condemn given how little Trump has granted to those who do cave.

The UK, for instance, agreed to a trade pact but ultimately failed to even partially reverse US reciprocal tariffs of 10%.

Niinami’s call to end agricultural protections also ignores the political importance of Japan’s farmers, who have long thrown in with Ishiba’s LDP and whose support will be vital in the upper house elections on July 20.

Rising rice prices — up 102% in May year-on-year, the biggest spike since records began in 1971 — are hitting household sentiment and, with government rice reserves running low, becoming a political conundrum.

Yet the import seal on the crop is already broken: in April, Japan bought South Korean rice for the first time since 1999, per Bloomberg, and some restaurants have even switched to American strains. And while consumers prefer locally grown grains, rapid purchases of even stale government rice show cost concerns now prevail.

If Ishiba wants to address domestic and foreign demands without sacrificing Japanese farmers, he can pitch a one-off imports deal with the White House. Conducting a massive one-time purchase of American rice without permanently opening up the market could lower prices and help get Trump back onside.

And it will give the LDP some breathing room to remedy the agricultural policies which caused domestic shortages in the first place. — Reuters

Stability makes Europe attractive for investors

THE chief executive of JPMorgan’s asset management business in Europe, Patrick Thomson, says international clients are expressing “much more interest” in the region.

“There is a very positive view towards Europe at the moment,” Thomson told delegates at a recent London conference organised by the asset manager. “That is predicted on policy stability. If you think of the institutions we have in Europe – the European Central Bank and the Bank of England – there is relatively predictable monetary policy.”

He added that “very clear communication” on economic growth objectives from major European governments was also attracting investors’ interest: “Having stable, predictable policy – as opposed to other parts of the world where it is a little less predictable – makes Europe a very attractive place to invest for the long term.

Thomson did not explicitly single out the US as a market where investors were retreating in the wake of President Donald Trump’s trade tariffs announced in May. He said it was “hard to determine” if investors were allocating to Europe “at the expense of other regions”.

He said: “We have international clients, with a strong interest in European products, much greater than we have seen in the past ten years. That’s a very positive sign.”

Other fund management bosses have also indicated there is growing investor interest in European assets.

DWS boss Stefan Hoops said a “structural shift” had taken place in the aftermath of the tariffs, prompting some of its retail investors to “repatriate” assets to Europe. BlackRock CEO Larry Fink has also cited more client interest in Europe. “As Europe is now focused on growing instead of controlling, could Europe become a better destination for capital?

Meanwhile, Peter Branner, chief investment officer at Aberdeen Investments said in May that European stocks – as well as those in



La Defence business district outside Paris is seen in an aerial view. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

With the attraction of Europe, from an investment point of view, it is not surprising that investment giant Goldman Sachs bolstered staff numbers in its European Union (EU) hubs by around 150 people over the last several months as investment fees bounced back.

China – are looking more attractive”.

With the attraction of Europe, from an investment point of view, it is not surprising that investment giant Goldman Sachs bolstered staff numbers in its European Union (EU) hubs by around 150 people over the last several months as investment fees bounced back.

The Wall Street bank ended 2024 with 1,182 employees at Goldman Sachs Bank Europe SE, which houses its EU employees, according to newly released accounts. That was an increase of 14 per cent compared with the previous year.

Goldman’s revenue for its EU businesses rose around 12 per cent to 1.9 billion euros last year, with investment banking and equities fees driving the increase.

The Wall Street bank spent 732 million euros on compensation for the year, which is up by 12 per cent compared with 2023. There have been some changes to the value of stock options over the period, however. Goldman also released numbers for the first quarter of 2025 for its EU operations, with employee

numbers edging up again to 1,213 people. Compensation costs were up 6 per cent compared with the same period last year, it said.

The Wall Street bank has bolstered its team on the continent again after making cuts in 2023 amid deep lay-offs globally. Head count shrunk by 5 per cent, even as it continued to move both traders and dealmakers to the EU as part of its post-Brexit strategy.

Last year, Dirk Lievens, its head of dealmaking for financial institutions in Emea (Europe, Middle-East, Africa), relocated to Paris in a high-profile move. Key investment banking sector teams led by partners have been relocating from London to European cities, including Frankfurt and Milan in recent years.

