

OMAN
Observer
عُضَائِد

VOL. 45, NO. 272
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

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RYBAKINA OUSTS
OSAKA TO BOOK
TORONTO SEMIFINAL
AGAINST GAUFF

RAS MADRAKAH BEACH AREA HIT BY OIL POLLUTION

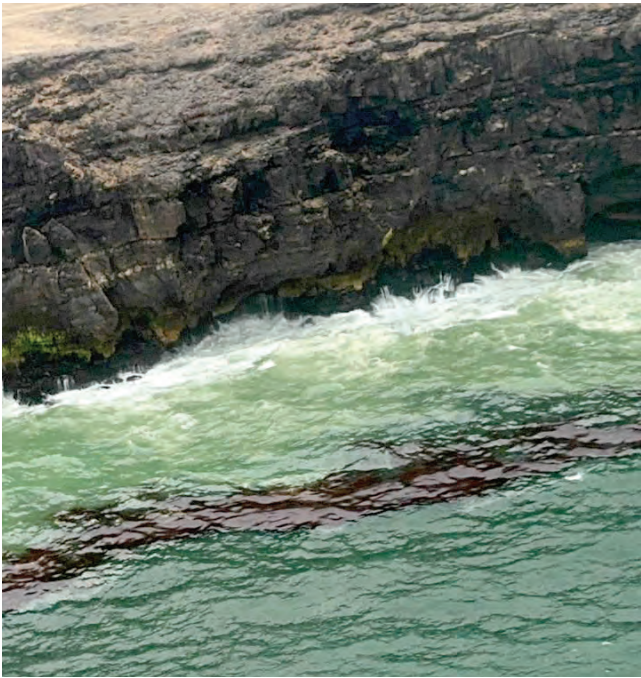
A F F E C T E D C O A S T A L S T R E T C H I S U P T O 4 0 K M I N L E N G T H

THE Environment Authority continues to monitor the repercussions of the vessel grounding incident near Al Qibliyah Island, part of the Al Hallaniyat Islands archipelago in the Governorate of Dhofar.

Efforts are under way to conduct and execute monitoring, survey, and environmental handling operations in coordination with relevant entities, using technical monitoring means, satellite imagery, and numerical models to track the movement and spread of oil slicks and predict their potential landing sites.

The authority clarified that

The authority called on fishermen, beachgoers, and members of the community not to approach any spotted materials or pollutants and to report them to the competent authorities.



Teams from the Environment Authority are making all efforts to limit the spread of the oil spill.

Wednesday’s monitoring results showed that some beaches in the Ras Madrasah area were affected by oil pollution, with expectations of an affected coastal stretch reaching up to 40 km in length in the same area, alongside the possibility of the southern beaches of Masirah Island being affected in the coming hours within a range of 10 to 20 km according to current data. Meanwhile, specialised teams continue follow-up and response efforts and take necessary measures to limit its spread and minimise its potential impacts, giving priority to areas of high environmental sensitivity.

The authority called on

fishermen, beachgoers, and members of the community not to approach any spotted materials or pollutants and to report them to the competent authorities, reaffirming its continued tracking of updates and announcing any developments through official channels.

The public should also consider the health and safety hazards of the toxic exposure because crude oil and petroleum products release harmful volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that cause respiratory distress, nausea, dizziness and skin irritation when inhaled or touched. — ONA

IN BRIEF

OMAN FLAYS COLOMBIA’S DECISION ON OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

The Sultanate of Oman has denounced the decision of the Government of the Republic of Colombia to recognise Israel’s sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan. Oman affirmed that this decision constitutes a violation of international law and contradicts the resolutions of international legitimacy, foremost among them United Nations Security Council Resolution No 497 of 1981. In a statement issued on Wednesday

by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman reiterated its steadfast position that the Golan is occupied Syrian territory, affirming its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic over all its lands. Oman also called upon all states to adhere to the Charter of the United Nations, the provisions of international law, and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

ACTIVITIES OF ‘AIR SPORTS VILLAGE’ BEGIN IN DHOFAR



Activities of a week-long event titled ‘Air Sports Village’ kicked off in the Governorate of Dhofar on Wednesday. The event, which will run until August 17, is organised by Oman Air Sports Committee in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The opening ceremony saw aerial displays lighting the skies, to the thrill of visitors and tourists in the governorate. The activities included paragliding, kite flying and drone demos. Dr Ahmed al Alawi, Chairman of Oman Air Sports Committee, said, “The event seeks to make air sports an integral part of the community’s culture, in addition to promoting tourism in the Governorate of Dhofar.”

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SHORTTAKES

Civilisation exhibition commences in Dhofar

SALALAH: The “My Identity: Oman – Identity and Civilization” event and exhibition on Wednesday commenced at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Compound for Culture and Entertainment in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate. Organised by the Hidayah Waqf Foundation, the event will run until 19 August 2026.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

The event features an exhibition comprising a variety of pavilions, including a pavilion on rights in Omani society, a pavilion on Omani values in urban jurisprudence, and a pavilion on the values and ethics of Omani merchants in spreading Islam, alongside a pavilion showcasing Omani contributions in various fields of the humanities, and an Omani village pavilion. — ONA

835 COCHLEAR IMPLANTS BOOST HEARING CARE AT AL NAHDA HOSPITAL

THE COCHLEAR implant team at Al Nahda Hospital has performed more than 835 surgeries as part of its ongoing programme to enhance specialised services. The hospital affirms its leadership as a reference centre for this type of surgeries in the Sultanate of Oman.

A cochlear implant surgery involves the insertion of an electronic device into the inner ear for people who suffer severe hearing loss. The device stimulates the auditory nerve and helps the brain receive sound signals.

Al Nahda Hospital cochlear implant team goes on periodic visits to different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman to perform such operations and facilitate access to specialised care as part of a programme of diversification of health services. The Hospital lays emphasis on the importance of early diagnosis of cases of hearing

A cochlear implant surgery involves the insertion of an electronic device into the inner ear for people who suffer severe hearing loss. The device stimulates the auditory nerve and helps the brain receive sound signals.

Al Nahda Hospital cochlear implant team performed one of the smallest cochlear implant surgeries in the world. — ONA

loss, notably among children. It stresses that cochlear implantation contributes to the rehabilitation of auditory and speech abilities.

Recently, Al Nahda Hospital cochlear implant team performed one of the smallest cochlear implant surgeries in the world. The surgery was conducted on a 9-week-old baby. It was a medical accomplishment that reflects Al Nahda Hospital's advanced level of expertise and competence in this highly specialised domain. — ONA

بنك عمان العربي
OMAN ARAB BANK

Dear Shareholders,

I am pleased to present the financial results of Oman Arab Bank SAOG (the "Bank") for the second quarter ended 30 June 2026.

Operating Environment

During the second quarter of 2026, Oman's economy continued to demonstrate resilience, supported by ongoing economic diversification efforts, sustained investment activity, and positive momentum across key non-oil sectors. Against this backdrop, Oman Arab Bank remained focused on executing its strategic priorities, maintaining prudent capital management, and creating sustainable long-term value for its stakeholders.

Consolidated Financial Performance

The Bank's performance for the first half of 2026 shows a consolidated net profit after tax of **ﷂ127 million**, up 21% compared to **ﷂ145 million** for the same period in 2025.

Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at **ﷂ570 million** for the first half of 2026, up 2% compared to **ﷂ557 million** for the same period in 2025 due to a 5% increase in net financing income by and a 5% decline in interest expense.

Operating income increased by 4% to **ﷂ717 million** in the first half of 2026 compared to **ﷂ688 million** in the first half of 2025, while operating expenses increased by 2% to reach **ﷂ385 million** compared to **ﷂ378 million** for the same period in 2025. This has led to an increase in operating profit by 7% to reach **ﷂ331 million** in the first half of 2026 compared to **ﷂ309 million** in the first half of 2025.

Net allowances for expected credit losses recorded **ﷂ121 million** in the first half of 2026, down 11% compared to **ﷂ135 million** in the first half of 2025.

Net loans and advances, including Islamic finance, grew 4% to **ﷂ3,655 million** at 30 June 2026 compared to **ﷂ3,720 million** at 31 December 2025. Customer deposits reached **ﷂ3,812 million** by the end of the first half of 2026, up 1% compared to **ﷂ3,775 million** at 31 December 2025.

Performance of the Parent Company

The parent company recorded a net profit after tax of **ﷂ178 million** in the first half of 2026, up 21% compared to **ﷂ148 million** in the first half of 2025. Interest income declined 2%, driven by lower recoveries, partly offset by higher interest income from loans and investments. Interest expense decreased by 5% due to a favourable change in the deposit mix and higher CASA.

Operating income reached **ﷂ575 million** in the first half of 2026, up 4% compared to **ﷂ555 million** in the first half of 2025, driven by an increase in net fees and commissions by 15% and share of profit from subsidiary by 13%. Operating expenses increased by 1% to reach **ﷂ281 million** in the first half of 2026, while operating profit recorded an increase of 6%. Net allowances for expected credit losses decreased by 17% to reach **ﷂ92 million** in the first half of 2026 compared to **ﷂ113 million** in the first half of 2025.

Net loans and advances stood at **ﷂ2,586 million** at 30 June 2026, up 3% compared to **ﷂ2,514 million** at 31 December 2025. Customer deposits reached **ﷂ2,461 million** at 30 June 2026 compared to **ﷂ2,495 million** at 31 December 2025.

Performance of Al Itz Islamic Bank

Al Itz delivered strong financial performance, achieving a net profit of **ﷂ5.8 million** for the first half of 2026 – a 13% increase compared to **ﷂ5.2 million**

CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2026

	Unaudited 30-Jun-26 ﷂ'000	Audited 31-Dec-25 ﷂ'000	Unaudited 30-Jun-26 ﷂ'000	Audited 31-Dec-25 ﷂ'000
Cash and balances with central bank	171,502	193,796	81,445	114,052
Due from banks	169,637	73,514	46,664	62,208
Loans, advances and financing to customers	3,654,824	3,720,017	2,586,091	2,513,740
Investment securities	519,763	502,482	351,109	347,508
Investment in subsidiary	-	-	149,808	145,941
Property and equipment	56,448	39,573	32,147	32,797
Intangible assets	5,815	5,070	-	-
Other assets	48,056	51,621	35,258	45,502
Total assets	4,709,067	4,586,983	3,362,720	3,261,748
Due to banks	47,953	23,389	22,135	22,558
Customer deposits	3,811,953	3,714,537	2,481,209	2,484,703
Borrowed funds	57,750	57,750	57,750	57,750
Other liabilities	73,842	75,174	55,082	61,886
Taxation	15,203	14,951	18,004	12,942
Total liabilities	4,006,711	3,945,801	2,608,986	2,650,137
Share capital	216,941	216,941	216,941	216,941
Share premium	36,568	36,568	36,568	36,568
Legal reserve	37,235	50,325	37,343	57,813
General reserve	25,500	25,500	25,500	25,500
Special reserve	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637
Fair value reserve	5,492	2,547	5,193	2,248
Impairment reserve	20,400	20,400	20,400	20,400
Retained earnings	92,220	91,741	93,515	92,491
Shareholders' equity	454,346	454,916	459,904	485,345
Perpetual Tier 1 capital bonds	244,016	186,265	214,015	158,266
Total equity	702,359	641,182	673,940	611,611
Total equity and liabilities	4,709,067	4,586,983	3,362,720	3,261,748
Net assets value per share (ﷂ)	0.223	0.227	0.228	0.227
Contingent liabilities and commitments	216,810	331,023	216,354	170,130

CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	Consolidated 30-Jun-26 ﷂ'000	Consolidated 30-Jun-25 ﷂ'000	Parent 30-Jun-26 ﷂ'000	Parent 30-Jun-25 ﷂ'000
Interest income	80,530	82,206	30,570	82,531
Interest expense	(40,047)	(42,211)	(40,047)	(42,211)
Net interest income	40,483	40,095	40,523	40,320
Income from Islamic financing and investing activities	38,676	37,006	-	-
Profit paid on participatory deposits and banks	(22,191)	(21,326)	-	-
Net income from Islamic financing and investing activities	16,485	15,680	-	-
Net fee and commission income	1,517	9,607	8,515	7,576
Net income from investment securities	593	605	444	443
Other operating income	2,786	2,810	2,128	2,190
Share of profit from subsidiary	-	-	5,642	5,162
Total income	71,674	68,757	57,452	55,491
Operating expenses	(38,543)	(37,840)	(28,089)	(27,779)
Net allowances for credit losses	(12,689)	(13,527)	(9,162)	(10,069)
Profit before tax	21,033	17,390	20,201	16,644
Income tax expense	(3,359)	(2,790)	(2,371)	(1,889)
Net Profit for the period	17,674	14,600	17,830	14,755
Other comprehensive income / (loss)	-	-	-	-
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent period	-	-	-	-
- Equity investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	3,455	(82)	2,752	(19)
Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent period	-	-	-	-
- Debt investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	(141)	1,071	161	1,077
Share of OCI from subsidiary	-	-	201	118
Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the period	3,314	989	3,314	1,016
Total comprehensive income for the period – net of tax	20,988	15,589	21,144	15,771
Earnings per share:				
Basic and diluted (ﷂ)	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005

TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description of Project	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Distribution of Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
OWW/T/ 10044/2026	Construction of Treated Effluent Transmission Pipeline from A'Seeb to Barka	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	27/8/2026	21/9/2026
OWW/T/ 10047/2026	Supply of Decentralized Sewage Treatment Plants	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 1000/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	27/8/2026	21/9/2026
OWW/T/ 10048/2026	Design and Construction of Al Musannah Treated Effluent Line	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	27/8/2026	21/9/2026
OW/T/ 10054/2026	Call off Contract for Supply & Delivery of PPE's to OWWSC Warehouse for Five Years	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	27/8/2026	21/9/2026
OW/T/ 10058/2026	Consultancy Services for Price Control Review 3 (PCR3)	Local companies Registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	27/8/2026	21/9/2026

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Portal) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into Supplier Portal (Supplier Login: <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/> → **Supplier Hub** → **Tenders** → **Supplier Login**).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Supplier-Hub/Vendors-Management/Vendor-Registration> to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services Supplier Portal e-tendering page (All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website <https://nws.nama.om> & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of tender@owwsc.nama.om

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Real Estate Khareef Season In Numbers 2026



+26
Thousand
Visitors



7+ Million
Investment
Value



144
Sales
Transactions

409
Expressions
of Interest



55
Real Estate
Projects
Showcased

43
Participating
Real Estate
Developers



+10
Participating
Media Outlets



+150
Media Features
& Coverage

+3 Million
Media &
Digital Reach



7
Participating
Government
Entities

18
Seminars &
Workshops



12
B2B
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خريف
ظفار
KHAREEF
DHO FAR

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

THE misty Dhofar, drenched in the Khareef, has been a hotbed for tourists from across the world since the season officially began on June 21, while sweltering summer is pushing everyone indoors in the rest of the country.

The mighty mountains of Dhofar wear green velvet robes during the Khareef Dhofar Season, which is typically from June to mid-September, transforming the governorate from a desert into a lush green paradise with misty mountains, cool drizzle, and flowing waterfalls.

While Wadi Darbat, one of Salalah's most famous attractions during the Khareef season, boasts lush green landscapes, seasonal waterfalls, boating activities and attractions for families and friends alike, Al Mughsail Beach, one of Oman's most spectacular coastal destinations, offers natural blowholes, stunning coastal scenery and scenic mountain roads.

