

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



3
PERSEID METEOR
SHOWER TO PEAK
ON WEDNESDAY

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HM, QATAR EMIR DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS

H I S M A J E S T Y P A Y S P R I V A T E V I S I T T O S H A I K H T A M I M



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani held a cordial meeting at Qasr Al Hukum in the Qatari capital, Doha.

HIS MAJESTY,
QATAR EMIR
HOLD CORDIAL
MEETING

LEADERS REVIEW
TRAJECTORY
OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN
HAITHAM BIN TARIK
paid a private fraternal
visit to Shaikh Tamim
bin Hamad al Thani,
Emir of the State of
Qatar, on Sunday.
During the visit,
a cordial meeting was held between
the two leaders at Qasr Al Hukum
in the Qatari capital, Doha. Their
discussions reviewed the trajectory
of bilateral relations and explored
avenues for further developing existing
cooperation across various sectors, in
a manner that serves mutual interests
and shared aspirations.
Alongside His Majesty the Sultan,
the meeting was attended by HH
Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said,

Minister of State and Governor of
Muscat, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al
Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal
Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al
Numani, Minister of the Royal Office,
Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy,
Minister of Interior, Eng Salim bin
Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and
Minerals, Sayyid Dr Sultan bin Yarub al
Busaidy, Adviser at the Private Office,
and Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al
Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate
of Oman to the State of Qatar.
It was attended from the Qatari side
by Shaikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al
Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of State for Defence Affairs,
Shaikh Khalifa bin Hamad al Thani,
Minister of Interior and Commander of
the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya),

Abdullah bin Mohammed al Khulaifi,
Chief of the Amiri Diwan, Shaikh
Hamad bin Tamim al Thani, Saad bin
Sherida al Kaabi, Minister of State
for Energy Affairs, Shaikh Faisal bin
Thani al Thani, Minister of Commerce
and Industry, Shaikh Mohammed
bin Abdullah al Thani, Minister of
Transport, Sultan bin Saad al Muraikhi,
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,
and Shaikh Mubarak bin Fahad al
Thani, Ambassador of the State of
Qatar to the Sultanate of Oman.
The Emir of the State of Qatar was at
the forefront of those welcoming and
bidding farewell to His Majesty the
Sultan at the Amiri Terminal of Hamad
International Airport, accompanied by
a number of senior officials. — ONA
SEE ALSO P2

EXPLORE
AVENUES FOR
DEVELOPING
EXISTING TIES

TALKS FOCUS
ON SERVING
MUTUAL
INTERESTS

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS
TO ECUADOR
PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham
bin Tarik has sent a cable of
greetings to President Daniel
Noboa of the Republic of Ecuador
on his country’s Independence
Anniversary. In his cable, His
Majesty the Sultan expressed his
heartfelt sentiments and best
wishes to President Daniel and the
people of Ecuador, wishing them
continuous prosperity.

Youth-led projects boost tourism in Khareef Dhofar

TAQAH: Wadi Darbat in Dhofar
Governorate is witnessing growing
economic and tourism activity
during the Khareef Dhofar Season
2026, driven by Omani youth-led
projects that have successfully
leveraged the valley’s unique
natural assets to offer diverse
tourism services and experiences.
This contributes to economic
vitality, provides seasonal
employment opportunities and
supports entrepreneurship and
sustainable tourism.
These projects are distributed
across hospitality facilities,



These projects contribute to economic vitality and provide seasonal employment
opportunities for youth.

rural rest houses, tourist chalets,
cafes, watercraft services, and
adventure tourism, in addition
to environmental conservation
initiatives and the promotion of
Omani handicrafts and heritage
products. This has contributed
to raising the quality of services
provided to visitors arriving
from various governorates of the
Sultanate of Oman and from abroad.
A number of project owners in
Wadi Darbat said that the increasing
demand during the Khareef season
has served as an incentive to expand
their investments. — ONA

HIS MAJESTY PAYS PRIVATE VISIT TO SHAIKH TAMIM



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik paid a private fraternal visit to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, on Sunday. During the visit, a cordial meeting was held between the two leaders at Qasr Al Hukum in the Qatari capital, Doha. Their discussions reviewed the trajectory of bilateral relations and explored avenues for further developing existing cooperation across various sectors, in a manner that serves mutual interests and shared aspirations. The Emir of the State of Qatar was at the forefront of those welcoming and bidding farewell to His Majesty the Sultan at the Amiri Terminal of Hamad International Airport, accompanied by a number of senior officials. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



The project will provide visitors with a more comfortable experience.

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY LAUNCHES AL BUSTAN CARTS PROJECT

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has announced the Al Bustan carts project in the Wilayat of Muscat, aimed at enhancing the area with new facilities and services for visitors.

The project will be developed over an area of 8,500 square metres and is expected to be completed within 270 days.

According to the municipality, the project will include 10 food carts, six shaded structures, a restroom facility, pedestrian walkways and a paved seating area. The site will also feature decorative lighting and asphalt works as part of the overall development. Muscat Municipality said the project is intended to enhance the appeal of the location and provide visitors with a more comfortable experience, as part of its ongoing efforts to improve public facilities and recreational spaces across the city.

‘RURAL DHOFAR 2026’ EXHIBITION KICKS OFF TODAY



SALALAH: The activities of the ‘Rural Dhofar 2026’ exhibition will kick off on Monday at Ittin Square in Dhofar Governorate. Organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the governorate, in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the event is held as part of the Khareef Dhofar Season activities, aiming to support rural women, empower them economically, and enhance the presence of Omani products in the markets.

Running until August 15, the exhibition serves as a marketing platform bringing together more than 60 participants among female entrepreneurs and productive families from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. They will showcase various agricultural, fisheries, and food products, alongside honey and date products, and cosmetics made from natural materials, reflecting the quality and diversity of Omani rural products.

The exhibition aims to enhance direct marketing opportunities for rural products, increase the income of productive families, and support small and medium enterprises, alongside highlighting the role of rural women as an active partner in achieving food security and sustainable economic development. — ONA

Omani team competes in US Adobe design championship

CALIFORNIA: An Omani team participated in the Adobe Global Graphic Design Championship 2026, held in Anaheim, California, bringing together students and creative professionals in graphic design from around the world.

The Omani team comprised three students who qualified through the National Graphic Design Championship — Sheikha al Yafai, Firas al Nuaimi and Shahm al Shabibi — along with a supervisory and organisational team.

The participants advanced through several competitive stages at the national level, including Adobe-accredited professional tests, practical projects and an intensive



The projects focused on non-profit organisations and community initiatives.

training programme.

The international championship featured practical challenges requiring participants to develop design solutions using Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. The challenges assessed creativity, innovation and time management, with projects focusing on non-profit

organisations and community initiatives. The United States won first place, followed by Brazil in second and Malaysia in third.

Oman’s participation builds on the National Graphic Design Championship, organised by Vision and Achievement International in cooperation with Al Qima Al

Ulya Company and in partnership with several government and private-sector entities. More than 850 contestants from various governorates participated in the national championship.

Zawan bint Khalfan al Akhzami, CEO of Vision and Achievement International, said Oman’s participation in the Adobe Global Championship reflects the country’s growing digital-skills ecosystem and the capabilities of Omani talent in design and digital creativity. She added that the participation forms part of a strategy to develop a new generation of national talent equipped with advanced digital skills. — ONA

EA conducts field surveys of ecosystems in Masirah

THE ENVIRONMENT Authority, represented by the Environment Centre in the Wilayat of Masirah, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, has commenced field survey work within the framework of two indicators of the Authority’s operational targets for 2026.

These indicators relate to the number of field surveys of coastal marine ecosystems and the rate of safety of water connectivity between lagoons (khawrs) and the sea, aiming to evaluate the environmental condition of coasts and coastal wetlands and enhance the national biodiversity database.

The survey work also aims to provide accurate field data on beach characteristics, natural components, and environmental pressures they may be exposed to, thereby contributing to assessing their condition and identifying sites of environmental importance and priority in protection and management efforts.

In its first aspect, the field survey work involves conducting longitudinal beach surveys by dividing them into segments each four kilometres in length, and documenting the beach’s nature and the proportions of its components.

This is alongside monitoring coastal erosion indicators and recording biological and environmental observations at the sites, including mangroves and coastal plants, tracks and nesting signs of sea turtles, invertebrates, and birds, in addition to inventorying the types of waste present on the beaches.

In the second aspect, the survey work covers coastal wetlands, with a focus on evaluating the safety of water connectivity between lagoons and the sea by measuring several physical water indicators during high tide. This is alongside conducting hydrological measurements of the lagoons, including the width and depth of their openings, the extent of tidal movement impact, and the percentage of tide water reaching inside the lagoon, in addition to documenting biodiversity components at the sites covered by the survey work.

Ghasi bin Hamad al Farsi, Supervisor



The Environment Centre has launched e-field forms that allow teams to record data directly from the devices.

of the Environmental Control Unit at the Environment Authority Centre in the Wilayat of Masirah, said that these surveys represent one of the important scientific foundations for assessing the environmental condition of coastal ecosystems and providing field information that contributes to identifying areas eligible for protection and guiding environmental management work based on actual data and results.

He added that the field team utilised sensing and aerial documentation technologies using an unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) to document the sites from above, monitor the extent of lagoons and their openings, mudflat areas, and the spread of mangroves, alongside defining beach erosion lines. He explained that aerial photos constitute a visual reference that can be relied upon for future comparisons and for tracking changes that may occur at the sites during coming seasons.

He noted that aerial photography operations are carried out according to controls and safe altitudes that take into account the nature of the sites and the sensitivity of wildlife, thereby minimising the potential for disturbing birds and creatures present in coastal areas.

He stated that the Environment Centre in the Wilayat of Masirah has introduced electronic field forms that allow teams to record data directly from the devices used in the survey, with the ability to operate without requiring a network connection, alongside automatically recording the geographic coordinates of the sites.

He pointed out that this mechanism contributes to accelerating the field data collection process and transitioning it to analysis phases, while reducing the need for manual data re-entry. This limits the chances of error, saves time and effort, and enhances the accuracy of data used in preparing environmental reports and studies.

The survey work comes as part of the Environment Authority’s efforts aimed at enhancing environmental monitoring of coastal ecosystems and building and updating an integrated national database on their components, characteristics, and changes occurring in them.

This supports planning and decision-making processes and contributes to setting priorities for protection and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. — ONA

Perseid meteor shower to light up Oman’s skies on Wednesday

MUSCAT: The skies over the Sultanate of Oman are experiencing the annual Perseid meteor shower, which can be observed with the naked eye across various governorates, particularly from dark locations away from artificial lights. The shower will continue until August 24, reaching its peak on Wednesday evening and continuing into the early hours of Thursday. It is one of the most captivating astronomical phenomena for stargazers and astrophotographers worldwide.

Speaking about the phenomenon, Ashwaq bint Nasser al Siyabi, Deputy Chairman of the Members’ Affairs Committee at the Oman

Astronomical Society, said meteor showers occur when Earth, in its orbit around the Sun, passes close to the path of a comet and encounters a stream of meteoroid particles left behind by the comet in space.

She explained that the Perseids originate from the famous Swift-Tuttle comet, which orbits the Sun approximately once every 133 years. Its nucleus is about 26 km in diameter.

As Earth passes through its debris, dust grains and tiny fragments — some no larger than grains of sand — enter the atmosphere at speeds of up to 59 km per second. They collide with air molecules and burn up, producing



This year’s Perseid peak coincides with the new moon, providing ideal conditions for observation. — ONA

bright streaks across the night sky.

Al Siyabi noted that the meteors could range from faint to exceptionally bright. The brightest are known as “fireballs”, one of the features that distinguish the

Perseids from other meteor showers. Studies indicate that the Perseids produce more fireballs than any other meteor shower.

She said successful observation depends mainly on two factors: the altitude of the radiant — the apparent point from which the meteors originate, located in the constellation Perseus in the north-eastern sky — and the darkness of the observing site.

This year’s Perseid peak coincides with the new moon, providing ideal conditions for observation. With moonlight absent, the sky will be at its darkest, allowing observers to see even faint meteors, as well as bright fireballs streaking clearly across the

night sky.

The best viewing time is from after midnight until just before dawn, when Perseus is high above the horizon.

Observers are advised to choose open, elevated locations away from artificial lights and obstructions, and allow their eyes at least 20 minutes to adjust to the darkness.

A good number of meteors can also be seen on August 14, although activity gradually decreases after the peak.

Al Siyabi concluded that no special equipment is required to enjoy the Perseids, making them an accessible and awe-inspiring spectacle for everyone.

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KHAREEF IN DHOFAR is not just about mist-covered mountains and lush green landscapes. This season, visitors are also being invited to savour the governorate through its distinctive flavours, with food emerging as an increasingly important part of the tourism experience.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is putting food at the heart of the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026 experience through its 'Omani Taste Journey', an initiative designed to allow visitors to discover the governorate through its flavours, landscapes and traditions. Launched in cooperation with Mwasalat, the open-top bus offers visitors a journey through Salalah while enjoying the cool Khareef breeze and authentic Omani hospitality through food. The initiative features two routes: the first connects Al Haffa, Al Baleed and Dahariz Beach, while the second runs between Al Haffa, Al Gharif and Al Nahda Tower, giving visitors an opportunity to experience different parts of the city while enjoying the seasonal atmosphere.



The initiative reflects a wider effort by the government and local communities to promote food tourism and showcase the authentic flavours of Dhofar. For visitors, traditional dishes are an important part of understanding the governorate, with madhbi, mashakeek, ma'ajeen and Omani halwa among the foods attracting attention.

Nasser al Harbi, a Saudi visitor, highlighted the importance of experiencing Dhofari cuisine during Khareef, pointing to the many restaurants serving traditional dishes across Salalah. He also noted the popularity of Omani halwa at food and event locations.

*FROM MADHBI
TO HALWA,
DHOFAR
SERVES UP
A CULINARY
TREAT DURING
KHAREEF*

FOOD SPICES UP KHAREEF

Al Saadi's creativity has transformed the cooking process itself into an attraction rather than simply offering a finished meal. The temporary closure was a precautionary measure to address food-safety concerns, and the concept can be further developed while maintaining the highest standards.

KAMLA AL RAHBI
Organisational behaviour
researcher

Meanwhile, Omani chefs and entrepreneurs are finding innovative ways to turn food preparation into entertainment. Chef and content creator Ahmed al Saadi introduced his 'Chicken Amusement Park' at Al Hashi Camp, an unconventional concept designed to make the cooking and grilling process part of the visitor experience.

The concept quickly went viral on social media, attracting widespread attention, though it was temporarily suspended by Muscat Municipality to address health and safety requirements. The development met the need for culinary innovation and aligned with professional safety standards. Organisational behaviour expert Dr. Al Hashi said, "Al Saadi's creativity has transformed the process itself into an attraction, offering a fresh meal. The temporary nature of the concept is a smart move to address food-safety concerns while further developed while maintaining the fun." From traditional Omani cooking experiences, this has become an important part of the tourism environment and a key attraction at Dhofar Camp.



RECALL DATE: 10-08-2026

Recall

KIA K8 (GL3)

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	#Number of Affected Commodities
K8 (GL3)	March-08-2021 to Feb-19-2025	55

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
 #Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

On some K8 (GL3) models produced within specific production date range, high pressure fuel pipe nut may get loosen overtime due to production deviation, so fuel leakage may occur in engine area. Estimated defect ratio is 10%.

