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DRIVING
TOWARDS
A GREENER
FUTURE

4

IN BRIEF

HM’S MESSAGE TO RWANDA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, pertaining to the bilateral relations between the two friendly nations. The message was handed over by Nasra bint Salim al Hashmi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Rwanda, when President Kagame received her at the Rwandan capital, Kigali.

IRONMAN 70.3 TO BE HELD IN DHOFAR

Acting in cooperation with the Ironman Group and the Middle East Global Events company, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism held a press conference during which it announced that the ‘Middle East Ironman 70.3 Championship for Teams’ will be held in Dhofar Governorate on October 24. The championship constitutes part of the ‘Experience Oman Ironman 70.3 Dhofar 2026’ race being held in partnership with Hawana Salalah Resort, in conjunction with individual run competitions. The race consists of three stages: A 1.9-km swim, a 90-km bike ride and a 21.1-km run. Individual racers take all three stages on their own, while team members share the race stages before coming together to cross the finish line.

DETAILS ON P11

HEATWAVES TO RISE BY 20-40%



The severity of heatwaves in the Sultanate of Oman is projected to increase under all emissions scenarios, according to the country’s third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) report submitted to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The report warns that heatwaves are likely to become more frequent and intense, with the number of heatwave days projected to increase by 20 to 40 per cent by 2050 under a high-emissions scenario. On Tuesday, temperatures hovered around 45°C in several parts of the Sultanate of Oman, including Ibri, Bidiyah, SamaYil, Mahadha, Fahud, Al Buraimi, Muscat, Nizwa and Haima. DETAILS ON P5



HIS MAJESTY RETURNS HOME FROM UK

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home on Tuesday evening, following a private visit to the United Kingdom. May the Almighty Allah grant His Majesty success and guide him towards all that brings goodness and prosperity. — ONA

US says Hormuz deal possible by ‘today’

P R O J E C T I L E S I N K S I N D I A N S H I P N E A R Y E M E N I W A T E R S

THE UNITED STATES was hopeful that a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz would be done “today or tomorrow”, a top US official said on Tuesday, hours after yet another cargo ship was hit in the vital waterway. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told broadcaster CNBC “there is a chance we may have a deal” in the coming hours, a day after President Donald Trump said the strait might reopen on Tuesday. Speaking from the White House on Monday, the US leader continued his now familiar combination of bullish optimism about diplomacy and bellicose threats, warning that this was Iran’s “last chance before decapitation”. Meanwhile, a projectile has hit an Indian vessel, causing it to capsize and sink near Yemeni waters, but all 14 seafarers have been safely rescued by Yemen’s coast guard, the South Asian nation’s shipping minister said on Tuesday in a post on X. Tehran and Washington have been at war since February 28,



A cargo ship is pictured off the coast of the Khor Fakkan Container Terminal, the only natural deep-sea port in the region. — AFP

when the US and Israel launched surprise attacks on Iran. Despite a ceasefire and a preliminary deal in the months since, diplomacy has failed to end the conflict. The Strait of Hormuz, a key conduit for global oil and gas supplies, has been the spark for repeated returns to fighting.

In what has become a regular pattern, Trump last week threatened to hit Iran “very hard”, potentially with attacks against civilian infrastructure, only to pull back on Saturday, saying the “perimeters” of a deal were in place. On Monday, he said he had agreed to continue to pursue

talks with Iran at the request of some countries. But Iran’s foreign ministry denied that negotiations with Washington were taking place, even as Trump insisted they were. “We are talking right now,” the US president said. Qatar, which has been mediating negotiations, said on Tuesday that diplomatic efforts were ongoing but that there were no direct Iran-US talks planned. The diplomatic focus is on reopening Hormuz, which Trump said could come “literally by tomorrow”, and the denuclearisation of Iran, which he said could “take a little while”. “Whether Iran wants to admit it or not, we are, in fact, talking of a solution to a problem that they have caused, for decades,” he added. Trump pointed to the United States’ counter-blockade of Iranian ports, saying: “Nothing gets through to Iran, unless we want it to, and nothing will get through, unless a Deal, or Total Surrender, is accomplished.” SEE ALSO P6

From Oman to Europe... unforgettable journey by 1993 Cressida

KHALID AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

For most travellers to Europe the journey begins with a boarding pass. But for Adam al Rasbi, it began with the turn of an ignition key. Waiting outside was a 1993 Toyota Cressida — a car with more than half a million kilometres on its odometer. For Adam, it was never about the age of the vehicle. It was about proving that determination can carry people farther than horsepower ever could. When he shared the idea with his friends Mohammed and Shihab

al Rasbi, he expected questions. Instead, he found his companions ready to embrace uncertainty. The three young Omanis from Al Kamil W’al Wafi in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate set out on an overland adventure that would take them across 15 countries, thousands of kilometres and countless unforgettable moments. Months before crossing their first border, the journey had already begun, by planning. Permits were secured, routes carefully mapped and budgets calculated, and for sure they didn’t forget to take care



The nearly 33-year-old car performed with remarkable consistency.

of Their ageing Cressida underwent a complete mechanical inspection, they replaced and essential spare parts packed alongside first-aid supplies, tools and camping necessities. Every detail mattered because reliability would be tested far from home. “I wasn’t worried about the distance,” Adam said. “What concerned me most was the possibility of a major engine or transmission failure. If that happened in a remote area, everything could change.” Fortunately, the Cressida proved

far more resilient than many expected. Apart from a handful of minor mechanical issues that were quickly repaired, the nearly 33-year-old continued to perform with remarkable consistency, quietly challenging assumptions about what an old car could achieve. Their route led them from Oman through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Türkiye before continuing into Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany, eventually returning once again to Bosnia and Herzegovina. TURN TO P2

OMAN

ONE DEAD, FOUR INJURED IN ROAD ACCIDENT



MUSCAT: One person died and four others were injured after a vehicle overturned and veered off the road in the Al Ghaftain area on Sultan Said bin Taimour Road. Police Aviation transported the body of the deceased citizen from Haima Hospital to the Wilayat of Bidbid. The four injured citizens were taken by Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority ambulances to Nizwa Hospital and Haima Hospital for treatment.

Oman to Europe...
unforgettable journey
by 1993 Cressida

FROM P1

Every border introduced a new culture. Every village revealed a different rhythm of life. Travelling overland allowed the friends to witness landscapes changing gradually rather than disappearing beneath clouds from an aircraft window. They explored historic towns, shared conversations with locals and discovered that every stop offered another story waiting to be told.

The original plan was to complete the journey in about a month, but curiosity repeatedly altered the itinerary. Historic landmarks, scenic mountain roads and vibrant city streets encouraged longer stays, transforming France from a final destination into just another chapter of a much larger European experience.

Driving between six and ten hours each day demanded discipline. The trio rotated behind the wheel, carefully managing fatigue while adapting to different traffic regulations and border procedures from one country to another.

The expedition was entirely self-funded. Careful budgeting covered fuel, accommodation, food and emergency expenses. To stretch their resources, they often prepared meals themselves and selected modest accommodation, proving that meaningful adventures depend more on planning than on lavish spending.

Unexpectedly, their greatest conversation starter was neither their destination nor their nationality — it was the car itself.

Wherever they stopped, curious passers-by gathered around the Omani-plated Cressida, surprised that a three-decade-old sedan had travelled from the Arabian Peninsula to the heart of Europe. Questions about the vehicle quickly turned into conversations about Oman.

MOMENTS BECAME OPPORTUNITIES
The three friends proudly introduced their homeland, speaking about Oman’s rich history, breathtaking landscapes, hospitality and reputation for peace and stability. With the Omani flag, they believed they were not representing themselves, but a country they come from.

“The biggest lesson wasn’t about driving,” he reflects. “It was about believing that an ambitious idea becomes possible once you’re willing to prepare for it.”

Their faithful Cressida eventually returned home carrying far more than luggage. It carried memories, friendships and how to pass challenges.

DHOFAR GOVERNOR, SHURA MEMBERS REVIEW INTEGRATION

SALALAH: HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, emphasised the importance of enhancing partnership and integration with various work sectors and community institutions, as well as benefiting from the views and proposals of Majlis Ash’shura members to support development efforts in the governorate. This came during a meeting on Tuesday at the Office of the Governor of Dhofar between the Governor and the Majlis Ash’shura members representing the governorate’s wilayats, in the presence of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, and several officials from the governorate. At the outset of the meeting, the Governor explained that the governorate adopts the



The governorate adopts the principle of partnership and continuous coordination with various entities. — ONA

principle of partnership and continuous coordination with various entities and societal groups, paying great attention to the ideas and proposals presented by Council members as an important supporter for the governorate’s development process. The meeting reviewed several introductory presentations. The first addressed key aspects related to service affairs in Dhofar Governorate during the first half of 2026, while the second presentation reviewed the work and achievements of the Governorate’s Municipal Council during its third term. The third presentation covered the initiatives, achievements, and projects executed and planned by Dhofar Municipality during the current year. — ONA

UAE VISITORS TOP OMAN’S
TOURISM ARRIVALS



The figures underscore Oman’s growing appeal as a destination that combines natural beauty and modern infrastructure.

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

OMAN'S tourism sector continued its upward trajectory during the first half of 2026, with the latest figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showing strong visitor growth from regional and international markets.

According to the data, visitors from the United Arab Emirates ranked first among all nationalities, reaching 491,503 by the end of June 2026. Indian nationals followed in second place with 382,015 visitors, while Germany emerged as the leading European source market, recording 68,771 visitors during the same period.

The figures underscore Oman's growing appeal as a destination that combines natural beauty, cultural heritage and modern tourism infrastructure, while reinforcing its reputation as one of the safest and most stable countries in the

region. India's continued presence as the second-largest source market highlights the long-standing economic and cultural links between the two countries. Improved air connectivity and growing awareness of tourism offerings have further strengthened Oman's appeal among Indian travellers seeking authentic cultural experiences, pristine landscapes and premium hospitality.

Meanwhile, Germany's ranking among the top three visitor markets demonstrates Oman's expanding presence in Europe. German travellers have increasingly shown interest in eco-tourism, adventure travel and heritage experiences, areas in which Oman enjoys a distinct competitive advantage. Khalid bin Rashid al Marzouqi, a tour guide, said the results reflect years of strategic investment in tourism infrastructure and destination development. “The first-half figures clearly demonstrate that Oman has become a preferred destination for travellers from across the world. The country’s success is built not only on its breathtaking

landscapes but also on an integrated tourism ecosystem that includes safety, high-quality infrastructure, improved services and an increasingly attractive investment environment.”

Beyond its internationally recognised security and stability, Oman offers remarkable geographical diversity. Towering mountains, dramatic wadis, pristine beaches, vast deserts and Unesco-recognised heritage sites provide visitors with a wide range of authentic experiences throughout the year. Traditional souqs, historic forts and rich cultural traditions continue to distinguish Oman from many competing destinations.

The latest visitor statistics represent more than encouraging numbers. They reflect the growing confidence of international travellers in Oman as a destination defined by safety, authenticity, sustainability and hospitality. With continued investment and strategic planning, Oman is steadily strengthening its position as one of the Middle East's leading tourism and investment destinations.

Trekkers advised to take sufficient precaution

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

Trekkers, mountain climbers and rock hikers have been advised to take sufficient precautions when scaling heights in extreme temperatures, according to experts.

Experts suggest that the key to safety is being well-informed and prepared for potential hazards, and ensuring safety through proper planning, preparation, and precautions. “The Sultanate of Oman has some unique terrain that complements mountain sports, and trekking and hiking are good sports activities that anyone can pursue.

Having said that, it can also be dangerous if not carried out properly and under the supervision of an expert. To me, these precautions start from understanding one's physical endurance, getting used to knowing the route and remembering to hydrate very often, to keeping proper communication networks open,” said Abdullah al Khaduri, a safety expert and trainer.

According to him, the first and foremost factor to take into consideration is not to venture out alone, and one should always have a team with a leader who can guide and advise the rest of the hikers. These extreme sports



Trekking involves inherent risks related to the natural environment and physical demands.

activities require constant practice, strong physical fitness, and specific clothing, especially hiking boots and a backpack containing first aid supplies, food, and water.

“It always pays off to learn the route well before the trek, also the distance, weather, and difficulty level, and keep someone informed about the plans and the expected return time,” says Rahees Melekkandy, another climber who has been to most of the mountains of Oman. One should wear comfortable trekking shoes, clothing, and protective gear, and carry sufficient water, energy snacks, a first-aid kit, and a fully charged phone. Rahees

said that some of the challenges he faced during his group mountain hikes were dehydration due to insufficient water intake, followed by intense heat from the sun and descending steep slopes. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority have recently urged hikers to prioritise safety while venturing out on hiking or trekking.

“Before setting to scale any heights, one should give priority to safety by staying away from unstable cliffs, informing others of their plans, choosing trails suited to their fitness, carrying essential gear,” ROP spokesman said.

SHORT TAKES



The project is being implemented to transform it into a recreational destination. — ONA

Nakhal promenade development project 90% complete

NAKHAL: The development project for Nakhal Promenade in Al Batinah South Governorate has reached approximately 90 per cent completion in its second phase. The project is being implemented by the Municipality of Al Batinah South with the aim of transforming it into an integrated sports and recreational destination. The project entails the construction of fully equipped pedestrian pathways, including a paved walkway, landscaped green areas, and five family seating zones strategically distributed according to an architectural design that ensures comfort and optimises the utilisation of the site.

The project is being carried out as part of the governorate’s ongoing efforts to elevate the urban landscape, enhance quality of life, and provide comprehensive public facilities that cater to the needs of various community segments, in alignment with the objectives of sustainable urban development.

The project also features the construction of a number of recreational and service amenities, including an open-air theatre for hosting events and community activities, a children’s play area, a sports zone, decorative fountains, an aesthetic archway, and a dedicated photography corner, in addition to commercial kiosks and restroom facilities — offering a holistic experience for promenade visitors. — ONA

8,000 cans of bottled water destroyed over health concerns



MoAFWR destroyed 8,400 cans of bottled drinking water in Barka.

MUSCAT: The food safety and quality specialists at the Directorate-General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR), in Al Batinah South Governorate, destroyed 8,400 cans of bottled drinking water in Barka. The Directorate-General said that the decision to destroy this particular shipment of water was made because it did not comply with the approved health requirements due to microbial contamination and because the percentage of total dissolved solids was below the permissible limits.

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SAHAM, AUGUST 4

As Oman continues to strengthen its non-oil economy in 2026, Al Batinah North is preparing to host one of the Sultanate of Oman’s most ambitious strategic developments with the launch of Saham Agricultural City, a project designed to reshape modern agriculture, reinforce food security, and position Oman as a regional hub for sustainable agri-investment.

Eng Nasser bin Ali al Marshoudi, General Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North, described the project as a pioneering future development that embodies a comprehensive vision for integrated and sustainable agricultural growth. He said the city represents a new



ENG NASSER
BIN ALI
AL MARSHOUDI

General Director
of Agriculture,
Fisheries and
Water Resources

generation of agricultural communities where production, services and urban development coexist within a single ecosystem, reflecting the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

Al Marshoudi explained that the city is planned over 92.3 square kilometres, including 22 square kilometres allocated to agricultural production, while the remaining area will accommodate residential neighbourhoods, commercial districts and essential service facilities. This integrated planning approach is intended to strengthen the connection between agricultural activities and supporting infrastructure, creating a self-sustaining agricultural city rather than a conventional farming zone.

He added that the project is expected to reinforce the concept of integrated agricultural cities by bringing together

production, community services and economic activity in one destination, while contributing directly to the national objectives of sustainable development and food security.

Building on this vision, Dr Masoud al Azri, Director of Agricultural and Fisheries Marketing, revealed that preliminary investment in the project is estimated at RO 1 billion, with total investment expected to exceed RO 1.5 billion upon completion of all development phases and associated private-sector investments.

He noted that the project is being implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning through a phased approach. Master planning and principal engineering designs have already been completed, while procedures are currently underway

to appoint the project operator before infrastructure works commence and investment opportunities are officially launched.

Unlike traditional agricultural developments, Saham Agricultural City has been conceived as a complete agricultural value chain. Its master plan includes modern open field and protected farms, food processing complexes, value-added manufacturing facilities, packaging and cold storage centres, logistics hubs, research laboratories, innovation centres, training institutes, advisory services and commercial facilities, creating an ecosystem capable of supporting every stage from production to export.