Places like Ayn Athum, which is a sure bet for nature lovers for the seasonal waterfalls, beautiful hiking trails, and misty mountain landscapes, mesmerise visitors. Ittin Mountain, Salalah's most

The largest segment of visitors to Dhofar are Omani citizens, accounting for roughly 70 per cent to 75 per cent of total seasonal visitors, driven by domestic tourism from Muscat and other governorates. This is followed by citizens from neighbouring GCC countries, making up around 15 per cent to 17 per cent of arrivals, followed by other international visitors from various Asian, European, and African countries, who account for the remaining 10 per cent to 12 per cent of total tourists.

MISTY DHO FAR BECKONS

popular viewpoint during Khareef, offers kaleidoscopic city views, with cool weather and foggy scenery.

A favourite destination for families and visitors seeking a peaceful atmosphere, Ayn Razat is home to beautiful gardens and natural water streams offering a bucketful of mind-soothing spots and relaxing picnic areas.

For the history-loving, discerning visitor, Khor Rori offers a treasure trove of stories from a bygone era. The site has earned a reputation as one of Dhofar's most important

historical and natural attractions.

Residents say the occasional rains and the mist are the two factors that attract regional as well as international tourists to the 'Land of Frankincense'.

The official total cumulative visitor count for the ongoing 2026 Khareef season in Dhofar has not yet been fully published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

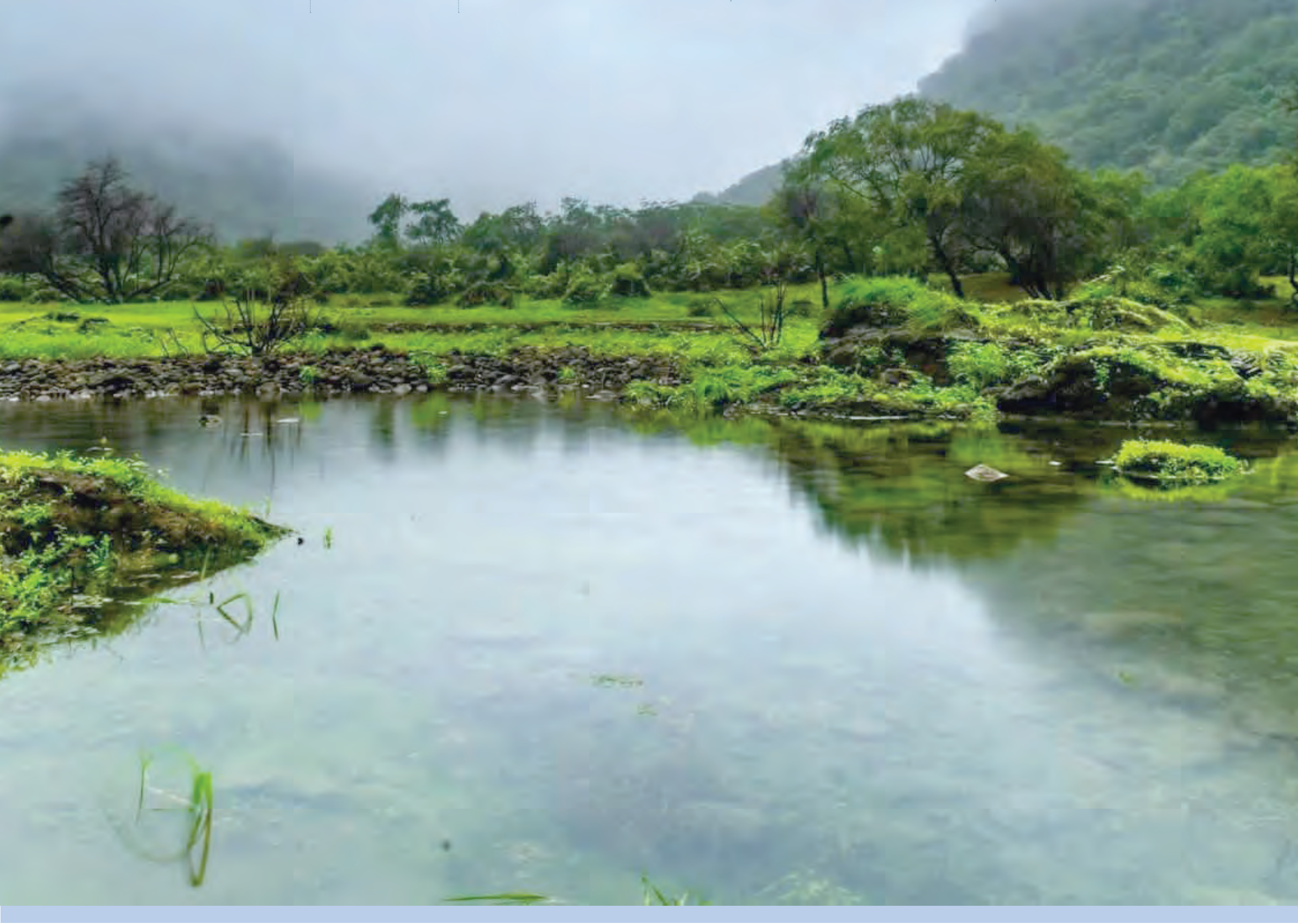
However, data tracking the early weeks of the season shows that Salalah International Airport handled 154,529 arriving

passengers between June 21 and July 31, 2026, marking an 8percent increase compared to the same period in 2025.

The largest segment of visitors to Dhofar comprises Omani citizens, who account for roughly 70 to 75 per cent of total seasonal visitors, driven by domestic tourism from Muscat and other governorates. This is followed by citizens from neighbouring GCC countries, making up around 15 per cent to 17 per cent of arrivals, followed by other international visitors from various Asian, European, and African countries, accounting for the remaining 10 per cent to 12 per cent of total tourists.

According to reports from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, as many as 154,529 passengers arrived via Salalah Airport from June 21 through July 31, 2026. During the same period, inbound flights to Salalah increased by 7 per cent, reaching 1,758 flights.

"We are targeting over 1 million total visitors for the full June 21 to September 21 season, following last year's final count of 1,070,738 visitors and with this trend, we are hopeful that we can achieve this," a spokesperson from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said.



WORLD

SHORT TAKES

ERDOGAN EYES
EXPANSION OF
REGIONAL DEFENCE
AGREEMENT



RECEP TAYYIP
ERDOGAN

Turkish President

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday he hoped more countries would join a defence agreement signed last week between Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan aimed at stabilising a region wracked by conflict. “Our

vision for it is not limited to the three countries,” the Turkish leader told the London-based Asharq Al-Awsat daily. “Rather we aspire for it to grow, and perhaps appropriate conditions will emerge one day for all countries of the region to gather under its umbrella.”

Erdogan said the pact emerged out of the “new circumstances” in the Middle East with regional players seeking to assume greater responsibility for their own security and stability. “Regional issues should be resolved by regional actors, and with this action, we consider that we have taken a first step toward achieving that goal,” he said. “Resolving regional issues must be carried out away from formulas imposed from the outside. We know very well that solutions imported from abroad only bring disasters,” he told the Saudi-owned newspaper.

The pact, which consolidates three major US allies into an alternative security architecture that rejects Israel’s hegemony, seeks to boost security cooperation, while also opening the way for “developing joint projects in the defence industries”, Erdogan said. Since the onset of the war, Saudi Arabia has grown closer to Türkiye, with whom it previously had fraught ties, with Erdogan saying Ankara and Riyadh would “take steps that will elevate relations between the two countries to much higher levels”. — **AFP**

SPAIN REJECTS
DISCUSSING
SOVEREIGNTY OF
AFRICAN ENCLAVES

MADRID: The status of the North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla as Spanish territories is not up for discussion, Spanish officials said on Wednesday, after Morocco’s justice minister reiterated Rabat’s sovereignty claims over the cities. The remarks by Abdellatif Ouahbi to Asharq TV marked the first time Rabat has publicly raised the contentious issue since Ceuta’s border crisis in late July, during which an estimated 72,000 migrants briefly crossed into the enclave. Ouahbi said his country always raised the issue of the cities’ status in negotiations with Spain, with a long-term goal of achieving a resolution through dialogue.

“Ceuta and Melilla aren’t just Spanish; they’re super-Spanish and cannot be touched,” Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles told reporters in Ceuta when asked about Ouahbi’s comments. “Any attack on Ceuta and Melilla is an attack on Spain as a whole. It must never happen again,” she added, referring to the border crisis.

Separately, Morocco’s Interior Ministry said on Wednesday it had stepped up security near the borders with Ceuta and Melilla over online calls for another mass crossing attempt on August 15, warning it would prosecute organisers and participants. “The ministry calls on everyone to remain vigilant and responsible and not to be drawn into such suspicious and misleading calls, given the risks they may pose to people’s lives,” it said in a statement, also urging Spain to accelerate the return of unaccompanied Moroccan minors in Ceuta. — **Reuters**

ONGOING ATTACKS

RSF renews assault on Sudan’s Al Obeid



The Sudanese Rapid Support Forces renewed its assault on the city of Al Obeid on Wednesday and stepped up drone and land attacks across the country this week following losses on several fronts. Witnesses in Al Obeid said the strategically important city in the Kordofan region was targeted by eight drones, triggering army air defences. The capital Khartoum and Atbara to the north, among other cities, reported drone strikes as well. — **Reuters**

OVERLOADED VESSEL

Zimbabwe boat accident toll rises to 44



At least 44 people died after a passenger ferry capsized in a lake in Zimbabwe, roughly trebling an earlier estimate of the death count. Investigations suggested the boat was overloaded when it went over during heavy winds on Lake Kariba. The vessel was built to carry 90 passengers, but more than 120 people could have been on board as it crossed the lake. So far, 67 people have been rescued and taken to a primary school for medical attention. — **Reuters**

OPERATING FACILITIES

Syria receives 1st shipments at Tartous port



Syria received its first shipments of wheat and cement materials this week at a berth previously used by Russian forces, according to officials at the Tartous port. Both shipments arrived two days after Damascus announced it had reached an agreement with Moscow on the future of Russian bases at Tartous and the Hmeimim airport, both in Syria’s northwestern regions. Syria’s foreign ministry said the deal would see Syria take over management of civilian facilities. — **Reuters**

Lebanon passes sweeping amnesty law for prisoners

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s parliament on Wednesday passed a sweeping and long-awaited amnesty law that should benefit thousands of prisoners and wanted people, in the first legislation of its kind since 1991. The law, which had been a demand of various political factions and a topic of debate for years, aims to reduce prison overcrowding with many

inmates awaiting trial for years. The office of the country’s parliament speaker announced the “approval of a draft law aimed at granting a general amnesty and exceptionally reducing the terms of certain sentences”. Authorities did not immediately announce the number of people that would benefit from the law.

According to Imad al-Hout, one of the lawmakers in favour of the bill, the law reduced the sentences of those facing death and life imprisonment to 17 prison years. That is equivalent to 12 years and nine months of actual imprisonment in Lebanon, where a prison year is calculated as nine months. The law also calls for the

release of inmates detained for more than 12 prison years without charges as their trial continues. In its 2025 report, the country’s National Human Rights Commission said that prisons had an overcrowding rate of 300 per cent, with prison authorities reporting at least 6,268 inmates by the end of March. — **AFP**

Colombia quake toll ups
200 as rescue continues



Rescuers and volunteers search for survivors amid the rubble of a collapsed building after an earthquake in Cali, Colombia. — **AFP**

COLOMBIAN RESCUERS pulled a 32-year-old woman alive from the rubble of a collapsed building, sparking cheers and applause as exhausted crews raced to find more survivors from the country’s strongest earthquake in a century. Daniela Largo was carried from the wreckage wrapped in a blue blanket as rescuers embraced and relatives shouted out with joy. Soldiers, firefighters and volunteers continued to scour collapsed buildings across western Colombia after Monday’s 7.4-magnitude quake.

Authorities revised the death toll down to 216 after local officials in Cali corrected earlier figures. “We were losing hope and then we received a call,” said her mother Sandra Milena Perez in Pereira. Perez said a local resident heard cries for help beneath the rubble and joined neighbours in removing debris before professional rescuers arrived. “Thanks to him, today we’re happy,” she said. “At home her 12-year-old son is waiting for her.”

In Pereira and in Cali, emergency crews used cranes, dogs and heavy machinery to search ruined buildings while volunteers formed human chains to clear debris by hand, hoping to reach people still trapped beneath collapsed structures. As darkness fell, families prepared to sleep in parks

In Pereira and in Cali, emergency crews used cranes, dogs and heavy machinery to search ruined buildings while volunteers formed human chains to clear debris by hand, hoping to reach people still trapped beneath collapsed structures

as aftershocks rattled damaged neighbourhoods where entire blocks had been reduced to rubble.

The quake overwhelmed parts of the health system, turning the rescue effort into one of Colombia’s largest disaster responses in years. “The house came down on top of us. I wasn’t able to get out,” said Beatriz Arcos, who was trapped with her husband and mother beneath their collapsed condominium. “It took about an hour to get us out.” Arcos said she was hospitalised after a concrete block fell on her back. Her husband and mother were also injured.

In Cali, residents armed with picks, shovels and their bare hands joined firefighters in digging through collapsed buildings. Rescuers stopped every few minutes to call

into the rubble and listen for any response. “We’re doing this with our hands, with gloves” said volunteer Pablo Cesar Ruiz “It’s sad to see time slipping away.”

In Pereira, army units and sniffer dogs combed through twisted concrete and exposed steel. At one site, a rescue squad leader abruptly raised his fist, stopping workers so they could listen for signs of life. Volunteers formed human chains, passing bricks and chunks of masonry hand-to-hand to clear paths into collapsed structures.

For many families, the desperate search was becoming a vigil. “My aunt lived there. She’s under the rubble,” said Jorge Gonzalez, standing beside a collapsed building in Pereira. “I arrived yesterday and I haven’t left, and until they find her body I don’t intend to leave here.”

From the air, neighbourhoods in Cali appeared flattened, with piles of grey rubble replacing entire blocks of homes and apartment buildings.

Nearby, cars lay crushed beneath fallen walls and concrete slabs. On one mound of debris, a young couple climbed over broken masonry searching for belongings. They recovered a box from inside a child’s bright red bedside table.

Many survivors spent the night outdoors, either because their homes were damaged or because they feared aftershocks. — **AFP**

SECOND FERRY CATCHES FIRE IN INDONESIA

LEMBAR: One woman died and more than 170 were rescued after a ferry caught fire off the Indonesian tourist island of Bali on Wednesday, a rescue official said, in the second such incident in days. A navy vessel and other ships evacuated 172 people from the stricken passenger vessel, including two Australian tourists, search and rescue official Muhamad Hariyadi said. A 19-year-old Indonesian woman was declared dead, said Hariyadi, an official on Lombok island, where the ferry had been headed from Bali.

Hariyadi said passengers were evacuated on at least three different vessels, including a navy ship and another ferry that rushed to help in the early morning hours. Search and rescue vessels were at the scene and a helicopter was conducting surveillance from the air. Hariyadi earlier said there were no passengers or crew left on the blazing ferry. There was no immediate information on people injured or missing. Five people died last week when a ferry caught fire off Java island. — **AFP**

UNCOMMONDECEPTION



US President Donald Trump boards Air Force One in Cleveland, Ohio. — Reuters

Trump says his plane faced ‘greater risk’ in secret flight change

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he secretly switched planes in Türkiye last month at the direction of the US Secret Service, but that the plane he ultimately flew on was still more vulnerable than Air Force One. Following a Nato summit in Ankara, Trump was transferred from Air Force One to a military plane via a catering truck in an extraordinary deception prompted by an Iranian assassination threat, US media reported.