Goldman Sachs also increased pay for its London employees, with compensation costs swelling by nine per cent in the first quarter.

It finished the first quarter with 3,615 employees, which is up by 256 compared with a year earlier, but flat from December.

BUSINESS

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, JULY 9

GOOGLE recently announced the start of Google Pay or Google Wallet in two new countries, Lebanon and Oman, which can be used via Android phone devices.

While making an announcement, the company said Google Pay allows people to pay and make secure purchases in stores (where contactless payments are accepted), in apps, and on the web.

Cardholders will also be able to store credit or debit cards for Google Pay within Google Wallet, a digital wallet.

Cardholders can make safer payments with multiple layers of security for transactions by using a virtual card number (a token), device-specific, that is associated with a dynamic security code that changes with each transaction.

In Oman, users can utilise Google Pay to make purchases through websites and mobile applications that support the service.

However, features like sending money to friends or paying for services are not supported in Oman.

For now, only Sohar International Bank has enabled Google Pay for customers, allowing them to make contactless payments using their Android phones. This service is available for international

GOOGLE PAY: A CONTACTLESS PAYMENT OPTION FOR OMAN 'S ANDROID USERS

In Oman, users can utilise Google Pay to make purchases through websites and mobile applications that support the service.



A smartphone with the Apple Pay logo is placed on a displayed Google Pay logo in this illustration. — Reuters

debit, credit and prepaid cardholders. To use Google Pay, customers need to add their card to the Google Wallet app.

Last year, with the launch of the Apple Pay service, the Sultanate of Oman joined the rest of the GCC markets that enable people to make online and offline payments via mobile devices. Unlike Samsung Pay, Google Pay will be available for all Android mobile users with versions Android 9 or higher.

Mohammed bin Saif al Manji of TechOneFive, an initiative group promoting awareness of new technologies, stated, “Digital payments in Oman are gaining remarkable momentum, driven by the Central Bank of Oman’s proactive efforts to promote a cashless society through initiatives such as mobile wallets, QR code payments and robust card tokenisation frameworks.

“The launch of Samsung Pay in April 2024 and Apple Pay in September 2024 marked key milestones in this journey.

“The recent support for Google Pay adds another secure and convenient option for users across the Sultanate of Oman.”

CLASSIFIEDS

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Mamma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khowair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

UMP
UNITED MAWA PROJECTS

Auditors & Accountants
• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance
Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

PTC Rent A Car
Travel & Tours

Daily, Weekly, Monthly Car Rental Available
9345 3444

Driving School
Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.
Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

JOB VACANCY

- ✓ Sales Executive,
- ✓ Laboratory instrument sector,
- ✓ Excellent Communication,
- ✓ Science Graduate.

sales@alchemyarabia.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

**Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309**
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

INDIAN male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

EXPERIENCED accountant with expertise in accounting, administration and documentation. Proficient in Tally and MS Office. Contact: + 968 72806772

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

INDIAN Male, 4 years of experience in web development in a product based company. Looking for a suitable position as software developer. Contact: + 968-99226403 suhail23599@gmail.com

INDIAN male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager. Contact: 00968 78099493

OMAN Experienced sales executive, valid D/L, 6 +years in FMCG, telecom, Trading, Leading teams and expanding market reach. contact: 94510339

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

SENIOR engineer 20+yrs exp in Elec. & Mech. projects in design, supervision & execution. Available with NOC, OSE membership & D/L. 99148940, jobluk.om@gmail.com

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582. Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

WAREHOUSE for rent in Misfah. Contact: 79939666, 99888390

FLAT for rent 3BKH 18 Nov Street, Ghubrah. Contact: 92470065, 92408308

STORES for rent 18 Nov St, Ghubrah, 200m, 300m,400m suitable for all commercial use. Contact: 92470065/92408308