The city will rely extensively on advanced agricultural technologies, including protected farming,

Call for preventive measures as flu cases rise

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

Many cases of flu have been reported, and doctors are seeing an increase in respiratory infections, particularly among children. Reported symptoms include throat pain, a runny nose, sneezing, headache, body pain, cough, and phlegm.

While influenza is one of the viruses involved, many cases are caused by other viruses such as rhinovirus, RSV, and adenovirus,

said Dr Mahmoud bin Nasser al Rahbi, Senior Consultant and Head of the Emergency Medicine Department at Samayil Hospital.

“Yes, we are currently seeing an increase in respiratory infections, particularly among children, which is consistent with the seasonal circulation of respiratory viruses,” Dr Al Rahbi told the Observer.

Although dust and airborne particles can aggravate respiratory symptoms — especially in individuals with asthma or allergies — they do not cause

influenza. Their main impact is to irritate the airways, which may make respiratory symptoms more noticeable, Dr Al Rahbi noted.

Not taking precautions to isolate infected individuals also leads to further spread, explained Dr Dilip Kumar Singvi, Specialist Internal Medicine at Burjeel Hospital. “Dust particles also help in further propagating the flu virus, a phenomenon called aerosolised fomite transmission,” said Dr Dilip.

“Most cases are mild and self-limiting, but the public should

remain vigilant and continue practicing these preventive measures to reduce transmission.”

At this stage, according to Dr Dilip, the most effective preventive measures remain good hand hygiene, proper cough etiquette, staying home when symptomatic, maintaining good indoor ventilation, and seeking medical attention promptly if symptoms worsen, especially in young children, older adults, and individuals with underlying health conditions.

MoL reviews legislative system in labour market

THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (MoL) organised in the Wilayat of Salalah two laboratories: “Governance of Legislative Procedures and Ministerial Decisions” and “Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector,” as part of the activities of the third edition of the Labour Forum 2026.

A number of officials, specialists, and experts from the Ministry of Labour and other government units, alongside representatives from the private sector and relevant entities, are participating in the two laboratories.



The two laboratories will continue over two days with the goal of reviewing strategic files and formulating practical, applicable solutions. — ONA

accelerating completion, raising service quality, and achieving integration among relevant entities, which positively reflects on the business and investment environment.

The laboratory featured the presentation of a working paper titled “Regulatory Bylaw for the Labour System in Oil and Gas Field Areas,” presented by Dawood bin Sulaiman al Hinai, Director of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Labour. During the presentation, he reviewed the legal frameworks governing work in these areas, the most prominent challenges associated with implementing the bylaw, alongside several proposals aimed at developing regulatory procedures, enhancing compliance with legislation, and achieving a balance between economic development requirements and protecting the rights of the parties of production.

The laboratory also addressed the “Devolution” agreement,

reviewing the legal and procedural aspects governing this type of agreement, implementation mechanisms, and their impact on regulating the transfer of obligations and rights among relevant entities, while discussing best practices that enhance legislative clarity and limit practical challenges.

On the other hand, the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector Laboratory discussed ways to develop the sector as one of the promising economic sectors by reviewing investment opportunities, analysing challenges facing its growth, and examining mechanisms to enhance its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), diversify income sources, and create sustainable job opportunities. Huda bint Humaid al Shibli, Director of Labour Market Studies, and Al Mirdas bin Hilal al Ma’ani, Director of Statistics, presented a working paper addressing the sector’s current reality, necessary

foundations for its development, and the importance of building a regulatory and legislative framework supportive of investment and innovation, contributing to raising the sector’s competitiveness and enhancing its presence in the national economy.

The proceedings of the two laboratories continued through panel discussions and specialised working groups, during which participants discussed key legislative, regulatory, and sectoral challenges, analysing their causes and effects before moving on to formulate solutions, initiatives, and recommendations according to a scientific methodology based on diagnosis, analysis, and foresight, ensuring the preparation of actionable outputs with a sustainable impact.

On the second day, the working groups are scheduled to present their outputs, discuss proposed recommendations, and evaluate their impact prior to adopting them as part of the labour market laboratories’ outcomes, thereby contributing to developing the legislative system, enhancing procedure governance, supporting the growth of the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector, raising institutional performance efficiency, improving the business environment, and boosting labour market competitiveness.

It is worth noting that the labour market laboratories are part of the activities of the Labour Forum 2026, organised by the Ministry of Labour under the slogan “A Nation’s Vision: Empowerment and Action,” which continues until August 13. — ONA

Saham agricultural city to anchor Oman’s next chapter

SPOTLIGHT



DRIVING TOWARDS A GREENER FUTURE

SAUD AL ANSARI

AS THE GLOBAL transition towards sustainable mobility gathers pace, electric and hybrid vehicles are giving motorists a wider choice of technologies focused on improving efficiency, reducing emissions and meeting different driving needs.

However, selecting the right vehicle technology depends largely on individual driving habits, travel distances and the availability of charging infrastructure, according to Electric Vehicle Expert Issa bin Mubarak al Qitaiti.

He said hybrid technology was initially developed to reduce emissions from petrol-powered vehicles and later paved the way for more advanced electric mobility solutions.

Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), powered entirely by rechargeable batteries and electric motors, provide a quiet and smooth driving experience with instant acceleration and no direct tailpipe emissions. Their simpler mechanical design can also help reduce maintenance costs.

“Electric vehicles have contributed to a much greater reduction in emissions, potentially exceeding 90 per cent,” Al Qitaiti said, adding that EVs have fewer mechanical components compared with conventional vehicles.

Unlike traditional vehicles that depend on engines and transmission systems to deliver power, EVs send electricity directly to the motor, allowing faster response and smoother performance.

Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), meanwhile, combine a petrol engine with an electric motor. Their batteries recharge automatically while driving, eliminating the need for external charging. This makes them practical for motorists who frequently travel

longer distances.

“The hybrid operates on petrol while charging its battery automatically during driving and use,” Al Qitaiti explained.

Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) add a charging port to the hybrid system, allowing drivers to recharge the battery externally and travel a certain distance using electric power before the petrol engine takes over.

“Plug-in Hybrid is essentially a hybrid vehicle with a charging port. You can charge it while stationary and then drive using electric power. Once the electric energy is depleted, the petrol engine starts operating,” he said.

Another emerging technology is the Range-Extended Electric Vehicle (REEV), where the electric motor drives the wheels while a petrol engine works only as a generator to recharge the battery. This provides the driving experience of an EV while reducing concerns over range limitations.

Nissan’s e-Power system follows a similar concept, using a petrol engine solely to generate electricity without connecting it directly to the wheels or transmission.

Al Qatiti stressed that there is no single technology suitable for every driver. “When people ask me what the best electric car is, I always tell them that it depends on your needs. Do you need it for city driving or long-distance journeys? Your needs determine the type of vehicle you should use.” For Oman, where long-distance travel is common, he believes hybrid vehicles currently offer a practical solution due to their ability to cover more than 1,000 kilometres without dependence on charging stations.

While charging infrastructure remains a challenge for wider EV adoption, Al Qitaiti expects improvements as investment increases and more companies enter the market.

The future of mobility, he said, is likely to involve multiple technologies rather than a single solution, with each designed to match different driving patterns, distances and infrastructure requirements.

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ISSA BIN MUBARAK AL QITAITI
Electric Vehicle expert

FACTS

- HEV (Hybrid Electric Vehicle) - Combines a gasoline engine and an electric motor to reduce fuel consumption and emissions
- PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle) - Blends the best of both worlds. It runs on electricity first and uses gasoline when needed
- REEV (Range-Extended Electric Vehicle) - Runs fully on electricity. The gasoline engine acts solely as a generator to charge the battery
- EV (Electric Vehicle) - Relies solely on electricity to power the motor and does not use gasoline at all

SHORT TAKES

TOURISM CAMPAIGN IN LONDON



LONDON: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism launched a new promotional campaign in London, featuring advertisements on 100 taxis and 100 buses across the British capital. The campaign aims to strengthen Oman's profile as a tourism destination in one of the world's key travel markets and highlight Oman's diverse cultural, natural and adventure experiences.

RAM LAUNCHES ZAD INITIATIVE



The initiative is founded on a vision that redefines overseas scholarship as a comprehensive investment.

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, launched the ZAD: Promising Omani Leaders Initiative, a national leadership and readiness initiative designed to prepare Omani scholarship students before departure and support them throughout their first year of overseas study.

Supporting Oman's commitment to investing in national talent and advancing the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040, the initiative strengthens the intellectual, cultural, and personal readiness of Omani scholarship students, equipping them with the leadership capabilities, practical life skills, and confidence needed to thrive academically, adapt to new environments, and represent Oman with pride throughout their overseas study journey.

The initiative is founded on an integrated vision that redefines overseas scholarship as a comprehensive investment in promising Omani leaders. It is not limited to academic achievement or the attainment of qualifications; rather, it is a transformative experience that builds leadership character, strengthens independent decision-making, develops cultural and communication intelligence, and deepens participants' sense of national identity and responsibility.

The inaugural edition of the initiative will support approximately 550 Omani scholarship students preparing to begin their studies overseas through government-sponsored scholarships, other scholarship programmes, and approved self-funded study pathways.

HOTTER MONTHS AHEAD AS FORECASTS ABOVE-AVERAGE

MIDHUN RAJ
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

Temperatures across the Sultanate of Oman are expected to remain above the long-term climatic average during August, September and October 2026, according to the latest seasonal outlook issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The bulletin, issued in August, provides an initial indication of the temperature and rainfall patterns expected across Oman over the next three months. During August, temperatures are forecast to



remain above the climatic average throughout Oman, while rainfall is expected to be below average across the country. A similar temperature pattern is anticipated in September,

with above-average temperatures likely to continue across Oman. Rainfall during the month is forecast to range from near average to below average in different parts of Oman. In October, temperatures are once again expected to remain above the climatic average. Rainfall conditions, however, are likely to change, with above-average precipitation forecast across Oman during the month. The CAA said seasonal bulletins are issued every month to provide an initial indication of possible weather conditions.

HEATWAVE TO INCREASE BY 40 PER CENT BY 2050

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

THE SEVERITY of heatwaves in the Sultanate of Oman is projected to increase under all emissions scenarios, according to the country's third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) report submitted to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The report warns that heatwaves are likely to become more frequent and intense, with the number of heatwave days projected to increase by 20 to 40 per cent by 2050 under a high-emissions scenario. On Tuesday, temperatures hovered around 45°C in several parts of the Sultanate of Oman, including Ibri, Bidiyah, SamaYil, Mahadha, Fahud, Al Buraimi, Muscat, Nizwa and Haima.

“Heatwaves and rising temperatures are already affecting Oman's human health, agriculture and infrastructure through increased heat stress, higher cooling demand and grid loads, and potential impacts on crops and livestock,” the report said. Combined with rainfall variability and water scarcity in Oman's groundwater-dependent arid environment, these trends could pose growing risks to socio-economic stability and essential services. Evidence of extreme heat is already visible.

In June 2018, Qurayat recorded a minimum temperature of 42.6°C over a 24-hour period, highlighting the intensification of heat-stress conditions. Increasing heat extremes pose significant risks to public health, outdoor labour productivity, agriculture, livestock and energy systems due to rising cooling demand and peak electricity loads. Projections under higher-emissions pathways indicate a further increase in the frequency, duration and severity of extremely hot days and warm nights. Oman's public health sector is also



The report warns that heatwaves are likely to become more frequent and intense.

increasingly exposed to climate-related hazards. Flooding, intense rainfall, heatwaves and associated disruptions to essential services could increase injuries and heat-related illnesses, aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, and raise the risk of vector-borne diseases.

Dust and blowing-dust events represent another growing regional concern, with national meteorological awareness materials highlighting their direct health effects, including an increase in respiratory illnesses. Under high-emissions pathways, these risks are expected to intensify. Oman's First Biennial Transparency Report cites SSP5-8.5 projections indicating that temperatures could approach or exceed human survivability thresholds under certain conditions by 2100. Daily maximum temperature anomalies could reach approximately 6.5°C, while peak temperatures in Al Dhahirah could rise to around 52.06°C. The governorate could also experience

about 110.65 additional days annually with temperatures of 45°C or above. The projections underline the need to prioritise protective measures for vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions.

These measures include heat-health preparedness, effective risk communication and stronger health surveillance and response systems. The third NDC serves as Oman's primary climate policy document, outlining the country's targets and mitigation measures through 2035. It sets out the national approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening climate adaptation and resilience, and advancing sustainable development in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the goal of achieving Net-Zero emissions by 2050. The targets are benchmarked against the base year of 2024, when Oman's total greenhouse gas emissions stood at approximately 93.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

OMANI TRADITIONAL GAMES SEASON FROM AUGUST 13



SALALAH: Omani Traditional Games Season 2026 will kick off on August 13 at Al Dahariz Beach in the Wilayat of Salalah, on the sidelines of Khareef Dhofar activities. The 3-day event will be organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The event seeks to raise the awareness of visitors to Dhofar about various aspects of Oman's cultural heritage, engage local communities and lend support to the tourism sector.

Sultan bin Said al Sinani, Head of the Traditional Sports Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that the ministry is organising the Omani Traditional Games Season's event as part of its efforts to preserve the salient features of Oman's civilisation. The event also aims to enhance interaction among Omani generations across the ages. — ONA



مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع
Muscat Clearing & Depository

TENDER NOTICE

Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (S.A.O.G) would like to float the Tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Eligibility	Tender Fee	Tender Documents Sale Dates	Tender Submission Closing Date
MCD-2026-002	Centralized insurance repository (CIR) system	Vendors specialized in this field	200 OMR (non-refundable)	05 – 12 Aug 2026	25 Aug 2026 12:00 PM (Muscat Time)

Tender Documents (RFP) shall be obtained from Procurements & Services Department (email: procurements@mcd.om), Muscat Clearing & Depository, First Floor, MBD, RUWI, Sultanate of Oman (Tel.: +968-24822212 or +968-24822231) during office hours after paying the participation charges mentioned above, to be paid into MCD Bank account details provided below.

All Vendors who are bidding must provide a bank guarantee from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of MUSCAT CLEARING & DEPOSITORY COMPANY, valid for (90) days from the date of submission of the proposal in response to the RFP.

Riyada card holders from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must attach a valid copy of the card in order to be exempted from tender fees and submission of bid bond.

MCD 's Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract Agreement shall be applicable.

MCD is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.

MCD Bank Account details: -

Bank Name & Branch : Bank Dhofar, MBD Branch

Bank Account Name : Muscat Clearing & Depository Company

Bank Account Number : 01010010875001

SWIFT/BIC Code : BDOFOMRUXXX



محافظة مسقط
Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (26/2026)

Muscat Municipality at Al Seeb invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of Tender Board, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRES/26/003	Supply, Installation and Completion of Height Restriction Structure at Wilayat A'Seeb	22/08/2026	13/09/2026
PRES/26/004	Adjusting the Levels of Existing Manholes at Wilaiyat A'Seeb	22/08/2026	13/09/2026

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

• For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

• For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

Japan sees need to boost military with ‘sense of urgency’



SHINJIRO KOIZUMI
Defence Minister of Japan

TOKYO: Japan needs to boost its military with a “sense of urgency and crisis”, its defence minister said on Tuesday, as a new government assessment again highlighted growing risks from China, North Korea and Russia. Japan is already beefing up military

spending and security cooperation in Asia, deploying missile launchers to outer islands, moving to acquire “counter-strike” capabilities, and easing rules on weapons exports.

But Shinjiro Koizumi said in a preface to the annual defence white paper that it was “imperative that Japan further reinforce and transform its defence capabilities with a stronger sense of urgency and crisis than ever before”.

In the Asia-Pacific, “not only are China and North Korea further strengthening their military capabilities, China-Russia and Russia-North Korea are also reinforcing their cooperation”, he also added. The white paper said China was “intensifying its activities” in the region around Japan, “extending beyond the so-called first island chain to the second island chain”.

The document listed a series of incidents in 2025, including activities by Chinese aircraft carriers and the “unusual close approach” by Chinese aircraft to Japanese planes in two incidents in June and July.