Recall Action

Verify affected vehicles as per the VIN list and Inspect fuel leakage in fuel pipe and tighten fuel pipe nut if no leakage exist or replace fuel pipe if leakage exist as per KMC recommendation.



To check the serial number of the affected items, please visit the Recall and Warnings website by scanning the QR code.



مركز حماية المستهلك
SAUDI BAWANI Center

Contact details: Please Call: 24579800
Working days: Sunday - Thursday
Working Time: 8:30 - 17:30 hrs.

التاريخ : شباط 2025

الاصدار : 04

الرقم: SOP-093-03

Consumer Protection Authority
80079009 - 80079977 خط المستهلك

SHORT TAKES



The caravan travelled to Dhofar via Al Dakhiliyah.

DOWN SYNDROME
ASSOCIATION
CONCLUDES
AWARENESS CARAVAN

AL SEEB: The Omani Down Syndrome Association concluded its first awareness caravan of the year, organised in cooperation with a charitable volunteer team and covering Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah and Dhofar governorates.

The caravan, held from July 31 to August 7, began in Muscat and travelled to Dhofar via Al Dakhiliyah before returning to the association's headquarters in Al Seeb.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Jabri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Down Syndrome Association, said that the caravan was the association's first initiative of the year and expressed hope that it would be repeated in the coming years following an evaluation of the experience.

The initiative aimed to strengthen community partnerships and raise awareness about Down syndrome across the governorates of Oman.

He said the initiative aimed to strengthen community partnerships and raise awareness about Down syndrome across the governorates of Oman. It also reflected the association's commitment to participating in national and community initiatives and forums that help convey its message to different segments of society.

The caravan also sought to introduce the public to Down syndrome, highlight the abilities and talents of children with Down syndrome and promote a culture of inclusion and social acceptance.

Al Jabri said the caravan travelled in 12 buses and included 24 association members, volunteers from the participating team and a number of children.

As part of the initiative, awareness and information corners were set up at Hawana Salalah, Al Mughsail, Awqad Public Park, Wadi Darbat and Ittin Square in Dhofar Governorate. The corners provided visitors with information about the association and its activities, as well as publications and educational materials.

In Al Dakhiliyah, an awareness corner was also established at Nizwa Public Market, where association members introduced visitors to the association's roles and activities and its branches in several wilayats.

The initiative also featured activities for visiting children, who were presented with gifts as part of the programme. — **ONA**

Dhofar Museum's 'Oman Heritage' expo concludes

SALALAH: The 'Oman Heritage' exhibition, organised by the Dhofar Museum in cooperation with the Artaqaa art team, concluded as part of the museum programme accompanying the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026.

The exhibition showcased the connection between fine art and Oman's cultural heritage through an innovative display that integrated contemporary artworks with the museum's collections and sections.

Harith al Ghassani, a member of the Dhofar Museum's Board of Directors, said the exhibition reflected the museum's efforts to promote awareness of national identity and strengthen links between fine art and historical artefacts.

He said the exhibition provided a visual



experience highlighting Oman's cultural and civilisational heritage in a contemporary manner, while also offering visual artists an opportunity to showcase their works and have them acquired.

The exhibition also sought to create a space where artistic creativity meets historical content,

helping strengthen the connection between members of society, particularly young people, with Oman's history and civilisation.

Al Ghassani described the exhibition as a distinctive cultural event, particularly for its integrated display approach. The artworks were placed across different sections of the museum according to their relevance to the collections on display, giving visitors an integrated artistic and cultural experience.

The exhibition formed part of the Dhofar Museum's efforts to use visual arts to introduce Oman's cultural heritage, strengthen the link between museum activities and artistic creativity and enrich the cultural scene during the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026. — **ONA**

Youth-led projects breathe
new life into Al Hamra

STAFF REPORTER
AL HAMRA, AUGUST 9

THE WILAYAT of Al Hamra is witnessing a surge in investment driven by Omani youths who are transforming cultural and historical heritage into thriving tourism ventures. By restoring mud-brick homes, reviving authentic Omani hospitality and leveraging lush oases and natural trails, these young entrepreneurs are putting the region firmly on the global travel map.

Leading the charge is Masqa Cafe, an initiative that blends location-specific authenticity with modern innovation. Project owner Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Hattali notes that Al Hamra is experiencing rapid tourism growth thanks to the diverse experiences offered by residents.

"Modern cafes and tourism concepts are no longer just about standard service," Al Hattali explained. "They rely on integrating local environment and Omani identity into an all-encompassing experience. Masqa Cafe was designed as an open-air retreat amidst date palm oases and trees, where natural beauty meets the unique character of the place."

Al Hattali highlighted that his clientele includes families seeking relaxation, photography enthusiasts and tourists eager to experience Omani hospitality in a natural setting. To sustain this momentum, he urged officials to boost rural tourism marketing, streamline approval processes for outdoor ventures, expand logistics infrastructure near oases and build dedicated pedestrian trails and safe recreational areas.

Efforts to preserve heritage architecture are equally robust. Jaber bin Mubarak al Abri, owner of the Bait Al Burj Heritage House,

Leading the charge is Masqa Cafe, an initiative that blends location-specific authenticity with modern innovation. Project owner Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Hattali notes that Al Hamra is experiencing rapid tourism growth thanks to the diverse experiences offered by residents.



The wilayat's historical structures are vital components of national identity.

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Constructed from mud and sun-dried brick amidst palm groves, Bait Al Burj serves as a living museum showcasing traditional architecture alongside a rare collection of artefacts documenting daily life in historic Oman.

"Visitor interest in heritage homes is steadily rising as travellers seek to step back in time and explore historical artefacts up close," Al Abri said.

To ensure long-term viability, Al Abri advocated for dedicated funding and support programmes to maintain and restore mud-brick structures facing weather erosion and high upkeep costs. He also called for simplified permitting processes to convert historic buildings into living museums without sacrificing architectural integrity, alongside workshops and festivals celebrating traditional crafts to reactivate ancient neighbourhoods.

Abdullah bin Zaher al Abri, founder of the Misfah Hospitality Inn and the Misfat Al Abriyeen Museum, emphasised the pivotal role of community-led investments in showcasing the area's natural assets. Key attractions include Misfat Al Abriyeen — recognised globally as one of the UN Tourism Best Tourism Villages — alongside Jabal Shams, Al Jabal Al Sharqi and Al Hoota Cave.

Built using traditional mud and stone, the inn and museum offer guests an immersive experience combining Omani hospitality with local history, attracting both domestic visitors and European tourists seeking authentic cultural stays.

Abdullah al Abri highlighted the need for infrastructure upgrades, including safer mountain roads, better signage and enhanced visitor services. He also suggested introducing adventure tourism infrastructure — such as cable cars and zip lines — and establishing a task force combining government agencies and local experts.

Rummana season showcases farm heritage

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The fourth edition of the Rummana season opened at Janain Farm in Saih Qatna village in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, offering visitors an agricultural tourism experience centred on fruit picking and local farm products.

The season will continue until September, allowing visitors to experience farm life and pick fresh figs and pomegranates directly from the trees during the harvest season.

Organised by Tibi Company and Janain Agricultural Tourism Development Company in partnership with Omran Group, the event aims to promote sustainable agricultural tourism, empower rural communities and make better use of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar's agricultural assets.



The new edition offers visitors a range of activities at the café and nursery.

The venue features a nursery showcasing local plant and tree species, an Omani corner highlighting traditional heritage and products, a café and a platform displaying fresh local

products made from produce grown in the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Amjad bint Khalid al Maawali, CEO of Tibi Company, said the fourth edition builds on the company's vision of creating

authentic and enriching agricultural tourism experiences.

She noted that new experiences are introduced each season to strengthen visitors' connection with the land and its agricultural cycles, including fruit picking, discovering local products and experiencing Omani heritage.

The latest edition builds on the success of previous Rummana seasons, with the organisers offering visitors a range of activities at the café and nursery.

The season forms part of wider efforts to transform Al Jabal Al Akhdhar's natural, agricultural and cultural resources into sustainable tourism experiences and strengthen its appeal as a leading destination in Oman. — **ONA**

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WORLD

SHORTTAKES

Syria reaches deal with Moscow on fate of Russian bases



A general view of the Russian Navy facility in Tartus, Syria. — Reuters file photo

DAMASCUS: Syria said on Sunday that it reached a deal with Moscow on the fate of Russia’s two bases in the country, which it once used to provide military support to ousted leader Bashar al Assad during the Syrian civil war. Syria’s official SANA news agency quoted the foreign ministry as saying that Hmeimim airbase and Tartus naval base, Russia’s only two official military bases outside the former Soviet Union, would be turned into “joint training and capacity-building centres, within new arrangements that preserve mutual interests”. The memorandum of understanding, which followed a year and a half of negotiations, “set a time limit of no more than three months to complete the process”, SANA added.

In the meantime, civilian facilities at both bases will be handed over to Damascus. Both the Hmeimim and Tartus bases had remained operational while talks were ongoing. Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani visited the sites on Sunday “to inspect the facilities and installations included in the historic memorandum of understanding”, according to SANA. Syria has expressed a willingness to cooperate with Moscow, and President Ahmed al Sharaa has been received by Putin in Moscow twice since taking over. — AFP

Türkiye says expects Egypt to join defence pact



HAKAN FIDAN
Turkish Foreign Minister

ANKARA: Türkiye’s foreign minister said that he expected Egypt to join a joint defence agreement with regional partners designed to stabilise the region that is grappling with the Middle East war. Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan signed the agreement on Friday against the

backdrop of war between the United States and Iran, which has drawn in surrounding nations and disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said he expected Egypt to join the “Mecca Joint Defence Agreement”, calling the country a “natural partner on all issues”. “I believe that at the next stage Egypt will also be among us in the alliance. We already act towards one another as if we were alliance members,” he said in an interview. “There are a few technical issues. Once these are implemented, there is no reason for Egypt not to be part of it,” Fidan said. The agreement does not target a specific country. “There is no common threat that we have put in writing,” he said, according to the news agency.

In the interview, Fidan said the agreement was “the most important step towards bringing lasting stability to this region”, and suggested the alliance could expand further. “Under our president’s vision, we should not remain limited to three countries. We should grow and, if necessary, bring all countries under this umbrella,” he said. — AFP

UNFOLDING CATASTROPHE

Pope calls for more aid corridors in Sudan



Pope Leo XIV called on Sunday for humanitarian corridors to be opened for civilians caught up in a conflict in Sudan which has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions. Leo said he was following “with concern the tragic situation in Sudan, especially in the city of El Obeid”, the largest city in the southern Kordofan region, which has come under intense drone attacks in recent weeks. The attacks have prompted the UN to issue a “red alert”. — AFP

Iran issues demands for reopening of Hormuz



Vessels are seen near the Strait of Hormuz. — Reuters

IRAN’S REVOLUTIONARY Guards said on Sunday they would not reopen the Strait of Hormuz, vital to the world economy, until the United States met Tehran’s conditions set out the day before, including compensation for war damages. Iran has imposed an effective blockade of the strait since the United States and Israel attacked in late February, and wants to charge tolls for passage, striking ships it accuses of attempting to circumvent its preferred route. Continued attacks in the waterway, which was free to transit before the war, led to the collapse of an April ceasefire. Mediators have urged both sides to return to the terms of a subsequent June memorandum that set out a path for peace talks.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said discussions with neighbouring states over transit and management of the strait were “approaching the final stages”, but added that the reopening of Hormuz “is subject to other conditions and compensation for the violation” of the June agreement. He denied on Sunday that Iran was negotiating

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the reopening of Hormuz “is subject to other conditions and compensation for the violation” of the June agreement. He denied on Sunday that Iran was negotiating with the United States, saying they were merely “exchanging messages” via intermediaries.

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Iran’s security chief Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr on Saturday laid out a list of demands for reopening the strait. He also demanded the lifting of a US counterblockade of Iranian ports, the end of sanctions, the release of frozen assets and compensation for wartime damage, according to remarks reported by the Tasnim news agency. Iran’s Revolutionary Guards on Sunday said their strategy was to maintain the closure “until the enemy accepts all our conditions... the strait is now actually a theatre of war for us and not just a waterway”.

The comments came as transit through Hormuz has dropped significantly, with Iran targeting ships it accuses of skirting its preferred route through Iranian waters. The United Arab Emirates’ foreign ministry on Saturday condemned what it called a “hostile Iranian attack that targeted a tanker belonging to ADNOC (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company) with a missile while it was transiting the Strait of Hormuz, without causing

casualties”.

Later on Saturday, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said a ship was hit by a projectile in the Strait of Hormuz, causing a fire that was extinguished but no casualties. It was unclear whether they were referring to the same ship. The previous Iran-US deal — meant to serve as a jumping-off point for negotiations on a permanent settlement — had said Tehran and Muscat would hash out future arrangements for the strait in discussion with other Gulf countries and “in line with the applicable international law”.

Meanwhile, Ansar Allah announced on Sunday that they had struck a Saudi oil facility on the country’s Red Sea coast, after the kingdom said it had extinguished a fire at the site. Also, strikes by the group on Sunday killed at least 11 people, after an earlier drone salvo targeted a Saudi oil refinery on the Red Sea coast. A medical source in Mokha said three civilians and eight military personnel had been killed in the Ansar Allah attacks. — AFP

ISRAEL REJECTS TRUMP’S PEACE PLAN FOR GAZA

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu restated his rejection of Donald Trump’s latest Gaza plan in televised remarks to his right-wing government on Sunday. Netanyahu is in campaign mode as he seeks re-election at a vote due on October 27 but is caught between far-right ministers angered by concessions in Gaza and his key military backer, Trump, who wants progress towards ending the conflict there with a new 15-point peace plan.

Israel has scaled back attacks in Gaza since Monday, when Nikolay Mladenov, the Gaza envoy for Trump’s Board of

Peace that oversees the Gaza ceasefire, met with Netanyahu. A source familiar with Israel’s position said it had agreed that the military would only act against what it perceives as immediate threats in Gaza and no longer carry out targeted assassinations as it had been doing on a near-daily basis.

Trump announced last month that there had been a breakthrough in his plan to end the war, to which both Israel and Hamas agreed, with Israeli forces withdrawing as Hamas disarms and an International Stabilisation Force working with a new Palestinian police force to secure the enclave. — Reuters



DANGER OF FLAMES

Indonesia closes national park over wildfire



Indonesian authorities have closed access to a national park on Java Island as firefighters battle a wildfire raging there for nearly a week. The blaze has razed 176 hectares since it broke out in the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, near the popular East Java tourist destination of Mount Bromo, a disaster official said. Authorities barred access to visitors late on Saturday until further notice. Two water-bombing helicopters have been deployed to douse the flames. — AFP

ONLINE PROMPTED

Thai shooter had watched violent content



The Thai teen behind a deadly school shooting outside Bangkok had an air gun confiscated by a teacher last year and had watched violent content online, police said on Sunday. As investigations continued into Friday’s rampage, police said the boy had used social media to learn how to use a firearm. “According to witness interviews, the perpetrator had begun showing interest in studying the use of firearms for some time, about one to two years.” — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Smoke rises from the Bald Range wildfire over a street in Summerland, Canada. — Reuters

WILDFIRE FORCES 20,000 EVACUATIONS IN WESTERN CANADA

VICTORIA: Canadian officials declared a state of emergency after a fast-moving wildfire in the western province of British Columbia forced the overnight evacuation of more than 20,000 people, including some who were airlifted to safety. Winds fanned the Bald Range wildfire to grow rapidly, pushing flames into the Summerland area and affecting communities throughout the surrounding valleys.