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels

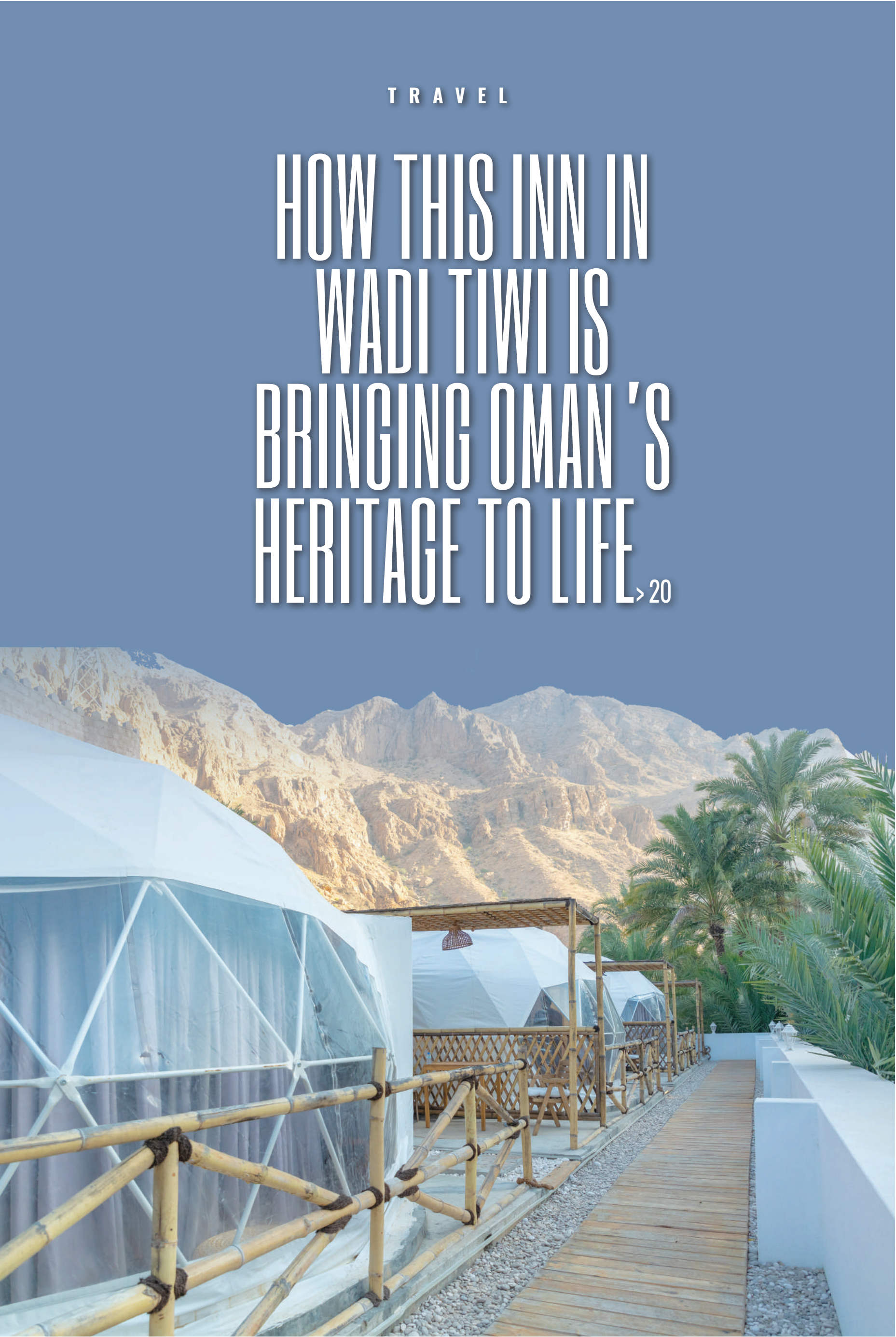
To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info

ازديهار izdihar

IZDIHAR_INFO

ART/LIFE



T R A V E L

HOW THIS INN IN WADI TIWI IS BRINGING OMAN'S HERITAGE TO LIFE > 20

LIFESTYLE

Michelin-star chef prepares ISS meals for French astronaut



WHEN FRENCH astronaut Sophie Adenot arrives at the International Space Station in 2026, she will dine on French gastronomical classics such as lobster bisque, foie gras and onion soup prepared especially for her by a chef with 10 Michelin stars.