A spokesman for China’s defence ministry said the white paper was “filled with false narratives”.

“This is a classic case of shifting the blame onto others, and an excuse to loosen (Japan’s) own military constraints,” said Chen Xi, according to an online post by the defence ministry. — **AFP**

Mountaineers mourn ‘lost generation’ in Pakistan avalanche



KATHMANDU: Hundreds of Nepalis held a candlelight vigil on Tuesday honouring 10 climbers killed in an avalanche on Pakistan’s Broad Peak, as rescuers battled treacherous conditions to recover the remaining bodies.

Buddhist monks in maroon robes chanted prayers and around 500 mourners lit candles and incense in a square in the Nepali capital.

World-renowned British-Nepali climber Nirmal Purja, 43, was among the victims along with six elite Nepali guides, killed in the avalanche on Thursday. “Nepal has lost a generation of accomplished mountaineers,” said Tul Singh Gurung, president of Nepal National Mountain Guide Association. The gathering observed a minute’s silence in their memory, in front of a banner with photographs of the 10 climbers.

At the centre, candles were arranged in the shape of Nepal’s national flag, flickering in the dusk.

“This is a big loss for our mountaineering sector,” said Man Raj Gurung, an international mountain guide. “I think it might take years for us to see such climbers again, because not everyone will be willing to take on such a risky job.”

News of the avalanche has prompted tributes from across the climbing community and beyond, with figures such as Britain’s Prince William offering condolences. — **AFP**

AFGHANISTAN’S MALNUTRITION CRISIS ‘SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL’, SAYS UN

GENEVA: Fuelled by drastic aid cuts, child malnutrition is reaching critical levels in Afghanistan, with the number of children being rushed to health centres soaring, the United Nations warned on Tuesday.

John Aylieff, the Afghanistan country director for the UN’s World Food Programme, painted a bleak picture of fully preventable deaths and acutely malnourished children being turned away without assistance. The country’s nutrition crisis “is spinning out of control”, he

told reporters in Geneva.

“It’s a crisis which is getting worse by the day, and tragically one which we are unable to contain,” he said, speaking from Kabul.

“Child wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition, has reached critical levels in one third of the country’s provinces now.”

He said conflict, trade disruptions, forced returns from neighbouring countries and dramatic aid cuts were driving unprecedented levels of acute malnutrition.

Last year saw the highest year-on-year surge in malnutrition and this year, the situation is “even worse,” he said.

“The number of children being rushed to health centres is soaring” but “too many of them are arriving too late to be saved”.

Children aged under two make up 80 per cent of the worst cases.

Aylieff said WFP only had sufficient funds this year to feed just one in seven acutely malnourished women and children. — **AFP**

Qatar blames Israel for delayed Gaza peace plan

MEDIATOR

QATAR blamed Israel on Tuesday for delays in implementing a Gaza peace plan, after US President Donald Trump said Hamas had agreed to disarm, as Israel refuses to leave the territory.

“It is clear to the international community who is obstructing the implementation of the agreement,” Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al Ansari told reporters. “The full responsibility lies on the Israeli side.” An increase in Israeli strikes in Gaza over recent days is “nothing more than an attempt to derail the plan’s implementation and block peaceful solutions”, he added.

Meanwhile, Hamas on Tuesday called for clarifications from US President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace, voicing “unease” over comments it made regarding the group’s prospective disarmament and Israel’s withdrawal in Gaza.

The Palestinian movement said on Friday that it had agreed to hand over its weapons, with the Board of Peace publishing a road map including provisions for the group’s gradual disarmament and a “phased Israeli withdrawal” from Gaza.

But Israel had remained defiant against a pullout without the prior completion of verifiable disarmament by Hamas.

Following a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



Bags containing the remains of Palestinians, draped in Palestinian flags, are lined up during the funeral of 112 members of the Hassayna and Abu Sharia clan, who were killed in an Israeli strike in 2023 and whose remains were recovered from beneath the rubble, according to Gaza’s Civil Defense, in Gaza City, on Tuesday. — **Reuters**

Hamas called for clarifications from US President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace, voicing “unease” over comments it made regarding the group’s prospective disarmament and Israel’s withdrawal in Gaza.

on Monday, the Board of Peace appeared to reassure Israel, saying that the withdrawal of the country’s forces from its current positions in Gaza would only begin once Hamas completely disarmed.

A Hamas official said on Tuesday that Hamas and other Palestinian factions “are uneasy with the statement issued by (Nickolay) Mladenov after his meeting with Netanyahu,” referring to the high representative for Gaza under the Board of Peace.

“The statement focused solely on the issue of weapons and failed to address the occupation’s obligations, particularly those

related to humanitarian aspects and Israel’s commitment to halting its aggression, including aerial and artillery bombardment, gunfire, assassinations and military operations in the Gaza Strip,” the official said.

Another Hamas official said the group was waiting for a “clear and official response” from Mladenov regarding the “agreed-upon terms, Mladenov’s position on the Israeli military escalation in Gaza, and the ongoing policy of stalling on the implementation of the agreement.”

Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye, which are mediating the truce in Gaza, have criticised Israel after renewed strikes in the Palestinian territory.

An increase in Israeli strikes in Gaza over recent days was “nothing more than an attempt to derail the plan’s implementation and block peaceful solutions”, he added.

Following Monday’s meeting with Netanyahu, the Board of Peace posted on X that Israel’s withdrawal beyond the Yellow Line, which demarcates the area between Hamas and Israeli military control, “will take place only once decommissioning (of weapons) is complete, as Hamas committed to the mediators”, it posted on X.

The stance appears to contradict what Mladenov said on Friday, when he posted on X that: “Withdrawal must move in lockstep with decommissioning”. — **Agencies**

STATUS OF US–IRAN TALKS UNCERTAIN

A woman holds a mock-up of a rocket-propelled grenade next to a Hezbollah flag in Tehran on Tuesday. Qatar said mediators were making progress in efforts to end the US-Iran war on Tuesday, driving oil prices lower, although Tehran has denied President Donald Trump’s assertion that talks are already under way. Benchmark Brent crude fell more than 4% after the comments from Qatar, extending Monday’s steep losses on hopes that an arrangement could soon be reached to restore traffic through the blockaded Strait of Hormuz. But for now, the strait remained virtually shut, with another ship reportedly coming under attack while trying to cross it. Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran did not want the conflict to widen: “We defend our borders, but we do not seek to expand the war,” he was quoted as saying by state media. Sources in Pakistan, which has been mediating efforts to end the conflict, said attempts to bring Washington and Tehran back to the negotiating table were continuing. — **Reuters**

RECORD SPREADING

Ebola claims over 1,700 lives in Congo



KINSHASA: The Ebola virus has claimed at least 1,700 lives in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, marking the fastest-spreading outbreak of the disease on record. A total of 3,802 cases and 1,707 deaths have been recorded as of Tuesday.

Jean Kaseya, Director-General of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, stated during his second visit to the town of Bunia, near the epicentre of the outbreak, that it remains unclear when the epidemic will reach its peak.

A CIVILIAN LEADER

Myanmar ex-junta chief set for Thailand visit



BANGKOK: Myanmar’s ex-junta chief Min Aung Hlaing is expected in Thailand on Thursday, making his first trip there since becoming civilian leader as he seeks a return to the diplomatic fold for his pariah state. He led a 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering a civil war estimated to have killed more than 100,000. He was installed as Myanmar’s president in April following stage-managed elections that democracy watchdogs and Western nations called a sham intended to launder the junta’s image.

DRONE ATTACK

Ensure safe Navigation in Black Sea: Türkiye



ANKARA: Türkiye on Tuesday called on Russia and Ukraine to ensure the safety of commercial shipping in the Black Sea after two Turkish-owned cargo vessels were struck near the Russian port of Novorossiysk.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said the civilian ships Yasar and Nadezhda were attacked after departing Novorossiysk on Monday evening, injuring several crew members, including Turkish citizens.

SHORT TAKES



Daimel Rodríguez and his wife collect drinking water in plastic tanks after Cuba's electricity grid collapsed late on Sunday, plunging the island of about 10 million people into darkness as blackouts become more frequent, in Havana on Tuesday. — Reuters

FRUSTRATION BUILDS AS CUBA SCRAMBLES TO RESTORE POWER

HAVANA: Cuba struggled to restore power on Monday after another nationwide blackout, with the extended darkness prompting some frustrated residents to bang pots and pans in small-scale protests. In pitch-black Old Havana, residents stood on balconies and hung out of windows thumping kitchenware and clapping in an hour-long protest at a power cut that began on Sunday.

The embattled communist island is struggling to keep the lights on due to creaking infrastructure and a biting US energy blockade. Most Cubans now have power only for a few hours a day at best, making normal life nearly impossible.

And countrywide grid collapses are becoming more common. With each outage water supplies trickle away and ceiling fans slow to a halt. — AFP

GUATEMALA 'S FUEGO VOLCANO ERUPTS



Fuego volcano erupts in Alotenango, some 65 kilometres southwest of Guatemala City, on Tuesday. Guatemalan authorities issued the country's second-highest emergency alert level after a major eruption of Central America's most active volcano, prompting the evacuation of nearby villages. Officials began evacuating on Monday two villages near the volcano, which is located 35 kilometres from the capital Guatemala City. Footage released by the emergency services showed the powerful eruption turning clouds red and lava flowing down the slopes of the 3,763-metre-high (12,346-foot) volcano. — AFP

ITALIAN GARBAGEMEN HELP RECOVER LOST 1M EURO LOTTERY TICKET

ROME: A one-million-euro lottery ticket was recovered from the trash in Italy after the frantic winner called on garbagemen to help her retrieve it, the waste management company said.

The instant win ticket was “miraculously still in one piece” after garbage workers combed through mounds of trash on their truck, said Roberto Nicola Toscano, the administrator of the SANB company in Italy's southern Puglia region. Toscano explained how when the winner went on Sunday to check her ticket at her local shop after the drawing, the machine

indicated it was “non-payable”. That was because smaller retailers can only redeem small wins.

But the woman — who remains anonymous — didn't realise she had won the big jackpot.

“The winner always played the same numbers, as they were associated with a loved one,” Toscano said.

When she returned home from the store, a family member told her that her regular numbers had won. They immediately ran back to the shop, only to discover that the ticket had already been thrown away and the trash collected.

She called Toscano.

“We reconstructed the journey of the ticket, without much hope of finding it, as it had already been picked up by a garbage truck,” Toscano said.

With a stroke of luck, however, they managed to identify the right truck and stopped it.

Given the risk posed by potentially dangerous material in the waste, they took the vehicle to a specialist company equipped to do the search, he said.

The workers searched for over a day, finding various tickets and ticket stubs. — Reuters

Drone strike on Moscow region kills 5, injures 10

A DRONE strike on an industrial zone outside the Russian capital killed five people and wounded 10 others, the region's governor said, as Moscow and Kyiv traded attacks.

Ukraine has conducted long-range strikes targeting civilian infrastructure in Russia, and in recent weeks stepped up attacks on warehouses belonging to the Russian e-commerce giant Wildberries.

Ukraine often fires hundreds of drones into Russia each night, in retaliation for Russia launching hundreds of its own drones and dozens of missiles at Ukrainian towns and cities.

Moscow's regional governor Andrey Vorobyov said on Tuesday that several fires broke out following a drone strike in the Novoselki industrial zone outside the Russian capital.

“According to preliminary information, five people were killed,” he said on Telegram, adding 10 others were wounded.

Drones also damaged a warehouse near Krasny Bor in northwestern Russia, wounding one person, according to Leningrad regional governor Aleksandr Drozdenko.

Wildberries said that a fire broke out at its Krasny Bor logistics facility as a result of the attack.

Another Wildberries warehouse was targeted by a Ukrainian drone attack in the rural area of Emmaus, around 180 kilometres (112 miles) northwest of Moscow, regional governor Vitaly Korolyov said.

Wildberries is a highly popular online retail platform in Russia, often dubbed the “Russian Amazon”, accounting for up to 10 per cent of the country's entire retail turnover, according to Russian media.

Since the start of the Ukraine

There has been an uptick in civilian deaths in the conflict throughout 2026, the United Nations has reported, as the four-and-a-half-year war grinds on with no sign of a peace deal. Russia launched its full-scale offensive against Ukraine in February 2022, and has regularly struck its neighbour, including from the Crimean peninsula



A pedestrian walks along the street past a “Wildberries” signboard the “Ukraina” hotel in central Moscow. Since mid-July, Ukraine has struck around 20 sites belonging to the Russian e-commerce giant Wildberries across various parts of Russia and in annexed Crimea. — AFP

war in 2022, Wildberries has been accused of helping Russians dodge Western sanctions by importing branded goods via third party countries. In Ukraine, Russian attacks killed three people in Sumy in the country's northeast, the head of the regional military administration said on Tuesday.

“Two children and an elderly woman were killed in Russian (guided aerial bomb) strikes on Sumy tonight,” Oleg Grygorov said on Telegram.

“The girls were 5 and 10 years old. The children's bodies were recovered from under the rubble of their house.”

Six guided aerial bombs struck civilian infrastructure in the city, including residential and non-residential buildings, Grygorov said.

Another attack on the port city of Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine killed an 89-year-old woman, according to Georgy Reshetilov, head of the

region's military administration.

Russia launched 136 drones at Ukraine overnight, Kyiv's air force said, 117 of which were shot down or intercepted.

There has been an uptick in civilian deaths in the conflict throughout 2026, the United Nations has reported, as the four-and-a-half-year war grinds on with no sign of a peace deal. Russia launched its full-scale offensive against Ukraine in February 2022, and has regularly struck its neighbour, including from the Crimean peninsula.

Moscow-installed authorities in Crimea on Tuesday said an unidentified soldier opened fire, killing a fellow serviceman and three civilians.

Ukraine's front lines were little changed in July as its forces largely stalled Russia's momentum, according to AFP analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War. — AFP

Greece firefighters hope to contain blaze on Athens outskirts

PORTO GERMENO: Firefighters in Greece on Tuesday were hoping to contain a wildfire on the outskirts of Athens burning for a fifth day, with winds that had restricted the use of water-bombing aircraft finally subsiding.

“Today, more than 30 aircraft will be deployed in the area,” enabling access to difficult mountain terrain, fire department deputy spokesman Yiannis Artopios told state TV ERT. Over 500 firefighters were deployed in villages around Mount Kithairon, some 60 kilometres northwest of the capital according to the fire service.

“We want to keep the fire in a controlled situation,” Artopios said. Large areas affected by the fire still contained active or smouldering hotspots requiring constant monitoring, as even a strong gust of wind could trigger fresh outbreaks, the spokesman said.

“It's a huge area and there could be a flare-up again at any moment,”

he said. Most of the damage from the fire, which broke out Friday, was to villages on the Gulf of Corinth including Porto Germeno, where scores of homes in the broader area are believed to have been destroyed or damaged.

At Porto Germeno on Tuesday, police had set up cordons to check people wishing to visit the area, where damage evaluation is ongoing.

Much of the formerly forested area around the village, where many Athenians have summer homes, has been consumed by the fire and dozens of homes lay gutted, an AFP reporter saw.

A charred fire engine lay among the wreckage on the road into the village. The greater Athens area and the neighbouring island of Evia remained under near maximum fire risk on Tuesday, according to the civil protection ministry.

“This is the period where we



A firefighter works to extinguish a wildfire raging since four days in the Megara Region, west of Athens on Tuesday. — AFP

usually see the biggest fires. Therefore we need to be very careful until August 20-25,” National Observatory research director Kostas Lagouvardos told ERT, adding that temperatures would rise during the week.

The wildfires have claimed the

lives of five firefighters since last week.

On Sunday, two Bell helicopters collided while operating on the western outskirts of Athens, killing a Danish pilot and his Greek co-pilot.

Three other firefighters died in Crete and the Peloponnese last

week. Other fires across the country, including one on the Ionian island of Cephalonia, had largely been contained, the Greek fire service said. “I would say that it is definitely one of the worst fire crises I've seen in the past, maybe eight to 10 years,” Theodore Giannaros, a senior wildfire meteorologist at the National Observatory, said.