“We know there have been significant losses of homes and property. We also know that some people became trapped as conditions changed quickly”, British Columbia Premier David Eby said in a statement. The Bald Range fire covered an estimated area of 10,341 hectares as of early on Sunday and was considered out of control, according to the BC Wildfire Service website. Kelly Greene, the province’s Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, declared a state of emergency.

Prime Minister Mark Carney posted his gratitude to firefighters and first responders on X, thanking them for “working tirelessly to keep people safe”.

“The federal government stands ready to help and support the government of British Columbia in these efforts. I’m keeping everyone forced from their homes in my thoughts and hoping they can return safely soon”, Carney said. — AFP

ROMAN WRECK FOUND OFF SICILY



Italian divers have discovered the 2,100-year-old wreck of a Roman ship off Sicily, piled high with hundreds of well-preserved amphorae. The wreck, dubbed by Italy’s Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli as “one of the most important underwater archaeological discoveries of recent years”, was found some three miles off the coast of Mazara del Vallo. Divers from the cultural heritage protection arm of Palermo’s police said that they had located the ship — thought to date to between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC — some 46 metres down, after a tip-off from fishermen. — AFP

BOMBING ATTACKS MARK FIRST DAY OF COLOMBIA’S NEW GOVT

BOGOTA: Two bombing attacks in different parts of Colombia marked the first day in office for new President Abelardo de la Espriella, leaving at least one police officer dead and several wounded. The tough-talking hard-right leader campaigned on confronting “narcoterrorism without truce” and ending peace talks with armed groups following his inauguration in the southwestern city of Cali.

Colombia’s army said FARC guerilla dissidents used explosives to destroy a highway tollbooth near Cali, with two security guards suffering minor injuries. Rebels under the command of Ivan

Morodisco, Colombia’s most wanted guerilla commander, operate in the area surrounding the tollbooth, which was under construction on the Pan-American highway in the Santander de Quilichao municipality.

Morodisco leads dissidents who broke away from the historic 2016 peace agreement between the FARC and Colombia’s government. De la Espriella condemned the bombing on social media, saying “attacking the country’s infrastructure is attacking progress” in an X post.

“To those responsible, I send a clear message: there will be no refuge, no leniency and no

impunity”, he added.

About 1,000 kilometres away, in the northern department of Cesar, an officer was killed in another bombing early on Saturday when an explosive-equipped drone struck a police station, officials there said. Authorities there have not yet identified suspects, but De la Espriella vowed whoever is responsible “will not go unpunished”. The confrontational style of the first-time political leader, who openly admires US President Donald Trump and El Salvador’s Nayib Bukele, now faces tough opposition from the guerilla groups and drug traffickers. — AFP

Zelensky says more North Korean troops in Russia

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelensky has said up to 50,000 North Korean soldiers will be deployed in Russia to fight for Pyongyang’s ally, while calling on South Korea to provide support for its air defence. Zelensky said on X on Saturday that “a decision has been made for 30,000 to 50,000 North Koreans to be deployed on the territory of Russia”, a higher figure than his estimate of 30,000 in July. He did not elaborate on how he obtained the information. He said Kyiv had found some North Korean missiles in Ukraine’s territory, without disclosing their locations.

“It is absolutely clear that North Korea will continue to build its experience in modern warfare, receive licenses from Russia and receive all kinds of military tools from them”, he said. Urging Seoul to have closer cooperation with Kyiv, Zelensky said that Ukraine “would very much like to receive support from South Korea in an area where we have a shortage”, referring to its air defence systems. “We are ready to work on the Drone Deal and other areas as well”, he said, adding that Ukrainian diplomats “are in contact” with Seoul to push potential deals.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim signed a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty during Putin’s June 2024 visit to Pyongyang. The pact includes a mutual assistance provision if either country faces external aggression. North Korea has cast its deployment as assistance to a treaty partner. North Korea has sent so far an estimated 14,000 soldiers to Russia’s Kursk Region in



A woman walks past a bank building damaged during a Ukrainian overnight drone attack in Belgorod, Russia. — Reuters

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2024, helping Moscow beat back a major incursion into the region by Ukrainian forces.

This month, an official at Ukraine’s military intelligence said that a North Korean missile unit has begun deploying to western Russia and could be equipped with 120 ballistic missiles and six launchers for strikes against Ukraine. Ukraine is very short of high-end air defences and Russia has tried to exploit this by using more ballistic missiles, which are particularly hard to shoot down.

North Korea has supplied Russia with millions of artillery and mortar rounds, ballistic missiles, long-range artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, according to Ukrainian and independent assessments. The North Korean Embassy in Russia did not immediately respond to a request from Reuters for a comment. South Korea’s Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for a comment outside business hours.

Meanwhile, Ukraine’s Odesa seaport sustained damage from an overnight Russian attack, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday, adding that eight people had been wounded in the city. “In this way, the Russians are at war with the world’s food security”, he said. Odesa’s seaports are the main artery for Ukraine’s vast agricultural exports. Ukraine’s energy ministry said Russia had attacked power facilities in the Odesa region, causing a “significant amount” of the port city’s residents to lose electricity overnight. It said power had already been restored to 90,000 consumers.

Separately, ships are passing smoothly through the Turkish straits to the Black Sea despite heightened concerns about safety, two Turkish government officials said on Sunday. On Saturday, Bloomberg News reported that Ankara had restricted commercial ship traffic entering the Black Sea following attacks on vessels there, including Turkish-owned ships.

Türkiye has issued repeated warnings to Moscow and Kyiv over the attacks in the Black Sea, urging the warring sides to take measures to ensure navigational safety in the area. On Saturday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Ankara had conveyed to Moscow and Kyiv they should declare a moratorium on their attacks in the Black Sea.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Türkiye had implemented some temporary measures because it had been highly uncomfortable about security for some time, but that passage was clear under the conditions of the Montreux Convention. They did not give further detail. — Reuters

Typhoon Dolphin hits China’s east coast, over 1 million evacuated

BEIJING: Typhoon Dolphin, the most powerful tropical cyclone to hit China this year, made landfall on the country’s eastern coast on Sunday, bringing torrential rain and strong winds and triggering warnings of flooding and landslides. The typhoon has already swept through Japan’s southern Okinawa prefecture, injuring six people and cutting power to more than 50,000 buildings.

Typhoon Dolphin made landfall near Yuhuan in eastern Zhejiang province at about 5:30 pm on Sunday, China’s meteorological authorities said. The storm packed maximum sustained winds of 42 metres per second (151 km/h) near its centre at landfall, equivalent to a Category 1 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale. Authorities had moved offshore workers to safety, ordered vessels back to port and increased checks at reservoirs, mountain streams, landslide-prone areas, construction sites and tourist locations.

Torrential rain is forecast through August 10 across Zhejiang, Shanghai, northern Fujian, northeastern Jiangxi,

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People stand next to huge waves crashing on a waterfront, in Sanmen County, China. — Reuters

central and southern Anhui; and much of Jiangsu. Parts of central and eastern Zhejiang could receive 250-500 mm (9.8-19.7 inches) of rain, according to forecasters. After landfall, Dolphin is forecast to track westward before slowing over central and southwestern China and gradually losing strength, Wang

Haiping, chief forecaster at the National Meteorological Centre, said. That could prolong heavy rain and raise the risk of flooding and landslides, especially in mountainous areas and along smaller rivers.

Transport was widely disrupted across the east of the country and more than

1 million people were evacuated from their homes. In addition to evacuating at least 30,300 people, Shanghai has cancelled about 1,500 flights, according to flight-tracking data provider VariFlight. A 42-year-old tourist from Guangdong, surnamed Chen, said he was stranded in Shanghai after his family’s flight, scheduled to depart on Sunday, was cancelled because of Typhoon Dolphin. He said the family had been rebooked on a flight at 10 pm on Monday, although they were unsure whether it would be able to take off. “To us Guangdong people, this typhoon is as ordinary as having a meal and feeling the wind. It’s just part of everyday life”, Chen said, adding that the storm did not appear particularly strong by the standards of China’s southern coast.

In neighbouring Zhejiang province, the city of Wenzhou relocated more than 900,000 residents and opened more than 1,000 emergency shelters. In Fujian province, authorities evacuated 98,900 people from high-risk areas after raising the typhoon emergency response to Level III. — Reuters

OPINION

Why Nolan’s ‘The Odyssey’ still speaks to our times



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

THE HIGHEST-GROSSING and most anticipated film of 2026, Christopher Nolan’s ‘The Odyssey’, has been reviewed with much adulation and critique that is typical of an ambitious film.

‘The Odyssey’ is, of course, based on the oral epic by the same name, attributed to the Greek poet Homer around 725 to 675 BCE. In effect, it is the culmination of a series of stories that would have existed in the wider Greek world towards the end of the Bronze Age.

Odysseus, the protagonist of the epic, is one of the main characters of an earlier epic, the Iliad, which revolved around the rescue of Helen of Troy - an epic battle that lasted 10 years. Odysseus is returning to his home on the island of Ithaca but faces multiple challenges in the form of divine interference, storms and monsters.

As a Greek epic composed over 3,000 years ago, ‘The Odyssey’ may not, at first glance, have much in common with a hyper-connected, digitalised 21st century. And yet, the film has generated an intense interest in the epic genre, the dynamics of the characters, and most importantly, the themes which the epic, through Nolan’s film, focuses upon.

At its heart, ‘The Odyssey’ is a sweeping

tale about homecoming, loyalty, identity and displacement. Nolan himself says, “It’s a love story, it’s a coming-of-age story, it’s a story about war and homecoming”. These concerns belong not only to the world of ancient Greece but also to our own, and the story, as much as the film, reflects some of its deepest anxieties and contradictions of our times.

An important theme in ‘The Odyssey’ is displacement, migration and belonging. Going through multiple places in his epic journey, Odysseus is confronted with questions of what it means to have a home to come back to, what the memory of that home means, and how a return would allow him to claim his rightful identity.

Clearly, home is an important concept in today’s global world order. With stories of refugees, migrations and separations, home becomes a central symbol of belonging amidst the uncertainties of the outside world.

War is another central point of discussion in ‘The Odyssey’, being central to the narrative, but also to the development of the central character who finds himself conflicted with the heroism, treachery and utter destruction of the war he has left behind.

Today, the story of the Trojan horse, which is used by the Greeks to defeat their enemy,

War is temporary, but the individual recovery from it is riddled with guilt and physical and mental trauma, much of which continues to be discussed today

has become a tale of duplicity rather than heroism. It also showcases the complete vacuity of war and its resultant miseries for all.

Surely, this is a theme relevant to our current times when nation states are involved in endless and even senseless wars.

Just as importantly, the epic centres the distinction between winning a war and recovering from war. War is temporary, but the individual recovery from it is riddled with guilt and physical and mental trauma, much of which continues to be discussed today.

Just as much as a tale of homecoming, ‘The Odyssey’ is about identity. Odysseus himself is a flawed character, both in the epic and more centrally in the film. He makes the return home a matter of personal pride, overriding the advice of a host of fellow sailors, all of whom die for his indiscretions and faulty decisions. The quality of leadership is central to discourse on political affairs even today.

In retelling Odysseus’s journey for a 21st-century audience, Nolan reminds us that, while the world of ‘The Odyssey’ may have changed since Homer’s time, many of the questions, issues and concerns confronting human beings have not. Perhaps that accounts for its current popularity.

AFGHANISTAN’S GOLD RUSH UPENDS LIVES AND LANDSCAPES

QUBAD WALI

In Afghanistan’s northeastern Badakhshan province, dozens of excavators operate day and night to extract gold from the mountains where villagers and their livestock once roamed.

Thousands of miners are deployed across the Shiwa area, about 50 kilometres northeast of the provincial capital Faizabad, extracting gold for investors nationwide.

Some residents in the area have profited from the gold rush, only to regret it later, such as farmer Muhammad Amin.

“Before, the river was deep, the water was clean,” said the 74-year-old from Pul-e-Ziri Ban valley. Since mining got underway, “the water of the river is not drinkable; you can’t even wash your body with that water”, he said.

With tears in his eyes, Amin said the grass along the riverbank “has all gone” and farming is no longer possible due to “the wind and dust”. Now he can only feed up to 15 goats, compared with as many as 40 previously.

Amin said he was paid half the \$20,000 for which he agreed to lease his land to a mining firm that failed to fulfil a promise to restore his fields after the work stopped.

Abdul Mateen Rahimzai, head of Badakhshan’s mines department, said they have registered “almost 650 to 700 companies, and there are thousands of people working manually”.

The World Bank said hundreds of mining contracts have been signed since 2021, with “real growth averaging 25 to 30 per cent” annually according to a May report. While mining has temporarily stopped in Amin’s village, not far from his home, in Gulak-Dara valley, dozens of diggers were carving into the mountainside.

Mohammad Agha Khwaja Khail, from Kabul, has worked in mining for five years and earns 10,000 Afghanis (\$150) a month loading trucks.

“It’s better than anything else... There aren’t many jobs in Kabul,” said the 21-year-old, above the din of diggers. Shafuallah Ehsas, a father-of-five, transported his excavator hundreds of kilometres from Jalalabad about three months ago.

“In Jalalabad, the gold (mining) work hasn’t started, and it was happening in Badakhshan, so we didn’t have any other option but to bring our machinery here,” said the 32-year-old, who earns 25,000 Afghanis per month.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has sought to regulate the industry, with spokesman Hamayoun Afghan saying resources “used to be extracted erratically; it wasn’t done under supervision” by the previous government. — AFP

The healing power of a good doctor

I’VE BEGUN to think that medical schools should have two graduation ceremonies. One is for medicine. The other is for ‘Putting Patients at Ease 101.’ The first earns you a licence to practise, while the second earns you patients who look forward to seeing you again.

If you’ve ever sat in a waiting room rehearsing what you’re about to say, you’ll know exactly the kind of doctor I’m talking about.

You walk into the consultation room already feeling anxious, only to be greeted by a face that suggests you’ve personally ruined the doctor’s day. You start wondering whether you should apologise for being ill or simply offer to come back after lunch.

You begin explaining your symptoms, but before you’ve reached the interesting part, you’re interrupted because, apparently, your illness has exceeded the maximum speaking time allowed.

Meanwhile, the doctor is typing away with such determination that you begin wondering whether they’re writing your medical notes or trying to qualify for the World Typing Championships. I’ve often been tempted to ask, “Doctor, should I come back after you’ve finished talking to your keyboard?” Sometimes I’m not sure which one of us has the appointment.

Fortunately, that’s not the kind of doctor I remember most. I remember another consultation when I walked in worried. The doctor smiled, listened without interrupting, asked a few sensible questions and explained everything in language I could understand. They somehow managed to translate “medical” into “human.”

I walked out with a prescription, but what stayed with me wasn’t the medicine. It was the feeling that everything was going to be all right. The tablets did their job, but so did



DR KHALFAN BIN HAMED AL HARRASI

The writer is an academic and researcher

‘Medical Care’ published a meta-analysis that combined 127 separate studies from around the world. The researchers found that patients whose doctors communicated poorly had a 19 per cent higher risk of not following medical advice.

the doctor. Before doctors decide to remove my name from their appointment books and blacklist me, let me make something clear.

I have enormous respect for them. In fact, my three daughters are medical doctors, so I have a front-row seat to the sleepless nights, difficult decisions and enormous responsibility that come with the profession.

This isn’t an article about criticising doctors. It’s about celebrating the ones who make medicine more effective by the way they treat people.