The White House did not disclose the change and it remained a secret until the Washington Post first reported it on Monday. Some media commentators questioned whether the operation left Trump’s aides and journalists travelling with him at risk aboard the plane presumed to be carrying the president. “I think actually the plane that I flew on was at greater risk,” Trump told reporters on Tuesday. “I think it was at greater risk because that would be the plane I think that they would be more likely to go for.”

Trump was accompanied by several close aides when he secretly transferred from Air Force One to a smaller military aircraft in Türkiye last month, The Washington Post reported on Wednesday. White House deputy chief of staff Dan Scavino, executive assistant Natalie Harp and Oval Office operations director Walt Nauta made the move in the catering truck with Trump, along with several lower-profile aides, the Post reported. No Cabinet officials joined Trump in the truck, according to the newspaper.

After a day of social media memes portraying Trump as hiding out in the catering truck, the image-conscious president, who often promotes memes of himself as a bold and courageous leader, said he was following the direction of the Secret Service, the agency that protects the president.

“Well, it’s only up to Secret Service. I just follow what they’d like to do, so I go by Secret Service and the military,” Trump said. “I guess there was a threat out there. I didn’t really ask too much about it. I get a lot of threats,” Trump said. The White House said at the time that the president was flying aboard Air Force One from Türkiye to Britain. But moments after Trump boarded the plane, he left it in secret via the catering truck and boarded another aircraft for the flight to Britain, the Post said on Monday, quoting unnamed sources.

Trump had taken a newly renovated Qatari-donated jet to Ankara for the Nato summit but unexpectedly announced he would use an older Air Force One when departing the country, a move that prompted questions about the newer plane’s security. — Reuters

GREECE ARRESTS MORE THAN 280 FOR STARTING FIRES IN 2026 SO FAR

ATHEN: More than 280 people have been arrested in Greece this year so far over fire-related offences, the fire service said on Wednesday, as the country remains on high alert for new blazes. The figure is down on the previous two years, after the Greek government toughened penalties against those found guilty of starting fires in recent years. In total, 281 arrests were made since January — including 252 for fires caused by negligence and 29 for deliberate arson, fire service

spokesman Yannis Atropios said on public television channel ERT.

Between January and August 2024, 360 arrests related to fires took place, though only 12 people were placed in pre-trial detention, according to the Greek fire service. It said 315 arrests were made and nine people were placed in pre-trial detention during the same period in 2025. Arrests for arson have steadily increased between 2014 and July 2025.

Those responsible for starting

fires in Greece now face sentences of up to 20 years in prison and fines of up to 200,000 euros. Greece remains on high alert for fires on Wednesday, days after a blaze destroyed more than 11,000 hectares of pine forest, scrubland and farmland near a seaside resort northwest of the capital Athens. Due to high winds the fire took five days to bring under control. On Wednesday a man was arrested in Thessaloniki for his involvement in more than five fires over a two-week period. — AFP

Ukraine pounds grain terminals at Russia’s port

UKRAINE HAMMERED Russia’s Black Sea port city of Novorossiysk in a massive overnight drone attack that put two major grain terminals out of action, according to Russian industry sources, raising fears in global markets of a disruption to supplies. Russia is the world’s largest wheat exporter and most of those exports are shipped via its Black Sea ports like Novorossiysk. Russia’s main grain lobby group warned last month that Ukrainian attacks could shut down grain exports via the Black Sea in the near future, pushing up prices and causing hunger in Africa and the Middle East.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram that Ukraine had hit Russia’s Novorossiysk naval base with drones, missiles and unmanned boats. Russia moved some of its Black Sea Fleet vessels to Novorossiysk after Kyiv’s forces attacked them repeatedly in Crimea, which Moscow seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Veniamin Kondratyev, the governor of Krasnodar region, where Novorossiysk is located, said a “massive” wave of Ukrainian attacks had targeted the area and killed at least two people, including an 8-year-old child. Andrei Kravchenko, the mayor of Novorossiysk, said the Black Sea port’s water supply had been suspended and an emergency situation had been declared following the attack, which damaged four unspecified enterprises, more than two dozen residential buildings and some educational facilities. Unverified video on social media showed images of a tower of flames and smoke rising from somewhere in Novorossiysk.

Amid fears of disruptions to wheat supplies on global markets, Chicago wheat futures rose around 3 per cent on Wednesday following reports of the Novorossiysk attack. Russian



A damaged private house following an overnight attack in Novorossiysk, Russia. — Reuters

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram that Ukraine had hit Russia’s Novorossiysk naval base with drones, missiles and unmanned boats. Russia moved some of its Black Sea Fleet vessels to Novorossiysk after Kyiv’s forces attacked them repeatedly in Crimea

strikes on ships in the Black Sea have drastically reduced grain shipments from Ukraine, which is also a major grain exporter. Shipments tumbled 76 per cent in the first two weeks of August, versus the same period last year, Ukraine’s agriculture ministry said.

Novorossiysk also hosts oil export infrastructure, including for the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which is owned partly by US oil majors Chevron and Exxon Mobil and carries Kazakh oil exports to market. The Financial Times reported on Wednesday that, following a request from US Vice-President JD Vance in late July, Ukraine had agreed not to target CPC infrastructure and non-Russian vessels, as long as they were not under Ukrainian sanctions or carrying Russian oil or other cargo. Ukraine’s presidency did not respond to a request for comment on the story.

There was no indication that the CPC or tankers collecting oil from the pipeline had been struck during the overnight attacks. In Sevastopol in Crimea, more than three dozen drones were downed, the city’s Russian-installed governor, Mikhail

Razvozhayev, said on Telegram. Separately, a Russian attack caused a fire at a shopping mall in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, regional Governor Ivan Fedorov said on Telegram, posting pictures of a building ablaze. A Russian attack on Odesa, Ukraine’s largest seaport, damaged infrastructure there, Serhiy Lysak, head of the city’s military administration, said on Telegram, without giving details. Moscow has intensified its strikes on Ukraine’s logistics and warehouse facilities in response to Kyiv’s attacks on Russian energy, port and logistic hubs. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday threatened to seize ships belonging to European countries in retaliation for plans to sell off cargo seized from Russian “shadow fleet” vessels. Several European companies have intercepted ships carrying Russian oil in contravention of European sanctions targeting the vital revenue source. New sanctions passed last month permit EU members to sell the oil or any other cargo seized from the ships. — Reuters/AFP

Europe heatwave: over 90 mn set for temperatures above 35°C

PARIS: Areas of Europe home to at least 92 million people — particularly in France, Italy, and Spain — are set for temperatures over 35°C on Wednesday in the continent’s latest heatwave, according to calculations. Europe is the planet’s fastest-warming continent and in some places is ill-equipped to deal with hot weather. Repeated heatwaves have fuelled a historically hot summer of drought and wildfires, and contributed to the deaths of thousands of people so far. Scientists blame growing heatwaves on human-caused climate change.

Temperatures are also forecast to surpass 30°C for more than half of Europe’s population, excluding Türkiye, amounting to around 300 million people, according to an analysis based on

German weather service forecasts and 2025 population projections from the Joint Research Centre. The most intense heat is expected in Western and Southern Europe. Temperatures are set to climb above 35°C in regions of France home to 30 million people, though mountainous areas and the northeast of the country are expected to be spared. Similar heat levels are forecast for 29 million people in Italy and for 21 million in Spain. The heatwave extends toward the Balkans, notably Greece and the Adriatic coast — including Albania and Croatia. Further north, temperatures in the United Kingdom are expected to rise above 30°C for 43 million people. The usually-temperate country is on track to



A woman uses a hand fan to cool off amid a heatwave, in St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. — Reuters

record its hottest summer ever, the official Met Office agency said on Tuesday. A method is used similar to that of the Austrian NGO Klimadashboard to calculate the figures, cross-referencing population density with the

weather forecast model from the Deutscher Wetterdienst (DWD) — Germany’s national meteorological service — published at 03:00 GMT. Residents are counted if the model forecasts temperatures above 30°C or 35°C at their

location at any point during the day. As the model has a resolution of approximately 6.5 km it does not fully capture urban heat-island effects, when cities are significantly warmer than surrounding rural areas, David Jablonski of NGO Klimadashboard said. Consequently, the analysis “likely underestimates the number of people affected in densely populated urban areas”, the organisation notes on its “European Heat Tracker” website. France on Wednesday recorded a more than 20 per cent shortfall in nuclear power production capacity, a record deficit caused by environmentally related outages linked to drought, extreme heat and a jellyfish invasion. France uses nuclear power to generate around

70 per cent of its electricity. The country has seen nuclear power production disrupted by multiple heatwaves and droughts this year. Between 9:45 am and 10:00 am, EDF’s nuclear fleet recorded a new peak in outages due to “environmental constraints” or “external environmental causes,” both in terms of the number of reactors shut down or operating at reduced output and in terms of lost generating capacity. In total, 13 of the 57 reactors in EDF’s nuclear fleet were affected. Much of the lost nuclear generating capacity was due to full or partial shutdowns at five of the six reactors at the Gravelines nuclear power plant after a swarm of jellyfish clogged pumps used to cool the units. — AFP

OPINION

The categories we did not choose



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

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The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

A FRIEND sent me a post he had written about becoming athletic in his thirties. He had spent most of his twenties building a career and had decided somewhere along the way, without examining the decision, that sport was simply not who he was. He carried that assumption for a decade without once testing whether it was true.

I wrote back with something my grandmother used to say, or the closest I can get to it in English, that identity is not a fixed inheritance but a horizon.

Sometimes the versions of ourselves we have not met yet are waiting for us to become curious enough to go looking for them. I have returned to that exchange since, because we do this constantly and rarely catch ourselves at it, reducing ourselves and each other to whatever quality is most visible from the outside: the ambitious one, the creative one, the scientist, the parent, the environmentalist. The labels are rarely wrong in themselves; the difficulty begins when a description hardens into a boundary.

Take the word environmentalist, around which we have built an archetype. We picture someone who recycles religiously, avoids plastic, knows their carbon footprint and can explain exactly why the cup in

your hand is a problem. Consequently, anyone who does not recognise themselves in that picture concludes, reasonably enough, that environmental responsibility belongs to somebody else. Caring about the environment has never required adopting a particular identity, and someone can love fashion, travel, and good food and still care deeply about the planet.

The part I find hardest to sit with is that we rarely choose these categories at all. Most were assigned to us early, by families deciding which child was practical and which the dreamer, by schools sorting us into sciences or arts at 15, and by workplaces that reward the one thing we already do well and have little use for the rest.

We then spend our adult lives defending conclusions reached by people who no longer remember reaching them, mistaking conditioning for character.

Human beings are more layered than that. We are contradictory and adaptive creatures; we can be rational and spiritual, comfortable in a boardroom and happiest halfway up a mountain, and none of those discoveries makes an earlier version of us less real. Interestingly, the pressure to become legible only increases with age, until

Caring about the environment has never required adopting a particular identity, and someone can love fashion, travel, and good food and still care deeply about the planet.

we begin demanding the same certainty of ourselves that everyone else does. I suspect “I am not that kind of person” is one of the most consequential sentences we tell ourselves, because it closes a door before we have looked at what is behind it.

What I want instead is a combination we rarely attempt, which is to be entirely unapologetic about what we already are and still curious about what we might also be. Certainty without curiosity closes a person down, and curiosity without conviction never settles long enough to become anything. So perhaps it is time I reintroduced myself.

Hi, I am Rumaitha, and I am a multipotentialite. I love science and writing, climate and adventure, energy and football, and the pleasure of being a complete beginner at something I know nothing about, and I have stopped needing to make any of them more legitimate than the rest.

The woman who told me identity was not an inheritance is the person I inherited the thought from, a contradiction I am happy to leave standing.

Which leaves me with the question I have been putting to myself, and now to you: what have you decided is not you, without ever finding out?

A trailblazing ex-PM who transformed China’s economy

ISABEL KUA

Zhu Rongji, China’s former premier, who died on Wednesday aged 97, championed free-market policies and delivered far-reaching economic reforms during his five years at the helm.

Rumoured to be descended from Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu was born in the central city of Changsha in 1928 into a China riven by civil war.

Zhu studied electrical engineering at Beijing’s elite Tsinghua University and joined the Communist Party in 1949, the same year leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of the “New China”.

An economic planner and later an engineer at the State Planning Commission, Zhu was purged twice during the tumultuous early decades of the People’s Republic.

He was first cast out during the “Hundred Flowers Campaign” in the 1950s, when his criticism of Mao’s “irrational” economic policies saw him labelled a “rightist”.

He was pardoned but purged again during the chaos and bloodshed of the Cultural Revolution, when he was sent into exile in rural China.

Those reforms slashed 30 million jobs over five years, leaving workers at the mercy of cutthroat market forces that spurred massive growth but which massively exacerbated economic inequality.

He also oversaw the privatisation of urban housing, scrapping welfare for millions of urban workers and promoting home ownership.

Those reforms sparked a boom in real estate and construction, which would soar to become a quarter of China’s economy before a crippling debt crisis struck in 2020.

His leadership was credited with helping China avoid the worst of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, bucking a global trend.

And he led negotiations for China’s accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 — a move seen as consolidating the country’s transformation from an isolated economy under Mao to the marketplace of the world.

In office, Zhu was asked by a Danish reporter what he hoped the Chinese people would remember him for.

“I only hope that after I step down, people across the country will say that ‘he was an honest official, not a corrupt one’ and I’ll be very satisfied with that,” he said.

“If they are a bit more generous and say that ‘Zhu Rongji did accomplish some practical things’, I will thank the heavens.”

Zhu is survived by his wife, Lao An and two children. — AFP

How Abdul el Sayed can win Michigan senate seat

I CONFESS that I never expected to see an American election where the choice of candidates in more than a few districts will be a democratic socialist versus a Republican monarchist — but live long enough, and you’ll see everything.

As I listen to these democratic socialists and King-Trump-right-or-wrong Republicans, one of my favourite movie lines keeps coming to mind. It’s from the 1997 film “As Good as It Gets,” when Jack Nicholson, playing a misanthropic writer, answers his door to find a neighbour asking him to walk a dog and offering cheery advice about opening window curtains to see “God’s beautiful work.” Nicholson says to her, “Where do they teach you to talk like this?” He adds, “Sell crazy someplace else. We’re all stocked up here.” How I wish I could say that to both these extremes: We’re all stocked up on crazy in American politics. Sell it someplace else.

But because this is the only country I have, because the midterms will be razor-close and because I am convinced that two more years of Donald Trump completely unchained — controlling the House, the Senate and tacitly the Supreme Court — could bring about the end of America as we have known it, I have to think about how to make the best of some not great choices.

The case most deserving of attention is in Michigan, so here is some free advice for Abdul el Sayed, the Democratic Senate candidate there. Why him? Because his victory or defeat could determine whether Trump continues to be able to rule as a monarch without any congressional oversight.

Sir, if you want to win over Jewish and centrist voters in Michigan; increase your odds of victory; be true to your pro-Palestinian, Arab American roots; and stick it to the American Israel Public



THOMAS L FRIEDMAN

The writer is reporter, author and NYT columnist

Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel organisation whose super political action committee spent \$32 million trying to defeat you in the primary, you need to thread your political needle very carefully. There is a way.