Winds at the end of July were the strongest in 15 years, the observatory has said, adding that more than 13,000 hectares of forest and agricultural land have been affected in the Porto Germeno fire.

Police have made two arrests over the Porto Germeno fire, believed to have started from a faulty power cable, including a local mayor. More than 30 people have been detained overall in connection to fires started through negligence or intent, including the mayor of the tourist island of Paros over a fire at a landfill last week. — AFP

OPINION

When children see barriers begin to move



HYESHA BARRETT
The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

THIS week, the first group of Omani women joined the Civil Defense and Ambulance Authority as firefighters. Their training will include theory, practical preparation and field exercises designed to equip them for emergency response and the protection of lives and properties. It is an important professional milestone, yet its significance reaches far beyond the uniform. It changes what young girls can see, what families may begin to imagine and what a new generation might quietly believe is possible. Children begin building a picture of themselves long before they have the language to explain it. They notice who leads, who rescues, who speaks up, who takes risks and who is encouraged to remain safely in the background. They absorb messages from family conversations, classrooms, television screens and the expectations woven into everyday life. Sometimes those messages expand a child’s world. Sometimes they make that world smaller before the child has even had the chance to explore it. Most limitations are not handed down with spitefulness. They are often delivered through concern. A parent may encourage the safer choice because they want to protect their child from failure, criticism or hardship. An adult may steer a young person towards

a familiar path because uncertainty feels frightening. Protection can come from love, yet love shaped by fear can still teach a child to doubt their own courage. There is a difference between preparing children for reality and asking them to shrink themselves to fit in. One builds resilience. The other builds hesitation. Children need honest guidance about effort, responsibility and consequences although they also need adults who can separate genuine wisdom from inherited fear. The question is not whether every child should pursue the boldest or most unconventional path. The question is whether they are being allowed to discover what is truly theirs. Courage is rarely the absence of fear. It is the decision that fear will not be given the final word. Those entering emergency services will not be protected from pressure, demanding training or difficult moments simply because they have crossed a historic threshold. Their achievement matters precisely because they are willing to prepare, develop competence and step forward anyway. That is the kind of courage worth modelling to children: not empty confidence, but commitment strengthened through discipline. This moment also offers parents a powerful opportunity to examine the language used at home. Children listen

Somewhere, a child is watching this moment and silently revising the future they had imagined for themselves. That is how change happens: first in public, then inside the private architecture of belief

when adults describe certain careers as unsuitable, certain dreams as unrealistic or certain qualities as belonging more naturally to one gender than another. They also listen when adults celebrate effort, curiosity and character. Every repeated message becomes part of the internal voice a child will carry into adulthood. A young girl seeing an Omani woman train as a firefighter may never choose that profession. That is not the point. The deeper gift is that she has seen a barrier move. A young boy watching the same story may grow up with a broader understanding of strength, leadership and partnership. Possibility does not change the person walking through a newly opened door. It changes everyone who witnesses the door opening. Progress is often discussed through policies, positions and percentages, yet its most lasting impact may be deeply personal. Somewhere, a child is watching this moment and silently revising the future they had imagined for themselves. That is how change happens: first in public, then inside the private architecture of belief. The greatest legacy of breaking a barrier is not simply proving it can be crossed. It is ensuring the next generation never mistakes that barrier for a boundary within themselves or carries forward a limitation that was never theirs to begin with.

BRAZIL’S LULA SAYS ‘IN GREAT SHAPE’ AS HE LAUNCHES FOURTH TERM BID

FACUNDO FERNÁNDEZ BARRIO

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, 80, said Sunday he was “in great shape” as he launched his candidacy for October elections, with pressure from President Donald Trump’s administration looming over the campaign.

Lula, a leftist titan of Latin American politics who is loved and despised in near-equal measure in Brazil, highlighted what he called his stamina and good health as he addressed a convention of his Worker’s Party (PT) in Sao Paulo attended by around 3,000 people.

“I want to fight against old age. I don’t want to be shuffling along. That’s why I work out my legs. That’s why I work out my arms. That’s why I walk for an hour,” said the veteran leftist, adding he was far fitter than when he was first elected in 2002.

The former metalworker and union leader made a dramatic comeback when he returned to power three years ago after a stint in jail on corruption charges that were later annulled.

He is seeking a fourth and final term in office. Brazil’s constitution allows presidents to serve two consecutive terms. After sitting out at least one term, they can run again, with no lifetime limit on the number of terms. In his speech to a crowd awash in red, the color of the PT, Lula compared himself to World Cup icons like Argentina’s Lionel Messi and Portugal’s Cristiano Ronaldo.

“What people don’t realise is that this World Cup of mine is the seventh,” he said, referring to the number of times he has run for the top job in the past four decades.

Standing next to his wife, Rosangela da Silva, 59, he said he would not run again, because “after we hand Brazil back to the Brazilian people in perfect shape — we’re going on vacation to focus on romance for another 20 years.”

Lula’s main election rival is Flavio Bolsonaro, eldest son of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro. The 45-year-old senator stepped into the role after his father was convicted of plotting a coup to prevent Lula from taking power in 2023.

The Bolsonaro family is allied with Trump, who has backed several victorious right-wing candidates in Latin America.

“In Brazil, we do not accept anyone sticking their nose where it does not belong,” said Lula.

In July, the United States imposed two rounds of tariffs on Brazilian goods, alleging unfair trade practices which Brasilia denies. — AFP

THE WAR THAT COULD SWALLOW THE WORLD

THE ONLY thing worse than President Donald Trump starting an unconstitutional war is Trump losing control of that war. On Wednesday, NBC News reported that Trump “erupted at members of his national security team over the Iran war. According to the report, his advisers can’t agree on a path forward. But how could they? Every path to victory risks dangerous escalation, while continuing the present course risks strategic defeat. This was always the most likely outcome. The president chose to take on a much more powerful country than, say, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in 2003, while using far less force than we employed to topple the Iraqi government. What did he expect would happen? Oh, right, we know. He thought he could topple a vicious, deeply embedded authoritarian regime with a few targeted airstrikes and a fantasied popular uprising. As he has said many times, he expected a version of his Venezuela outcome and when the Venezuela strategy failed, if strategy is the word, there was no real Plan B — other than to bomb Iran more and hope for capitulation. In fact, we’re planning to do that yet again. Or maybe we’re not. On Friday, Trump said he was ordering a new round of airstrikes. And what was his reasoning? “You know at some point,” Trump said, “they’re going to say, ‘We just can’t take it anymore.’” On Saturday, he’d changed his mind. “We have just been asked by Iran, and other Middle Eastern Countries, to hold off any attack,” Trump said in a Truth Social post. “I have agreed,” he added, “for the future benefit of the WORLD



DAVID FRENCH
The writer is a columnist for The New York Times

See the catastrophe coming and act decisively before a terrible war swallows the world.

and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL.” But the problem we face right now is something well beyond deals. America has been so powerful for so long that we are accustomed to being in control of events. We start wars when we want and — crucially — we believe that we can end them when we want. There is no such thing as a safe war — any war can spin out of control — but the combination of American power, enemy weakness and Russian and Chinese restraint meant that Americans could sleep secure in the knowledge that the chances of a catastrophic escalation were extremely remote. Consider these developments. Not only does Iran continue to strike US bases effectively; it has relentlessly attacked US partners across the region. These attacks are doing immense damage to oil and gas facilities and — combined with Iran’s continued control over the Strait of Hormuz — are placing the world economy at risk. Ansar Allah have entered the conflict, expanding the fighting into the Red Sea and now Saudi Arabia is reportedly planning a large-scale attack on Ansar Allah territory, including, potentially, the use of ground forces to attempt to break the Yemeni fighters’ shipping blockade. Ukraine struck an Iranian ship in the Caspian Sea, the immense body of water that borders Russia and Iran. Ukraine said it did this because the ship was carrying military equipment between the two countries. Let’s put all this together: The initial US strategy failed, the war with Iran is consuming the entire region, Iran and Ukraine are risking a face-off, there is evidence that

both Russia and China are escalating their military commitments, US munitions stocks are dwindling and Trump is raging. I’m not trying to predict anything and I hold out hope for de-escalation. I know there are still serious people in the US government (whether they have Trump’s ear is a different question) and in allied governments across the world. But we can analyse the events and trends of the moment and right now all the momentum is toward greater escalation. And we absolutely cannot do what Trump asks, which is to “just sit back and relax” and trust that “it will all work out well in the end.” I do not think that world war is inevitable, nor do I think it is probable. But it is more possible now than it has been at any other time since the end of the Cold War and the US government is led by the worst rulers in the modern history of the United States. Congress, the only branch of government that possesses the power to intervene, has been prostrate before the president. The threat of a primary loss is all it takes to completely remove the spine from a typical Republican member of Congress. It’s often said that your average American voter doesn’t really care that much about foreign policy. In general, that’s true — until there’s a catastrophe. When that happens, though, foreign policy isn’t just the main thing; it’s the only thing that truly matters. Our future may depend in part on American voters deciding to give Congress a spinal transplant. But that requires us to do something that democracies have rarely, if ever, done successfully: see the catastrophe coming and act decisively before a terrible war swallows the world.

Cockroach movement shows the power of digital activism



OMAN AL YAHYAI

The writer is a multilingual writer and media professional based in Paris. She specialises in human rights and immigration

WHAT BEGAN as an internet joke has evolved into one of the most significant youth-led protest movements India has witnessed in years. The so-called “Cockroach” movement, organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), started as a satirical response after India’s chief justice referred to unemployed young people as “cockroaches” during a court hearing. Instead of rejecting the insult, Generation Z reclaimed it, transforming a derogatory label into a symbol of resilience and political resistance. The movement’s origins may have been humorous, but the frustrations behind it were anything but. Initially centred on repeated examination paper leaks, cancelled tests and youth unemployment, the protests quickly expanded into a broader critique of government accountability. What distinguishes the Cockroach movement is not simply its demands but the way it has mobilised. Unlike traditional political parties or trade unions, it was born on social media, where memes, short videos and viral posts became powerful tools for political organisation before spilling onto the streets. This reflects a wider transformation taking place across South Asia. Social media is no longer merely a platform for commentary; it has become a catalyst for political participation. Young people who once felt excluded from formal politics are increasingly using digital platforms to organise demonstrations, challenge official narratives and place pressure on governments

in ways that were difficult to imagine a decade ago. India is not the first country in the region to experience this phenomenon. In neighbouring Bangladesh, students played a pivotal role in organising nationwide protests through Facebook, WhatsApp and other digital platforms. What began as demonstrations over a controversial public-sector job quota system, developed into a broader movement demanding political reform and government accountability. Social media allowed organisers to coordinate protests, document alleged abuses and maintain momentum even when authorities attempted to restrict communication. The protests contributed to one of the country’s most significant political crises in decades. Nepal has witnessed similar developments. Young activists have increasingly relied on TikTok, Facebook and X to mobilise support around anti-corruption campaigns, governance issues and public protests. Digital platforms have enabled activists to bypass traditional political structures and communicate directly with millions of people, particularly younger citizens who consume most of their news online rather than through conventional media. Rather than relying on established political parties, they have emerged from loosely organised online communities. Their language is often informal, humorous and highly visual. Memes carry political messages. Viral videos replace campaign speeches and hashtags become rallying cries. While older generations may dismiss these methods as unserious, they

Unlike traditional political parties or trade unions, it was born on social media, where memes, short videos and viral posts became powerful tools for political organisation before spilling onto the streets

have proven remarkably effective at capturing public attention and sustaining participation. The Cockroach movement is perhaps the clearest example of this shift. Its founders understood that Generation Z engages with politics differently. They communicate through short-form videos, share information almost instantly and use humour to discuss issues that previous generations may have approached more formally. What initially appeared to many observers as an internet trend, gradually developed into mass demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people across India. Protest camps in New Delhi attracted students, professionals and civil society groups, eventually forcing the government to respond to demands for education reform and contributing to the resignation of the education minister. The Cockroach movement demonstrates that humour can coexist with serious political demands. Reclaiming an insult transformed it into a symbol of solidarity, allowing thousands of young Indians to express frustrations over unemployment, corruption and limited opportunities in a language that resonated with their generation. In doing so, they challenged traditional assumptions about what political participation should look like. It signals the emergence of a generation that refuses to remain politically passive. Like the youth movements seen in Bangladesh and Nepal, it shows that smartphones have become as important to political mobilisation as public squares once were.

HEATWAVE DIVIDES RICH AND POOR OF UPMARKET SEOUL

JIHYE SHIN

In Seoul’s affluent district of Gangnam, a severe heatwave has changed the currency of cool: access to air conditioning now defines the line between the haves and the have-nots. The ritzy neighbourhood was made globally famous by K-pop star Psy’s 2012 hit single “Gangnam Style” - lauding the lifestyles of its ultra-rich residents. But under million-dollar luxury apartments chilled by whirling air conditioners, tenants in one of Seoul’s last shanty towns suffer headaches in the savage heat. “It’s so hot it’s hard to breathe,” said one resident of Guryong Village, a settlement of crude wood and tarpaulin shacks hosting around 160 households according to officials. The woman - asking to be identified by her surname, Jeong, for privacy reasons - said she could not afford to cool the one-room home shared with her husband and disabled daughter. “The poor really suffer,” said the woman in her 60s, washing vegetables by the open door of her residence as temperatures outside soared up to 38C. South Korea is sweltering in a streak of searing weather - new all-time highs set three times over the past week alone, peaking at 42.5C on Sunday. The capital was under a “severe heatwave warning” on Tuesday for the first time since the new category was introduced this year to alert citizens to increasing extremes. Scientists say volatile weather events are becoming more intense and frequent owing to climate change, which is man-made. But heatwaves are not experienced equally across the wealth divide. In exclusive Gangnam, south of the Han River, homes near the Guryong Village sell for up to 5.4 billion won (\$3.7 million) and boast all cutting-edge mod-cons. Tree-shaded boulevards are lined with flagship Ferrari, Lamborghini and Rolls-Royce showrooms, as well as designer boutiques and Michelin-starred restaurants. Jeong Eun-woo, who lives in one of Gangnam’s modern high-rises, has not found this summer particularly difficult. “I’m keeping the air conditioning running full blast. I drink iced coffee and wear light clothes,” said the 20-year-old. “So far, it’s been fine.” But in Guryong Village, set among mounds of accumulated refuse, access to air conditioning - or even a reliable supply of electricity - is far from guaranteed. Ko Jae-ok, 87, has collected handheld battery-powered fans discarded by wealthier Seoul citizens, but found they provide little relief. “We’re just surviving,” she said. South Korea’s economy is thriving amidst a manufacturing boom in microchips vital to the AI industry. — AFP

Nations should embrace AI or be left behind

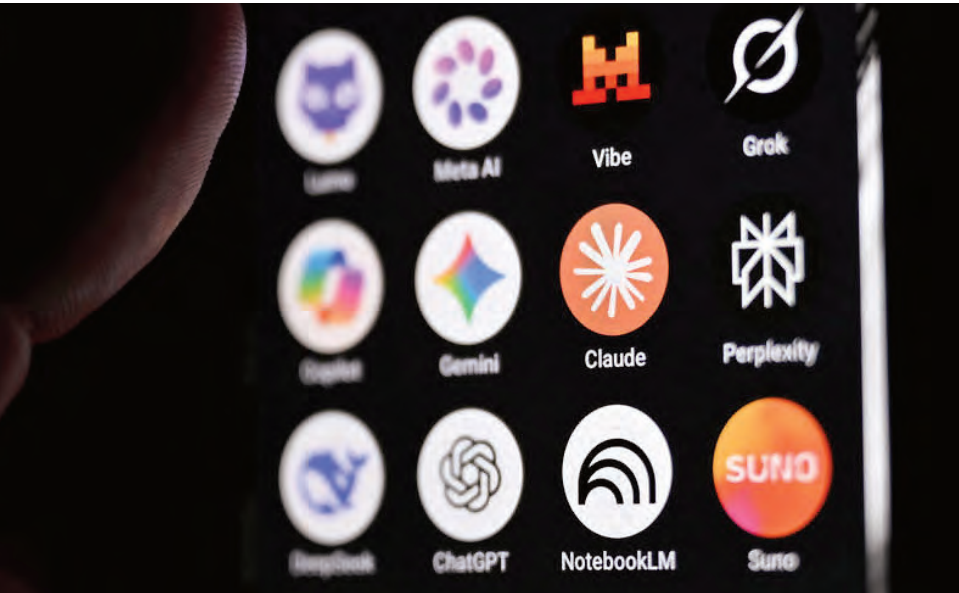
THE World Bank on Tuesday called on developing countries to embrace artificial intelligence technology tools to deliver better governance outcomes, warning that they risked being left behind if they failed to do so. “AI has thrown developing economies a lifeline and they should seize it,” Indermit Gill, chief economist of the World Bank Group, said as the organisation launched its annual World Development Report. “They do not need large models or big data centres to reap its benefits,” he added, advocating for the adaptation of lower-cost AI tools to local conditions to deliver results in the health, education, justice and agricultural sectors. Advanced AI models — largely developed in the United States and China - offer the ability to quickly analyse data and automate many tasks that otherwise take skilled humans longer to do.