Of course, you might say this is all common sense. Yes, kind of, but even researchers have been investigating the same question.

In 2009, the journal ‘Medical Care’ published a meta-analysis that combined 127 separate studies from around the world. The researchers found that patients whose doctors communicated poorly had a 19-per cent higher risk of not following medical advice. When doctors received communication-skills training, their patients became 62 per cent more likely to follow treatment correctly. The medicine hadn’t changed, but the conversation had. Bedside manner isn’t just something our grandparents talked about. Scientists have been measuring it too.

A 2023 systematic review found that doctors who communicate with empathy build greater trust, improve patient satisfaction and are associated with better health outcomes.

In 2025, researchers analysing data from the US National Survey of Children’s Health found that poorer communication was linked with more emergency department visits and hospital admissions among children.

Researchers in South Korea studied nearly 1,000 adults and found

that empathetic doctors inspired greater trust and made patients more willing to accept medical advice. Although the studies were done in different countries and different healthcare systems, the findings pointed in exactly the same direction.

It makes perfect sense, doesn’t it? Doctors spend years learning to interpret X-rays, CT scans, MRIs, ECGs and blood tests. They can detect the faintest heart murmur and diagnose diseases that most of us struggle even to pronounce. Sometimes, however, the most important thing isn’t on the scan or the monitor; it’s sitting in the chair opposite them. Anxiety doesn’t appear in a blood test, and worry doesn’t show up on an MRI, but every patient brings both into the consultation room.

Imagine two patients with the same illness. They receive the same diagnosis and the same prescription. One leaves convinced the worst is about to happen. The other leaves feeling reassured and hopeful. The tablets are identical, and the dosage is identical. The difference isn’t the prescription but the consultation.

I can’t remember the names of most of the medicines I’ve taken over the years, but I remember many of the doctors. I remember the one who barely looked at me. I remember the one who made me feel rushed. More importantly, I remember the ones who somehow managed to make me feel that, for those few minutes, I was the only patient who mattered. I’ve forgotten the name of the antibiotic they prescribed, but I’ve never forgotten how they treated me.

So, to all the doctors who smile before they speak, listen before they interrupt, and reassure before they prescribe, Thank You! You may never know how much difference those small moments make, but we (your patients) do.

When dreams wear helmets not crowns!



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
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EVERY GREAT achievement begins as a dream. A child imagines becoming a scientist, an artist, a journalist, or an entrepreneur. Dreams inspire courage, innovation and hope, but sometimes, dreams become the reason a person is killed. Around the world, people have lost their lives simply because they dared to imagine a different future. For some people, dreams are found in classrooms or offices! For others, dreams lie thousands of feet above the ground, on mountain cliffs, in waves, or on racetracks where every second demands absolute care. These are the dreamers who pursue dangerous sports not because they seek death, but because they are deeply passionate about pushing the limits of human ability. From mountaineers climbing the world's highest peaks to professional racers competing at incredible speeds and surfers challenging massive waves, these athletes accept risks that most people would never consider. Their dream is to master fear, test their skills and achieve what once seemed impossible. Yet these dreams can carry heartbreaking consequences! Every year, lives are lost in dangerous sports despite careful preparation, advanced equipment and years of training. A sudden change in the weather, a mechanical failure, or an unexpected obstacle can turn a lifelong

ambition into tragedy. Families, teammates and fans are left mourning individuals whose greatest passion also became the greatest risk they ever faced. It is easy to ask why anyone would willingly choose such a dream. For many athletes, these sports represent discipline, freedom, resilience and a profound connection with nature. They do not pursue danger for its own sake, they pursue excellence, adventure and the fulfilment of dreams that define who they are. Their stories remind us that every meaningful dream carries some degree of risk. The difference is that in dangerous sports, those risks are immediate and visible. Success demands not only courage, but also careful planning, rigorous training, respect for safety procedures and the wisdom to recognise when conditions are too dangerous to continue. Passion should never replace preparation. The greatest athletes are not those who ignore danger, but those who understand it, respect it and work tirelessly to reduce it. Safety is not the enemy of adventure, but it is what makes adventure possible. The dream of standing on a summit, crossing a finish line, or completing a daring challenge is inspiring. However, no achievement is worth treating life as expendable. True courage is found not only in

Passion should never replace preparation. The greatest athletes are not those who ignore danger, but those who understand it, respect it and work tirelessly to reduce it. Safety is not the enemy of adventure, but it is what makes adventure possible

taking calculated risks, but also in making responsible decisions that protect both yourself and those who care about you. Let ambition drive you to remarkable achievements, but let wisdom guide every step of the journey. The greatest victory is not simply accomplishing the impossible, but it is returning home safely to dream again. Dreams should build lives, not end them. When a person's aspirations become the reason they are threatened or killed, it is not only an attack on an individual — it is an attack on humanity's shared hope for a better future. The measure of a just society is not how it treats those who conform, but how it protects those who dare to dream differently. The lesson is not that dreams are dangerous. The lesson is that meaningful dreams are powerful enough to unsettle fear and inspire change. While some dreamers have paid the highest price, their vision has continued to light the path for others. Their lives remind us that courage is contagious and that one person's hope can become another person's purpose. Dreams may be tested, challenged, or resisted, but they remain the seeds from which humanity's greatest achievements grow. The most powerful legacy we can leave is not simply the life we lived, but the hope we inspired in others to keep dreaming. Always remember that there are dreams that wear helmets instead of crowns.

Success is evaluated by your rivals, not by your allies



ISHWAR
DESHMUKH

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Having taught for 35 years in esteemed schools across India and Gulf countries, I assert that a sports teacher's success is determined not by the scores, but by the enduring habits, resilience and self-assurance developed in students. It's about fostering a passion for activity, promoting equity and developing character well beyond

the last whistle. Your assertion clearly expresses that true success is measured by the quality of your rivals rather than the acclaim from your admirers. I want to convey some of my insights. Though supporters back your vision, opponents challenge your execution. Supporters applaud your endeavours, yet opponents challenge your true ability. Your success is truly significant only when you can surpass those who are actively attempting to compete with you. The criticism reveals your weaknesses and motivates you to create. When a rival acknowledges or fears your momentum, it demonstrates that your efforts are genuinely transforming the market or industry. Athletes examining competitive theory observe that a difficult opponent frequently serves as your most significant driver for improvement. In the domain of sports and competitions, the caliber of the competition and the admiration from your toughest adversaries genuinely affirm an athlete's greatness. Excellence demands a formidable opponent and this is why competitors demonstrate achievement more effectively than others. Competitors drive you to achieve higher levels of performance. In the end, although supporters offer the motivation to persist, it is your competitors who push you to deliver your very best — demonstrating precisely what you can accomplish. The statement "success is gauged by your competitors, not supporters" underscores the truth that genuine skill is evaluated by challenges rather than praise. Your competitors reveal the true extent of your success as they highlight your real capabilities. Supporters and admirers might applaud you, but rivals challenge you and assess your true strength. They will back you even in failure; rivals push you to adjust, innovate and enhance your abilities merely to thrive in the market. In other terms, your actual gauge of success is the degree of quality needed to surpass your rivals, instead of the cheers from encouraging onlookers. It redirects attention from comfortable, personal validation to objective, indisputable skill. I would like to conclude with a quote of Robert Collier — Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day-in and day-out.

When delusion masquerades as a strategy...

SUPPOSE A RULER woke up one morning determined to change his people's religion. Could he do it? The question sounds absurd. Faith is not a garment discarded with a ruler's robes, nor an edict issued and obeyed. Yet history tells us that Vladimir, prince of Kyiv, converted to Christianity and made it the religion of his realm in the late tenth century. In time it became a pillar of his people's identity. Akhenaten, by contrast, elevated the worship of Aten above Egypt's other gods, deployed the full authority of the pharaoh, and built a new capital for his faith. Soon after his death, his religious order receded, and the old gods returned. Both men ruled. Why did one decision echo through the centuries while the other was almost buried with its author? History places the ruler's name at the head of the story, tempting us to credit him with the whole transformation. But decisions do not descend upon empty ground. A new faith may already have travelled with merchants and migrants. Elites may see in it an alliance, a source of legitimacy or a more effective system of administration. Clerics, scribes, schools and money then carry what began in the palace into ordinary life. And then comes time. A political choice can harden into social custom and eventually become part of a people's identity. A decree that finds no institution to sustain it, no constituency to adopt it, and no need to answer may vanish with the hand that imposed it. Vladimir and Akhenaten set existing forces in motion; countless people whose names no chronicle records completed, resisted or remade what their rulers began. This leads to a question at the heart of historical inquiry: do people make history, or does history make them? Some see a leader or reformer behind every great transformation. Others regard individuals as ripples on deeper currents: economics, geography, institutions, belief and the distribution of power. Yet history rarely shows us an actor without a structure, or a structure that acts without human agents. Structures



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biologist, translator
and editor

constrain the will; they do not abolish it. We still ask why an Arab ruler cannot simply propel his country into the ranks of developed nations: establish justice, repair education and abolish poverty. The question rightly holds power to account, but it treats the state as a single man and development as a command. A state is also an administration, a judiciary, a school system, a market and accumulated networks of interest and belief. A ruler may build universities while the labour market fails to reward knowledge. He may enact reform only for bureaucracy and patronage to empty it of substance. Understanding constraints makes accountability more exacting, not less. Which options were genuinely available? Which limits were real and which were excuses? Did the ruler build institutions that could outlast him, or reduce every institution to his own shadow? History, however, is moved not only by interests and power. It can also be moved by delusions. A political delusion need not be a conscious lie. It may be a settled belief through which leaders view the world, admitting evidence that confirms it and excluding what does not. When such a belief captures a small circle close to power, and a strong state gives it force, it passes from the realm of ideas into the realm of events. This is where delusion must be distinguished from strategy. Both speak about the future. Strategy connects ends to means, tests its assumptions, measures the ability of others to resist, and leaves room for error and contingency. Delusion begins with the desired outcome and treats it as the likeliest — sometimes the only — one. The invasion of Iraq grew out of an Iraqi delusion: that overthrowing a regime was equivalent to building a state, and that once a dictator had been removed, society would arrange itself in the image imagined by the victor. The fear that followed September 11, confidence in unrivalled American power and a narrow decision-making circle that excluded contrary expertise all fed that belief. The power of the state then turned it into war.

History rarely offers leaders a script. Its real value is teaching them to distinguish what is possible from what they merely wish to be true

Named individuals chose the invasion, and their responsibility cannot be dissolved into circumstance. But reading the war solely as a fully formed conspiracy obscures an even more unsettling danger: powerful people can become captives of their own ideas, mistaking a capacity to destroy for a capacity to build. Washington knew how to topple the regime. It did not know the Iraq that would emerge from the ruins. At roughly the same time came a China delusion. Across two successive administrations and with broad bipartisan support, the US promoted China's integration into the World Trade Organization. The wager was not merely economic. Many believed that markets would change politics; that wealth and information would bring liberalisation; and that a China benefiting from the global order would inevitably become a guardian of it. This was the creed of an era. After the Soviet Union collapsed, history appeared to have revealed its direction, with markets carrying a particular political system inside them. Events proved less obedient. The Chinese state used the market without dissolving into it, and integration strengthened a competitor rather than simply taming it. This does not mean that engagement achieved nothing, but it does expose the error of treating political liberalisation as its inevitable destination. Iraq and China were not equivalent in means, consequences or moral weight. One policy used war and the other trade. But both reflected the same confidence: that the United States could prescribe the path by which other societies would change. In Iraq, policymakers exaggerated the ability of military power to remake a society. In China, they exaggerated the ability of markets to remake a state. It is never enough to ask who acted. We must also ask what world of interests, fears and ideas made the action possible; which alternatives were excluded; and which consequences were intended or unleashed by accident. That is where reading history begins.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Royal Cavalry riders celebrate after being crowned overall champions of the Khareef Dhofar Tent Pegging Championship 2026.

ROYAL CAVALRY TAKES KHAREEF TENT PEGGING CROWN

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
SALALAH, AUGUST 9

The Khareef Dhofar Tent Pegging Championship 2026 came to a close at the equestrian arena at Al Haffa Beach, following three days of competitive action as part of the equestrian programme accompanying the Khareef Dhofar Season.

The championship was organised by the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation in cooperation with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee, with support from the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality and the Festival Department at Dhofar Municipality.

Five teams representing government cavalry units and private stables took part in the championship, competing across a series of tent pegging events that tested the riders' speed, precision, concentration and ability to control their horses.

The final day featured six rounds, including two rings and peg, two lemons and peg, as well as relay events involving different peg sizes. The competitions produced close contests among the participating teams and riders as they battled for the final day's honours and overall championship standings.

Royal Cavalry takes final-day team title

The Royal Cavalry secured first place in the team competition on the final day. The winning team was represented by Salim bin Mohammed al Amri, Hamad al Raisi, Saif al Ashkhari and Safwan al Maamari.

Sultan's Armed Vehicles (B) finished second, with Khalid al Maamari, Hisham al Bakri, Badr al Khasibi and Zaid al Saeedi representing the team.

Third place went to Sultan's Armed Vehicles (A), represented by Ahd al Balushi, Mohammed al Siyabi, Ali al Balushi and Nasser al Siyabi.

In the individual competition on the final day, Hamad al Raisi of the Royal Cavalry claimed first place. Hisham al Bakri of Sultan's Armed Vehicles finished second, while Ahd al Balushi took third.

Al Raisi tops overall individual standings

The Royal Cavalry also secured the overall team title, finishing first in the championship standings. The winning team consisted of Salim al Amri, Hamad al Raisi, Saif al Ashkhari and Safwan al Maamari.

Sultan's Armed Vehicles (B) took second place overall, represented by Khalid al Maamari, Hisham al Bakri, Badr al Khasibi and Zaid al Saeedi.

Sultan's Armed Vehicles (A) completed the overall team podium in third place, with Ahd al Balushi, Mohammed al Siyabi, Ali al Balushi and Nasser bin Mohammed al Siyabi.



Riders compete in the rings and peg event during the final day of the Championship.

Galopet de Fleizen wins Dhofar endurance race

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
SALALAH, AUGUST 9

GALOPET DE FLEIZEN claimed first place in the Khareef Dhofar 100km Endurance Race, held on Saturday as part of the Khareef Dhofar Season activities.

The race was held under the auspices of Brigadier Eng Ali bin Sulayem al Falahi, Director-General of Traffic at Royal Oman Police (ROP), in cooperation with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee and with the support fo the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality and the Festival Department at Dhofar Municipality.

The 100km competition brought together a number of endurance horses and riders in a demanding test of fitness, strategy and horse management. The race provided riders and trainers with an opportunity to assess their horses over a challenging course while competing in the distinctive conditions of Dhofar during the khareef season.

Galopet de Fleizen secured the title for its owner Ahmed bin Hafeez Maqeibil, under trainer Abdulaziz bin Shehab al Shanfari and rider Hafeez bin Ahmed Maqeibil.

Shelly Walk finished second for its owner Ahmed Kamil Qatan, trained by Ahmed bin Kamil Muslem Qatan and ridden by Malik bin Kamil Qatan.

Nehab completed the podium in third place for its owner Mazen bin Hamad al Subhi, trained by Salem bin Hamad al Maliki and ridden by Tamim bin Hamad al Maliki.

Veterinary care central to the race

veterinarian Yousuf bin Sulaiman al Wahibi, a member of the race's veterinary team, highlighted the importance of veterinary inspections in endurance competitions.