El Sayed says Michigan Jews should not be worried about him — insisting that his commitment “to Jewish safety is the same commitment that I have to the safety of my own daughters.” That’s commendable, but many American Jewish voters are not just looking for stronger police protection from their elected representatives. They are looking for recognition of the right of Jews to self-determination, like any other people.

But don’t confuse that with the belief in the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state: That is still something very dear to most American Jews — just as much as Palestinian statehood beats in the heart of most Arabs and Muslims. Israel is part of their identity, and El-Sayed is not swaying American Jews when he simply tells them he will protect their synagogues.

He needs to stress his even more commendable and constructive position — which I just heard him describe to CNN’s Kaitlan Collins — that he believes “in equal rights to peace, dignity and self-determination for Jewish Israelis and Palestinians alike.” That is a very good perspective, and it is different from that of the democratic socialist mayor of New York City, Zohran Mamdani, who has argued that Jews are not entitled to self-determination in a state of their own — a Jewish state in their biblical homeland.

As Jay Michaelson, a contributing columnist to The Forward, has pointed out, “Already, El Sayed’s statement is a useful contrast to Mamdani’s. He is not pontificating about the abstract legitimacy of Israel or Palestine; on the contrary, he is insisting on the pragmatic view, that

I share, that ‘what the ultimate peace should be’ must be decided by both Palestinians and Israelis — a position rejected by both the Zionism-is-colonialism crowd on the left and the Jewish supremacists on the right.” But when El Sayed campaigns with far-left streamer Hasan Piker, who has said that “Hamas is a thousand times better” than Israel, it is not surprising that Jewish voters wonder what his real position is on their right to a state of their own like every other people.

El Sayed should just keep stressing what he told CNN — that he believes “in equal rights to peace, dignity and self-determination for Jewish Israelis and Palestinians alike” and he’d support any peace agreement they mutually agreed to.

And then go back to talking about the Midwest and leave the Mideast alone.

Being for any other exclusivist position — that only Palestinians or Jews are entitled to a national homeland between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River — is a prescription for a forever war, because approximately 7 million Palestinians and 7 million Jews now live in that area, and neither group is leaving. Anyone advocating either of the above is an enemy of peace and will alienate the centrist voters who will decide this election.

It is not only El Sayed, though, who needs to draw clear red lines. American Jews have let AIPAC drive them over a cliff.

I repeat — this is not complicated. El Sayed can be pro-American, pro-Michigan, pro-Palestinian, pro-Muslim, pro-Israel, pro-Jewish people and expose AIPAC for the Netanyahu front organisation that it has become: Just keep being for two states for two peoples. Then just talk about Michigan.

Trust me, his Republican opponent will not like that. And if it upsets the far-lefties in his own party, that’s a bonus for him and the rest of us.

One year after summit, ‘spirit of Anchorage’ gone

IN year since Donald Trump hosted Vladimir Putin on US soil for a summit designed to broker an end to Russia's war on Ukraine, the diplomatic initiative has fizzled out and the conflict has escalated.

For months, Russian officials talked up the “spirit of Anchorage” - a supposed climate of detente, renewed dialogue with Washington and a framework for finding a way out of the deadliest European conflict since World War II.

Now there are few traces of that atmosphere. US mediation efforts are at a standstill; both Russia and Ukraine are ramping up attacks, and more civilians are being killed than at any point since the first months of the war.

On August 15, 2025, Trump broke with the West's policy of isolating Putin, rolling out the red carpet as the Kremlin chief stepped off his plane at the Elmendorf-Richardson air base in Alaska. It remains unclear what was decided or discussed behind closed doors.

Russia has always maintained that some kind of understanding on a peace deal was struck - “a compromise proposal”, as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called it. Washington has rebuffed any talk of a deal being reached.

“There was a proposal in Alaska, but there was no agreement. If there had been an agreement, we would have had an end of the war,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in June.

Moscow had hoped the summit would lay the foundations for a “lasting peace” by addressing what it calls the “root causes” of the conflict, said political analyst Sergei

Markov - designated a “foreign agent” but still close to the Russian authorities.

For years - including right before launching its war in February 2022 - Russia has called for a new overarching security deal with the United States over Europe, Nato and arms control.

The “compromise” Russia tabled in Alaska, Markov said, was to limit its territorial claims on Ukraine to the eastern Donbas region in exchange for recognition of Russia's new borders by Washington and the lifting of sanctions.

Those Russian demands were included in a 28-point document drafted by the United States - later cut down to 19 - after separate negotiations with Kyiv and Moscow.

The document was never published officially and never came to fruition. US-brokered direct talks between Russia and Ukraine in early 2026 broke down, chiefly over the issue of territory.

Ukraine refuses to cede land it still controls and wants an immediate ceasefire along the current front line, with territorial status to be decided during fuller peace talks.

And since late February, Washington's attention has been consumed by the war on Iran.

Trump has since issued fresh sanctions on Russia and the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement - New START - has been allowed to lapse.

Having once sensed a window of opportunity to press its demands and been at pains to praise Trump's efforts, Russia has lately allowed itself to publicly question Washington's commitment to diplomacy.

Now there are few traces of that atmosphere. US mediation efforts are at a standstill, both Russia and Ukraine are ramping up attacks and more civilians are being killed than at any point since the first months of the war

“I don't even want to imagine that Alaska... was conceived to gain time in order to strengthen Ukraine militarily,” Lavrov said in June. A meeting between Lavrov and Rubio in Manila in July - their first since September 2025 - lasted only around 30 minutes.

“We'll have to find new suggestions and new ideas” that both “Russia and Ukraine can agree to,” Rubio said after that meeting.

“That's going to require a lot of work,” he added. The two sides' conditions for peace are irreconcilable.

Russia demands territory alongside political and military concessions that Ukraine rejects as capitulation.

At the same time, both are convinced force can improve their negotiating position.

“The Russian armed forces will continue their mission to liberate the Donbas and Novorossiya in line with the approved plan,” Russia's army chief Valery Gerasimov told Putin in a televised meeting in early July - referring to land stretching across eastern and southern Ukraine.

Its attacks triggered a nationwide fuel crisis over the summer, and have forced Moscow-installed authorities to put the annexed Crimean peninsula under a local “state of emergency”.

Russia has upped its missile attacks on Kyiv, killing dozens there in recent weeks. It has also brought Ukrainian exports through the Black Sea to a standstill through a campaign of port and ship strikes.

“The spirit of Anchorage has dissipated,” said Russian political analyst Fyodor Lukyanov - close to the ruling elite - in August. The result? “Brutal escalation.” — **AFP**

GERMANY TO GIVE SPY SERVICES MORE CLOAK-AND-DAGGER POWERS

BRYN STOLE

The German government on Wednesday signed off on a major overhaul of the country's intelligence agencies to give them broad new powers to conduct covert operations and take action against foreign threats. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt announced a “new era” for Germany's secret services, which have until now been largely limited to gathering intelligence.

The services will get greater latitude to conduct non-lethal operations such as hacking enemy servers or conducting sabotage under the reforms that still have to pass parliament before taking effect early next year. Chancellor Friedrich Merz's coalition has argued that more powerful intelligence agencies are needed to counter the threats posed by hostile foreign powers, terrorist groups and cybercriminals.

German officials accuse Moscow of waging a “hybrid” campaign of sabotage, espionage and disinformation against the country, which is among Ukraine's biggest military supporters in the war with Russia.

“We are in the thick of a hybrid conflict not only with Russia but also with other actors,” Marc Henrichmann, chairman of the parliament's intelligence oversight committee, said.

He argued Germany's cautious approach has left it “behind the curve” and unable to properly contribute to European security.

Henrichmann pointed to a string of recent incidents, including an explosive-laden drone discovered at Leipzig airport last week, to underscore the importance of the changes.

“We face adversaries who play without any rules at all,” he said. “They have no regard for law and order. Their goal is not merely to put the West, the EU and Germany under pressure, but ideally to bring them to their knees.”

For decades, Germany has placed its BND foreign intelligence agency and the BfV domestic spy service under tight restrictions that rule out direct and potentially lethal operations as practised by the CIA of the United States or Israel's Mossad. Those rules were imposed in part because of the gruesome abuses carried out by the Nazi dictatorship and communist East Germany, as well as a strong German sense of privacy rights.

“The German intelligence services were essentially, until recently, information collection services,” Peter Neumann, professor of security studies at King's College London, said.

“They have some powers to collect information and give policymakers a better picture, but they are very restricted in what they were allowed to do with that information.” — **AFP**

Resilience the new asset

THE WORLD economy is moving from an era in which uncertainty was treated as a temporary disturbance to one in which uncertainty itself has become an economic variable. Markets, companies and governments can no longer wait for geopolitical disputes to be resolved. They must price them, insure against them and carry on.

The Strait of Hormuz crisis illustrates the change. As of August 12, Brent is trading close to \$90 a barrel as markets react almost hour by hour to prospects for a US-Iran agreement and the security of shipping. Yet the deeper shift predates the current crisis. From Ukraine and Gaza to US-China rivalry, sanctions, trade restrictions, climate shocks and technological disruption, uncertainty is becoming structural.

We are moving from pricing risk to pricing uncertainty — and from an economics of efficiency towards an economics of resilience.

Traditionally, markets responded to crises with an identifiable risk premium. War begins; oil rises. A ceasefire occurs; oil falls. A shipping lane closes; insurance costs rise. It reopens; they decline. Today's premium is more complicated.

It has three layers. The first is the event premium. For example, Hormuz closes, war erupts, a tariff is imposed, or a pipeline is destroyed. This can disappear remarkably quickly when the event is resolved. The second is the structural uncertainty premium. Investors ask whether the disruption could happen again. They demand compensation for vulnerable shipping routes, sanctions exposure, concentrated supply chains and political volatility. A ceasefire does not eliminate these risks.

The third is the resilience premium. Companies deliberately accept higher costs to reduce dependence on single suppliers, countries or transport corridors. Governments accumulate inventories. Firms duplicate production. Banks hold additional liquidity. Shipping companies



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

The Strait of Hormuz crisis illustrates the change. As of August 12, Brent is trading close to \$90 a barrel as markets react almost hour by hour to prospects for a US-Iran agreement and the security of shipping

maintain alternative routes. Countries subsidise strategic industries.

Yesterday's economics might have called this inefficient. Today's economics increasingly calls it insurance. And insurance has a price.

If a credible Hormuz settlement were announced tomorrow, oil would probably fall, gold would weaken, tanker and war-risk premiums would compress, regional equities would strengthen and inflation expectations moderate. But normalisation would not mean returning to the old normal. Inventories must be rebuilt. Insurers reassess routes. Companies retain alternative suppliers. Governments maintain strategic stocks. Defence expenditure remains elevated. Supply chains already relocated may never return.

The event premium therefore falls quickly; the structural premium declines slowly; resilience expenditure remains.

There is a further paradox. Markets may sometimes underprice this uncertain world. Repeated crises produce habituation: another conflict erupts, markets recover, and investors conclude that the next one will be equally manageable. The BIS has warned that valuations remain stretched and risk premia compressed despite considerable geopolitical and macroeconomic vulnerabilities.

The danger, therefore, may not be permanently expensive markets but long periods of complacency interrupted by violent repricing.

Commodities in an age of uncertainty. The next five years are unlikely to produce a conventional commodity supercycle. Strategic divergence is more likely.

Oil will sit between two powerful forces. Geopolitics pushes prices upward; technological change, efficiency, alternative energy and non-OPEC supply constrain them. Oil could increasingly resemble a saw-tooth market: comfortable supply drives prices surprisingly low before geopolitical disruption sends them sharply higher.

Copper has perhaps the strongest

structural case. Electrification, power grids, electric vehicles and renewable energy all require it. So does AI indirectly through its enormous electricity and data-centre infrastructure.

The larger lesson is that resilience itself is becoming an asset class.

For three decades, governments and companies were rewarded primarily for efficiency: just-in-time inventories, concentrated supply chains, lowest-cost production, global sourcing and minimal redundancy.

The coming decades may reward something different: optionality. A second port. A second supplier. A second payment channel. Alternative energy. Strategic inventories. Fiscal space. Domestic skills. Cyber redundancy. Diplomatic relationships across competing blocs.

Each appears inefficient when nothing goes wrong. Each becomes extraordinarily valuable when something does. Markets are not telling us that the world has become permanently uninvestable. They are telling us that certainty has become scarce. And scarce things acquire value.

Gold attracts reserves. Copper attracts strategic investment. Secure energy commands a premium. Reliable jurisdictions attract capital. Skilled labour becomes more mobile. Countries capable of maintaining options become more valuable partners.

For Oman, that need not be bad news. Oman cannot control the global system, but it can position itself so that instability elsewhere increases rather than diminishes its strategic relevance. That requires broadening the meaning of diversification. The objective should no longer be simply diversification away from oil. It should be diversification away from vulnerability — across fiscal policy, financial markets, food, energy, shipping, technology, skills, diplomacy and infrastructure.

In an age of persistent uncertainty, what once looked like inefficiency may turn out to be the price of resilience.

SPORTS

SEEB STAY PERFECT AS SAHAM RETURN TO WINNING WAYS



Saham thrashed Al Nahda 6-1 in the Jindal Youth League.



Samayil and Bahla settled for a draw in the Jindal Youth League.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

SEEB MAINTAINED their perfect record in the Jindal Youth League after defeating Dhofar 4-0 in the sixth round, while Sur strengthened their challenge in Group One and Saham returned to winning ways to remain on top of Group Two.

Seeb continued their dominant campaign with a fifth successive victory, overcoming Dhofar 4-0 to move to 15 points. The leaders have scored 27 goals and conceded only two, giving them an impressive goal difference of plus 25.

Sur kept up the pressure with a 2-1 victory over Oman Club. The result extended Sur's unbeaten run and lifted them to 13 points from five matches, two behind Seeb. Sur have recorded four victories and one draw and remain the only other unbeaten side in Group One. Samayil and Bahla shared the points in a 3-3 draw. It was Bahla's first point of the campaign, while Samayil moved to four points.

Al Nasr, who sat out the sixth round, remain third with 10 points from five matches, while Oman Club are fourth on nine points after suffering a third successive defeat. Samayil have four points, Bahla one and Dhofar remain without a point.

In Group Two, Saham bounced back from their first defeat of the season with an emphatic 6-1 victory over Al Nahda. The win took Saham to 12 points from five matches and kept them three points clear at the top of the standings.

Al Shabab remain second and unbeaten after playing out a goalless draw with Ibri. They have nine points from five matches, with two wins and three draws. Al Khabourah and Al Rustaq also shared the points following a 1-1 draw. Al Khabourah moved to eight points from five matches and occupy third place, while Al Rustaq are fourth with eight points from six matches, behind on goal difference.

Ibri sit fifth with seven points, while Sohar, who did not play in the round, remain on five. Al Nahda are still searching for their first point after five defeats.

With the group stage moving towards its decisive rounds, Seeb have established a clear advantage in Group One, while the battle behind Saham in Group Two remains wide open as teams continue to chase the two semifinal qualification places.



Sur kept up the pressure with a 2-1 victory over Oman Club in Group 1.



Seeb continued their dominant campaign with a fifth successive victory.

Alexandria camp boosts Oman's emerging basketball talent

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Elite players from the Oman Basketball Association's Athlete Preparation Centres have concluded their overseas training camp in Alexandria, Egypt, marking another important stage in the association's long-term player development programme.