These AI models, however, require huge data centres and large amounts of complex computing power, using massive amounts of electricity and water — with implications for climate change. “Developing economies today are in the midst of their weakest average growth performance in three decades,” said a World Bank statement accompanying the report. “AI could significantly boost that performance before the end of the 2020s while delivering tangible benefits to people.” The report calls for countries to use AI to “help extend otherwise costly medical, legal, educational and agricultural services to underserved billions - doing in a decade what might otherwise take a century.” Lower-income countries have struggled through the 2020s, hit by a series of successive shocks that saw the World Bank earlier this year dub it a “lost decade” for their economic growth. The Bank has lowered its 2026 global growth forecast to its lowest level since the pandemic, with the economic fallout of the Iran war



ASAD HASHIM

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The World Bank has called for governments in developing countries to embrace the use of AI to achieve better governance outcomes. — AFP

battering countries around the world. The shock has hit low-income and developing countries hardest, with Asia the worst-affected region. The Bank’s new report advocates for developing countries to start working with localised AI tools and solutions now and to invest in electricity generation and distribution; expand access to computing power; and improve the availability of local data. “The window to get this right is narrow,” said Gaurav Nayyar, director of the report. “AI presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to solve problems that have resisted solutions for generations,” he added. For the 6.8 billion people - 83 per cent of humanity — who live in low-income and developing countries, AI tools will need to be adapted to meet their needs. The report shares examples of AI applications in governance, such as to increase diabetes screening volumes in Bangladesh or in reducing costs for Indian farmers through advanced weather forecasts. The solutions, the report stresses, will need to meet people where they are. “For example, AI solutions will need to be delivered through voice

calls on basic mobile phones for those who cannot read or afford smartphones,” it says. “Simply importing an AI model does not mean it will work well locally.” The report calls for policymakers to also build public trust as they expand AI use. “Improved public services and better learning outcomes in schools will reinforce trust - but if AI embeds bias in government decisions or erodes data privacy, that trust will be difficult to recover,” said the statement. The report delivers a stark warning, too: “AI could widen gaps between countries, increase inequality within them, concentrate market power, weaken trust in public institutions and create new risks for safety, rights and social cohesion.” And while risks to employment in developing countries are low at the moment, it warns that in the long run AI tools could cut off economic mobility by eliminating many of the middle-class jobs that enable it. The report was written with the aid of several of the world’s most advanced AI tools, including offerings from OpenAI, DeepSeek, Google and Anthropic, according to a disclosure.

SPORTS

KEYSTEP



The facility has begun operations as part of the national medical screening programme for athletes.

SPORTS MEDICINE LABORATORY TO STRENGTHEN ATHLETES HEALTHCARE

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) has officially launched a specialised Sports Medicine Laboratory, marking a significant step in strengthening healthcare services for athletes and enhancing medical support across the country’s sports sector.

The facility, established by the Directorate General of Sports Care and Development through its Department of Sports Medicine and Science, has begun operations as part of the national medical screening programme for athletes. The initiative aims to improve preventive healthcare, ensure athletes’ fitness for training and competition and support early detection of medical conditions that could affect performance or lead to injuries.

The laboratory provides comprehensive medical assessments under one roof, offering standardised screening procedures for elite athletes and promising talents in its initial phase. The ministry plans to gradually expand the service to include all athletes registered with national sports federations and committees, creating a unified medical evaluation system across different sports.

Each athlete undergoes a structured examination beginning with a review of personal and family medical history, followed by essential health measurements including blood pressure, heart rate, height, weight and body mass index. The programme also includes a clinical examination, electrocardiogram (ECG) and laboratory tests, allowing medical specialists to evaluate an athlete’s overall health and physical readiness before participation in training camps or competitions. The laboratory is staffed by a dedicated medical support team responsible for recording medical data, conducting preliminary assessments, collecting blood samples and performing laboratory analyses in accordance with professional standards to ensure accurate and timely results.

Dr Afrah al Jabri, physician at the Department of Sports Medicine and Science, said the project was introduced to provide athletes with faster and more efficient access to medical screening services under the ministry’s supervision. She explained that regular medical examinations are essential before athletes join national teams or participate in domestic and international events, as they help identify hereditary heart conditions, musculoskeletal disorders and other health risks at an early stage. She noted that athletes previously relied on Ministry of Health facilities, where heavy workloads occasionally delayed examinations, particularly for large national team delegations. The new laboratory streamlines the process by bringing all core services together in a single location. The department has also expanded its treatment capabilities through the use of ultrasound-guided platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections for various joints, improving treatment accuracy and rehabilitation outcomes.

Athletes welcomed the initiative, describing it as a major improvement in sports healthcare. Paralympic athlete Taha al Harrasi said the laboratory would reduce time and administrative procedures while providing easier access to essential medical services. He also highlighted the importance of strengthening sports recovery facilities and nutritional support programmes.

AL NASR HIT 10 AS SAHAM MAINTAIN PERFECT START

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

AL NASR RECORDED the biggest victory of the second round of the Jindal Youth League after defeating Dhofar 10-0, while Saham continued their perfect start by securing a second successive win in Group 2.

The six matches played across the two groups delivered 35 goals, underlining the attacking approach shown by the young teams in the inaugural edition of the competition.

In Group 1, Al Nasr dominated their encounter against Dhofar at Seeb Club’s Al Baha’s ground and converted their superiority into a comprehensive victory. The result lifted Al Nasr to the top of the standings with four points from two matches and a goal difference of plus 10.

Sur also moved on to four points after defeating Bahla 4-2.

The victory followed their 2-2 draw with Al Nasr in the opening round and kept them firmly in contention at the top of the group.

Sur occupy second place, behind Al Nasr on goal difference.

Seeb, who received a bye in the opening round, began their campaign in impressive fashion with a commanding 7-0 win over Oman Club.

The result placed Seeb third with three points and a strong early goal difference.

Oman Club remain on three points after suffering their first defeat of the competition.

They had opened their campaign with a 4-1 victory over Bahla.

Samayil, who sat out the second round, also have three points following their opening win over Dhofar. Bahla and Dhofar remain without a point after two matches.

SAHAM ON TOP

In Group 2, Saham maintained their position at the summit after defeating



Al Rustaq and Al Shabab played out a thrilling 3-3 draw.



Sur also moved on to four points in Group 1 after defeating Bahla 4-2.

Al Khabourah 2-1. Saham have now collected six points from two matches, having also beaten Al Rustaq 3-1 in the opening round.

Sohar moved into second place with

four points following a 3-0 victory over Ibri. The result extended Sohar’s unbeaten start after their first-round draw with Al Khabourah.

Ibri remain third with three points, having defeated Al Nahda in their opening fixture.

SIX-GOAL THRILLER

Al Shabab and Al Rustaq produced one of the round’s most entertaining matches as they shared six goals in a 3-3 draw. It was Al Shabab’s first appearance in the competition, while Al Rustaq collected their first point after losing their opening match.

Al Khabourah and Al Shabab have one point each, while Al Nahda remain without a point after sitting out the second round.

Oman U17 team to meet Bahrain in two friendlies

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

The Oman Under-17 football team will resume preparations on Thursday with an intensive domestic training camp in Muscat, marking the beginning of a crucial phase in their build-up to two major continental assignments later this year.

The camp, which will run until August 17, will see the young Red Warriors engage in a comprehensive programme of technical, tactical and physical training besides playing two international friendly matches against Bahrain. The fixtures are expected to provide the coaching staff with an important opportunity to assess the squad’s progress and fine-tune preparations ahead of the West Asian Under-17 Championship in Iraq in September and the AFC Under-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers in November.

Led by national head coach Ahmed Said, Oman will be looking to maximise the value of every training session as the team enters a decisive stage of its development. The coaching staff aims to enhance the players’ tactical awareness,



The Oman Under-17 team during a training camp.



HAMDAN BAIT SAID

improve match fitness and strengthen team chemistry before competitive action begins.

Speaking to *Oman Observer*, team administrative manager Hamdan Bait Said confirmed that the Oman Football Association (OFA) developed a comprehensive long-term preparation programme

designed to ensure the squad reaches peak readiness for the upcoming tournaments. “We have prepared a comprehensive plan for the team, and it is currently under final review by the National Teams Committee of the OFA. We are waiting for the official approval before implementing the remaining stages of the programme,” Hamdan said.

He explained that the current camp represents the beginning of a more demanding period in the team’s preparations. “Starting this month, the team will enter a more intensive phase with a series of internal training camps focusing

on tactical understanding, physical conditioning and strengthening team cohesion. Every camp has specific technical objectives, and we believe this gradual approach will benefit the players significantly.”

Hamdan added that the coaching staff intends to increase both the duration and intensity of future camps as the competition calendar approaches. “During the coming months, we are planning two longer training camps compared to the initial preparation phase. These camps will be extremely important in creating consistency within the squad and raising the overall performance level before the official competitions begin.”

Hamdan also confirmed that Oman are awaiting official communication regarding the draw procedures for both major tournaments. “We are expecting the relevant organising bodies to announce the details for the draws of the West Asian Championship and the AFC U17 Asian Cup Qualifiers in the near future. The OFA will receive the official notifications once they are released.”

NEWSYSTEM



The course brought together former riders, aspiring coaches and cycling enthusiasts from across Oman.

OCA LAUNCHES NATIONAL COACHING COURSE TO PREPARE FUTURE COACHES

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

The Oman Cycling Association (OCA) has taken another significant step toward strengthening the country's cycling development system by organising a foundational coaching course designed to prepare a new generation of Omani cycling coaches capable of leading youth training centres and identifying future champions through modern scientific methods.

The course brought together former riders, aspiring coaches and cycling enthusiasts from across Oman, reflecting the association's long-term commitment to expanding the sport at the grassroots level while establishing a sustainable coaching structure based on internationally recognised training principles.

The programme covered a broad range of technical and educational topics, including the characteristics of successful coaches, athlete identification, physical and technical testing, long-term athlete development, performance evaluation and the integration of modern technology into coaching practices.

Marwan Znagui, coach of Oman's youth and junior national cycling teams and one of the course instructors, emphasised that the primary objective is to create a new generation of qualified coaches who will lead youth development centres and discover talented riders through scientific and evidence-based methods.

"The future of cycling depends on building knowledgeable coaches who understand modern training concepts," he said. "The course focuses on talent identification in schools using physical, technical and cycling-specific assessments, while introducing smart technologies that help measure riders' physical capabilities and identify those with the greatest potential."

Znagui added that coaches must continue learning beyond the classroom by keeping pace with the latest research and scientific developments in sport in general and cycling in particular, stressing that continuous education is essential for long-term success.

Participant Shahab bin Hamad al Qamshoui described the course as a major step forward for cycling in Oman, noting that the sport continues to face challenges due to the limited number of training centers and the high financial costs associated with equipment and bicycles.

"Cycling is an expensive sport and we need greater support to establish more training centres across the country," he said.

Coach Waleed al Fahdi praised the OCA for investing in local coaching talent, saying the initiative will provide the qualified personnel needed to manage future cycling centres in every governorate.



Sami bin Ali al Haddadi of Fursan Oman Centre captured the overall title, Ahmed bin Nasser al Sawafi of Al Saad Stud finished runner-up, while Mahmood bin Sulaiman al Sharyani of Fursan Oman Centre secured third overall. — Asaad al Badri

Al Haddadi clinches title at Dhofar Horseback Archery

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

THE inaugural Horseback Archery Championship concluded at Al Haffa Equestrian Arena in Dhofar Governorate after two days of thrilling competition held as part of the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026 festivities, attracting enthusiastic spectators and showcasing one of the Sultanate of Oman's growing equestrian disciplines.

Organised by the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation in cooperation with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee, the event was supported by the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality, and the Festival Department of Dhofar Municipality. The championship featured 15 riders representing several equestrian clubs and stables from across Oman.

The opening day featured the Qabaq (Plate) Track, where Basel bin Rabia al Hinai of Al Sharaf Equestrian Centre secured first place after an impressive display of speed and accuracy. Mahmood bin Sulaiman al Sharyani of Fursan Oman Centre finished second, while his teammate Sami bin Ali al Haddadi claimed third place.

Competition intensified on the second day with the Serial Track, which tested riders' precision and consistency while shooting at multiple targets during full-speed runs. Sami bin Ali al Haddadi delivered an outstanding performance to take first place, followed by Ahmed bin Nasser al Sawafi of Al Saad Stud in second. Ali bin Khamis al Balushi, representing Madaraat Fursan Oman,



The championship featured 15 riders representing several equestrian clubs and stables from across Oman. — Asaad al Badri

completed the podium in third.

Thanks to his consistent performances across both events, Al Haddadi captured the overall championship title. Al Sawafi finished runner-up in the overall standings, while Al Sharyani secured third place.

Mohammed bin Hamed al Marhoon, Chairman of the Dhofar Equestrian

Committee, praised the successful staging of the championship, noting that hosting the event for the first time at Al Haffa Beach marked an important milestone for horseback archery in Oman.

He expressed appreciation to the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation for organising the competition and thanked the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, and Dhofar Municipality for their valuable support. Al Marhoon highlighted the impressive public attendance and the high technical standard demonstrated by the riders, describing the championship as a significant addition to the Khareef Season's sporting programme.

MONTHS OF PREPARATION

Overall champion Sami bin Ali al Haddadi credited his success to months of intensive preparation and dedicated training.

"I prepared thoroughly for this championship, and the hard work paid off," Al Haddadi said. "Winning first place in the Serial Track, finishing third in the Plate Track, and securing the overall title is a tremendous achievement."

The level of competition was exceptionally strong, which makes this victory even more meaningful. I sincerely thank everyone who supported and encouraged me throughout this journey."

The successful debut of the championship reflects the growing popularity of horseback archery in Oman and reinforces the country's commitment to promoting traditional equestrian sports while expanding the range of attractions offered during the annual Khareef Dhofar Season.

Dhofar to host ME's first Ironman 70.3 Relay Championship

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 4

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), in cooperation with the Ironman Group and Middle East International Events, has announced the launch of the Middle East's first Ironman 70.3 Relay Championship.

The Ironman 70.3 Dhofar Middle East Relay Championship will take place in Dhofar Governorate on October 24 as part of the Experience Oman Ironman 70.3 Dhofar 2026, in partnership with Hawana Salalah.

The new relay championship will be held alongside the individual race, allowing participants to compete either independently or as part of a team. It will be the first

dedicated relay championship in the Middle East to be staged within the Ironman 70.3 series.

Teams comprising two or three members will be able to divide the race's three disciplines among themselves. This format is designed to attract a wider range of participants, including amateur athletes, government and private sector institutions, universities and sports clubs.

The winning team will be crowned the inaugural Ironman 70.3 Middle East Relay Champion.

The race consists of a 1.9 km swim, a 90 km cycling segment and a 21.1 km run. Individual competitors must complete all three disciplines, while relay team members may distribute the stages



The event would also provide institutions, universities and sports clubs with an opportunity to form teams.

among themselves before reuniting to cross the finish line together.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said the championship represented a new

milestone in the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to consolidate its position as a global sports tourism destination.

"The launch of the Middle East's first Ironman 70.3 Relay Championship reflects the success of the strategic partnership between the Ministry and the Ironman Group in attracting major international sporting events," he said.