He said the event featured a number of well-prepared horses and explained that the veterinary team's responsibility begins before the start, with comprehensive checks to assess each horse's health and fitness for the 100km distance.

The veterinary team also monitored the horses throughout the race, including their pulse rates and general physical condition, ensuring that they were fit to



Winners and officials celebrate at the conclusion of the Khareef Dhofar 100km Endurance Race.



Horses and riders in action during the Khareef Dhofar 100km Endurance Race.

continue safely. Post-stage examinations were another important part of the process.

Al Wahibi stressed that horse welfare remains the team's highest priority and that successful endurance racing requires close cooperation between riders, trainers and veterinary personnel.

COURSE EXPERIENCE

Trainer Saeed bin Salim al Balushi said the Dhofar course demands careful

management from both rider and horse, particularly when it comes to the horse's effort across the different stages.

He noted that previous experience on the same course gives riders and trainers valuable knowledge of its characteristics and helps them determine the appropriate pace while preserving the horse's energy for the final stages.

Al Balushi added that the khareef atmosphere provides a distinctive setting for endurance competitions and contributes to the growing profile of equestrian sport during Khareef Dhofar Season.

Second-placed rider Malik bin Kamil Qatan, riding Shelly Walk, said he was pleased with the result following a competitive race that required concentration and patience.

He explained that his previous experience on the course helped him develop an effective strategy, particularly in managing the horse's pace and distributing its energy throughout the 100km challenge.

Qatan thanked the owner, trainer and members of his team for their support, saying the result would provide additional motivation for future competitions.

Trainer Mohammed bin Hassan al Balushi also highlighted the importance of course knowledge, saying previous experience helps riders and trainers make better decisions regarding pace, horse management and race strategy.

Oman juniors shine in Kazakhstan golf tournament

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 9

Oman's junior national golf teams returned from Kazakhstan with three medals and valuable international experience after competing in an international junior tournament in Almaty.

Yousuf al Ramhi won gold in the Under-12 category, while Yasmeen Jameel al Kathiri claimed bronze in the Girls' Under-13 category. Mohaib Jameel al Kathiri added another bronze in the Under-16 category, highlighting the growing potential of Oman's young golfers.

The tournament featured more than 72 boys and girls from Oman, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and concluded a joint training camp hosted by the Kazakhstan Golf Federation.

The participation formed part of the Oman Golf Association's junior



Oman's junior golf delegation concluded its Kazakhstan camp with three medals and valuable international experience.

development programme, aimed at strengthening players' technical and competitive abilities ahead of upcoming competitions.

The Omani delegation was headed by Oman Golf Association Vice Chairman Faiz Mohammed Riaz, with Jonathan serving as coach and Fahad al Kaitani as assistant coach. Ahmed al

Jahdhami and Naikl Sampat handled administrative responsibilities.

The 12-player squad comprised Mohaib al Kathiri, Mohammed al Junaidi, Mohammed al Nabhani, Timur al Busaidi, Yousuf al Ramhi, Waleed al Sharji, Ibrahim Riaz, Ahmed al Harthi, Anas al Kathiri, Mirairi Sambat, Hiba al

Nabhani and Yasmeen al Kathiri. Riaz praised the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for its continued support of junior golfers and thanked Kazakhstan Golf Federation President Davran Alidjanovich Ibragimov, Secy General Abdulaziz Omarov and tournament partner Serik Sultan Galiyev for their cooperation.

"The experience was rewarding for our players, from exchanging of knowledge, building friendships and discovering a new culture," Riaz said.

The closing ceremony featured a cultural gesture when Ibragimov presented Riaz with the traditional Kazakh shapan, a garment associated with honour and respect.

Ahmed Faisal al Jahdhami, Secretary General, Oman Golf Association, also received a similar garment, reflecting the growing sporting ties between the two federations.

SHORT TAKES



Oman U17 team step up preparations during their internal camp, which continues until August 17.

OMAN IN POT 1 FOR AFC U17 QUALIFIERS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT AUGUST 9

Oman have been placed in Pot 1 for the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 Qualifiers draw, strengthening their position ahead of the continental qualification campaign which will see the Sultanate of Oman host one of the seven groups in Salalah in November.

The official draw will take place at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on August 27, with 35 participating teams to be divided into seven groups of five.

Oman are among the seven top-seeded teams in Pot 1 alongside the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Iran, Thailand, Indonesia and India.

Pot 2 comprises Kuwait, Iraq, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Turkmenistan, Myanmar and Laos, while Bahrain, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Hong Kong, China make up Pot 3.

Lebanon, Pakistan, Mongolia, Singapore, the Philippines, Chinese Taipei and Bhutan have been placed in Pot 4, with Cambodia, Macau, Brunei Darussalam, Northern Mariana Islands, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Guam completing the draw in Pot 5.

Oman will be among seven nations hosting the centralised qualifying groups, alongside Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos and Kyrgyzstan.

The Oman-hosted group will be played in Salalah from November 8 to 20, giving the national U17 side home advantage as they target a place in the continental finals.

Oman's U17 national team are currently undergoing an internal training camp in Muscat from August 6 to 17 as part of their preparations for upcoming regional and continental competitions, including the AFC U17 Asian Cup Qualifiers in November.

Under the qualification format, only the winners of the seven groups will advance to the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 finals.

Oman's position in Pot 1 means they will avoid the other six top-seeded sides during the draw, while their remaining four opponents will come from Pots 2 to 5.



Participants compete during the second edition of the Muscat Night Run at Madinat Al Irfan.

Muscat Night Run draws over 1,500 participants

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT AUGUST 9

MORE than 1,500 participants competed in the second edition of the Muscat Night Run, organised by the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) as part of Sports Spark 2026, presented by Sohar International, which brought together competitive runners, amateurs, families and children at Madinat Al Irfan.

Presented by Madinat Al Irfan, the Official Destination Partner, the event forms part of OCEC's efforts to enrich Oman's sporting landscape by creating community-focused events that promote physical activity and encourage people of different ages and abilities to embrace active lifestyles.

The night race featured two distances catering to different levels of participation. The 5 km race offered runners a competitive challenge, while the 2.5 km family route provided amateurs, children and families with an opportunity to take part together in an accessible sporting environment.

Competition was strong across both categories. In the women's category, Khawla Yachou claimed first place, followed by Hanan al Juhani in second and Ghina al Habbal in third. Zahra Ghasemi finished fourth, while Maria Cristina Finch completed the top five.

In the men's category, Mohammed al Farsi emerged victorious, with Imad al Farsi finishing second and Nader Abdullah taking



Top finishers pose for a group photo following the conclusion of the Muscat Night Run.

third place. Ahmed Ali al Amiri secured fourth, while Majid al Ghadami finished fifth.

The participation of more than 1,500 competitors underlined the growing appeal of the Muscat Night Run in its second edition and reflected increasing interest in sporting events that combine competition with community participation.

The night-time setting at Madinat Al Irfan added a distinctive atmosphere to the event, allowing participants to enjoy sport in a setting that combined physical activity, recreation and social interaction.

The varied race format also reinforced the concept of sport for all, extending participation beyond competitive runners to families, children and recreational athletes, in line with Sports Spark's wider objective of encouraging physical activity across different sections of society.

Madinat Al Irfan's support as the Official Destination Partner reflects its commitment

to initiatives that promote quality of life and healthier lifestyles while strengthening its position as a destination for major community, sporting and entertainment events.

Mohammed al Salmi, General Manager of Madinat Al Irfan, said "our partnership with the Muscat Night Run reflects Madinat Al Irfan's belief in the importance of initiatives that create spaces and opportunities for people to come together and strengthen their connection with the place and with one another."

"As Madinat Al Irfan continues to grow, we will continue to support initiatives that encourage healthy lifestyles and strengthen the sense of community that gives places their value and vitality."

The Muscat Night Run is part of the fourth edition of Sports Spark 2026, held at OCEC and featuring a wide range of sporting, recreational and interactive activities for different sections of the community.

Sami al Hadadi tops Dhofar horseback archery championship

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
SALALAH, AUGUST 9

Sami bin Ali al Hadadi of Faris Oman Equestrian Centre claimed the overall title at the Dhofar Horseback Archery Championship, which concluded at the Al Haffa Beach Equestrian Arena in Dhofar Governorate after two days of competition as part of the equestrian programme accompanying the 2026 Khareef Dhofar Season.

The championship brought together 15 riders and featured two distinct disciplines. The opening day was dedicated to the Plate Course, while the second day saw riders compete in the Sequential Course, with both events producing intense competition and high levels of skill.

The equestrian activities held during Khareef Dhofar 2026 are being organised in cooperation with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee, with support from the Office of



Sami al Hadadi in action on his way to claiming the overall title at the Dhofar Horseback Archery Championship.

the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality and the Festival Department at Dhofar Municipality.

In the Plate Course on the opening day, Basil bin Rabie al Hinai of Al Sharaf Equestrian Centre secured first place. Mahmoud bin Sulaiman al Shiryani of Faris Oman Equestrian



The top-ranked riders pose with their awards following the conclusion of the Dhofar Horseback Archery Championship.

Centre finished second, while Sami bin Ali al Hadadi, also representing Faris Oman, took third place.

The competition continued on the second day with the Sequential Course, where al Hadadi produced another strong performance to take first place. Ahmed bin Nasser

al Sawafi of Al Saad Stud finished runner-up, while Ali bin Khamis al Balushi of Faris Oman Armoured took third.

Al Hadadi's consistent performances across both disciplines earned him the overall championship title. Al Sawafi

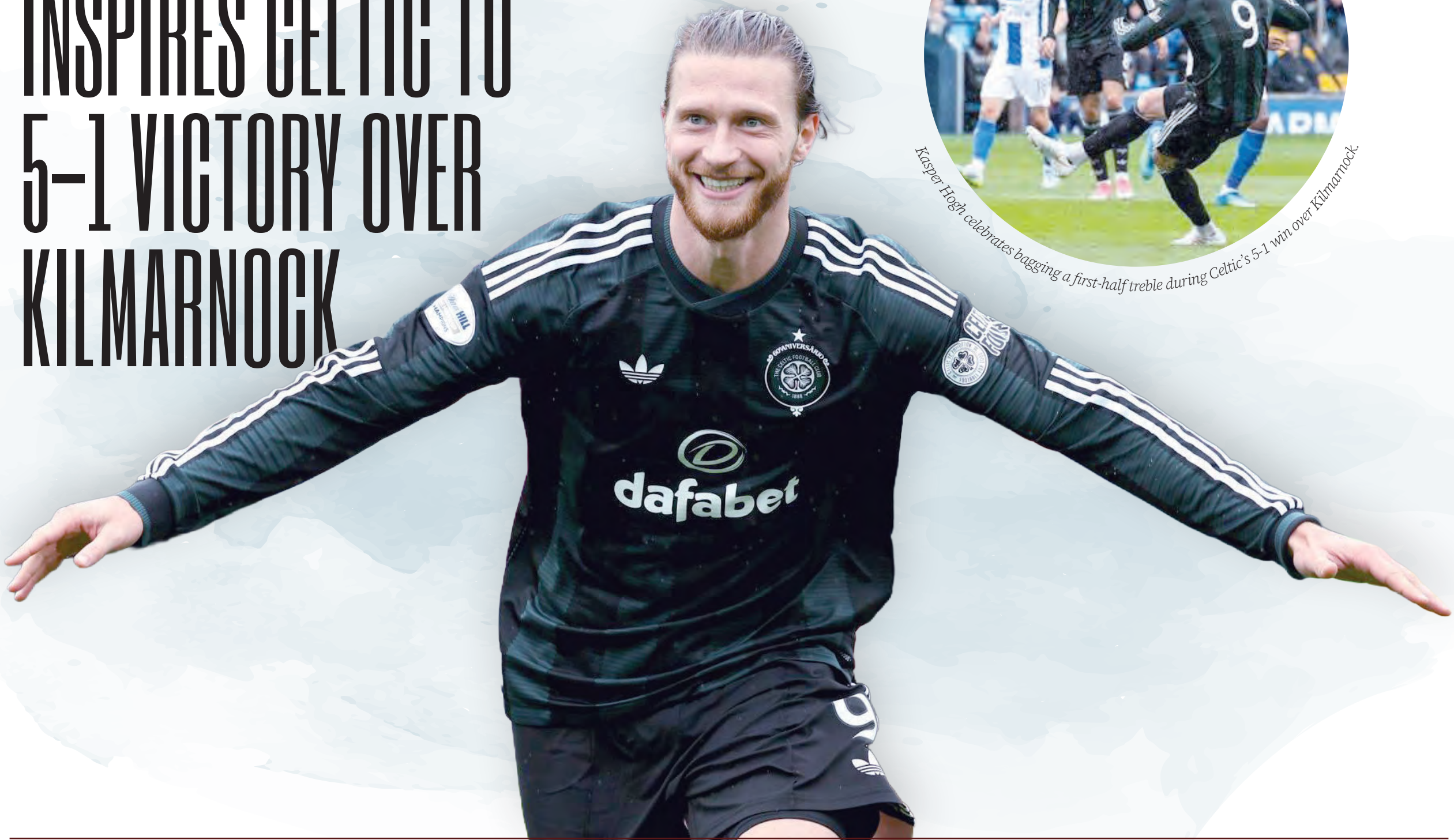
secured second place in the overall standings, while Al Shiryani finished third. Speaking after the conclusion of the championship, Mohammed bin Hamid al Marhoon, Chairman of the Dhofar Equestrian Committee, expressed his appreciation to the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation for organising the horseback archery championship, which was held at Al Haffa Beach.

Al Marhoon said the event was a notable success, highlighting the strong public turnout and the high level of competition among the participating riders.

"The championship witnessed a remarkable level of success, reflected in the large attendance and the strong competition among the riders, who delivered high-quality performances," Al Marhoon said. "We would also like to thank the Governor of Dhofar and Dhofar Municipality for their contribution and support."

SPORTS

HOGH'S HAT-TRICK INSPIRES CELTIC TO 5-1 VICTORY OVER KILMARNOCK



KASPER HOGH scored a hat-trick, his first goals for Celtic, as the Scottish champions made light of the absence of manager Martin O'Neill with a 5-1 win away to Kilmarnock on Sunday.

Victory made it two wins out of two Scottish Premiership games for Glasgow giants Celtic, with 74-year-old boss O'Neill missing the trip to Rugby Park after what the club had said earlier this week was a "small procedure" in hospital.

No details were given about O'Neill's operation, which came after the veteran

Northern Irish boss took charge of Celtic's win against Dundee in their first game of the season.

But assistant manager Shaun Maloney, speaking before Sunday's kick-off, said O'Neill was on the mend.

"He is doing better again," Maloney said. "He came to the team hotel and spoke to the players, but he just needs an extra few days."

And O'Neill's mood would doubtless have been improved by the performance of his side, with Celtic 3-0 ahead before half-time thanks to Høgh's treble.

The Danish striker needed less than a minute on Sunday to score his first Celtic goal, heading in at the back post from a cross

by Arne Engels.

Høgh doubled Celtic's lead in the 33rd minute, with Camilo Duran seizing on Johnly Yfeko's pass out of defence.

He combined with Benjamin Nygren to work the ball to Høgh on the left edge of the box, with the forward finishing well.

Two minutes later, Høgh had his hat-trick. Benjamin Nygren slipped the ball right for Duran, whose cross took Kilmarnock goalkeeper Max Stryjek out of play, with Høgh nodding into an empty net.

Celtic extended their lead early in the second half after they were effectively gifted a fourth goal by Stryjek.