The camp, organised by the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), was held from August 3 to 11 and featured intensive technical and physical training alongside a series of friendly matches against Egyptian clubs. The delegation returned to Muscat International Airport on Wednesday.

The Alexandria camp followed a series of domestic training programmes held after the end of the academic examinations and provided the players with an opportunity to experience a different competitive environment and gain exposure to different coaching and playing styles.

Speaking after the delegation's arrival, Abu Bakr bin Ahmed al Jahwari, OBA Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Athlete Preparation Centres Supervisory Committee, said the players had successfully completed



The Omani players faced Al Ittihad Alexandria, Sporting, Smouha, Al Tram and Al Olympi.

their first overseas camp as part of an integrated development programme.

"The overseas camp is part of our plan for developing players at the centres and giving them opportunities to learn, compete and gain experience," he said.

Al Jahwari described the Alexandria camp as an important step in moving the players beyond the local training environment and exposing them to different competitive demands, stressing that the real value of the camp would be reflected in how its outcomes are used during the next stages of preparation.

He also highlighted the



The camp was held from August 3 to 11 and featured intensive technical and physical training alongside a series of friendly matches against Egyptian clubs.



ABU BAKR BIN AHMED AL JAHWARI
OBA Vice-Chairman

association's efforts to create a positive environment for the young players and maintain close communication with their families.

A communication group involving coaches, parents and delegation officials was used

throughout the camp to share videos, photographs and details of the daily programme.

"This allowed parents to remain closely involved in their children's experience and become genuine partners in their development journey," he added.

Al Jahwari thanked MoCSY for its continued support and the parents for their trust and cooperation, stressing that the ultimate objective is to develop players with the technical ability, experience, discipline and personality required to progress and represent the Sultanate of Oman with distinction in the future.

VALUABLE COMPETITIVE EXPOSURE
Iskandar al Nabli, General Technical Supervisor of the Athlete Preparation Centres, said the friendly matches represented one of the most important elements of the camp as they allowed the technical staff to assess players under competitive conditions that could not be fully replicated during regular training.

The Omani players faced Al Ittihad Alexandria, Sporting, Smouha, Al Tram and Al Olympi, gaining exposure to different technical approaches and styles of play.

Al Nabli said the matches required players to think quickly, make decisions under pressure and adapt to changing situations on court, giving the coaching staff a clearer picture of the technical requirements of each player.

He added that the observations gathered during the matches would now be incorporated into future training programmes.

Video analysis also played an important role throughout the camp, allowing the technical staff to review individual and collective performances in greater detail. Match footage helped identify strengths and weaknesses and enabled players to directly review situations involving positioning, movement and decision-making.

INTENSE TRAINING



The Oman Sailing Championship will take place from August 14–18 in Ras Al Hadd.

OMAN SAIL’S SUMMER CAMP CONCLUDES IN RAS AL HADD

MUSCAT: Following six weeks of intensive technical and physical conditioning in Ras Al Hadd, Oman Sail has officially concluded its Summer Training Camp. Taking advantage of the region’s exceptional summer wind conditions, national sailors across the Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, and 29er fleets spent the season building tactical sharpness, technical mastery and athletic endurance.

Hashim al Rashdi, Head Coach Performance at Oman Sail, said, “The dedicated training blocks in Ras Al Hadd over July and August allowed us to push our sailors to their limits in ideal conditions. We saw remarkable progress in technical precision,

tactical decision-making, and endurance across all fleets. Wrapping up this camp leaves our sailors sharp, confident, and fully prepared to test their skills in high-stakes competition at the Oman Sailing Championship.”

Nawaf al Ghadani, Race Team Officer at Oman Sail, added, “Host conditions in South Al Sharqiyah provide an outstanding backdrop for competitive fleet racing. With up to 12 races scheduled across five days, the Oman Sailing Championship will demand consistency, adaptability and high mental fortitude. Bringing together our domestic talent alongside international competitors from the UAE and Sri Lanka ensures world-class racing standards on the water.”



HASHIM AL RASHDI

Head Coach Performance at Oman Sail



NAWAF AL GHADANI

Race Team Officer at Oman Sail

The camp served as an essential springboard for its immediate next highlight: the upcoming Oman Sailing Championship, taking place from August 14–18, in Ras Al Hadd where sailors will compete in a rigorous racing format featuring up to 12 races per class, capped at a maximum of three races per day.

The championship will feature more than 64 elite sailors competing across the Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, and ILCA 7 classes. The roster includes 50 top talents from Oman Sail’s national sailing schools alongside 14 international competitors from the United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka.

The event is organised in partnership with the Oman LNG and Oman Marine Sports Association.



The winners in various categories pose with the officials. — Hussein al Muqbali

Younis grabs overall title at Oman Shooting Club Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

YOUNIS

BIN JUMA AL BUSAIDI claimed the grand prize at the inaugural Oman Shooting Club Cup 2026 as more than a month of competition concluded at Action Point Oman, attracting 1,017 shooters from across the Sultanate of Oman and other GCC countries.

The championship, staged at Oman Shooting Club at Active Oman Centre, Oman Automobile Association, ran from July 5 to August 11. It featured four main disciplines: 50-metre 22 LR rifle which attracted 651 competitors; 25-metre pistol, which attracted 142; 100-metre rifle and shotgun, which attracted 224; alongside the Al Qannas children’s competition, which attracted 150 youngsters.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Mulham bin Bashir al Jarf, Deputy President for Investments at Oman Investment Authority, in the presence of officials, shooting enthusiasts and participants.

Mubarak bin Said al Salti completed an impressive double by winning both the rifle and 22 LR rifle titles. In the rifle competition, Said bin Salim al Kalbani finished second and Said bin Musallam al Sarkhi third. In 22 LR rifle, Ali bin Hamoud al Hadhrami took second place, with Abdullah bin Ahmed al Masfari third.

Anas bin Alaa al Beaini won the shotgun title, ahead of Badr al Yousuf from Qatar and his father Alaa bin Naif al Beaini, while UAE shooter Ali bin Mubarak al Omari topped the 9mm pistol competition. Mohammed bin Khalifa al Harthi finished second and Said bin Muslim al Sarkhi third.

In the children’s competition, Shahm al Harrasi won the 7-10 age category, followed by Abdulaziz bin Saud al Nasri and Salim bin Hamoud al Rawahi. Fatma bint Said al Nabhani took first place in the 11-15 category, ahead of Mohammed bin Abdulwahab al Hinai and Ammar bin Imran al Akhzami.



The top three grand prize winners at the inaugural Oman Shooting Club Cup 2026.

The grand prize draw gave first-place finishers three chances, runners-up two and third-place finishers one. Al Busaidi, from Samayil, emerged as the overall winner to claim a Jetour X50 and the Oman Shooting Club Cup. Al Yaqdhan bin Ali al Jabri won the RO 2,000 second prize, while Anas bin Alaa al Beaini received RO 1,000 for third.

Retired Colonel Nasser bin Ali al Amri, Director-General of Oman Shooting Club, said the championship was conceived as more than another sporting competition, with the club seeking to promote shooting as a discipline that builds responsibility, confidence, concentration and self-control.

GROWING INTEREST

He said the turnout reflected the growing interest in shooting and confidence in the club’s professional and safe environment. He also highlighted the children’s competition as an important step in introducing younger participants to discipline, focus and respect for instructions.

Al Amri thanked strategic sponsor Sohar International, other sponsors and supporting organisations, as well as judges, organising committees, volunteers, coaches, administrators and technical

staff for contributing to the success of the championship.

Grand prize winner Al Busaidi said his first appearance in the tournament had provided a memorable experience. He finished seventh in the 22 LR rifle category before winning the top prize in the draw and said competing on an indoor range offered a different challenge from the outdoor environments he was accustomed to.

Double champion Al Salti said winning the rifle and 22 LR rifle titles was the result of long experience, continuous training and strong competition against shooters of closely matched ability. He also praised the indoor venue for providing equal conditions away from wind and heat.

Shotgun champion Al Beaini said training under his father from a young age had played an important role in developing his skills, adding that the victory would motivate him to continue improving and pursue future success.

Pistol champion Al Omari, from the United Arab Emirates, praised the high technical standard of the competition and the quality of shooters from Oman and other GCC countries, while also commending the smooth organisation and strict implementation of safety procedures.

Tentoglou claims fourth Euro long jump title, Jacobs falters

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom: Greece’s Miltiadis Tentoglou soared out to a record-equalling fourth European long jump title in Birmingham on Tuesday, but Italian Marcell Jacobs was unable to claim a third 100m gold.

Tentoglou, the double Olympic champion, came under pressure from Swiss athlete Simon Ehammer, but produced a winning 8.44 metres on his fourth attempt.

Tentoglou emulated Germany’s Heike Drechsler who won four successive European women’s long jump titles between 1986 and 1998.

“This was one of the hardest finals I have ever done,” said Tentoglou. “I am good in all conditions but this wind was so hard on us long jumpers.

“Ehammer is a very strong guy and he was kind of OK with it. But for the other jumpers and me, it was incredibly difficult.”

Tentoglou added: “I had to try so hard for this 8.44m jump. It is nothing for me usually but today it was so hard to do. This is one of my most precious victories because it is also a complex season for me. This is the start of winning golds again.”

Like Tentoglou, Jacobs is a proven championship performer.

But the Tokyo Olympic gold medallist and firm favourite for the blue riband event fell short in his quest to win a third title and equal a feat only achieved by Ukrainian Valeriy Borzov (1969, 1971, 1974) and Britain’s Linford Christie (1986, 1990, 1994). The 31-year-old Italian



Greece’s Miltiadis Tentoglou competes in the men’s long jump final. — AFP

suffered a terrible start and seemed to pull up halfway through the race before continuing to the finish line in a jog. He then walked off with a slight limp. “I think my injury is serious because I felt something before the start when I tried the blocks,” said Jacobs.

GLAVE DOMINATES 100M

With Jacobs out of contention, Jamaican-born Glave sealed victory in 10.09 seconds in a British 1-2 as world indoor 60m champion Jeremiah Azu claimed silver in 10.16sec.

Glave’s victory came hot on the heels of Amy Hunt winning the women’s 100m on Monday.

“It is domination. Total domination,” said Glave.

Where Jacobs faltered, Nadia Battocletti remained resolute, the Italian striking with 200 metres to run to comfortably defend her 5,000m title in 15:37.84.

“It was a little crazy, we touched each other a lot during the race as it was very tactical,” Battocletti said.

It is the latest accolade for Battocletti, who has gone on a medal spree since completing a 5,000/10,000m Euro double in Rome two years ago.

Spain’s Marta García took silver in 15:39.98, with another Italian, Micol Majori, rounding out the podium.

Dutchwoman Nadine Visser claimed a thrilling victory in the 100m hurdles, edging Poland’s Pia Skrzyszowska in a photo finish in 12.67sec. — AFP

SPORTS



Elena Rybakina (KAZ) hits a return shot to Naomi Osaka during their quarterfinal at the National Bank Open at Sobeys Stadium. — *Imagn Images*

RYBAKINA OUSTS OSAKA TO BOOK TORONTO SEMIFINAL AGAINST GAUFF

WORLD NUMBER two Elena Rybakina came from a set down to defeat four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka on Tuesday and reach the WTA Toronto Masters semifinals, where she will face fourth-ranked Coco Gauff.

Rybakina, the reigning Australian Open champion from Kazakhstan, fired 13 aces in a 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 victory.

“Super happy. It was a very difficult match,” Rybakina said after a tight battle lasting 2hr 33min.

“In the first set (I made) a few mistakes, a poor start.

“It was a really tough one but I’m glad I could turn it around, I don’t yet know how, but I think my serve

helped me a little bit.”

Gauff, a 22-year-old American, had a walkover into her first Canada semifinal when Switzerland’s Belinda Bencic withdrew with a hip injury.

“I’m really sorry to not be able to compete,” Bencic said in a statement. “I tried everything possible to be ready. Looking forward to being back in Toronto next time.”

Gauff, the 2023 US Open and 2025 French Open champion, defeated Rybakina in their only previous meeting, which came at Toronto in a 2022 third-round match.

“She’s a fighter,” Rybakina said of Gauff.

“I definitely need to bring my energy and serve well.”

Poland’s Iga Swiatek and Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina meet in Wednesday’s



Coco Gauff (USA) reacts after winning a game against Alina Korneeva during fourth round play at Sobeys Stadium. — *Imagn Images*

other semifinal.

Osaka and Rybakina staged a dramatic duel in their first ever meeting on tour.

“We practised couple of times

before so I more or less knew how the ball was going to come, what to expect,” Rybakina said. “In some moments my energy wasn’t there but I’m glad in the end it went my way.”

‘JUST KEEP GOING’

Rybakina double-faulted to hand Osaka a break in the opening game and the Asian star held serve from there to claim the first set in 42 minutes.

The pair exchanged breaks of service twice in a drama-filled second set but in the tie-break Rybakina never trailed and smashed a forehand winner to force a third set.

“I was trying to stay close on the score, trying not to think if I make a mistake, just keep going,” Rybakina said.

Osaka was denied on four break points in the sixth game as Rybakina held the serve.

The Kazakh broke for a 4-3 lead as Osaka missed a forehand smash wide on game point, then sent forehands long and wide.

Rybakina sealed the match with a second-serve ace, winning all 18 of her first-serve points in the final set.

World number 13 Osaka, who took a break has not won a title since the 2021 Australian Open.

Rybakina is within touching distance of becoming world number one for the first time.

If two-time Grand Slam champion wins the Toronto title she would move to just four ranking points behind Aryna Sabalenka, who lost in the last 16. — *AFP*

Defending champion Shelton rolls into Montreal last four

MONTREAL: Ben Shelton took another step toward defending his ATP Montreal Masters title on Tuesday with a 6-3, 6-1 quarterfinals hammering of Jakub Mensik for his 10th straight victory in Canada.

World number 10 Shelton, the last top-10 player in the field, was never challenged by the Czech in advancing to a Wednesday semifinal against fellow American Learner Tien, who ousted Spain’s Daniel Merida 6-3, 6-2 in 72 minutes.

“It was a great performance for me, super happy with that and to be in the semis again,” Shelton said.

Spanish teen Rafael Jodar booked a semifinal spot in only his fifth ATP Masters 1000 event by holding off France’s Arthur Fils 7-6 (7/5), 6-3. The 19-year-old will face the oldest remaining player when he plays 25-year-old American Brandon Nakashima in a Wednesday battle for a place in Thursday’s final.



Brandon Nakashima (USA) hits a backhand against Arthur Rinderknech (FRA) during Round of 16 at IGA Stadium. — *Imagn Images*

Nakashima reached his breakthrough Masters semi in 77 minutes as he imposed his game on Luciano Darderi 6-2, 6-3, setting up three match points with his 11th ace as winning as the Italian missed on a drop shot.

It’s the first time since 1992 that three American men have reached the last four in

Canada. Shelton was on fire in his 72-minute thrashing of Mensik, the American producing 18 winners and only three unforced errors.

Shelton has yet to lose a set at this event.

“I felt great, I played well form the ground from point one,” Shelton said. “I’m right where I want to be.



Ben Shelton (USA) returns a shot to Jakub Mensik (CZE) in their quarterfinal at IGA Stadium. — *Imagn Images*

I maintained a high level throughout the match. I hope to continue to build on this in the semis.”