Al Ghassani noted that the championship was not limited to professional athletes, as the relay format would enable broader participation and encourage different segments of society to experience an international Ironman 70.3 event. "We hope the championship will become an annual platform for government and private sector institutions,

universities and sports clubs to form teams representing them," he said.

Talal bin Humaid al Khusaibi, Director-General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate, said the governorate was preparing to welcome participants and accompanying visitors from around the world.

Mohammed al Obaidani, Chief Executive Officer of Middle East International Events, said the relay championship would make Ironman 70.3 racing more accessible to athletes and enthusiasts who may not be able to complete all three disciplines individually.

He said the event would also provide institutions, universities and sports clubs with an opportunity to form representative teams.

SPORTS

INFANTINO 'S PROBLEMS MOUNT AS WENGER, KEY FIFA ALLY TURN ON HIM



FIVE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATIONS WITHDRAW BACKING FOR RE-ELECTION BID

WENGER SAYS DECISION TO WITHDRAW THE PROJECT WAS NECESSARY

SECRETARY GENERAL GRAFSTROM SENDS MEMO TO FIFA STAFF

PRESSURE ON Fifa president Gianni Infantino intensified on Tuesday, with opposition emerging from within world football's governing body as well as from external critics over his since-abandoned proposal to open the World Cup to private investment.

Former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, appointed in 2019 by Infantino as Fifa's chief of global football development, said in a statement on Tuesday that "the decision to withdraw the project was absolutely necessary and beyond question".

His remarks followed hot on the heels of an extraordinary internal email to Fifa staff, in which secretary-general Mattias Grafstrom appeared to distance himself from Infantino on the issue.

Previously seen as close to Infantino, Grafstrom describes the fiasco surrounding the plan as "a sad and reproachable series of events".

He adds: "Individuals, unstable moments and unfortunate episodes come and go. The institution, its mission and its responsibility towards world football continue."

Fifa had floated the plan last Tuesday, saying it could raise up to \$4.2 billion based on a valuation of \$20 billion for a new commercial subsidiary, called the Fifa Forward Enterprise (FFE), which it proposed would run events such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

By Saturday it was dead in the water as Infantino announced the humiliating climbdown after widespread condemnation, as Uefa wielded the nuclear option of boycotting all Fifa competitions, including the World Cup.

Far from calming the waters or shoring up his presidency, Infantino has been swamped with criticism of his style of leadership and a previously smooth path to being re-elected unopposed to a fourth and final term next March in Rabat now looks a very rocky one indeed.

'TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS'
That is a problem down the road. For now, he has others to confront.

Even though he had withdrawn the scheme, Uefa issued a letter through their lawyers in the US threatening legal action over what they had scathingly described as a "shabby, backroom, opaque deal".

Both Grafstrom and Wenger as well as chief operating officer Kevin Lamour, who had

slammed the plan on Friday, are mentioned in the letter as being knowledgeable about the FFE and instructed to keep all "relevant materials".

"Dear Mr Infantino. Uefa hereby gives formal notice that it is actively considering legal action, arbitration, and/or regulatory complaints (together, the 'Proceedings') arising out of and in connection with the FFE plan proposed by Fifa and all related matters as further described below," their lawyer Andrew Levander said in the letter sent last Friday.

"You and Fifa are required to take immediate steps to identify, locate, and preserve all documents and electronically stored information described in this Notice that are in your or Fifa's possession, custody, or control.

"These obligations arise independently of any internal retention policy you or your organisation maintain and supersede any routine document destruction or deletion policies that would otherwise apply."

Several of Uefa's member associations — Wales, Finland, Sweden and Serbia — have withdrawn their letters of support for Infantino and the English FA is strongly rumoured to be on the verge of also joining them.

The scant comfort for Infantino came from

a handful of supporters, including 2030 World Cup co-hosts Morocco, as well as Kuwait, Qatar, where he has a house, and Lebanon, which granted him honorary citizenship in February.

However, it is the damning remarks by both Wenger and Grafstrom — who shadowed Infantino throughout the World Cup — that will twist the knife further.

Their criticism only adds to the impression that Infantino has lost the confidence of even his closest Fifa collaborators.

One of the most devastating blows to Infantino's plan was the resignation on Friday of his special advisor Carlos Cordeiro, who is also close to US President Donald Trump.

Despite what Uefa's lawyer wrote regarding keeping material pertinent to FFE, Wenger claims to have only learned about it through the media.

"I was not involved in this strategic plan," the 76-year-old Frenchman said.

Grafstrom, for his part, tried to cheer up the staff by congratulating them on their work while admitting it had been "an extraordinary and challenging week".

For Infantino, the challenge threatens to grow, and his stated purpose when he ditched the plan, to unite football, seems unlikely to be realised while he remains president. — AFP

Filipina Eala lives up to hype with Washington triumph

WASHINGTON: Few young players on the WTA Tour have experienced the level of expectation and support Alexandra Eala has received since she earned a place on the elite women's circuit, and on Monday the Filipina showed what all the fuss is about by winning the Washington Open.

Eala capped her breakthrough run by rallying to defeat top seed Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 in a rain-interrupted final that began on Sunday, becoming the first woman from her country to claim a tour-level singles crown.

Along the way, the 21-year-old beat Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen, last year's winner Leylah Fernandez, second seed Elina Svitolina and four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, victories which will mark her out as a dangerous

outsider for the upcoming US Open.

"It's an incredible milestone for me," Eala told reporters.

"At the beginning of the week, there's no way I'd have thought that I'd be holding this trophy. These things creep up on you, and I hold these moments really close to me.

"It was a very steep hill. Coming into the tournament, I knew that the competition was super strong and my draw was quite tough. Every match was a different set of obstacles. I'm really proud.

"I ended the tournament in better shape than I started. Each match I kept improving and kept learning things about myself.

So it definitely gives me a lot of confidence.

"It's really nice to see all the things I've been working on off court or during



Alexandra Eala celebrates with the trophy.



training being implemented in matches."

PROGRESS CLOSELY WATCHED
Eala's progress has been closely watched since her US Open junior triumph in 2022. Reaching the Eastbourne final last year and making the fourth round at Wimbledon last month signalled steady improvement.

As Eala's reputation grew, so too did her following,

with large groups of Filipino fans packing the stands at tournaments around the world to back a player many see as a pioneer for tennis in their country.

Her popularity was evident in the final of the WTA 500 event on Monday, with Eala's opponent Pegula impressed by the level of support on show.

"It's amazing that you guys showed up and again, to all the Filipino fans that came out, you are helping grow tennis around the world," she said.

"I appreciate that being a female athlete and being in tennis, we love to see that grow."

Eala can expect that support to continue at this week's Canadian Open in Toronto before she heads to New York for the US Open beginning on August 30.

— Reuters



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,334.803

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$83.51
BRENT \$83.78
LIGHT \$80.27



Al Ashkarah Waterfront 76% complete, boosts investment

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE Al Sharqiyah South Governorate is proceeding with the implementation of a package of waterfront projects, representing one of the most prominent development investments in the governorate during 2026.

The development come within the framework of administrative and financial decentralisation and the transformation of governorates into economic hubs capable of leveraging their competitive advantages.

According to the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate office, Al Ashkharah Beach waterfront project in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali is among the projects that have reached 76% completion. Its estimated cost is approximately RO 5.8 million and it is being built on an area of 74,172 square metres, including a building area of 4,140 square metres. The project includes a 1,860-metre main promenade, 1,800 metres



Al Ashkharah Waterfront project will contribute to supporting economic activity and stimulating local investment.

of walking, jogging and cycling paths, as well as investment areas for restaurants and cafes, green spaces and public services. These features will benefit residents and visitors and open up broad prospects for tourism and service investments in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and the surrounding areas.

The Al Sharqiyah South Governorate indicated that it is

simultaneously working on other waterfront projects, including the Sur Waterfront Trail project, which has reached 28% completion. Funded by Oman LNG, this project will provide indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including padel courts, a health promenade and a 1,865-metre-long cycling track, in addition to children's play areas and public seating areas.

The project will also contribute to supporting economic activity and stimulating local investment by attracting a number of restaurants, cafes and kiosks, thus providing promising investment opportunities and boosting tourism and economic activity in the region.

The Al Sharqiyah South Governorate added that it is also developing other coastal areas, including the Asilah Waterfront, where the first phase has been completed and the second phase, which is 55 per cent complete. The Al Hadda Waterfront has also been completed. These developments are part of a comprehensive programme aimed at transforming the coastline into an integrated economic and tourism destination capable of attracting local and foreign investment.

The accelerated implementation of waterfront projects in Al Sharqiyah South confirms that spatial development has become a key pillar of economic policy in the Sultanate of Oman. These projects are no longer

merely recreational facilities but have transformed into strategic investments aimed at building a more diversified local economy, attracting capital and enhancing the competitiveness of the governorates within a development model based on decentralisation and sustainability.

The importance of these projects is highlighted in the context of implementing the decentralisation approach, whereby governorates now possess broader powers to determine their development priorities and manage their investments according to their comparative advantages. The waterfronts in South Sharqiyah exemplify this approach by utilizing the governorate's natural resources to create sustainable economic assets that contribute to raising the quality of life and enhancing spatial competitiveness. Economic indicators show that the development of waterfronts is one of the main drivers of the local economy, due to the multiplier effect.

Oman expands investment options with 11 new funds

CONRAD PRABHU

Oman has significantly expanded its collective investment framework with the introduction of 11 distinct categories of investment funds under the newly issued Executive Regulations of the Securities Law, marking a major step towards deepening the Sultanate of Oman's capital markets and aligning its regulatory regime with international best practices.

The new regulations empower the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to license and supervise a diverse range of collective investment funds, creating a legal foundation for new investment products while strengthening investor protection, governance and market transparency.

Under the regulations, collective investment funds may now be established as securities mutual investment funds, money market funds, real estate investment funds, debt instruments funds, holding funds, exchange-traded funds (ETFs), venture capital funds, private equity funds, endowment funds, green funds and sustainable-purpose funds, with the FSA retaining the authority to approve additional fund types as market needs evolve.

The reforms represent a substantial evolution from Oman's previous mutual fund regime by formally recognising several internationally established investment vehicles that had not previously operated under a comprehensive regulatory framework in the Sultanate of Oman. The regulations also establish licensing and prudential requirements for the full investment fund ecosystem, including fund managers, investment managers, custodians, trustees, administrators, distributors and investment advisers.

Each category is expected to play a distinct role in broadening Oman's financial services landscape.

Securities mutual investment funds will continue to provide retail and institutional investors with professionally managed diversified portfolios of listed securities. Money market funds will offer low-risk, highly liquid investment options for cash management, benefitting both corporate and institutional investors.

Real estate investment funds are



The new regulations empower the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to license and supervise a diverse range of collective investment funds.

expected to channel long-term capital into property development and income-generating real estate assets, while debt instruments funds will expand investment opportunities in government and corporate bonds, sukuk and other fixed-income securities, helping deepen the domestic debt capital market.

Holding funds will enable strategic investments in corporate assets and subsidiaries, supporting business consolidation and long-term ownership structures.

The formal recognition of exchange-traded funds (ETFs) introduces globally popular, low-cost investment vehicles that trade on stock exchanges and can improve market liquidity while giving investors efficient exposure to diversified indices and asset classes.

Among the most significant additions are venture capital and private equity funds, which establish a regulatory platform for mobilising institutional capital into startups, high-growth enterprises, SMEs and established businesses seeking expansion or restructuring. Their introduction supports Oman Vision 2040's objectives of fostering entrepreneurship, innovation and economic diversification.

The inclusion of endowment funds creates a regulated framework for long-term charitable and institutional investment vehicles, while green funds and sustainable-purpose funds position Oman to capture growing global demand for environmental, social and governance (ESG) investments.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (R.O.)
NESC/ 2026/030	Development and Implementation of Interactive Activity Experiences	16/08/2026	25/08/2026	Specialist	26.250

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



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ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



SOHAR PORT MARKS
SUCCESSFUL CLOSING
OF THE MASEER
PROGRAMME

Under the auspices of Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Hinai, Wali of Suhar, SOHAR Port and Freezone, in collaboration with Kidsity, concluded the fourth edition of the Maseer Programme. The closing ceremony recognised outstanding students for their creativity and leadership demonstrated throughout the programme. The event also featured an exhibition showcasing the innovative solutions and technical projects developed by participating students, reflecting the skills and knowledge they gained through the training workshops and hands-on learning experiences.

Aligned directly with Oman Vision 2040, the Maseer Programme serves as a key pillar in SOHAR's local content and social responsibility strategy, focusing on long-term human capital development, innovation and digital readiness. Over the course of 20 training days, participants accumulated a total of 16,400 hours (40 hours per student) dedicated to practical learning, problem-solving and project-based experiences. At the conclusion of the programme, all 410 participants received officially accredited certificates from the Ministry of Labour.

“One of the most valuable parts of the programme was the opportunity to work with others and approach challenges in a different way. It helped me think more creatively and gave me a better sense of what I can do”, said Maryam al Maqbali, a participant in the Maseer Programme.

Said al Balushi, Administration Government Relation Manager at SOHAR Port and Freezone, said: “Investing in young people means investing in the future of our community and our country. Through initiatives such as Maseer, we are pleased to support platforms that help students discover their potential and build the confidence to take on future opportunities”.

“Partnerships like this allow learning to move beyond the classroom and into real engagement, where students can explore, create and grow in a meaningful way. We are proud to have contributed to a programme that encouraged curiosity, participation and a spirit of achievement”, said Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Managing Director of Kidsity Centre Suhar.

By investing in scalable, high-impact youth development programmes, SOHAR Port and Freezone reinforces its position not only as a global logistics hub, but as an active driver of sustainable socio-economic progress within the Sultanate of Oman.

SOHAR INTL COMPLETES
₹149.3M RIGHTS ISSUE

SOHAR International Bank SAOG is pleased to announce the successful completion of its rights issue of 1,058,759,403 ordinary shares, attracting total subscriptions of RO 182,408,592.29, covering the issuance size of RO 149,285,075.82 by 1.22 times. The rights issue was fully subscribed, reflecting the strong confidence of the Bank's shareholders in its strategic direction, financial strength, and long-term growth ambitions. With a take-up rate of 95.5% among eligible shareholders, the residual pool of unsubscribed shares was oversubscribed by 9 times, demonstrating robust investor demand and reaffirming market confidence in the Bank's strategy and future outlook.

Commenting on the successful completion of the rights issue, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “The successful completion of this rights issue represents another important milestone in Sohar International's growth journey and reflects the strong confidence our shareholders continue to place in the Bank's strategy, leadership, and long-term vision. Their support reinforces our ability to execute our strategic priorities while creating sustainable value for all stakeholders”.

He further added, “This enhanced capital base further strengthens our financial position, providing greater flexibility to pursue growth opportunities, deepen our market presence, invest in innovation, and continue delivering differentiated financial solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers across Oman and our international markets”.

The successful capital raise further



enhances Sohar International's capital position, reinforcing the Bank's resilience and providing additional capacity to support sustainable business growth. It also strengthens the Bank's ability to accelerate strategic initiatives, expand its product and service offerings; and capture new opportunities across its priority markets while continuing to deliver long-term value for customers, shareholders, and the wider economy.

Following the completion of the rights issue, the Bank's paid-up capital has increased to RO 849,675,744, divided into 7,676,005,673 ordinary shares. The rights issue was offered at an issue price of 141 baisa per share, comprising 139 baisa as the share price and 2 baisa towards issue

expenses.

Sohar International extends its sincere appreciation to its shareholders and investors for their continued trust and support throughout this important milestone. The Bank remains focused on executing its long-term growth strategy, strengthening its leadership position in the market, and delivering innovative financial solutions that create lasting value for customers, shareholders, and the communities it serves.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the Financial Services Authority, the Central Bank of Oman, and Muscat Clearing & Depository Company for their valuable guidance and support throughout the Rights Issue process.

ahlibank reports strong performance in the 1st half of 2026

ahlibank has announced its unaudited financial results for the six-month period ended June 30, 2026, reporting a net profit of RO 25.11 million, compared to RO 22.36 million for the corresponding period in 2025, representing an increase of 12.3%.