Parsnip and haddock veloute, chicken with tonka beans and creamy polenta, and a chocolate cream with hazelnut cazette flower will also be on the menu, the European Space Agency (ESA) said on Wednesday.

Food delivered to the International Space Station (ISS) must meet strict specifications. It cannot be crumbly or too heavy and must be able to be stored for two years, the ESA said in a statement.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are only available after a new spacecraft arrives from Earth with supplies.

So most meals in space are canned, vacuum-packed or freeze-dried from a set of options provided by space agencies.

But to spice things up, one out of every 10 meals is prepared for specific crew members according to their personal tastes.

"During a mission, sharing our respective dishes is a way of inviting crewmates to learn more about our culture. It's a very powerful bonding experience," Adenot said in the statement.

Adenot's menu was developed by French chef Anne-Sophie Pic, who holds a total of 10 Michelin stars and was named best female chef by The World's 50 Best Restaurants in 2011.

Pic said it was an "exhilarating challenge" to develop the menu, which includes four starters, two mains and two desserts.

Adenot, a 42-year-old former helicopter test pilot, is scheduled to arrive for her first tour aboard the ISS in 2026.

A pair of NASA astronauts returned to Earth in March after being unexpectedly stuck on the ISS for more than nine months after problems with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft. — AFP

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



ANIMAL PLANET

An elephant plays during their daily bath in a river at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Pinnawala, about 90 km from the capital, Colombo. —AFP



MUSIC

Brazilian musician and actor Seu Jorge performs on stage during the 79th edition of the Les Nuits de Fourviere at the Theatre Antique de Fourviere in Lyon, eastern France. —AFP



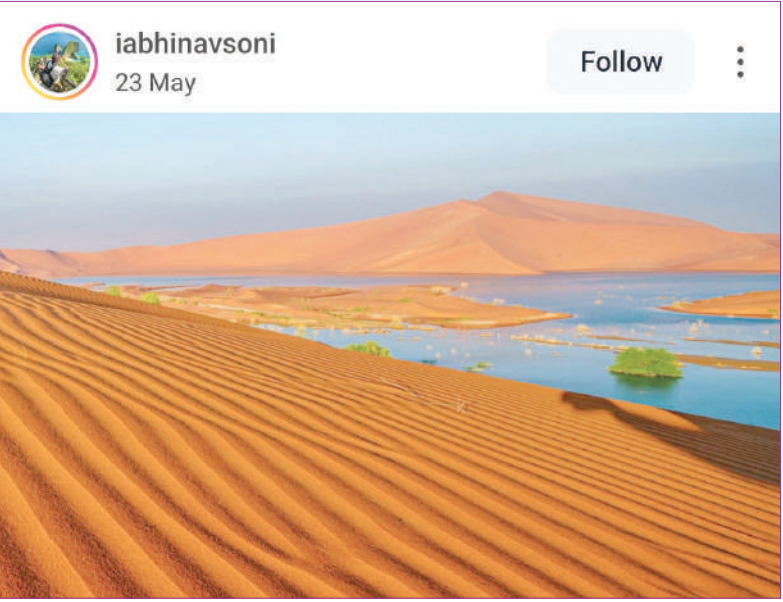
FILM

Canadian-US actor Nathan Fillion attends the world premiere of "Superman" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Rolling Down the Mountain



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Hong Kong fans queue for opening of Cristiano Ronaldo exhibition



HONG KONG football fans queued for hours on Monday to snap pictures of Cristiano Ronaldo's trophies and jerseys at an exhibition billed as the first of its kind outside the superstar's native Portugal.

Visitors at the opening of the "CR7 LIFE Museum Hong Kong" at a luxury shopping mall posed next to life-sized statues of the former Manchester United and Real Madrid player, including one in mid-air celebration and another in traditional Saudi dress.

"Cristiano Ronaldo is my idol... he's special," said 14-year-old Alvin Lai, who was first in a queue of more than 100 people.

"He's the most hardworking person out there," said university student Henry Singh.

"He's 40 years old and still going very strong."

Ronaldo signed a new two-year contract with Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr last month, calling it a "new chapter" in an Instagram post.