Jodar shrugged off a slight tweak of his ankle in the second set against Fils and remained calm throughout as his French opponent smashed a racquet after being broken early in the second set.

Jodar, who does not turn 20 until after the US Open, has won 34 matches this season and risen to 15th in world rankings, but sees improving his game as more important than his ranking.

“That shouldn’t be your primary thing and your goal,” he said. “My goal is to have fun on court and to enjoy all

the tournaments that are new for me.”

Fils, back after injury, saved three match points in the final game before Jodar lanced a winner to the empty court after an hour and three quarters.

“I played a very high level today against a tough player like Arthur,” Jodar said. “I had to give my best to win this match.”

Nakashima, who won his fifth quarterfinal of the season, credited his serve with the win.

“My serve was super important. It got me out of some tough holes,” Nakashima said.

“I also took my opportunities on return when I needed to. I knew I had to open up the court. He was hitting his spots really well.”

Nakashima, into his 16th career semifinals, put his confidence “at an all-time high” after his seventh victory in eight matches following a Washington semifinal run. — *AFP*



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,443.589

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$86.93
BRENT \$88.76
LIGHT \$83.24



15million deals signed for local parts

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

In a move aimed at transforming the growing demand for electrical sector components and equipment into investment and industrial opportunities within the Sultanate of Oman, 10 agreements were signed with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and local and international companies to localise the manufacturing of key components used in the electrical transformer industry.

The expected investments in these agreements amount to approximately RO 15 million and they fall under the “Localise It: From Vision to Partnerships” initiative organised by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), in cooperation with Voltamp Energy.

The signing ceremony was



The projects are expected to be built on a proposed total area of 34,000 sq metres, providing numerous job opportunities for Omanis, as well as indirect employment opportunities in related service sectors and supporting industries.

held under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; and in the presence of Her Highness Sayyidah Mayyan bint Shihab al Said, Vice Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Voltamp; and Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), among other officials.

The agreements encompass the establishment of seven new factories and the addition of new production lines at two existing factories, thereby strengthening the local manufacturing base, increasing local content and supporting the development of supply chains related to the electricity sector.

The projects include the establishment of seven factories to manufacture eight essential components of electrical transformers, in addition to adding new production lines at two

existing factories to manufacture two essential components of electrical transformers. The projects are expected to be built on a proposed total area of 34,000 sq metres, providing numerous job opportunities for Omanis, as well as indirect employment opportunities in related service sectors and supporting industries. The projects will commence commercial production during 2027-2028.

APSR Chairman Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai affirmed that the agreements represent a practical step towards localising strategic industries, enhancing local content and enabling SMEs to integrate into industrial value chains. This will contribute to expanding investment and production opportunities, increasing local added value and strengthening the competitiveness of the national economy.

Dr Al Hinai explained that the

rapid growth in electricity, energy, transmission and distribution, renewable energy and green hydrogen projects underscores the need to build a national industrial base capable of efficiently, reliably and with high quality to meet the needs of these sectors.

For her part, HH Sayyidah Mayyan bint Shihab al Said, Vice Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Voltamp, pointed out that the success of the initiative could serve as the initial spark for pioneering and far-reaching national initiatives across various sectors, thus strengthening the role of local industry and opening new horizons for partnerships and investments.

Maryam al Araiimi of Al Maha Ideal Solutions said the agreement with Voltamp Energy presents an opportunity for the company to expand into Gulf and global markets by supplying control panels and control valves.

be’ah adopts ESG policy to anchor sustainable governance

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) – the national agency overseeing the Sultanate of Oman’s solid waste sector – has formally adopted an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy setting out a unified framework that defines the company’s sustainability commitments, principles and accountability mechanisms.

According to be’ah’s newly released 2025 Sustainability Report, the policy was approved by the Board of Directors, marking what the company described as a significant milestone in embedding ESG considerations into corporate governance and decision-making. It defines ESG key performance indicators aligned with the ESG and Sustainable Finance Guidelines for Oman Investment Authority (OIA) Entities, ensuring consistency with shareholder requirements and serves as a reference point for ESG-related strategies and performance monitoring across the organisation.

To support implementation, be’ah has established a structured ESG governance framework spanning four tiers: the Board of Directors, which provides overall oversight and strategic direction; an ESG Committee overseeing performance and alignment with business priorities; an ESG Function leading implementation; and ESG Champions embedding ESG across departments.

As a key outcome of the ESG Committee’s quarterly meetings in 2025, the company endorsed the enrolment of Board members, the management



be’ah ESG Policy establishes a unified framework that defines the company’s sustainability commitments, principles and accountability mechanisms

team, committee members and ESG Champions in a certified ESG Practitioner Programme. The majority of ESG Champions completed the programme and obtained certification during the year, with enrolment of Board members, management team representatives and committee members formally scheduled for 2026.

Capacity-building extended beyond the company. A total of 72 participants attended external professional programmes delivered by be’ah to accelerate sustainability awareness across the wider market. These included the Certified Sustainability (ESG) Practitioner Programme, delivered with the Centre for Sustainability and Excellence over four sessions for 56 participants and a “Pathways to Net-Zero” session delivered with the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals and supported by Oman Net

Zero Centre, attended by 16 participants. A cooperation agreement with Oman Net Zero Centre was also established to integrate sustainability and decarbonisation principles into educational and awareness initiatives.

On materiality, be’ah conducts a comprehensive assessment every three years, with the most recent completed in 2023 using an impact-based approach consistent with GRI Standards (2021) and drawing on MSCI sector guidance and SASB standards. The resulting material topics span environmental, social, governance and economic pillars. The next comprehensive assessment is scheduled for 2026.

The company said stakeholder engagement – spanning OIA, government entities, employees, local communities, service providers, SMEs and academia – directly informs the materiality process and the prioritisation of sustainability topics.



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 Type	Tender Price (ر.ع.)	Bid Bond (ر.ع.)
NESC/ 2026/031	Provide cleaning Service for NESC branches (head office, Sohar, Ibbri) and Garden maintenance for NESC head office	24/08/2026	13/09/2026	Specialized Companies	Public	52.5	1% of Bid Amount
NESC/ 2026/032	Provision of Manpower Outsourcing Services for NESC Company	24/08/2026	02/09/2026	Specialized Companies	Public	1,050	3,000

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -							
Participation	- Local companies registered with The Ministry of Commerce, The 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 https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor /E Tender.						
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to Tender@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 https://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 valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER 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.						
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. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - The Organization certificate achievement is obligatory , 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.						

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



NATIONAL FINANCE
EXPANDS CONSUMER
DURABLES
FINANCING

MUSCAT: Committed to helping customers realise their lifestyle aspirations while making quality home and office upgrades more financially accessible, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, has renewed its strategic partnerships with a distinguished network of leading home improvement and lifestyle retailers, including Danube Home, Homes R Us, Abraj Muscat Electronics, Royal Kitchens and Holike by ASAS. These renewed collaborations further strengthen the company’s Consumer Durables Financing portfolio, giving customers access to a wide selection of premium products from some of the nation’s most trusted brands, complemented by flexible financing solutions designed to make every purchase more convenient and affordable.

Spanning a diverse range of home and office enhancement categories, these strategic partnerships provide customers with greater choice and convenience when furnishing, renovating, or upgrading their space. Through Abraj Muscat Electronics, customers can access the latest electronics and home appliances, while Royal Kitchens offers bespoke kitchen solutions tailored to modern lifestyles. Homes R Us and Danube Home present an extensive selection of stylish furniture and home décor to suit a variety of tastes, while Holike by ASAS delivers innovative, customised AI-powered interior design solutions.

By combining an extensive network of trusted merchant partners with customer-centric financing solutions, National Finance continues to make quality home and lifestyle investments more accessible. Customers can benefit from Consumer Durables Financing of up to RO 25,000, with flexible repayment tenures of up to 24 months, with flexible repayment tenures of up to 8 years, empowering them to enhance their homes and lifestyles while enjoying greater financial flexibility and peace of mind.

Commenting on the renewed partnerships, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, said, “At National Finance, we believe strong partnerships are fundamental to creating lasting value for our customers. By continually expanding and strengthening our network of trusted merchant partners, we are giving customers greater choice and access to quality products across a wide range of lifestyle segments, complemented by flexible financing solutions that are designed around their evolving needs.

BANKDHOFAR
ENHANCES
SAVINGS WITH
FLEXIBLE
RECURRING
DEPOSIT
ACCOUNT

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second-largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman by branch network, continues to expand its portfolio of customer-focused banking solutions with its Recurring Deposit Account, a disciplined savings solution designed to help customers build financial security through regular savings.

The account offers customers the flexibility to save on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, making it easier to align savings with individual lifestyles and financial goals. With competitive returns of up to 5%, the Recurring Deposit Account provides an attractive opportunity to grow savings while encouraging



disciplined financial planning. Customers can begin saving from as little as 500 baisas, making the account accessible to a wide

range of customers. The account also provides an ideal platform for families to invest the RO 10 monthly child benefit received from Social Protection Fund, helping parents build long-term savings for their children’s future.

Whether saving for education, travel, major purchases or future financial commitments, the account enables customers to accumulate funds gradually through convenient and affordable contributions.

The Recurring Deposit Account also offers fixed savings tenures, providing greater certainty and helping customers plan confidently towards specific financial milestones within a defined timeframe.

Sohar International, OCCI
boost ‘Live the Vibe’

SOHAR International and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) signed a cooperation agreement to support the recently launched ‘Live the Vibe’ campaign. The campaign is being organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Interior and the Consumer Protection Authority.

As the main sponsor of the campaign, Sohar International aims to help stimulate commercial and tourism activity and further enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s position as an attractive destination for trade, tourism and investment. The initiative also underscores the importance of strategic partnerships and the integration of efforts between the public and private sectors in supporting economic development.

As part of the campaign, Sohar International also announced the launch of 0% fees on point-of-sale (POS) terminal transactions for debit and Maal cards from August 4 to November 4. Through this exclusive initiative, Sohar International aims to support businesses and boost their summer sales. The offer is subject to applicable eligibility criteria.

Commenting on the partnership, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “At Sohar International, we believe that supporting national initiatives is key to driving sustainable economic growth. Our collaboration with OCCI on the ‘Live the Vibe’ campaign reflects our commitment to empowering local businesses, stimulating consumer activity and contributing to Oman’s positioning as a vibrant destination for commerce and tourism in line with



Sohar International also announced the launch of 0% fees on point-of-sale (POS) terminal transactions for debit and Maal cards from August 4 to November 4.

Oman Vision 2040”.

The ‘Live the Vibe’ campaign, running until September 1, 2026, seeks to activate markets across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman through a wide range of commercial offers, discounts, incentive prizes and diverse events and experiences designed to enrich the experience of shoppers and visitors.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated: “This agreement with Sohar International comes as an extension of joint efforts to support the national campaign ‘Live the Vibe’ reflecting the importance of effective partnerships between organising entities and private sector institutions in achieving their objectives.

We greatly appreciate Sohar International’s initiative in supporting the campaign, which contributes to stimulating commercial activity and offering additional benefits to private sector enterprises, thereby enhancing the campaign’s economic impact and generating added value for the national economy”.

“The ‘Live the Vibe’ campaign is about creating more reasons for people to shop and explore across Oman. By waiving POS transaction fees for debit and Maal cards for three months, Sohar International is making digital payments easier and more affordable for businesses during this peak season”, stated Abdul Qader bin Ahmed al Sumali, Chief Retail & Wealth Management Officer at Sohar International.

Sohar International continues to play an active role in supporting initiatives that drive economic diversification and community engagement. Through strategic partnerships like this, the bank reinforces its commitment to being an enabler of growth across key sectors of the Omani economy.

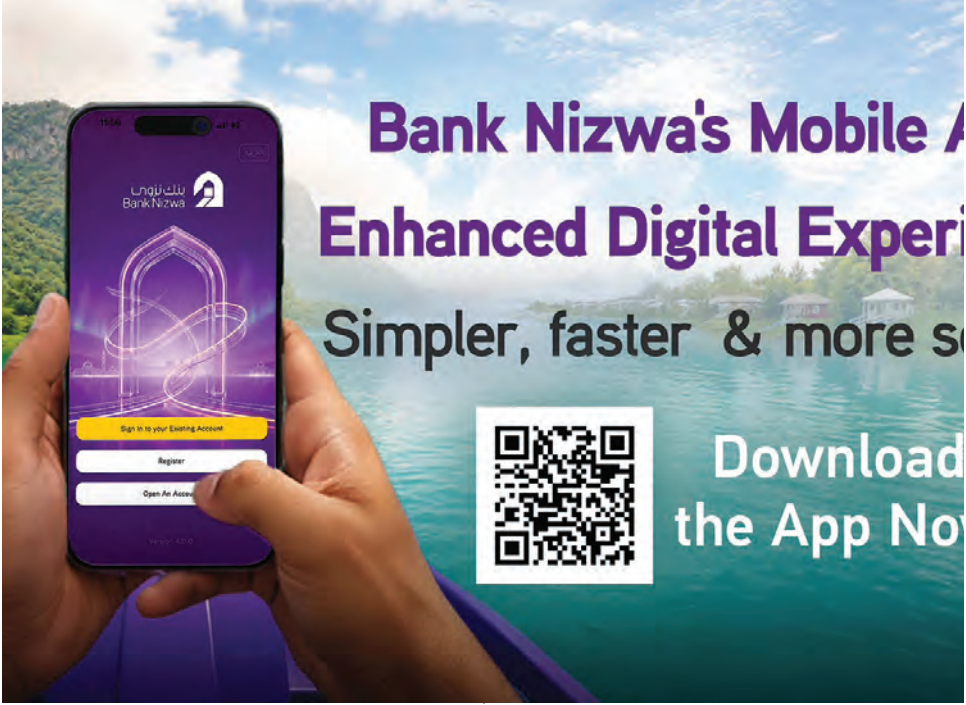
Bank Nizwa unveils enhanced mobile banking experience

MUSCAT: Committed to continually enhancing the digital banking experience for its customers, Bank Nizwa, the most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, has launched the updated version of its banking application, delivering a more seamless and efficient digital journey.

The application has been completely redesigned to meet evolving customer expectations, the enhanced application improves operational efficiency while simplifying the overall banking experience.

Featuring a modern user interface, a newly designed dashboard and an enhanced funds transfer experience, the upgraded application empowers customers to manage their finances with greater ease, flexibility and convenience — anytime and anywhere.

Commenting, Mohamed al Ghassani, Deputy General Manager



— Chief Retail Officer at Bank Nizwa, stated: “The launch of the updated version of our banking application marks another milestone in Bank Nizwa’s digital transformation journey and reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering innovative banking solutions

that meet the evolving needs and expectations of our customers and make everyday banking services simpler, more efficient and more convenient. This upgrade represents the first phase of our ongoing digital enhancement journey.

In the coming phases, we will introduce a range of advanced digital services and features powered by the latest technologies and innovative solutions, further elevating the customer experience and reinforcing Bank Nizwa’s position as a trusted banking partner offering Sharia-compliant digital banking services that meet the highest standards of quality and innovation”.

The Bank Nizwa app, provides customers with a comprehensive range of services, including the Salary Advance facility, convenient payment of electricity, water, telecommunications and internet bills; and other invoices with the

ability to pay Multi-bill payment. It also enables users to automate recurring payments, helping them manage their financial commitments with greater efficiency and ease.