His pass out of defence went straight to

Nygren in front of goal and his shot into the top corner made it 4-0.

Michael Schjønning-Larsen pulled a goal back for Kilmarnock in the 56th minute after finishing a well-worked move.

But Celtic were four goals ahead again when substitute Luke McCowan, moments after coming on, volleyed in from close range 15 minutes from time after Kilmarnock made a mess of trying to clear the ball from a corner.

In Sunday's other Scottish Premiership matches, Hearts are at home to Dundee United as they look to bounce back from their opening-day defeat by Aberdeen, with Rangers facing Hibernian at Ibrox. — AFP

Top-ranked Sabalenka, Pegula stunned in Toronto fourth round

TORONTO, CANADA: World number one Aryna Sabalenka and Jessica Pegula were both upset in fourth-round matches on Saturday at the Toronto Masters.

Four-time Grand Slam winner Sabalenka suffered a blow to her preparations for a tilt at a third consecutive US Open title, beaten 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-4 by Russian 16th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova.

"I wasn't trying to think about the score or anything like beating number one," said Alexandrova after ousting the Belarusian in 2hr 29min.

"I was just trying to do my best.

"I just tried to play every single point as if it was the last one because with her, you don't get a lot of chances during the match," Alexandrova said.

"I had a lot today, but I couldn't realise some of them. I'm super happy that I could win because after the second set, I thought (winning) was already past me."

Alexandrova moves on to a

quarterfinal against Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, who dispatched American Amanda Anisimova 6-2, 6-4 in 78 minutes.

Russian 15th seed Shnaider upset world number three Pegula 6-3, 6-3 to book a last-eight date with Poland's Iga Swiatek.

The 22-year-old left-hander took only 73 minutes to defeat Pegula.

"This week I've been very comfortable on both defending and just firing some winners," Shnaider said.

"It was working well. I was choosing a bigger target today but sometimes ripping the ball."

Sabalenka dropped the first set on a tiebreak as her Russian opponent won five of the last six points.

"I was trying to play super aggressive, the way I didn't play for a long time. It worked," said Alexandrova.

"I had the feeling I have some kind of power, and I can create something, and it helped me



Ekaterina Alexandrova reacts after defeating Aryna Sabalenka during the fourth round at the National Bank Open at Sobeys Stadium. — **Imagn Images**

mentally."

Sabalenka levelled the match but in the decider faced match points on her serve in the 10th game.

She saved the first on a service winner and the second with an ace.

But, after sending a backhand



Aryna Sabalenka serves a ball to Ekaterina Alexandrova during the fourth round at the National Bank Open at Sobeys Stadium. — **Imagn Images**

beyond the baseline, the Belarusian made her sixth and final double fault to lose the match.

"I didn't have any expectations before the match," Alexandrova said. "I knew it was going to be super difficult when I walked on the court.

"I was trying to risk as much as possible because it felt like it was the only way to create some chances. It caused many more mistakes but at the same time I created many more opportunities."

Former world number one Swiatek, the seventh seed, rallied to defeat Ukraine's 10th-seeded Marta Kostyuk 3-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Swiatek, a four-time French Open champion, saved nine break points in the last two sets without dropping serve.

"In the second I came out... playing a bit faster and pushing Marta a little bit more," Swiatek said. "Game by game I felt like it was a good plan and a good choice and I went for it." — AFP

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BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



Women made up 61 per cent of graduates from higher education institutions in Oman in 2025.

DUQM SUMMER SERIES TACKLES CHANGING BUSINESS WORLD

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 9

The 2026 Duqm Summer Series (DSS) centres on the people who will turn investment in Al Duqm into lasting economic value. Hosted by the Special Economic Zone at Duqm from August 23 to 25 at the Crowne Plaza Duqm, the three-day event examines developments changing how companies operate and grow.

Held over three evenings, DSS opens with Intelligent Machines examining how AI and robotics are changing today's workplace. The following evening, Leading Without a Playbook considers how executives make decisions when tariffs, geopolitical tensions and incomplete information leave little precedent. The Business of Culture closes the three-day series by examining how a company's culture shapes the customer experience and, in turn, how the business is remembered.

Women made up 61 per cent of graduates from higher education institutions in Oman in 2025. Many will enter the job market where AI is taking on work once handled by experienced teams and where skills are losing value faster than qualifications can be updated. They are also entering an economy creating new kinds of work. Oman's non-oil activities generated RO 29.1 billion in 2025, including RO 4 billion from manufacturing.

Hanan al Siyabi, Section Head, Tourism & Lifestyle at SEZAD, said the consequences are reaching well beyond IT departments. "AI is changing who does the work and what employers value. Effects are being felt in recruitment and career progression. Women starting work today will face choices many established leaders didn't meet at the same stage of their careers."

The Business of Culture examines the role culture plays in how a company operates, not only how it presents itself. It shapes what customers receive and how they are treated. Marketing may attract the public's attention but the experience of dealing with the business is what people remember.

OFC pilots drive innovation across Oman's food sector

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 9

SUBSIDIARIES of Oman Food Capital (OFC), the food-sector investment arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), are advancing a series of pilot projects designed to diversify Oman's food economy, strengthen domestic production and improve the efficiency and sustainability of food farming.

The initiatives span aquaculture, controlled-environment agriculture, farm automation and dairy processing, reflecting OFC's broader focus on developing new production capabilities and adding value across Oman's food value chain. Among the pilots are an offshore oyster farm on Masirah Island, greenhouse structures above aquaculture ponds, automated feeding systems for fish farms and a new range of Greek yoghurt products.

On Masirah Island, the Oyster Pilot Farming Project is testing floating-cage technology to produce high-quality oysters while harnessing their natural ability to filter seawater. The two-hectare offshore farm comprises 3,600 cages arranged across six offshore lines, with imported oyster seed weighing around eight grammes at the start of cultivation.

The project was targeting production of more than 30 tonnes by the end of 2025, while also generating environmental benefits through improved water quality and supporting economic diversification on the island.

Another pilot is testing the feasibility of placing greenhouse structures above aquaculture ponds, creating a more controlled and secure production environment.

Four production ponds are being covered by greenhouse structures, supported by a zero-seawater-exchange system designed to provide greater stability in production conditions. The approach has been identified as a preferred solution for



One of the pilots evaluates the feasibility of placing greenhouse structures above aquaculture ponds.

The pilots underscore Oman Food Capital's approach of using innovation, technology and value addition to strengthen Oman's food-security capabilities

implementation at the island site, with anticipated benefits including enhanced process control and product quality, improved production efficiency and greater operational stability.

OFC subsidiaries are also piloting timer-based automated feeding systems across aquaculture farms, offering a simpler alternative to more sophisticated automated solutions. Around 10 units are being installed at each farm, with the system designed to streamline feed management, maintain stable productivity and improve operational efficiency while reducing costs. Initial results indicate productivity comparable to more complex feeding systems. Diversification is also extending

beyond primary production into value-added food manufacturing. At Mazoon Dairy in the Wilayat of Al Sinainah, Al Buraimi Governorate, a pilot is developing a range of Greek yoghurt products in several flavours, including plain, peach and apricot, strawberry and mango; and blueberry.

The initiative is intended to expand Mazoon Dairy's product portfolio, create greater value from locally produced dairy and reach wider consumer segments.

Taken together, the pilots underscore OFC's approach of using innovation, technology and value addition to strengthen Oman's food-security capabilities while creating new commercial opportunities.

DIDIC posts RO 17.4m profit in first results since OIFC merger

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 9

Dhofar International Development and Investment Company SAOG (DIDIC) reported a net profit after tax of RO 17.404 million for the six months ended June 30, 2026, in its first full half-year since completing its merger with Oman Investment and Finance Company SAOG (OIFC).

Total comprehensive income attributable to shareholders reached RO 24.097 million, against RO 4.650 million a year earlier, when net profit stood at RO 5.366 million.

Chairman Khalid bin Mustahail bin Ahmed al Mashani said the prior-year figures were not directly comparable, citing the merger effective July 1, 2025 and the completion of purchase price allocation.

The Group closed the period



The DIDIC Group closed the period with total assets of RO 589.506 million.

with total assets of RO 589.506 million and shareholders' equity of RO 151.64 million, including retained earnings of RO 66.137 million. Basic earnings per share rose to RO 0.034 from RO 0.013.

The merger left DIDIC managing nine subsidiaries and six associates, with Dhofar Insurance Company SAOG and Dhofar Foods and Investment Company SAOG now consolidated as subsidiaries.

Among its banking associates, Bank Dhofar, in which DIDIC holds 23.29 per cent — lifted net profit by 15.20 per cent to RO 27.26 million, with operating income up 11.40 per cent to RO 94.09 million and the cost-to-income ratio improving to 45.44 per cent from 48.18 per cent.

Sohar International, 13.03 per cent held, posted a 15 per cent rise in profit to RO 53 million, with total assets up 30 per cent to

RO 10.258 billion and customer deposits up 26 per cent to RO 7.943 billion.

Dhofar Insurance raised net profit by 55 per cent to RO 4.038 million despite a 2 per cent fall in gross written premiums to RO 55.666 million, holding a 16.6 per cent market share.

Dhofar Foods and Investment reported net profit of RO 2.481 million against RO 0.511 million.

The filed accounts also show a consolidated loss of RO 1.046 million for the second quarter alone, against a profit of RO 1.625 million in the same quarter of 2025.

Net assets per share eased to RO 0.355 from RO 0.391 at end-2025. DIDIC issued RO 30 million of unsecured perpetual subordinated bonds during the period, allocated to shareholders as a bonus issue funded by the capitalisation of retained earnings.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Companies like Meta Platforms and Google's YouTube face mounting legal pressure over their treatment of young users.

3 IN 5 AMERICANS FAVOUR STRONGER OVERSIGHT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

A bipartisan majority of Americans support more government rules for how social media companies conduct business, including a requirement of age-verification tools to keep younger children off social media, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The poll, which was conducted over the six days ending August 3, comes as companies like Meta Platforms and Google's YouTube face mounting legal pressure over their treatment of young users. A trial is expected to begin on Wednesday over allegations by state prosecutors that Meta designed its products to addict young users.

Meta, which denies the allegations, says it could face up to \$1.4 trillion in penalties if the states prevail. A New Mexico state court on Thursday separately ordered Meta to pay \$567 million into a teen mental health fund and change how its platforms function for young users, after finding the company is to blame for harming children's wellbeing.

Tech companies are also under increasing scrutiny by lawmakers across the US for their effect on youth. More than a dozen states have passed laws regulating minors' social media access, saying it is needed to bolster their safety online. NetChoice, a trade group backed by social media giants such as Meta, TikTok and Snap, has sued to stop laws requiring apps verify the ages of their users. It argues such laws violate free speech protections.

Some 61% of poll respondents — including 71% of Democrats and 62% of Republicans — said social media companies need firmer oversight. Support among independents was lower as many of them said they were unsure where they stood.

The poll also found 66% support laws that would require social media companies use age-verification tools to keep children under age 16 from accessing their platforms. Support was highest among Republicans, with 74% backing the idea, compared to 69% of Democrats.

GLOBAL FOOD PRICES RISE AMIDST PERSISTENT SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS

ROME: The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has reported an increase in global food prices during July, driven primarily by rising prices of cereals, sugar and vegetable oils, while meat and dairy product prices declined.

The Organisation indicated that the average FAO Food Price Index stood at 131.1 points in July, marking a 0.6 per cent increase compared with June. It noted that disruptions to export flows in the Black Sea region, coupled with the impact of heatwaves on crops, contributed to the upward price



movement. The Cereal Price Index rose by 3.4 per cent, driven largely by higher wheat prices amidst

damage to export infrastructure in the Black Sea region, as well as the effects of heatwaves on crops in several major producing countries.

The Vegetable Oil Price Index recorded a 2 per cent increase, reaching its highest level since June 2022, driven by higher palm oil and soybean oil prices.

In contrast, the Meat Price Index declined by 2.8 per cent, while the Dairy Price Index fell by 0.7 per cent. The Sugar Price Index also rose by 5.6 per cent, influenced by concerns over the impact of hot and dry weather on crops in key producing regions. — ONA

Sohar International drives energy growth

SOHAR

International reaffirmed its commitment to driving the energy sector and enabling sustainable economic growth through its joint symposium 'Oman's Energy Sector in a Reshaped Gulf: Driving Economic Growth, Investment, and Global Competitiveness'.

The symposium was held in collaboration with Oman Energy Association (OPAL) and brought together a distinguished group of experts, senior executives and decision-makers from both the energy and financial sectors.

As a key pillar of Oman's economy, the energy sector is undergoing rapid transformation. The symposium provided a platform to explore this evolution across the Sultanate of Oman and the wider Gulf region, with a focus on unlocking promising investment opportunities and strengthening the sector's role in driving GDP growth and enhancing Oman's regional and global competitiveness.

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer, Sohar International said: "At Sohar International, we see our role extending beyond banking. We are committed to being an enabler of growth in strategic sectors. The energy sector is central to Oman's future and through platforms like this symposium, we aim to drive dialogue, mobilise investment and forge the partnerships needed to position Oman as a globally competitive energy hub".

Throughout the discussions, participants examined emerging opportunities for capital deployment in renewables, gas, hydrogen and energy infrastructure, while also



The energy sector is central to Oman's future and through platforms like this symposium, we aim to drive dialogue, mobilise investment and forge the partnerships needed to position Oman as a globally competitive energy hub.

addressing the key challenges and policy frameworks needed to accelerate the energy transition.

Eng Mohammed bin Hamood al Naabi, Chief Executive Officer, Oman Energy Association (OPAL), said: "The partnership with Sohar International reflects our shared commitment to advancing Oman's energy sector. OPAL believes that strong collaboration between industry and finance is essential to unlock investment, drive innovation and ensure the sector continues to support Oman's economic diversification and the goals of Oman Vision 2040".

The symposium emphasised the importance of building strategic

collaboration between financial institutions and energy companies to support large-scale projects aligned with Oman Vision 2040. It further reinforced the role of the private sector in achieving the objectives of the national vision through innovation, financing and sustainable development.

Sohar International continues to play an active role in financing and advising projects that support energy security, diversification and sustainability.

By bringing together stakeholders from across the ecosystem, the bank aims to contribute meaningfully to a resilient and future-ready energy sector that supports long-term prosperity for Oman.

BankDhofar strengthens home protection with insurance cover

MUSCAT: BankDhofar is strengthening its position in Oman's retail bancassurance market with a comprehensive Home Insurance solution that combines the bank's customer reach with the underwriting expertise of Dhofar Insurance, offering homeowners and tenants an accessible way to safeguard their valuable assets.

A home represents far more than bricks and mortar. It is often a family's largest financial investment, while also protecting cherished possessions accumulated over many years. Recognising this, BankDhofar's Home Insurance has been designed to provide broad financial protection against a wide spectrum of everyday and unforeseen risks, helping customers recover more quickly from unexpected events.

The policy provides cover for residential buildings, household contents and domestic appliances against losses arising from fire, accidental explosion, malicious damage, riots and civil disturbances, as well as natural hazards including



A home represents far more than bricks and mortar. It is often a family's largest financial investment, while also protecting cherished possessions accumulated over many years.

cyclones, floods, rainstorms, landslides and earthquakes.

Coverage extends beyond the main residence to include permanent structures such as garages, outbuildings, swimming pools, terraces, patios, driveways,

walls, gates and other fixed installations. Household furniture, fixtures, fittings and personal belongings are also protected, giving customers a comprehensive level of cover under a single annual policy.