The bank continued to deliver strong growth across its key financial indicators during the first half of the year. Net loans, advances and financing grew by 18.3% to RO 3,741.1 million, compared to RO 3,161.7 million during the same period last year while customer deposits rose by 16.0% to RO 3,504.8 million, compared to RO 3,020.4 million as of June 30, 2025. Total assets increased by 15.3% from RO 3,911.5 million as of June 30, 2025 to RO 4,508.6 million as of June 30, 2026.

For the six months period ended June 30, 2026, operating income increased by 9.3% to RO 62.59 million, compared



SAID
ABDULLAH
AL HATMI

Chief Execu-
tive Officer of
ahlibank

to RO 57.26 million for the same period last year. Operating expenses rose by 7.1% to RO 26.34 million, compared to RO 24.59 million for the same period in 2025.

Commenting on the bank's performance, Said bin Abdullah al Hatmi, Chief Executive Officer of ahlibank, commented: “Our performance during the first half of 2026 reflects a disciplined approach to sustainable growth, underpinned by sound financial management, operational excellence and a continued focus on innovation.

As the banking landscape continues to evolve, we remain focused on strengthening our capabilities and delivering advanced financial solutions that respond to the changing needs of our customers, while supporting the Sultanate of Oman's economic development and long-term priorities. Beyond our financial performance,

the first half of the year has been characterised by strategic milestones that reinforce our role as Your Partner in Excellence and reflect our commitment to innovation, integrity, responsibility and sustainability.”

During the first half of 2026, ahlibank and ahli islamic continued to strengthen their role in financing strategic sectors that support Oman's economic diversification and long-term development priorities.

In renewable energy, ahli islamic, in partnership with O-Green, successfully closed the financing of a 93 MW solar power project at Sohar Industrial City in collaboration with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn). The landmark project reinforces the bank's contribution to Oman's transition towards clean energy while demonstrating its expertise in financing large-scale and strategically important infrastructure projects.

Chery Arrizo 5: The sophisticated sedan built for every journey

The Chery Arrizo 5 continues to stand out as an exceptional sedan choice for automotive enthusiasts across the Sultanate. Built to elevate daily driving, the Arrizo 5 is a smart, modern companion packed with advanced features designed to make every journey smoother, safer and more enjoyable.

SMART INFOTAINMENT & SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY
At the heart of the Arrizo 5, you will be welcomed by a spacious, well-crafted cabin that prioritises passenger comfort. Premium materials, a premium steering wheel, and customisable ambient lighting enhance the interior ambience, giving the sedan a refined and personal feel.



RESPONSIVE 1.5L PERFORMANCE & INTELLIGENT CVT
Performance-wise, the Arrizo 5 is powered by a responsive 1.5L engine that delivers the ideal mix of power and fuel economy. Whether navigating busy urban

streets or cruising along open highways, the engine responds effortlessly. Paired with an intelligent CVT (Continuously Variable Transmission), it ensures smooth acceleration and efficient gear transitions, resulting in a

quieter, more comfortable drive.

UNCOMPROMISING SAFETY
As impressive as it is from the outside, the Arrizo 5 also possesses a range of impressive safety features, leaving no room for compromise. It is loaded with intelligent safety technologies, including an Electronic Stability Programme (ESP) and Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), which provide greater control during sudden stops or sharp turns. A full array of airbags ensures maximum protection for all occupants. Maneuvering in tight spots becomes stress-free with the parking sensors, while driver-assist systems act like an extra alerting and assisting drivers for a more confident driving experience.

A SEDAN BUILT FOR MODERN LIFE
With its blend of smart technology, refined comfort, responsive performance and comprehensive safety, the Arrizo 5 is designed to be a dependable, enjoyable companion for everyday driving in Oman — whether navigating the city or heading out on the open road.

GLOBAL RECOGNITION
Chery's global reputation continues to grow, as reflected in recent accolades. Ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th overall in the 2023 Kantar & Google Chinese Global Brand Builders report. Secured first place among all Chinese automotive brands in the J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM (IQS).

JOB SKILLS

NEXT DUQM NOW
SESSION FOCUSES
ON CAREER
PROGRESSION

BUSINESS
REPORTER



MOHAMMED
AL FARSI
Head, Food &
Fisheries Industrial
Clusters, SEZAD

The World Economic Forum expects 39 per cent of today's job skills to change by 2030. As careers evolve, Duqm Now examines what organizations look for when selecting their next managers. Promotion rarely arrives because someone has stayed in the same job long enough. More often, it follows a period when colleagues begin relying on that person to solve problems, organize work or make decisions that affect others. Many businesses find that transition difficult. Technical expertise helps someone establish a career but managing colleagues requires different strengths. The best engineer, accountant or logistics specialist will not automatically become the best manager. Some experienced professionals also find they have become indispensable in their current role without being considered for the next one.

The next Duqm Now discussion will take place 7.30pm, Wednesday, August 19, at Crowne Plaza Duqm. Talal Al Shahri, Director, Specialized Radio Stations at the Ministry of Information will moderate the event. The panel will bring together Aisha Al Balushi, Environmental Officer at ASYAD Container Terminal; Mohammed Al Farsi, Head of Food and Fisheries in SEZAD's Industrial Clusters Department; and Maryam Al Rawahi, HSSE Technical Expert at OQ8.

Designed for mid-career professionals, the evening event will examine a stage of working life that receives surprisingly little attention. Employers devote considerable attention to graduate recruitment and executive leadership attracts extensive commentary. Far less is said about the years when professionals first supervise projects, influence colleagues and prepare for management.

The discussion comes as more Omanis establish careers in the private sector. Their number reached 441,737 in June 2026 a 8.6 per cent jump on the previous year. Employment among Omani technicians increased 6.4 per cent while the number of Omani specialists is up 3 per cent. Behind those numbers are thousands of professionals reaching a stage when career progression depends on more than technical knowledge.

‘Living The Vibe’ campaign
to boost trade and tourism



The 'Living The Vibe' campaign is designed to support the national economy, strengthen commercial and tourism activity; and stimulate local markets

BALARAB AL TAMIMI

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion celebrated on Monday the launch of the national campaign, 'Living The Vibe', organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Ministry of Interior, Consumer Protection Authority, Muscat Municipality; and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

The event was held under the auspices of Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality and in the presence of Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry.

The launch reflects the importance of strategic partnership and joint effort between the public and private sectors in supporting economic development and stimulating commercial and tourism activity, in a way that strengthens the Sultanate of Oman's standing as an attractive destination for trade, tourism and investment.

The ceremony featured a visual presentation setting out the campaign's vision and objectives, together with the

distinctive events and integrated experiences it offers to enrich the shopper and visitor experience. It also included the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Sohar International, embodying the two parties' shared commitment to supporting the national initiative and delivering its targets.

Under the agreement, Sohar International, as the campaign's banking sponsor, will apply a zero per cent interest rate on withdrawals made under the prize draw programme for all shopping centres, companies and establishments taking part in the "Living The Vibe" campaign. All transactions will therefore be carried out without any fees, deductions or interest being taken from the value of prizes or from the sums allocated to participating companies, in line with the terms and conditions agreed between the two parties. The move is intended to encourage participation by a wide range of commercial establishments, broaden the campaign's reach and strengthen its economic impact. Abdulwahid al Murshidi, CEO, affirmed that all SMEs are welcome to join Sohar

International for zero per cent charge for three months or more if the campaign lasts longer.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director-General of Commerce at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the "Living The Vibe" campaign represents a leading national platform that brings together the efforts of government institutions and the private sector under a single objective: supporting the national economy, strengthening commercial and tourism activity, stimulating local markets and highlighting the economic and tourism assets with which the Sultanate of Oman is richly endowed.

The 'Living The Vibe' campaign, which runs until September 1, 2026, aims to deliver a broad package of commercial offers and discounts, incentive prizes and a varied programme of events across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The campaign seeks to stimulate commercial and tourism activity and to encourage consumers and visitors to take advantage of the experiences and offers provided by participating establishments throughout the country.

Registration opens for Industrial Business Accelerator

BUSINESS REPORTER

The Industrial Innovation Academy has announced the opening of registration for the Industrial Business Accelerator, implemented in collaboration with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada).

The accelerator targets innovative idea owners, industrial startups, entrepreneurs and owners of industrial enterprises seeking to establish or expand their businesses through two specialised tracks: Industrial Innovation Development, accommodating 15 startups and Industrial Venture Creation, accommodating 15 entrepreneurs or industrial business owners.

The accelerator is scheduled



Business accelerators play a pivotal role in enabling startups to grow and scale.

to commence in September 2026 and will run for six months. Participants will benefit from a comprehensive support package that includes specialised training, prototype development, mentoring and advisory services, connections with investors, investment funds and industrial partners, as well as access to an integrated working

environment featuring office space, training rooms, meeting facilities and logistical support to enhance the readiness of their projects for growth and expansion.

The Industrial Business Accelerator builds on the strategic collaboration between the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by the Industrial Innovation Academy and the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada), following the success of the Omani Promising Startups Accelerator implemented last year.

Business accelerators play a pivotal role in enabling startups to grow and scale. This year's Industrial Business Accelerator has been specifically designed to support entrepreneurs and

startups operating within the industrial sector, one of the key sectors driving Oman's economic diversification. The programme also aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by contributing to the development of a knowledge-based, technology-driven and innovation-led economy, while keeping pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Registration will remain open until August 12, 2026. Applicants will undergo an evaluation and selection process to ensure the quality and suitability of participants. Those interested in joining the accelerator can submit their applications through the Industrial Innovation Academy's official social media platforms.

CRYPTO MARKETS

Stocks rally as oil edges higher



European stocks climbed alongside US futures on Tuesday, although a rebound in oil prices underscored market scepticism that the US-Iran war would be resolved quickly through diplomacy.

Meanwhile the yen eased slightly, but held on to most of its intervention-driven gains after last week's joint action by Tokyo and Washington to support the currency. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold holds steady amidst Fed uncertainty



Gold prices were steady on Tuesday as investors grappled with uncertainty over the Federal Reserve's interest-rate path and monitored ongoing developments in the Middle East for signs of a diplomatic resolution to the Iran war.

Spot gold was little changed at \$4,052.86 per ounce by 09:05 GMT, while US gold futures were up 0.5% at \$4,111.70. — Reuters

SATELLITE INDUSTRY

SpaceX satellite ambitions pressure rivals



SpaceX is increasingly reserving space on its rockets to launch its own Starlink satellites, crowding out rival space companies that have long depended on Elon Musk's company to get their payloads into orbit.

Starlink's share of SpaceX missions has grown year after year, rising from 54% of the Falcon 9 rocket's manifest in 2020 to about 79% so far in 2026. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s industrial clusters drive sustainable growth



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

The writer is Director of the Technical Office of the Under-Secretary of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

INDUSTRIAL clusters have become one of the key pillars of modern industrial policies, playing a significant role in enhancing productivity, fostering innovation, and strengthening the global competitiveness of national industries. By bringing together manufacturers, suppliers, research and development institutions, logistics providers, and supporting entities within an integrated ecosystem, industrial clusters create economic value through collaboration, knowledge sharing, integration across production stages, and economies of scale.

In Oman, the development of industrial clusters represents a strategic pillar of the Oman Industrial Strategy 2040, which aims to enhance the competitiveness of the industrial sector, diversify the national economy, increase local value addition, and connect Omani industries with regional and global value chains. Through investments in industrial infrastructure, logistics, innovation, and human capital development, Oman is moving towards building integrated industrial ecosystems that support the growth of advanced and value-added industries.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion places increasing emphasis on establishing specialized industrial clusters as an advanced model for industrial integration and localization of value chains. This approach supports the development of a diversified production base, enhances industrial competitiveness, and strengthens the integration between basic industries and downstream manufacturing activities.

These clusters contribute to improving production efficiency, reducing operational costs, attracting domestic and foreign investment, encouraging innovation and technology transfer, and creating high-quality employment opportunities for national talent.

Oman has developed several existing and emerging industrial clusters. Suhar has become a successful model of industrial integration, benefiting from its world-class port, advanced infrastructure, and strategic location. The area has evolved into a major hub for metals, petrochemicals, and related downstream manufacturing industries. One of the key success stories is Lada'in Park in Suhar, an integrated plastics industrial cluster that strengthens the connection between petrochemical industries and downstream plastic manufacturing, covering different stages of the value chain from raw materials to final plastic products. This supports the growth of value-added industries and creates new investment opportunities in the plastics sector. As part of Oman's transition towards a green economy and future industries, work is underway to develop a Renewable Energy Technologies and Equipment Industrial Cluster in Sohar Freezone. The cluster aims to support the manufacturing of solar energy components, clean energy technologies, and hydrogen-related equipment, strengthening the integration between the industrial sector and renewable energy development while supporting Oman's energy transition and sustainability objectives. In the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, industrial development is progressing rapidly, positioning the area as a strategic hub for petrochemicals, mining and mineral processing, green hydrogen, renewable energy, and logistics. Future plans also include the development

Industrial clusters generate significant economic benefits, including higher productivity, reduced production and logistics costs, accelerated technology transfer, and enhanced innovation through partnerships between industry, universities, and research institutions.

of strategic industrial projects such as the Green Steel and Iron Industries Cluster and the Petrochemical Industries Cluster in Duqm, in addition to supporting light industries, food industries, and packaging activities in industrial areas such as Barka, Samayil, and Nizwa. Industrial clusters generate significant economic benefits, including higher productivity, reduced production and logistics costs, accelerated technology transfer, and enhanced innovation through partnerships between industry, universities, and research institutions. They also strengthen Oman's attractiveness as an investment destination by providing integrated industrial ecosystems supported by modern infrastructure, enabling services, skilled human capital, and access to regional and global markets.

Looking ahead, Oman has significant opportunities to further enhance the role of industrial clusters by expanding research and development programs, accelerating digital transformation and Industry 4.0 applications, integrating small and medium enterprises into industrial value chains, developing national skills, and attracting investments in advanced manufacturing sectors.

As global industries move towards sustainable manufacturing, circular economy models, and digital transformation, industrial clusters have become a strategic tool for enhancing the competitiveness of national industries. Through the implementation of the Oman Industrial Strategy 2040, Oman continues to develop integrated industrial ecosystems that promote innovation, improve productivity, enhance exports, and create sustainable economic value, contributing to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and strengthening Oman's position as a regional industrial and logistics hub.

CHINA’S EV EXPORT BOOM IS STARTING TO SHOW UP IN THE GASOLINE MARKET

GAVIN MAGUIRE

For years, forecasts of the energy transition followed a familiar script: electric vehicles would gradually dent gasoline demand in Europe and China before eventually spreading elsewhere.

The latest trade data suggest that process may already be accelerating across a much broader swath of the global economy. A comparison of year-to-date gasoline imports and Chinese EV exports reveals a striking overlap in several major economies. Australia, Brazil, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, the United States, Nigeria and Japan have all sharply increased imports of Chinese EVs this year while simultaneously reducing gasoline imports.

No single dataset proves causation. Gasoline imports are influenced by refinery operations, inventories, economic growth and government policy. But when the same pattern appears across multiple regions and income levels, it starts to look less like coincidence and more like an early signal of structural change. The provocative possibility is that China's EV export surge is beginning to show up in global gasoline trade flows. For years, EV adoption and gasoline demand were largely treated as separate stories. Increasingly, they appear connected. The countries highlighted here have collectively cut gasoline imports by roughly a third so far in 2026 compared to the same months last year, while simultaneously boosting imports of Chinese EVs to record highs. If that relationship persists, fuel traders may need to start watching Chinese vehicle exports as closely as they watch refinery outages.

Australia offers perhaps the clearest example. Gasoline imports are down nearly 0.9 million metric tonnes or 15% year-to-date, while imports of Chinese EVs have surged by nearly 200% or by roughly \$2.5 billion.

Chinese brands have rapidly gained market share by offering vehicles at prices many Western competitors struggle to match. For consumers facing elevated living costs and uncertain fuel prices, the economics increasingly favour electrification. South Korea and Japan are particularly noteworthy because both are automotive powerhouses. South Korea has cut gasoline imports by about 0.4 million tonnes or by around 44% while boosting Chinese EV imports by more than \$1 billion. — Reuters

Adapting to the singularity

SAM Altman's recent claim that humanity has moved beyond the (event horizon) and that the technological take-off has begun was designed to sound historic. In his essay The Gentle Singularity, he argues that systems already exist that are smarter than people in many domains and that digital superintelligence is now within reach. Whether that judgement proves right is still contested. But the more useful question for governments and large organisations is not whether the singularity has formally arrived. It is whether the assumptions on which modern institutions were built would survive if it did.