The updated Mobile Application represents another milestone in Bank Nizwa’s position as a leader in Islamic digital banking in Oman. By continuously refining the customer experience through intelligent digital capabilities, the bank remains focused on delivering banking that is not only secure and Sharia-compliant, but also effortless to use.

As customer needs continue to evolve, Bank Nizwa remains committed to developing innovative digital experiences that empower customers to bank with flexibility, while contributing to a more digitally connected financial ecosystem across the Sultanate of Oman.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



New industrial cities are being established in Al Suwaiq, Al Mudhaibi, Thamrait and Madha: Khalid al Salehi.

FOUR INDUSTRIAL CITIES TO COME UP UNDER 11TH PLAN

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

As part of the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030), the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is advancing the development of new industrial cities across Musandam, Al Batinah North, Al Sharqiyah North and Dhofar Governorates.

In developing these industrial hubs, Madayn is guided by its commitment to promoting balanced governorates’ growth, empowering the private sector to play an active role in driving the national economy, developing sectors that drive economic diversification alongside complementary industries, strengthening a labour market that attracts national talent and specialised skills; and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources while advancing the adoption of renewable energy.

Khalid al Salehi, Director General of Marketing and Commercial Affairs and Official Spokesperson for Madayn, stated that Madayn is executing a suite of strategic projects across several governorates as part of its efforts to elevate Oman’s investment environment and support sustainable economic development.

“The projects involve the development of fully integrated industrial cities equipped with advanced infrastructure and logistics services. Establishing new industrial cities in Al Suwaiq, Al Mudhaibi, Thamrait and Madha aims to strengthen Oman’s industrial infrastructure, support economic diversification, attract local and foreign investments, support SMEs; and generate job opportunities”.

Al Salehi highlighted Al Suwaiq Industrial City as one of Madayn’s promising development projects in Al Batinah North Governorate. The city covers a total area of approximately 12.2 million sq m, with around 1.3 million sq m to be developed during Phase 1.

Oman maps policy stress tests for Oman Vision 2040

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 12

OMAN’S National Foresight Office has laid out an operating model that would feed early warnings and policy stress tests into Oman Vision 2040 decision-making, allowing assumptions behind national targets to be challenged and alternative routes developed when conditions change.

Mubarak bin Khamis al Hamdani, Director of the Office at the Ministry of Economy, presented the framework in Salalah on Wednesday during the 25th Annual General Conference on ‘Government Readiness for a Sustainable Future’.

The model seeks to move government planning beyond reliance on a single expected outcome by monitoring emerging signals, constructing multiple scenarios and testing whether policies can withstand economic, technological, climate and geopolitical shocks.

“Foresight complements planning by widening the range of possibilities”, the presentation said, adding that it should provide plans and decisions with more resilient pathways.

Unlike conventional strategic planning, which generally works towards a predetermined objective over a short-to-medium period, foresight considers several plausible futures over longer horizons.

The aim is not to predict one outcome, but to improve preparedness by regularly reviewing assumptions, identifying emerging risks and developing options before disruption occurs.

The proposed operating model has four analytical



The new framework will help improve preparedness by regularly reviewing assumptions, identifying emerging risks and developing options before disruption occurs

levels: general strategic foresight; Oman Vision 2040; the economic system; and the wider development system.

The first level would continuously monitor global transformations, emerging technologies, domestic issues and changes affecting the operating model of the Omani economy. It also provides for an emergency foresight track to examine unexpected developments requiring rapid assessment.

At the Oman Vision 2040 level, the framework would monitor the expected trajectories of national indicators, assess how global scenarios could affect priorities and test the resilience of policies linked to the Vision.

It would also identify potential implementation gaps, examine interdependencies between national priorities and design alternative routes to targets if the conditions or assumptions underpinning them change. Its analytical horizon extends beyond 2040.

The economic component covers future sources of growth, the distribution of value added, diversification, economic complexity, productivity and competitiveness.

It also examines fiscal sustainability, investment and finance, foreign trade and export markets, employment and skills, supply chains and economic security.

Individual sectors and wider economic systems would be tested against potential shocks arising from technological change, energy transitions, climate risks and geopolitical developments.

The development component covers demographic shifts, education and skills, health and quality of life, social protection, public services, spatial development, water and food security, natural resources and fairness between generations.

The model’s intended outputs include early warnings, foresight-based situation assessments, scenarios, Oman Vision 2040 readiness reports, risk and opportunity maps, policy alternatives, transition pathways and decision-support

notes.

These would feed into government decision-making, policy formulation, economic and development planning, reviews of national programmes and responses to emerging risks.

The framework also contains a feedback mechanism under which the effects of policies and decisions would be measured, new developments monitored and assumptions and scenarios updated. Issues could then be reordered as risks or opportunities evolve.

Al Hamdani’s presentation identified six foundations for proactive government: anticipatory services; integrated digital infrastructure, data and artificial intelligence; anticipatory regulation; institutional foresight capacity; future-ready human capital; and evidence-based, participatory policy-making.

However, it warned that adopting technology without improving institutional flexibility could create an “execution gap”, in which technological capabilities advance faster than government bodies’ ability to adapt and deliver public value.

A fully proactive government would combine integrated technology with institutional flexibility, enabling services to respond to life events and data, policies to be tested before full implementation and government systems to learn from results. The presentation identified five main governance challenges: a disconnect between foresight findings and decisions; short policy cycles set against long-term risks; uneven capabilities across government bodies; governance of data and artificial intelligence; and difficulty translating long-term ambitions into measurable outcomes.

Fleet expansion lifts Asyad Shipping assets to 1.316 bn

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Asyad Shipping Company’s total assets climbed to RO 1.316 billion at the end of June 2026, up from RO 1.235 billion at the end of 2025, as the Oman-based maritime group accelerated fleet expansion and renewal with the acquisition and delivery of several new vessels during the first half of the year.

The RO 81 million increase in assets was driven primarily by the acquisition of additional vessels under the group’s strategic fleet renewal and expansion programme. Capital expenditure reached RO 260.4 million during the six months ended June 30, reflecting investments in the company’s long-



Asyad Shipping added over a dozen vessels across multiple cargo segments during the first half of this year.

term strategy for maritime trade and energy transportation.

Publicly-traded Asyad Shipping acquired three newly built very large crude carriers (VLCCs) under construction and four secondhand dry bulk vessels — two Kamsarmax

and two Baby-Capesize vessels — during the period. It also took delivery of three secondhand Newcastlemax dry bulk vessels, one newbuild VLCC and two newbuild LNG carriers.

At the same time, the group completed the delivery of five LNG carriers and one VLCC to their new owners, reflecting continued active management of its fleet portfolio.

As of June 30, Asyad Shipping’s operating fleet comprised 45 owned vessels, three co-owned vessels through joint ventures and 31 chartered vessels, compared with 44 owned, four co-owned and 32 chartered vessels at the end of 2025.

The fleet expansion was accompanied by a sharp improvement in financial

performance. Asyad Shipping reported a net profit of RO 38.9 million for the first half of 2026, nearly doubling from RO 20.2 million in the corresponding period of 2025. Operating profit rose to RO 48.6 million from RO 32.3 million a year earlier, supported by higher freight rates, stronger operating margins and improved cost efficiencies across the business.

The bottom line also benefitted from a one-off RO 1.9 million gain from vessel disposals during the period.

Despite disruptions to regional maritime traffic and heightened market uncertainty, the group said its operations remained resilient, with its fleet commercially deployed and continuing to serve customers safely and reliably.

Asyad Shipping also maintained shareholder returns, declaring and paying dividends of RO 28.88 million during the first half, while retaining financial flexibility to fund its growth strategy.

Commenting on the outlook for the remainder of the year, Chairman Muhsin al Rustom said the operating environment would remain challenging amid heightened regional geopolitical tensions, but expressed confidence in the company’s prospects.

“Nevertheless, the Group maintains a positive outlook for market rates and financial performance, supported by the scheduled delivery of newbuild and second-hand vessels during the remainder of the year”, he said.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Meta faces the biggest court fight



Meta Platforms will face a coalition of state attorneys general in a California federal court trial beginning on Wednesday over claims it engineered Facebook and Instagram to be addictive to children.

A case that could expose the company to massive damages and force it to make sweeping changes to its platforms. — Reuters

OLI AND FIRE

Oil rises after Hormuz attacks



Oil prices rose on Wednesday after attacks on two ships reinforced worries about disruptions to Middle East supplies, while industry data showing swelling inventories of US crude might keep bulls in check. Brent futures were up 90 cents, or 1%, at \$89.81 a barrel by 07:57 GMT, set for their sixth day of gains. — Reuters

BANKING AND FINANCE

Bank of America pledges \$250 billion



Bank of America said on Wednesday it plans to deploy \$250 billion by July 2027 to support US digital and infrastructure projects, a move it says will boost the country’s economic growth and help create tens of thousands of jobs.

The Wall Street bank said its “Critical Infrastructure Finance Initiative” will provide primary market lending, investments, capital markets services and banking and advisory offerings. — Reuters

OPINION

Aquaculture projects to fuel fisheries sector growth



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

SOME Omani businesses aspire to move forward with the development of the aquaculture sector in the Sultanate of Oman during the coming period by increasing the number of projects serving this sector and working to establish large Omani joint-stock companies, whether through Omani or GCC investors. Omani aquaculture projects have entered a stage of transformation from limited-scale ventures into a strategic industry. Production figures for 2025 indicate that aquaculture output reached approximately 9,240 tonnes, which represents a promising beginning. Many additional projects are currently in the pipeline as a result of the support and encouragement provided by the relevant authorities to companies operating in this sector. This expansion is expected to significantly increase the country's fish production capacity. The objective is to reach 252,000 tonnes of fishery products by 2030. Achieving this target requires addressing a number of forthcoming challenges, including biosecurity, the provision of feed and other production inputs, the adoption of modern technologies, the development of skilled human resources and the resolution of marketing, supply-chain and export-related challenges. Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources began

implementing a new project to manufacture and develop feed for farmed shrimp in Oman, using locally available raw materials and resources derived from the country's natural environment, in cooperation with a private-sector company operating in this field. The new project aims to localise the fish-feed industry in Oman and increase the contribution of aquaculture to the national economy. It will also provide alternatives to costly imported raw materials and imported feeds by incorporating locally available resources into fish-feed formulations. This initiative opens the door for private-sector companies to further develop the shrimp-feed industry in particular and the fish-feed industry in general in Oman. Over the past period, Oman's aquaculture sector has witnessed rapid growth, driven by expanding investments and increased production capacity as part of the objectives of the blue economy. Total investment in existing aquaculture projects reached approximately RO 349 million by the end of 2025. This reflects growing investor confidence in the sector and its potential to expand production capacity in shrimp, marine fish, oysters, abalone, as well as seaweed and algae, as part of an effort to establish an integrated production system. Consequently, the aquaculture sector is expected to become an advanced model of a promising industry driven by growing investment and is likely to emerge as one of

Oman's extensive coastline and diverse marine environments provide favourable conditions for selecting suitable sites for aquaculture projects.

the important contributors to the national economy during the coming phase. This is gradually driving the sector towards the establishment of an integrated food and investment industry covering shrimp, marine fish and other aquatic products, while also creating greater employment opportunities for Omanis. The importance of these projects also lies in establishing an integrated value chain encompassing hatcheries, feed production, veterinary medicines, packaging, freezing, transportation and exports. Developing such an integrated chain would reduce dependence on imported inputs, enhance local value creation and improve the competitiveness of Omani aquaculture products in domestic and international markets. Oman's extensive coastline and diverse marine environments provide favourable conditions for selecting suitable sites for aquaculture projects. They also create significant opportunities for accessing international markets, where demand for aquaculture products continues to grow in the world. Therefore, it represents an important opportunity to transform the country's marine resources into a sustainable source of food, investment, employment, exports and economic diversification. With appropriate investment and technology, aquaculture can become one of the key pillars of Oman's emerging blue economy.

INFLATION FOG
BLURS CENTRAL
BANK TRAJECTORIES

MIKE DOLAN

What matters in US and global markets today It's inflation day stateside and an important moment for Federal Reserve thinking, not to mention for nervy bond markets. To be fair, the consumer price report only makes for one of three big "inflation days" each month. Tomorrow will bring the producer price update, while the Fed's favored PCE gauge will come later in the month. But CPI will start to form the picture. I'll get into that and more below. But first, where I discuss Europe's unexpected performers, Japan's euro debt purchases and why inflation watchers should care about rising populism. With annual headline and core inflation rates expected to tick slightly lower, today's report may chime with last week's softer July jobs numbers to douse speculation of a Fed rate hike next month. Right now, markets are priced 50-50 on that outcome. Decent demand at Tuesday's 3-year Treasury auction helped calm the horses in the bond market, with 10-year notes coming under the hammer later today. This week's rise in oil prices won't help, however, even though that obviously won't be captured in July consumer inflation. The impasse in Iran talks, as well as more attacks by the Iran-backed Ansar Allah in the Red Sea on Tuesday, are keeping Brent crude close to \$90 per barrel. But there was better news back in the US tech world as CoreWeave surged 15% overnight after beating second-quarter revenue forecasts. The AI cloud company also upgraded its demand forecast, citing a backlog of more than \$100 billion in orders in the second quarter. Meantime, Super Micro Computer jumped 7% after its sales forecast also beat estimates. And elsewhere, Taiwan's Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics maker, reported a 35% rise in second-quarter profit, beating analyst forecasts. Showing how the tech-led boom is flattering investment portfolios, Norway's \$2.3 trillion sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, posted a record profit of \$184.3 billion for the first half of the year. Broader equities were steady early on Wednesday, with Wall Street futures up before the bell. Elsewhere, a nearly 4% gain in South Korea's KOSPI lifted Asian shares. World farm production has outpaced consumption and population growth since the 1980s, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The changes have been driven by higher-yielding crop varieties, greater use of fertiliser and improved irrigation and crop protection, lifting yields of staples such as rice, wheat, corn and soybeans. — Reuters

Construction in UK falls
at fastest rate this year

AS the downturn bites, activity in the UK construction sector falls at the fastest pace so far this year impacting on the housebuilding sector which has remained firmly in contraction, according to new figures. The S&P Global UK construction PMI had a reading of 38.4 in June, marking a slight improvement on May's six-year low of 38.2, but still showed the second fastest fall in output since the start of the pandemic. Any reading above the 50 threshold indicates that activity in the industry is increasing, while anything below means it is contracting. Housebuilding and civil engineering remained under pressure, with bigger falls in activity than in May, with the latter having its weakest performance since the start of the pandemic. Commercial construction was the only part of the industry to record a slower downturn in activity. Kiran Raichura, chief commercial real estate economist at Capital Economics, said: "The construction sector appears to have stabilised in June as, after three straight months of falls, the headline construction PMI rose marginally". He added: "The latest data suggested that construction activity has reached a floor, with forward-looking expectations improving. "However, the rises in input prices that we have already seen over the last few months will still feed through to construction costs over the coming months, while the level of activity remains in the doldrums for both the commercial and housing markets". The report showed easing cost pressures in June while supply chain disruptions were also "notably less acute" than in April and May, with fewer shipping delays. There was also a rebound in business optimism as 38 per cent of construction firms surveyed for the report said they expect an increase in business activity over the year ahead, with 19 per cent predicting a decline. This follows a six-month low to optimism recorded in May.