A standout feature of the

offering is its flexibility. While core protection for buildings and household contents forms the foundation of the policy, customers can enhance their protection through optional benefits that address a range of practical risks. These include accidental damage to contents, protection for personal belongings and valuables, cover for personal documents, cash and credit cards, as well as personal and property liability.

The policy also provides financial support in circumstances where a home becomes temporarily uninhabitable, covering alternative accommodation or rental costs during the restoration period. Additional benefits include replacement of locks and keys, limited cover for contents temporarily removed from the home, refrigerated food spoilage, and a death benefit, creating a well-rounded protection package for families.

Operating within BankDhofar's growing bancassurance platform, the Home Insurance solution

reflects the bank's strategy of integrating essential protection products alongside its banking services. Customers can access insurance solutions through the bank's extensive branch network as well as its digital banking channels, making it easier to arrange financial protection as part of their everyday banking relationship.

The product forms part of a broader insurance portfolio that also includes health, travel, motor, life and domestic worker insurance, enabling customers to meet multiple protection needs through a single financial institution.

BankDhofar acts solely as the distribution agent for the Home Insurance product, while all policies are underwritten by Dhofar Insurance Company. The insurance contract is entered into directly between Dhofar Insurance Company and the customer, ensuring policyholders benefit from the expertise of one of Oman's leading insurers alongside the convenience and accessibility of BankDhofar's trusted banking network.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Foreign investors recorded net buying of RO 73.877 million, while Omani investors recorded net selling of RO 773,000.

MSX TRADING
VALUE HITS
RO6.9 BILLION
IN H1 2026

The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose by 66.8% by the end of June 2026 to reach 7,507.9 points, compared with 4,500.9 points at the end of June 2025.

The value of securities traded also increased by 654.8% to reach RO 6,923.403 million, while the total number of securities traded rose by 337.4% to 23,157.424 million securities, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that the Financial Sector Index stood at 13,085 points by the end of June 2026, while the Industrial Sector Index reached 9,757 points and the Services Sector Index stood at 3,050 points.

In terms of net investor transactions during the first half of 2026, foreign investors recorded net buying of RO 73.877 million, while Omani investors recorded net selling of RO 773,000.

GCC investors recorded net selling of RO 66.983 million, while Arab investors recorded net selling of RO 6.121 million.

Decision issued on tax
invoices in e-format

THE Tax Authority today issued Decision No 189/2026 amending certain provisions of the Regulations of the Value-Added Tax Law, which include the issuance of tax invoices in an approved and secure electronic format that ensures their integrity and retention.

Idris bin Hamoud al Rashidi, Director of the E-Invoicing Project at the Tax Authority, affirmed that the electronic tax invoice project represents a qualitative leap in the development of the Sultanate of Oman's tax system. He stated that the project aims to enhance tax compliance, raise the level of transparency in commercial transactions and improve the efficiency of tax procedures, alongside supporting digital transformation and fostering a more efficient and reliable business environment.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he explained that an electronic tax invoice is an invoice issued, transmitted and retained in an approved electronic format in accordance with the technical requirements specified by the Tax Authority, thereby ensuring data integrity, security and verifiability.

He elaborated that the implementation of the system contributes to reducing errors and manipulation by issuing invoices in the approved XML electronic format — a format that enables electronic systems to read, analyse and process data automatically. He noted that invoices are exchanged between the seller's electronic system and the buyer's electronic system in business-to-business transactions through e-invoicing service providers



The system contributes to reducing errors and manipulation by issuing invoices in the approved XML electronic format — a format that enables electronic systems to read, analyse and process data automatically.

accredited by the Tax Authority, in near real-time and without human intervention.

He added that paper invoices, or those sent as digital images via email do not qualify as electronic tax invoices under the new requirements and will not be recognised following the implementation of the recent amendments to the Regulations of the Value-Added Tax Law.

He pointed out that all companies registered for value-added tax will be obliged to issue their tax invoices electronically in accordance with the system approved by the Tax Authority.

The implementation will proceed in two phases: the first phase, commencing on April 1, 2027, will cover companies with annual supplies exceeding RO 5 million; the second phase, commencing on October 1, 2027, will cover companies with annual supplies below this threshold.

He further stated that the Tax Authority has selected 100 companies to participate voluntarily in the pilot phase of the project, which will launch at the end of this August, with the aim of testing the system and assessing its readiness. He noted that a number of participating companies have already begun early preparations for system implementation, commending their cooperation with the Authority during the pilot phase. He affirmed that the project will yield direct benefits for the end consumer by enhancing the reliability of tax invoices and enabling consumers to verify their authenticity — thereby reinforcing trust in commercial transactions and safeguarding consumer rights — alongside promoting transparency between sellers and buyers.

He clarified that the electronic tax invoice must be issued through an electronic system linked to an e-invoicing service provider accredited by the Tax Authority and must be secure and verifiable, containing all the mandatory data stipulated in the Value-Added Tax Law and its Regulations, in addition to the technical requirements specified by the Authority.

He noted that accredited

service providers offer technical support to companies to align their systems with the approved requirements.

He stated that the e-invoicing project represents a paradigm shift in the development of tax administration through the digitalisation of invoice issuance and exchange processes, improved data quality, enhanced tax compliance and data-driven decision-making based on accurate and secure information — all of which contribute to enhancing the efficiency of the tax system.

He added that the project is one of the national initiatives supporting Oman Vision 2040 and the National Digital Transformation Strategy; it contributes to the digitalisation of government procedures, enhances system integration, develops digital services and improves the efficiency of government service delivery using the latest technologies.

This is in addition to providing economic data and statistics that support the formulation of policies and economic strategies. — ONA

Nepal delegation explores investment opportunities in Oman

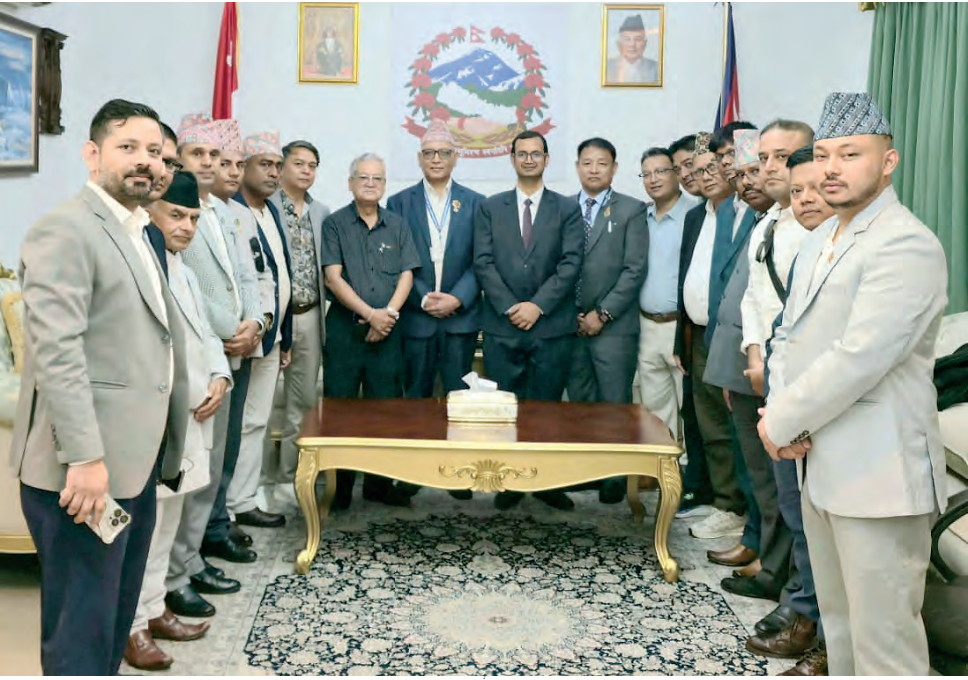
KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 9

A 15-member business delegation from Nepal, which was in Oman for over a week, left the Sultanate of Oman after a series of successful Business to Business (B2B) meetings on Saturday.

This is the first-ever organised trade mission from the Himalayan nation to the Sultanate of Oman and it represented 15 companies across 28 sectors.

The delegation which aimed at strengthening bilateral trade, attracting investments in both countries and establishing long-term business partnerships with Omani companies, had fruitful meetings with officials of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, OCCI and private entities aiming at forging business partnerships.

“The delegation of entrepreneurs represented a diverse range of industries,



During their seven-day visit, the delegation met with leading Omani businesses and institutions.

including bottled water and beverages, spices, handicrafts, herbal and essential oil products, tea and coffee, carpets, woollen products, gems and jewellery, hand creams and other consumer goods; and they had very fruitful meetings with relevant parties”, said Bishesh Kumar Sah, Charge d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nepal in Muscat.

During their seven-day visit, the delegation met with leading Omani businesses and institutions, including Lulu Hypermarket, Hypermax and Nesto Hypermarket. The meetings were focused on introducing Nepalese products to the Omani market, exploring investment opportunities and building distribution partnerships.

The delegation also visited the Al Rusayl Industrial City to gain insights into regional commercial development and investment prospects.

“The visit representing a significant milestone in Oman-Nepal economic

relations. This is the first organised business trade delegation from Nepal to Oman.

We hope this initiative will open new avenues for trade, investment and collaboration, allowing businesses from both countries to benefit from stronger commercial ties”, the official said, adding that the delegation believes Oman offers promising opportunities as a gateway to the GCC market, while Nepalese products are gaining recognition for their quality, authenticity and competitive pricing.

During the programme, members of the delegation also paid tribute to the late Nadhira al Harthy, the first Omani woman to summit Mount Everest, who recently passed away in Pakistan. They honoured her remarkable achievement and remembered her as an inspiration whose legacy transcended borders and reflected the enduring friendship between Oman and Nepal.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Germany-China trade deficit widens



Germany’s trade deficit with China widened in the first half of 2026, even as the Asian powerhouse remained its top trade partner, preliminary data from state-run agency Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI) showed on Sunday. German exports to China fell over 12% year-on-year to just under €37 billion between January and June, the data showed, as Chinese firms cut reliance on European imports, making China only the ninth-biggest market for German goods. — Reuters

CRYPTO MARKETS

Senate advances landmark crypto bill



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune moved on Saturday to advance a major bill that would create a regulatory framework for cryptocurrencies which, if passed, would mark a huge victory for US President Donald Trump and the crypto industry. The legislation would give the crypto industry its first comprehensive federal rulebook, defining when digital tokens are securities or commodities and which regulators oversee them. — Reuters

AUTO MARKET

India’s auto market set to reach 6.3m



India’s largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India expects the domestic passenger vehicle market to grow to 6.1 million-6.3 million units by fiscal year 2030-31, driven by a revival in demand for small cars and a stronger sport utility vehicle segment, Chairman RC Bhargava said. Maruti is reassessing its five-year growth targets as it expects the small-car segment to expand significantly faster than in the past five years, the company said in a statement on Sunday. — Reuters

OPINION

AI dilution and the growing challenge of trust online



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at College of Banking and Financial Studies



KV CH MADHU SUDHANA RAO

AI researcher based in the US.

FOR over thirty years, the internet has served as a medium for sharing the collective memories of humanity. News, knowledge, creativity, research and personal experiences can be shared on the internet across all boundaries. It has supported the growth of curated digital collections: articles, reviews, photographs, web pages, tutorials and discussions that are referred to by billions of people. This great resource may now be undergoing a new phase of transformation with great challenges and fewer extraordinary opportunities.

The first obstacle this new phase of the internet may face is the rise of quickly developing generative AI. It is becoming increasingly simple to write an article, generate an image, create a video, or code a computer programme all in a matter of seconds. With the large, transformative impact of this new technology in the workplace, the ability to streamline automation has been significantly improved. While the advantages of this new technology in the workplace may be great, it has also produced a new phenomenon: the rapid introduction and increasing prevalence of AI-diluted content on the public Internet.

AI rapidly generates and posts millions of blog articles, product reviews, social media updates and even videos and images. The large quantity of this content may be mostly harmless and beneficial, but it now

hurts people’s ability to identify substantive content created by a human. Some researchers have even suggested that the “Dead Internet” phenomenon is contributing to the lack of genuine human interaction as the quiet is filled with automated content. This makes searches more time-consuming and annoying. However, the measurable impact is worse than that. Most modern AI systems learn from sifting through vast amounts of public data. If the AI is especially good, it is likely because its training data is especially good.

As more content is generated by AI and uploaded to the Internet, future AI systems will learn more from content generated by prior AI systems than from content created by people. This phenomenon, referred to by experts as model collapse or data cannibalism, will feed back to reduce AI outputs in the areas of creativity and language use, but will also show hallucination, or a tendency to fabricate content and errors. This will erode trust for the average internet user. A simple search will likely yield convincing and seemingly authoritative articles that are false or misleading. AI will further the generation of convincing fake images and will fake or edit audio and video. The combination of these will deepen the deception and increase the difficulty of discerning the truth. If combined with malicious intent, this will sway public opinion, cause financial manipulation of

As more content is generated by AI and uploaded to the Internet, future AI systems will learn more from content generated by prior AI systems than from content created by people.

markets and damage the integrity of AI-generated content.

While these examples will create a negative perception of AI, the opposite is true. Many fields, especially medicine, education and customer service, have learned to rely on the many positive innovations of AI. The goal has to be the responsible and ethical use of AI while maintaining the integrity of the information frameworks of the Internet that People and other non-AI systems rely on.

Governments, IT firms and international scholars are developing new strategies and innovative techniques, like secure digital asset tracking systems, responsible AI frameworks, verified digital IDs for content producers and cryptographic watermarking for AI-generated material. Instead of restricting innovation, these safeguards are meant to promote it.

The coming internet developments cannot be determined only by the development of AI. They will be determined by our collective ability to protect digital trust. The integration of AI into daily life will devalue less authentic information. In contrast, human-authored content, fact-checked journalism and verified information will be the most prized. In the future, the Internet may not be valued by its access to information, but by how trustworthy the information is. The Internet’s affordability will help to build that trust. Maintaining that trust will be a primary responsibility of the AI era.

EVERYBODY WANTS ENERGY SECURITY POST THE IRAN WAR, BUT HOW?

The lasting legacy of the Iran war will likely be a renewed impetus for energy-importing nations to lessen their dependence on fossil fuels. The big question for these countries is how to accomplish this in a cost-effective, politically acceptable way that does not create new vulnerabilities. This is no easy feat.

The debate is often framed along left- and right-wing political fault lines.

Progressives typically say the conflict underscores the need to accelerate the transition to renewables and electric vehicles (EVs), while conservatives argue it shows the need to develop more fossil fuel production outside the Middle East.

The Iran war, launched by the US and Israel on February 28, has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz. The narrow waterway previously carried close to 20% of global crude, refined products and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Markets are still pricing in an eventual reopening of the strait, but the risks around the movement of crude and fuel from the Gulf have shifted in the past five months, as Iran is likely to end up with some form of control over vessel movements through the chokepoint.

For fuel-importing nations, the Iran war is the second crisis in four years. Russia’s 2022 war in Ukraine caused prices for crude, fuel, LNG and thermal coal to spike globally amidst fears that exports from Russia would be curtailed.

The status quo is clearly no longer acceptable, so the question is how energy security can be achieved moving forward.

Australia — the world’s leading diesel importer — offers a prime example of the dilemma facing fuel importers.

Should the country revive its oil refining industry decades after shutting most of its plants down, or should it accelerate electrification to cut its reliance on imported fuels? The answer is complex and offers some far-reaching lessons.