In the artificial-intelligence context, the singularity means a point at which machine intelligence begins to accelerate scientific discovery, software development and its own improvement so rapidly that human institutions can no longer reliably predict or absorb the pace of change. It is not simply a better chatbot or even an artificial general intelligence system. It is a shift from technological progress being managed by institutions to progress moving faster than those institutions can adapt.

That distinction matters because most public institutions and major companies were designed around scarcity: scarce expertise, slow information, periodic planning and hierarchical decision-making. Knowledge had to be gathered, reviewed and passed upward. Strategies were refreshed every three or five years. Regulation usually followed innovation. Authority rested partly on controlling information.

AI is already weakening those assumptions before any true singularity occurs. Stanford's 2025 AI Index reported that 78 per cent of organisations used AI in at least one business function in 2024, up from 55 per cent a year earlier. Generative-AI use in at least one



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The defining competition of the next decade may therefore be less about which country or company possesses the most powerful model. It may be about which institutions are prepared to abandon assumptions that no longer hold, learn continuously and govern at the speed of change

function rose from 33 per cent to 71 per cent. US private AI investment reached \$109.1 billion, compared with \$9.3 billion in China and \$4.5 billion in the UK.

The economic upside is potentially enormous. PwC estimates that broad AI adoption could raise global output by as much as 15 percentage points by 2035, effectively adding about one percentage point to annual growth. Yet the same research stresses that capability alone is insufficient; deployment, trust and responsible use will determine how much value is actually realised.

This exposes the first central problem: institutional inertia. Technology can spread in months, while organisations may require years to redesign workflows, amend regulation, retrain staff and reallocate budgets. McKinsey found that 78 per cent of surveyed organisations were using AI in 2024, but only 21 per cent of those using generative AI had fundamentally redesigned at least some workflows. In its 2025 survey, nearly two-thirds still had not begun scaling AI across the enterprise, and only 39 per cent reported an enterprise-level EBIT impact. The gap is not between organisations that own AI and those that do not. It is between those that use AI to automate yesterday's processes and those willing to question whether those processes should exist at all.

If Altman's forecast proves broadly correct, the benefits could be transformative: faster medical discovery, more productive firms, more accurate forecasting, personalised public services and cheaper access to expertise. Knowledge scarcity could decline sharply. Smaller economies might gain capabilities once available only to large states or multinational corporations.

But the risks would be equally structural. Labour markets could adjust faster than education systems. Decision-making could

become more concentrated in institutions controlling models, data and computing power. Errors could scale at machine speed. Cyber threats, disinformation and regulatory arbitrage could outrun existing safeguards. The youngest workers may feel the disruption first: Stanford's 2026 AI Index reports that employment among software developers aged 22 to 25 fell by nearly 20 per cent from 2024 in AI-exposed sectors.

The deeper danger, however, is not that machines become smarter than people. It is that institutions remain slower than the environments they are expected to govern.

The required response is therefore not another technology programme. Institutions need to review the assumptions embedded in their operating models: where authority sits, how evidence reaches decision-makers, how frequently strategy is revised, how quickly regulations can be updated and which workflows AI makes unnecessary. They must also separate decisions that can be automated from those requiring political accountability, ethical judgement and human legitimacy.

The singularity may arrive later than Altman expects, or not in its strongest form. That does not weaken the case for reform. Institutions that become more adaptive, data-literate and capable of continuous learning will gain even under a gradual AI scenario. Those that simply digitise existing bureaucracy may discover that technology has accelerated everything except the institution itself.

The defining competition of the next decade may therefore be less about which country or company possesses the most powerful model. It may be about which institutions are prepared to abandon assumptions that no longer hold, learn continuously and govern at the speed of change.

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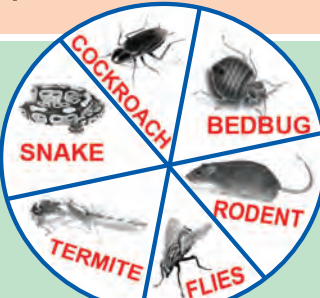
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ART/LIFE



THE OMANI WOMAN CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN AT SEA > 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT** MAKING THE MOST OF THE AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR FESTIVAL



Yeru Ebuén
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

I have been fortunate enough to visit the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival since its very first edition. I still remember making that drive up the mountain in August 2022. Oman was beginning to breathe again after the pandemic. Travel no longer felt uncertain, yet there remained a quiet appreciation for simply being outdoors, surrounded by people once more. The festival itself was wonderfully modest. Pomegranates were undoubtedly the stars of the show. A handful of local stalls lined the grounds, families wandered at an unhurried pace and the atmosphere felt less like a major tourism event than a community proudly opening its doors to the rest of the country. I have returned almost every year since, watching the festival evolve into one of Oman's signature summer events. More attractions, more local businesses and more entertainment have helped it grow in confidence without losing the warmth that made it so special in the first place. Perhaps that is why I keep returning. Not simply because the festival grows every year, but because each visit has become an opportunity to rediscover the mountain itself.

I have returned almost every year since, watching the festival evolve into one of Oman's signature summer events. More attractions, more local businesses and more entertainment have helped it grow in confidence without losing the warmth that made it so special in the first place

My own trips have always been memorable because I have never let the festival be the entire itinerary. For me, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is one of Oman's finest places for café hopping. Within a short drive, you can move from elegant cafés inside luxury resorts to village coffee shops where Omani hospitality takes centre stage. One offers sweeping canyon views; another, little more than kahwa, warm conversation and a glimpse into mountain life. Both leave a lasting impression.

Then there are the people who know the mountain better than any map. Joining a local guide through pomegranate farms, ancient falaj systems and quiet villages reveals stories that would otherwise remain hidden. These are experiences that no festival programme can schedule. But if there is one tradition my family looks forward to every year, it is wild camping. After the festival lights begin to fade, we leave the crowds behind and settle beneath one of the clearest night skies in Oman. The mountain grows quiet as countless stars slowly claim the darkness above. It is a spectacle no stage performance could ever rival. Around a small campfire, children search for constellations and ask endless questions. Without realising it, they begin learning how the stars once guided travellers across deserts and mountains, turning a family holiday into a lesson in astronomy, history and Omani heritage. The festival gives us a reason to climb Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Everything else that makes us fall in love with it is waiting beyond the festival gates.

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



MUSIC
Brazilian singer Seu Jorge performs during the Rio 2026 Winter Festival at Marina da Gloria in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

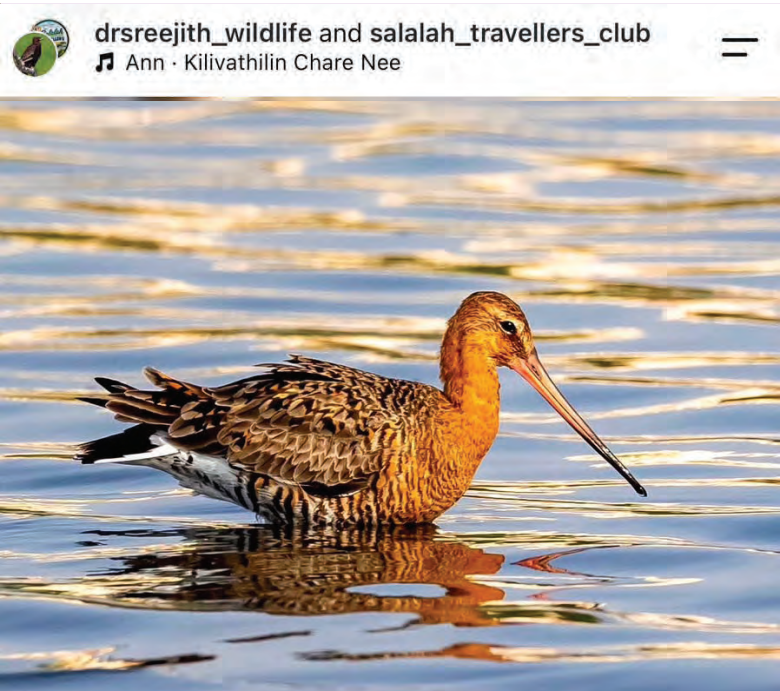


CULTURE
Students in traditional Punjabi dress perform the Giddha dance during celebrations for the Teej festival at a school in Amritsar, India. — AFP



FASHION
A model presents Irma Siregar's contemporary ulos design at Indonesia Fashion Week in Jakarta, Indonesia. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Black-tailed godwit bathed in golden hour grace



The breathtaking beauty of Dhofar during Khareef

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‘SOPRANOS’ ACTOR VINCENT PASTORE DEAD AT 80



US actor Vincent Pastore, seen in 2019, was best known for his role on ‘The Sopranos’. — AFP

Vincent Pastore, the actor best known for playing Salvatore Bonpensiero in HBO’s hit series “The Sopranos”, has died at the age of 80, his manager confirmed.

Hollywood news outlet Deadline reported that Pastore was found dead on Saturday at his home in The Bronx, New York. His manager, Robert Attermann, confirmed the death, but did not provide details about the circumstances.

Born on July 14, 1946, Pastore served in the US Navy during the Vietnam War before earning a university degree in drama.

A native New Yorker, he was frequently cast as a gangster and appeared in films including Martin Scorsese’s “Goodfellas” in 1990 and Brian De Palma’s “Carlito’s Way” in 1993.

His best-known role was Salvatore Bonpensiero, a close associate of Tony

Soprano, played by the late James Gandolfini, who later became an FBI informant. The character became one of the most memorable figures in the Emmy-winning series.

Pastore also made guest appearances in television series including “Law & Order” and “The Practice”; and lent his voice to the animated film “Shark Tale”. His reality television appearances included “The Celebrity Apprentice”, then hosted by Donald Trump.

“I had the privilege of representing Vinny for more than 30 years, long before ‘The Sopranos’ made him a household name”, Attermann said.

“He loved being an actor. He was passionate about his craft and was always encouraging, respectful and generous with young actors, taking the time to offer guidance and support whenever he could throughout his long acting career”. — AFP



Spider-Man remains one of Marvel’s most recognisable heroes, portrayed by Tom Holland in the new film.

SPIDER-MAN OPENS TO A HUGE \$927M GLOBAL BOX OFFICE

“SPIDER-MAN: Brand New Day” brought in a blockbuster \$927 million in worldwide ticket sales, including \$355 million in the United States and Canada, to deliver the second most lucrative opening weekend of all time for a film, both domestically and globally.

The movie, which marks actor Tom Holland’s fourth outing as the web-slinging superhero, depicts Peter Parker fighting crime in a world that has forgotten he is Spider-Man. Zendaya co-stars as MJ, the love of Parker’s life. Audiences returned for a film that was grounded in Parker’s struggles with loneliness and his pursuit of human connection.

“Spider-Man: Brand New Day” is fundamentally a movie about friendship, about the balm of connection in all our lives and that is resonant to audiences of all ages and all around the world”, Tom Rothman, chairman and chief executive of Sony Pictures Entertainment’s Motion Picture Group, said.

Data from Rentrak indicates “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” had the highest domestic gross opening since the Covid-19 pandemic and the second-highest of all time, in North America and worldwide, behind the 2019 release of the superhero film “Avengers: Endgame”. That film raked in an inflation-adjusted \$1.6 billion in global ticket sales, including \$467 million in the United States and Canada, in its opening.

Internationally, “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” grossed \$572 million in opening weekend ticket sales, with China leading international markets with \$121 million in ticket sales, according to the studio.

Paul Dergarabedian, head of marketplace trends for Rentrak, said on Friday that the franchise is approaching the \$10 billion mark in unadjusted worldwide theatrical box office, which speaks to the character’s appeal.

Greg Durkin, the founder and CEO of the entertainment research firm Enact Insight, said the movie’s central themes of loneliness and



Peter Parker swings back into the spotlight in Marvel’s latest Spider-Man adventure.



Spider-Man: Brand New Day has grossed \$927 million worldwide at the global box office.

isolation; and triumphing over drama, resonated especially with Gen Z filmgoers.

“There’s a mental health crisis now with young people in our country — it’s especially acute for young men right now. There’s a friendship crisis”, Durkin said.

“The pandemic created a bunch of shock-wave effects that we haven’t fully documented, much less addressed. This movie touches on some really important themes”The performance of “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” fuels an already-robust summer box office, which has been buoyed by such major releases as “Toy Story 5” and “The Odyssey”. Dergarabedian said on Sunday that the combination of “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” with another hit, “The Odyssey”, created the “all-time biggest domestic weekend” in movie theatres. — Reuters

FEATURES

THE OMANI WOMAN CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN AT SEA



HIBBA AL KINDI

MEET 29-year-old Reem al Humaidi, a boat captain, freediver and founder of Ocean Emotions, a sea-tourism company creating safe and welcoming sea experiences for women.

Just six years ago, she could not even swim. What began as an unexpected setback during her college years ultimately led her to discover a passion that transformed her life.

In 2020, Al Humaidi was going through a difficult period in her studies which resulted in a three-month break. Unsure of what to do next, she booked a trip to the Daymaniyat Islands.

“I booked the trip and thought, ‘Let’s go and see what happens’. During the trip, I saw a whale shark for the first time and was amazed by how beautiful the islands were”, she said.

“At the time, I did not know how to swim and knew nothing about the sea. After the trip, I asked the owner of the company whether he would accept me as a freelancer so that I could understand the field and gain experience.”

“That was when my passion for the sea began. It felt like I had found what I really wanted to do”.

Al Humaidi began working with tourism operators in Muscat, first as a customer supervisor and social media manager before moving into a female supervisor and guide role.

At the same time, she taught herself how to swim.

“At the time, I did not have the money to book swimming lessons, so I taught myself. Whenever I met someone who knew how to swim, I would ask them for advice until I gradually gained the confidence to be in the water”, she said.

In 2021, Al Humaidi started working towards obtaining her boat captain’s licence.

“It took me a long time because becoming a boat captain is not only about understanding the boat. You also need to understand the nature surrounding you”, she said.

“Most importantly, you have to gain the confidence to lead the trip, operate the boat independently and take responsibility for your guests”.

After several years, Al Humaidi obtained her boat captain’s licence in 2025 and founded her company, Ocean Emotions, with the goal of making marine tourism more accessible to women.

“Ocean Emotions started as a sea tourism company. We wanted to gain the trust of our female customers and create a more female-friendly environment for trips to the Daymaniyat Islands”, she said.

“I love seeing girls thrive and enjoy themselves near the water. It means a lot, especially because, for some of the girls, it is their first time trusting someone enough to go on a sea trip”, she said.

Al Humaidi was surprised to learn that her female-only trips were attracting tourists from abroad.

“A lot of people travel from outside Oman specifically to join one of my trips, which is something I am very grateful for”, she said.



A sea turtle swims underwater during one of Ocean Emotions’ trips to the Daymaniyat Islands.



In 2025, Reem founded Ocean Emotions, a tourism company created with the aim of making marine tourism more accessible to women.

Among them were two women from Qatar who requested her as their captain after seeing her videos online.

“I was surprised when they told me they had travelled from Qatar not only for a holiday, but also specifically to join one of my trips”.

The company has since expanded its trips to include everyone while continuing

to dedicate several trips each month to women. It has also moved beyond the sea by introducing land trips.

“I would love to explore more of Oman and showcase the country beautifully through tourism”, Al Humaidi said.

Beyond her work as a boat captain and tour operator, Al Humaidi is also a freediver.

Inspired by Omani freediver Omar al Ghailani, she saved money while still a student to enrol in her first freediving course.

“I was impressed by how smoothly he moved through the water”, she said.

Today, she has reached a depth of 32 metres and continues to train regularly.

“Some people ask how I can go that deep, but I see it as a very peaceful, almost Zen-like environment. It is just you and the rope”, she said.

For Al Humaidi, freediving is also a mental challenge that has taught her to remain calm and manage her thoughts underwater.

Looking ahead, she hopes to compete in freediving tournaments.

“As far as I know, there is currently no Omani women’s national freediving record. I would love to compete in a tournament and see how far I can go”, she said.