There was also a rebound in business optimism as 38 per cent of construction firms surveyed for the report said they expect an increase in business activity over the year ahead, with 19 per cent predicting a decline



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, Tim Moore, said: "New work decreased to the least marked extent since March, despite widespread reports of challenging market conditions. "Construction companies commented on headwinds from subdued housing sales, elevated interest rates and squeezed consumer finances, alongside cutbacks to business investment plans". He added: "Some firms noted delays with infrastructure work and fewer public sector tender opportunities". Meanwhile, property prices have been affected with the average UK house price flatlining last month as mortgage rates edged higher in the face of global economic uncertainty. Property values for July reported no growth compared with the previous month, slowing down from 0.2 per cent growth in June, according to the monthly Lloyds house price index. Across the UK, the average property value in July was £299,253. It also meant that house prices were 0.1 per cent higher than a year earlier, the weakest annual increase since November 2023. Northern Ireland had the

strongest growth in prices across the UK, with prices up 7.4 per cent year on year for July at £231,131. It compares with 3.6 per cent growth in Scotland and a 1.6 per cent increase in Wales. Increases in northern areas of England were offset by weakness in the south, with prices in the South East down 2 per cent and those in Greater London down 1.3 per cent. Head of mortgages at Lloyds, Amanda Bryden, said the UK housing market "remained steady" in July. She added: "Average house prices have remained relatively stable for almost two years, moving within a narrow range over that period and sitting just 0.5 per cent higher than they were in November 2024. "That trend has persisted even as buyer and sellers have faced a more uncertain economic backdrop this year. Affordability remains a challenge for many would-be buyers and, following recent events in the Middle East, mortgage rates have edged higher again after easing earlier in the summer". It comes after lenders have been hiking their mortgage rates in recent weeks, despite the base rate being held at 3.75 per cent.

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LOGISTICS
Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

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SALE OF USED VEHICLES

Offers are invited for the purchase of the above individual vehicles, with preference given to the highest bidder. RFQs available at the Khimji Ramdas Automotive Workshop, Ghala.

*Image shown is only for indicative purpose. Features and Colours may differ.

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SIT. WANTED

PAKISTANI male, having diploma in mechanical engineering, 10+ years experience as "sales engineer" in UAE and 15 years experience as "operation manager" in Oman with D/L. Looking for job
Contact: 99495131
email: manzoor.Ahmed1997@gmail.com

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job.
Contact: 92919281

SIT. WANTED

DESKTOP support engineer, 6+ years experience, skilled in Windows/ Server/ Ubuntu, Network configuration, M365 & Google workspace admin. Contact: 99639710, jay.prajapati5655@gmail.ci

Project manager (IT) 4+ years experience seeking opportunities in PMO Project Management or business analysis, MS Engineering Mgt. Experience across IT, Banking. Higher Education & nonprofit sectors. PMP (in progress) currently in Oman.
Contact: 95800828

Lost Bill of Lading Notice

Six Construct LLC, registered under Commercial Registration No. (9014276), has lost Bill of Lading No. (GBTJS0H039/056) on 20/7/2026.

Whoever finds it should hand it over to the nearest branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry or contact the following number: +968 99229518.

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Contact: 91799438

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

Accounts & Finance professional with 7+ years' experience in reporting, revenue assurance, audit, compliance & ERP.
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Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

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ART/LIFE

SHARIFA AL MALKI: WHEN ART BECOMES A WAY OF GIVING



> 20

BAKING MASTERY WORLD’S BEST PASTRY CHEF STAYS TRUE TO ARTISAN ROOTS



Castel received the UIBC award presented annually to a leading figure in the profession in recognition of their career and contribution to the trade on July 14 in Singapore.

The smell of warm bread fills one of Benoit Castel’s patisseries in Paris, where the newly crowned world’s best pastry chef is back at work testing new recipes.

His fingers covered in cookie dough, the 54-year-old Frenchman returned to his usual routine after the International Union of Bakers and Confectioners (UIBC) named him World Confectioner of the Year last month.

“I have a mission: to be the world champion every day in my shop for my customers”, he said.

At the helm of several establishments in Paris, Castel has always followed one motto: “It’s all about the product”.

Three years after fellow French pastry chef Nina Metayer was crowned champion, Castel received the UIBC award presented annually to a leading figure in the profession in recognition of their career and contribution to the trade on July 14 in Singapore.

“Our work is no trivial matter. Every day we make things that people put into their bodies”, said Castel, who grew up in Brittany in western France.

His pastry cases feature blueberry and raspberry tartlets, cherry clafoutis and vanilla flans, but his best-seller is a chocolate choux pastry.

“If we stopped making it, there’d be protests”, he joked.

Each pastry is decorated with a small scalloped shortbread biscuit, a nod to his Breton roots. Castel avoids artificial colouring and gold or silver leaf, while fruit and vegetables are supplied from his own gardens and orchards in Brittany.

The grandson of farmers, Castel grew up watching his grandparents make butter. His mother and grandmother were also accomplished cooks.

He wanted to become a chef from the age of seven, but it was watching a pastry chef create a sugar model of the Château de Chambord when he was 10 that convinced him to pursue pastry-making.

‘Try new things’

“The funny thing with this profession is that it’s the product that dictates the recipe”, he said from his kitchen, which opens onto the shop and dining room.

Working alongside head baker Romain Montbabut, Castel regularly experiments with new recipes. Montbabut, who has worked with him for six years, describes him as demanding and perfectionist, but says he works alongside his staff every day and enjoys sharing his knowledge.

After setting out on his own in 2012, following work with chef Helene Darroze, Hotel Costes and La Grande Epicerie de Paris, Castel discovered breadmaking. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



TOURISM

Tourists come to watch the seals in Berck, in the Bay of Somme, northern France.

— AFP



ARTS

This photograph shows painted plates lined up along the wall in the children's dining room at the Cistercian Fontfroide Abbey, near Narbonne.

— AFP

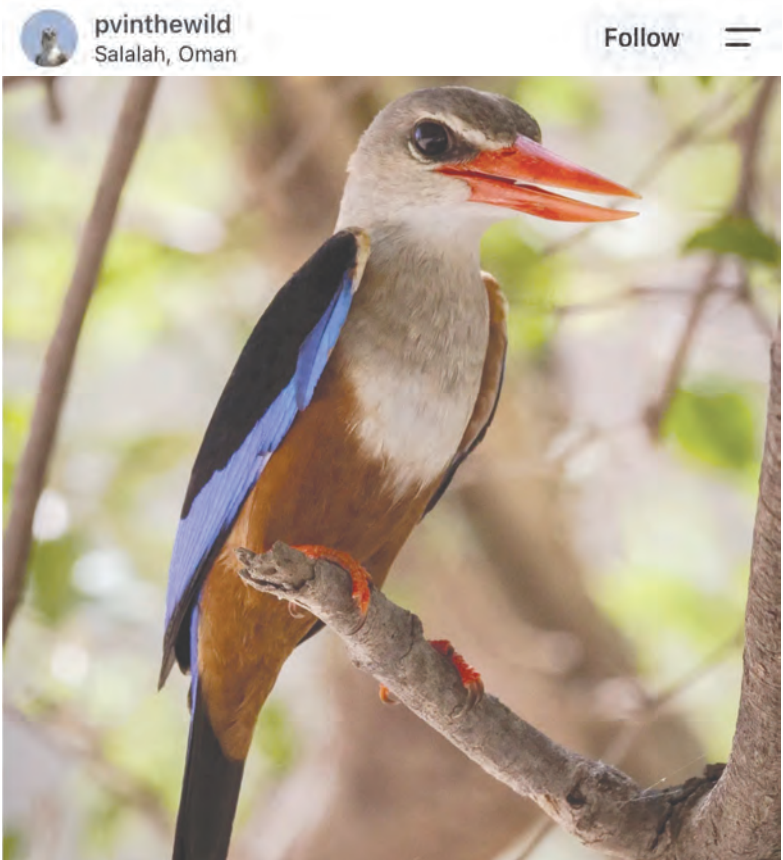


LITERATURE

A woman reads a book during the 34th edition of the Havana Book Fair in Havana.

— AFP

INSTA PICKS



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“A Rüppell’s weaver bird with its unmatched industrious efforts”

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JAMIE LEE CURTIS TAKES CHARGE IN NEW COMEDY ‘NEWLYWEDS’



Oscar-winning actress Jamie Lee Curtis fulfilled two wishes with her new television project, “Newlyweds”: being the boss and returning to the set of a sitcom.

Starring Tea Leoni and Tim Daly, the comedy, which premieres in October on NBC, centres on an impulsive romance between a middle-aged couple who tie the knot after just a few days together.

Curtis, who has an extensive film and television resume, said the multi-camera sitcom appealed to her to the point of having previously “begged” her agents for such an opportunity.

“It was my favourite job. I love... every aspect of it. The dance with the cameras, the idea that you actually get to rehearse something and work it and learn a joke and play it”, she told

reporters.

“And I just never got to do it. And so I just decided to basically kind of create my own job and met Gail”, she added, referring to “Will & Grace” screenwriter Gail Lerner.

The comedy, in which Curtis plays an ex-wife, also allowed her to take the reins of a project as a producer, something she had long desired.

“I’ve wanted to be a boss my whole life”, she said. “I’ve been waiting my whole life, literally, to be able to manifest ideas and bring what I love about what I do into the workplace.

For Leoni and Daly, who are married in real life, the series also marked a return to the small screen as a couple, after working together in the political drama “Madam Secretary”.

— AFP



Camels feeding on a camel dairy farm on the outskirts of the South Australian town of Robe. — AFP

Camels find unlikely home in Australia

XIAO YU YIN

FAR from their origins in the Arabian desert, hundreds of thousands of camels roam outback Australia where they are used for wild races, an alternative milk source.

Imported by British colonists in the 19th century for transport but set free when the advent of cars rendered them redundant, estimates of the camel population in Australia range from 300,000 to up to a million.

Many of them are feral, roaming the outback and generally causing trouble — competing with stock for food, destroying fences, fouling waterholes and damaging Indigenous cultural sites, authorities say. But domesticated they also represent a modest export market, with Australian farmers selling their milk and sometimes even the camels whole — 68 so far in 2026 heading to Malaysia and Indonesia.

Exports of camel meat totalled over \$3.9 million in 2024, according to trade data. On the Humpalicious farm in the South Australian town of Robe, owner and former sea captain Warwick Hill sings the benefits of his fluffy dromedarian friends.

“If you’re kind and fair with them, they generally reciprocate.”

MILKING IT

Camel milk — which he sells for Aus\$20 (\$14) a litre — has a multitude of health benefits, especially for those with allergies, he maintains.

And Hill insists it’s a far superior dairy compared to the “overprocessed” mainstream options. “We haven’t met anybody that can’t have camel milk,” he said. “It’s one of the closest milks to human milk.” Business isn’t huge — the farm supplements its income from the camels with tourism and a homestay.

“The market should be huge, but the price is prohibitive,” Hill said, pointing to the costs of labour and the animals’ relatively low milk output. Further north, others are deploying the camels to more daredevilish ends.

In the remote town of Maree, roughly 600 kilometres (370 miles) north of Adelaide, the camels transform from beasts of burden to powerful racers.

Every year, hundreds of spectators descend on the small town for the annual Marree Camel Cup.

This year’s Marree Camel Cup winner was Young Gun, ridden by Patrick Dennis. Joanne Bell, 55, was racing for the first time -- and took a tumble during the contest. She told AFP she “fell in love” with camels when she was working at a petting farm. “Always wanted to be a jockey but never



A dairy farmer handling camel milk in the town of Robe



Jockey Joanne Bell mounting a camel in her first race meet in Marree

Far from their origins in the Arabian desert, hundreds of thousands of camels roam outback Australia where they are used for wild races, an alternative milk source

had the opportunity to ride horses,” she said. “I love it because it’s just something different,” camel racer Kyrraley Woodhouse said. The key is to pick a camel with the right personality, she explained. “You would want a little bit of temper, a little bit of fire in them,” she said.

“Something that’s got a heart, that’s going to run.” Cameleers — many from Afghanistan and other parts of Central and South Asia — were brought to Australia in the 1860s to harness the animals for transport in the arid interior. Some of their descendants remain in Marree. “It all revolved around the camels. The reason the camels were brought here was because they were so resilient,” Greg Burk, whose great-grandfather came to Australia in the 1880s, said. “Camels are still dear to my heart.” Back at Humpalicious, farmer Hill said he hoped his efforts and those of others could teach people to love his humpbacked homies. — AFP

FEATURES



S H A R I F A A L M A L K I

SIHAM AL SAIDI

SOME stories begin with a career and end with a title. Others keep changing shape, gathering new meaning with every chapter. The story of Omani artist Sharifa al Malki belongs to the second kind.

Her journey has moved across different worlds, healthcare, art, beauty, culture and voluntary work, yet, beneath them all, runs one consistent idea which is a belief that what a person knows should be shared and what a person creates should leave something valuable behind.

For many years, Al Malki worked as a specialist nephrology nurse, a profession that placed compassion, patience and responsibility at the centre of her daily life. But outside the hospital, another side of her personality was taking form. Art gradually became more than a personal passion. It became a language through which she could connect with people and contribute to her community.

That vision eventually found a home in Sharifa Gallery in Qurayat.

The private gallery has grown into more than a space displaying paintings. It has become a meeting point for artists, young talents and people curious to discover their own creative abilities. Through exhibitions, workshops and educational activities, Al Malki has sought to make art accessible rather than distant, something people can experience, learn and build upon.

Her own artistic practice reflects that same openness to experimentation. Her works move between fine-art painting, resin, textured relief and sculpture, combining different materials and contemporary techniques. At the heart of many of these works is a connection to Omani identity, heritage and the visual richness of the environment around her.

Yet, maybe the most distinctive part of her story lies beyond the gallery walls.

Drawing on her healthcare background, Al Malki has organised awareness campaigns for schools and government institutions in Qurayat. She has delivered free educational workshops for students and opened opportunities for women with limited incomes through complimentary courses in beauty and decoration.



WHEN ART BECOMES A WAY OF GIVING

Her artistic journey has also taken her beyond Oman, where her work has earned recognition on international platforms. During one of her participations in Switzerland, Al Malki was honoured by Marwan al Balushi, Minister Plenipotentiary and Deputy Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Switzerland. The recognition added a meaningful chapter to her journey, affirming the growing presence of Omani artistic talent on the international stage and reflecting the appreciation her work has received beyond the country's borders.

For her, volunteering is not a separate activity added to a professional life. It is an extension of it.

Her work in beauty and decoration has also evolved into entrepreneurship. As an internationally certified trainer, she has developed her expertise while running a women's beauty salon, creating another platform through which skills can be taught and livelihoods supported.

Over the years, her community involvement has expanded across health, education, culture and humanitarian initiatives. She has worked to raise awareness, encourage women's participation, discover emerging talent and position art as a tool for personal growth and national identity.

Her artistic journey has also taken her beyond Oman, where she has participated in festivals, exhibitions and cultural forums, representing the country through her work and demonstrating the ability of Omani women artists to engage confidently on regional and international platforms.

Her efforts were recognised at the fifth annual Global Women's Forum, "You Are the Lady of Society", where she was honoured among leading and influential women.

But perhaps the most fitting way to understand Sharifa al Malki is not through the number of exhibitions, certificates or honours she has collected.

It is through the people who learned something from her, the women who gained a skill, the students who discovered a creative talent and the visitors who found a new appreciation for art.

Her legacy, in the end, is not only what she has painted.

It is what she has helped others see in themselves.