Al Nassr are due to play in a pre-season tournament in Hong Kong next month.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo will be greeting fans at the museum "very soon", said Tomas Froes, a representative of the footballer's family office.

The 12,000 square feet (1,110 square metres) exhibition sends a "strong message for everyone to achieve their dreams", Froes said.

Organisers have said the Hong Kong exhibition will run for a year before heading to mainland China. —AFP



Celebs light up Schiaparelli to open Paris Haute Couture Week

A CELEB-heavy show by Schiaparelli kicked off Paris Haute Couture Week on Monday, the first of four packed days that will see Georgian showman Demna bow out from Balenciaga after 10 years at the brand.

Schiaparelli designer Daniel Roseberry, hot on the heels of providing one of Lauren Sanchez's outfits for her blockbuster Venice wedding to Jeff Bezos last month, drew a roster of A-listers.

Rapper Cardi B turned up in a traffic-stopping tasselled neckpiece and posed with a black crow perched on her hand in the drizzle outside the Petit Palais exhibition space, where Roseberry's collection, entitled "Back to the Future", was unveiled.

The front row also included singer Dua Lipa, who wore a full-length petalled white bridal outfit, as well as US trans actress Hunter Schafer, known for HBO hit show "Euphoria".

Haute Couture Week is dedicated to handcrafted, one-of-a-kind creations bought by celebrities and VIPs for red carpets, galas and other high-profile events.

Schiaparelli was followed by a show by Dutch designer Iris van Herpen, who said her creations were inspired by the ocean and British documentary maker David Attenborough's heart-rending new film on sea life.

Known for fusing technology and fashion, van Herpen presented body-hugging dresses evoking fish scales or seaweed, the flowing tails and fins of tropical fish, and the curling forms of seahorse tails.

Cameroonian designer Imane Ayissi also celebrated the natural world, sending out his models to the sound of birdsong with dresses featuring leaf motifs as well as insect-shaped brooches made from glass beads.

Tuesday saw Chanel present the final collection created by its in-house design studio, the fifth since former chief creative Virginie Viard's



sudden departure in June 2024.

Her successor, the discreet and highly respected Franco-Belgian designer Matthieu Blazy, was appointed in December and will showcase his first collection for Chanel in October.

ABSENCES

One of the highlights of Haute Couture week will be the swansong of Demna, who goes by one name and is known for his daring work as well as controversies during his decade-long stint at Kering-owned

Balenciaga.

The man behind a \$2,000 "Ikea" bag and a \$1,800 so-called "trash pouch", as well as a much-criticised advertising campaign that appeared to reference child abuse, will present his final collection on Wednesday.

The 44-year-old, acclaimed by millennials and Gen-Z stars from Kim Kardashian to British pop sensation Charli XCX, has been tasked with reviving the flagging fortunes of Gucci by outgoing Kering CEO Francois-Henri Pinault.

After Demna's farewell on Wednesday, Belgian designer Glenn Martens will find himself in the spotlight when he unveils his first collection for Maison Margiela, following his appointment in January to succeed British designer John Galiano.

Martens has big shoes to fill, with the house's last couture show under Galiano in January 2024 considered a huge success by critics.

In total, 27 brands will unveil their creations during Haute Couture Week, including Elie Saab, Armani Prive, Aelis, Viktor&Rolf, Adeline Andre and Dubai-based Rami Al Ali, who is set to become the first Syrian to join the official Paris calendar.

Following a spate of major changes at fashion houses, some absences will stand out, particularly Dior's.

After a highly anticipated debut during the men's Fashion Week on June 27, newly appointed artistic director Jonathan Anderson is holding back his first haute couture collection for January 2026.

Named in early June to lead Dior's women's and couture lines as well, the 40-year-old Northern Irishman has become the first person since founder Christian Dior himself to oversee all three branches of the house.

American Michael Rider, who succeeded Hedi Slimane as chief designer at Celine, unveiled his first collection for the luxury French brand on Sunday, outside the official calendar. — AFP

FEATURES



HOW THIS INN IN WADI TIWI IS BRINGING OMAN'S HERITAGE TO LIFE

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI

IN THE RUGGED, wind-carved landscape of Wadi Tiwi, a quiet revolution has taken root — one that blends the timeless beauty of Oman's natural world with a deeply personal vision.