Australia relies on imports for about 80% of its liquid fuel needs. Its eight refineries operating at the start of the century have been reduced to just two — both relatively small, with processing capacities of just over 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) each.

The country imported about 861,000 bpd of light and middle distillates in 2025, with diesel accounting for about 60% of that, according to data from commodity analysts Kpler. — Reuters



CLYDE RUSSELL

The writer is the Asia commodities and energy columnist at Reuters

Towards a stronger, more resilient insurance sector

ECONOMIC legislation plays a fundamental role in regulating markets, protecting stakeholders, promoting financial stability and supporting sustainable economic growth. However, the success of any legislation should not be measured by the date of its enactment, but rather by its ability to achieve its intended objectives while adapting to evolving economic, financial, technological and market developments.

Over the past years, the insurance sector in the Sultanate of Oman has undergone significant legislative and regulatory reforms. Among the most notable requirements was increasing the minimum paid-up capital of national insurance companies to RO 10 million, together with the requirement that they operate as public joint stock companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). These measures were introduced to strengthen financial solvency, improve corporate governance, enhance transparency and disclosure; and protect the interests of policyholders and shareholders.

The regulatory framework also introduced measures aimed at promoting competition and preventing excessive market concentration. These include limiting an individual insurance company’s market share to 33 per cent of the total insurance market, unless justified by compelling reasons approved by the regulatory authority. In addition, the ownership of any individual or corporate shareholder is generally limited to 25 per cent of the company’s share capital, thereby promoting diversified ownership, sound corporate governance and institutional stability.

After several years of implementation, a number of important questions deserve careful consideration:

1. Have the increased capital requirements achieved their intended objective of strengthening the financial solvency and long-



MURTADHA M J IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI

The writer is Deputy Chairman, OCCI, Muscat

Legislative review should become an institutional practice based on measurable performance indicators, empirical evidence and regulatory outcomes rather than the mere passage of time.

term sustainability of insurance companies?

2. Have these legislative reforms increased the insurance sector’s contribution to Oman’s GDP and improved insurance penetration?

3. Has the domestic insurance market retained a greater proportion of underwriting risks, or does a significant share of premiums continue to flow to foreign reinsurance markets?

4. Has the increase in capital improved underwriting performance, profitability and resilience during periods of financial stress?

5. Has listing on the MSX strengthened corporate governance, transparency, disclosure and investor confidence?

6. Have these regulatory requirements encouraged mergers and acquisitions, resulting in stronger and more competitive national insurance companies?

7. Have insurance companies invested sufficiently in developing Omani talent and implementing Career & Succession Planning to ensure leadership continuity?

8. Does the current 33 per cent market share limit continue to achieve the appropriate balance between competition and economies of scale, or should it be reassessed in light of current market realities?

9. Does the 25 per cent ownership limit for individuals and institutions continue to serve the objectives of good governance and market stability, or is greater flexibility now required to attract strategic investors with capital, expertise and advanced technology?

10. Should future legislation place greater emphasis on financial resilience, governance quality, enterprise risk management, management effectiveness and institutional performance rather than relying primarily on fixed numerical thresholds?

11. Is the time right for Oman to adopt a Risk-Based Regulatory Framework, aligned with international best practices, that rewards well-managed and

financially sound insurers while encouraging innovation and sustainable growth?

Today’s insurance industry faces challenges and opportunities that were not envisaged when many of the current regulations were introduced. These include digital transformation, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, climate change, health insurance reforms, agricultural insurance, catastrophe insurance and increasingly sophisticated international standards for capital adequacy and enterprise risk management.

Consequently, periodic legislative review should become an institutional practice based on measurable performance indicators, empirical evidence and regulatory outcomes rather than the mere passage of time. The most fundamental question therefore remains: Does the Omani insurance sector require a comprehensive review of the Insurance Law, or should the priority now be to strengthen implementation, improve corporate governance, enhance technical pricing, reinforce enterprise risk management and invest in human capital development?

In conclusion, the purpose of raising these questions is not to advocate legislative change for its own sake, but rather to encourage constructive professional dialogue and an objective assessment of whether the Insurance Law and its implementing regulations have achieved the objectives for which they were enacted. International experience demonstrates that successful legislation is characterised by periodic review, evidence-based policymaking and continuous improvement.

Future reforms should therefore seek an appropriate balance between protecting policyholders, promoting healthy competition, attracting investment, strengthening corporate governance, enhancing financial resilience, developing national talent and encouraging innovation.

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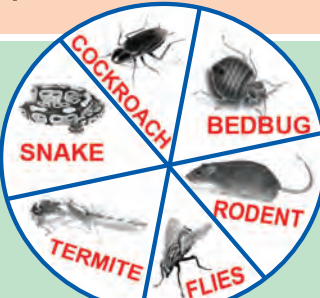
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Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to the Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P.Box No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

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MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

SECOND KATSEYE MEMBER GOES ON HIATUS



Member of the US girl group KATSEYE Sophia Laforteza. — AFP

Sophia Laforteza, the leader of global girl group KATSEYE, is temporarily stepping back from promotional activities to focus on her mental health and wellbeing, Hybe and Geffen said on Friday in a joint statement posted on Hybe’s fan-to-artist platform Weverse.

“We are very sorry to share that Sophia will be temporarily unable to participate in upcoming promotional activities”, the statement from the South Korean and American music companies said.

“Sophia has been receiving the utmost support and following thorough consultations with medical professionals. It has been advised that she take dedicated time for extended rest and ongoing care to ensure a full recovery”, the statement added.

The companies said that despite the setback, Laforteza remains eager to return to performing alongside fellow members Daniela Avanzini, Lara Raj, Megan Skiendiel and Yoonchae Jeung.

Her condition will be reassessed in September when further updates are expected to be shared with fans. Hybe did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for additional comment.

Laforteza also addressed the decision in a story posted on her personal Instagram page, saying that stepping away breaks her heart.

“You know how much I love being on stage, performing and sharing these moments with you”, she added.

She noted that taking care of her mind and body now will enable her to continue doing what she loves. Laforteza also thanked fans for their support and asked them to continue supporting KATSEYE during her absence.

The announcement comes shortly before the worldwide premiere of the group’s first documentary, “KATSEYE: WILD HEARTS”, this upcoming Wednesday. The group is also preparing to release its third EP, “WILD”, on August 14.

Laforteza is the second KATSEYE member to take a temporary hiatus for mental health and wellness reasons. Manon Bannerman’s hiatus was announced through Weverse on February 20.

While fans have speculated about the reasons for Bannerman’s absence, Hybe, Geffen and KATSEYE’s members have not provided additional details about her condition or possible return.

KATSEYE is a Los Angeles-based multinational pop group known for combining K-pop’s intensive training model with Western pop influences.

The group, whose members come from the Philippines, South Korea, Switzerland and the United States, was formed in 2023. Its members were selected from the finalists of Hybe and Geffen’s survival-style competition, “The Debut: Dream Academy”.

KATSEYE later gained widespread international attention through singles including “Touch”, “Gnarly” and “Gabriela”, with the latter earning the group a Grammy nomination. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



ART

A trio of painted steel works created in 1962 by renowned American abstract sculptor David Smith in Washington DC, USA. — REU



MUSIC

A busker plays guitar in an underpass in Beijing, China. — AFP



COMMUNITY

People dancing in a pool during a “Silent Evening Pool Party” amidst a heatwave in Seoul, South Korea. — REU

INSTA PICKS



“The silent take off, where grace meets fashion”



“A shot that captures the magic of the wild”

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MUSIC PRODUCER WILLIAM ORBIT DIES AGED 69



William Orbit, who won three Grammys, is being remembered as a ‘music icon’. — Reuters

Grammy-winning British musician and producer William Orbit, whose work helped reshape music for artists including Madonna, Britney Spears and U2, has died aged 69, his family and friends announced.

The London-born musician died at home on July 23, according to a statement shared on his Instagram account. His family said he would be greatly missed by those touched by his music, friendship and kindness.

Orbit was best known for producing Madonna’s 1998 album “Ray of Light”, which moved the US star further into electronica and trip-hop. His work on the record earned him two of his three Grammy Awards.

He later worked with Madonna on her 2000 album “Music” and co-wrote and performed on the 1999 single “Beautiful Stranger”. The song, featured in the film “Austin

Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me”, brought him another Grammy for best song written for visual media.

Orbit also received Grammy nominations for his work on Pink’s “Feel Good Time”, his 2000 album “Pieces in a Modern Style” and “Ray of Light”, which was nominated for record of the year.

His production credits included work with Britpop band Blur, girl group All Saints and Spice Girls member Mel C, who described collaborating with him as an honour.

He also worked with Britney Spears and Will.i.am on the 2013 album “Britney Jean” and produced two tracks included on U2’s compilation “The Best of 1990-2000”.

Alongside his production career, Orbit released 12 studio albums, featuring electronic music and performed with the groups Bassomatic and Torch Song. — AFP



Farewell to the ‘Queen of the Mountains’

DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

SOME people come into our lives quietly, barely making a ripple. Others? They leave footprints on your heart that never fade. Nadhira al Harthy was one of those rare souls — the kind whose presence changes you even if you didn’t get enough time with her.

I first met Nadhira just months before she stood on top of Mount Everest. It was our dear friend Khaled al Siyabi — her mentor and my late partner — who encouraged me to connect with her. From the moment we met, she became family. She jumped right into our canyoneering adventures, helping us explore the wild, breathtaking beauty of our beloved Oman. Every trip with her felt like uncovering a secret the mountains had been keeping just for us.

But Nadhira was so much more than an incredible athlete. Her story wasn’t just about reaching summits — it was about inspiring others to find their own path. Whenever she spoke at events, you could feel her deep love for nature and the mountains. Her voice wasn’t loud, but it carried something powerful: truth, wisdom and the quiet strength of someone who had faced fear and kept going.

She was the ultimate planner — nothing ever slipped through the cracks. From gear checklists to weather forecasts, she made sure everything was in place because she knew big dreams are built on small, careful steps. And she was always learning, always asking questions, hungry to understand every detail. That’s who she was — curious, humble and deeply committed.

After she achieved her



Nadhira al Harthy’s legacy goes beyond her historic climbs. Remembered for her courage, humility and determination, she inspired others to pursue their dreams and reach higher

dream of summiting Everest, she admitted she felt empty. But that didn’t stop her. She didn’t rest. Instead, she looked ahead, set a new goal and kept climbing — not just mountains, but towards a deeper purpose. That’s when I realised: her real passion wasn’t just the peaks, it was the journey of becoming.

I didn’t meet someone proud of her accomplishments. I met a woman who saw dreams as promises she made to herself. Success, to her, wasn’t luck — it was preparation, discipline and faith.

Her climb to Everest didn’t start at the base camp. It started in her heart, long before, with a quiet vow: “Impossible is not my language”.

To many, she was a mountaineer. To me, she was someone always reaching higher — not just in altitude, but in spirit. Every climb was a battle against fear, fatigue and doubt. And while she stood on some of the world’s tallest peaks, her greatest achievement was her unbreakable will.

She reminded us all that we each have our own mountains. Not all are made of snow and rock — some are made of illness, hardship, grief or responsibility.

Nadhira chose the tallest peaks on Earth, but the lessons she lived are for all of us: keep going, prepare well, believe deeply and never let go of your purpose.

She carried Oman’s name to the roof of the world — not for fame, but with grace, warmth and a quiet mission to lift others up.

She wasn’t racing against anyone else. Her only competition was the person she was yesterday.

Now, as we say goodbye after her passing in Pakistan’s mountains, we grieve not just a legendary climber, but a symbol of courage, hope and the power of dreams. Oman may have lost an extraordinary woman — but in losing her, we’ve gained a lasting inspiration.

To those who cynically say she sought her fate — I feel sorry for you because you lack passion and ambition. Rest In Peace ‘Queen of the mountains’.

FEATURES



Master flautist Yousuf al Foori, the driving force behind the Explore Oman Talent Competition.

YOUSUF AL FOORI GIVES YOUNG OMANI TALENT A STAGE



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

EVERY weekend, parents make their way to Active Oman at the Oman Automobile Association, accompanied by children eagerly waiting for their turn to perform.

The young vocalists, aged between 10 and 18, are competing in the Explore Oman Talent Competition. For some, it may be their first opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in front of professional musicians.

Watching them is Yousuf al Foori, the master flautist behind the competition. Having performed around the world, he is now turning his attention towards finding and grooming young talent in Oman.

“It is very important to recognise the talent in a child, but the most important part is how to improve the talent further to make it shine”, said Yousuf.

For him, the mission is deeply personal. Long before the international performances and solo appearances, Yousuf was also a child whose musical ability was recognised and encouraged.

He began playing the flute at the age of 10 when he joined the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra in 1995 as part of its first group of students.

“We were the pioneers, the first batch of students. It was 1995. My first teacher, Aleste Hume, discovered the talent from a young age. I am grateful to my teacher. Most of the people we worked with were teachers and conductors”, he reflected.

Life in the orchestra immersed him in the world of music. Surrounded by teachers, conductors and fellow musicians, he was given the guidance needed to develop his talent.

His first solo performance came when he was just 15 years old in front of two distinguished members of the audience.

“It is an unforgettable moment for me — performing in front of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth”, he recollected.

From there, Yousuf’s career took him to stages around the world and brought him numerous opportunities to perform as a soloist. Today, those experiences have shaped a new dream: to help young performers receive the same recognition and guidance that transformed his own life.

“My dream is to bring young talent to light to give them the exposure and to guide them the right way so they can reach their goal”, said Yousuf with optimism.

The response to the competition suggests that young performers are waiting for such opportunities. More than 60 vocalists turned up to demonstrate

their abilities.

Ten contestants were selected during the first weekend, followed by another eight on August 7. A further eight young vocalists will be selected on August 14, bringing the total to 26.

From that group, 12 contestants will advance to the final on August 21, where they will compete for a first prize of RO 500 and a second prize of RO 300.

“Out of 26, 12 of the selected participants will head to the finals to compete for the title on August 21. The winner will win RO 500 and the second winner RO 300. The response has been amazing. The parents’ support towards their children is inspiring”, Yousuf noted.

Joining him in evaluating the performers are Omani musicians Faisal al Shibli and Taj al Balushi.

Faisal is a musician, composer and conductor known for blending orchestral music with authentic Omani elements. His arrangements bring traditional instruments such as the oud together with modern orchestration.

As a maestro and multi-instrumentalist, he has led live performances and contributed to cultural events, including national celebrations and theatrical productions. He also operates a professional studio where he composes, records and produces music while developing educational content for aspiring musicians.

“Through my work, I aim to bridge tradition and innovation, crafting a unique musical identity that reflects both heritage and contemporary artistry”, he said.

Taj is a pianist, theatre actress and choir trainer who graduated from Sultan Qaboos University with a degree in musical sciences. She also holds a master’s degree in school administration.

Currently head of the school activities department at an international school, she brings together her experience in the arts, education and creative content as one of the competition’s judges.

Beyond the contestants taking the stage, the event has also attracted children who come to watch performers from their own age group. Their enthusiasm, Yousuf believes, demonstrates why young artists need spaces where they can be seen, encouraged and taken seriously.

“What is most inspiring is the response from children who are waiting enthusiastically to watch their own age group perform. The youth need a platform to showcase their talent and here we are”, concluded Yousuf al Foori.

More than three decades after a teacher recognised his potential as a young flautist, Yousuf is now hoping to do the same for another generation.