At the centre of this transformation is Asaad al Akhzami, a man driven not just by entrepreneurial ambition but by a profound connection to the land and its stories. His journey from a corporate titan steeped in global hospitality to a custodian of local heritage reveals a compelling tale of reinvention, rooted in passion, purpose, and a desire to redefine what it truly means to welcome others.

Asaad, for many years, thrived in the high-stakes world of a leading international hotel chain, serving as its youngest general manager. He learned the intricacies of offering guest comfort, orchestrating luxury, and managing operations on a grand scale.

It was during a rare trip to Wadi Tiwi that everything shifted. The quiet beauty of this secluded valley, with its verdant plantations, ancient falaj water channels, and dramatic mountain backdrops, captivated him in a way no hotel lobby ever had. He found himself wandering through the old, abandoned orchards, struck by their silent resilience and the stories embedded in the soil. The wadi, with its intricate water systems and humble farms, seemed to pulse with history and life—waiting to be rediscovered.

Asaad recognised that Wadi Tiwi was more than just a picturesque escape; it embodied the essence of Oman's identity—its history, its connection to nature, its stories that span generations. He saw in the overlooked farm the potential to breathe new life into the old roots, to create something authentic that honours the land. This wasn't about building another luxury retreat with imported décor and cookie-cutter finishes. No, his ambition was far richer: to craft a space where the landscape itself—its soil, water, and traditional crafts — would be the core experience.

Leaving behind the corporate world, Asaad embarked on a journey that was as much about personal rediscovery as it was about community transformation. He purchased the small, neglected farm that once supplied Wadi Tiwi with fruits and vegetables, envisioning it not merely as a business but as a testament to the spirit of Oman. His goal was to preserve and showcase the ingenuity of traditional building methods — local Omani stone, sidr wood, handcrafted touches—imparting a sense of place that fierce modernity often erodes.

The challenges were numerous. Infrastructure was minimal, utilities had to be introduced from scratch, and restoring the old farmhouses and gardens required patience and dedication. Asaad didn't seek fast results; instead, he wanted to nurture a genuine sense of place. Every stone laid, every timber chosen, was deliberate — designed to reflect the valley's character and to foster harmony between tradition and modern comfort.

It took sometime, but when it finally came together, the Nomad Inn in Tiwi was born.

Perhaps the most mesmerising element of Asaad's vision was the embrace of Wadi Tiwi's ancient falaj watercourse. Rather than conceal it behind walls, he made it the heart of the inn's design. Guests wake up to the gentle sound of water flowing past their rooms. They walk beside it during the day, sipping coffee in its shade, or drift to sleep listening to its soft murmur at night. Here, the water is not just a utilitarian feature, but a symbol — a reminder of Oman's enduring ingenuity and resilience.

The guest experience is crafted carefully to foster connection. Rooms are inspired by traditional mud-built houses, yet equipped with the comforts travellers seek today. Bespoke names and stories are tied to each private retreat, inviting guests to step into the narrative of the valley. The inn also offers traditional breakfast options prepared by local women from Tiwi village, alongside herbal teas by the falaj, guided walks to ancient caves, and workshops demonstrating age-old crafts like date palm weaving.

Buoyed by the success of the first project, Asaad is expanding his vision. A second lodge is already taking shape at Hillar Al Hisn, with plans for multiple new units. This expansion isn't just about increasing capacity; it's about deepening the connection between visitors, the land, and the community.

Asaad's aim is to create a network of spaces that celebrate the enduring spirit of Oman's heritage — spaces that invite guests to explore, learn, and heal their sense of place. With each new lodge, the core principles remain unchanged: authentic storytelling, sustainable practices, and a heartfelt respect for the environment and its people.

Asaad sees his project as a mirror to Oman itself — a country proud of its ancient traditions but also capable of innovative stewardship. His work in Wadi Tiwi reflects a desire to show the world that true luxury isn't defined solely by opulence, but by meaningful engagement with people and place. Guests come seeking more than just a scenic backdrop; they seek stories, connection, and a chance to become part of something larger than themselves.