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SENSATIONAL
INGEBRIGTSEN
CLAIMS
SEVENTH GOLD

IN BRIEF

OMAN’S POPULATION EXCEEDS 5.39 MILLION

HM, King of Bahrain discuss regional security

The total population of the Sultanate of Oman reached 5,398,645 (5.39 million) at the end of June 2026, recording a growth of 1.7 per cent compared to the end of June 2025, when it stood at 5,306,976. Data from the monthly statistical bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that the number of Omanis reached 3,063,949 by the end of June 2026, accounting for 56.75 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman’s total population, while the number of expatriates reached 2,334,696, representing 43.25 per cent. At the governorate level, Muscat Governorate topped the governorates in terms of population, with a total of 1,542,619 people, accounting for 28.6 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman’s total population.

CONDOLENCES SENT TO COLOMBIA

The Sultanate of Oman has conveyed its sincere solidarity and condolences to the government and people of the friendly Republic of Colombia in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck western Colombia, resulting in a number of fatalities and injuries. In a statement issued on Tuesday by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman expressed its deepest sympathies to the families of the victims and extended its earnest wishes for a speedy recovery to the injured, as well as for the successful mitigation of the aftermath of this natural disaster. Rescue crews dug through mountains of shattered concrete in western Colombia on Tuesday, racing to find survivors after a powerful earthquake killed more than 200 people, according to estimates from local authorities. Families waited beside the rubble for signs of life. The 7.4-magnitude earthquake is the most powerful to strike the South American country in decades.

CONTRACTS WORTH 2 MILLION SIGNED

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has signed ten agricultural usufruct contracts for the establishment of projects in the agricultural and livestock sectors in Dhofar Governorate, with a total investment value exceeding RO 2 million and covering an area of over 2,000 feddans. The signing took place as part of the activities of the 2026 Food Security Forum and Exhibition, currently being held in the Wilayat of Salalah. The signed contracts are distributed across the wilayats of Maqshin, Thamrait, Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, and encompass a range of productive activities and projects, including crop cultivation, watermelon and cantaloupe production, poultry farming, and the cultivation of both seasonal and non-seasonal crops. This reflects the diversity of investment opportunities linked to the food security sector in Dhofar Governorate.

DETAILS ON P3

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday received a telephone call from King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain. During the call, they discussed a number of recent developments and issues of mutual concern in both the regional and international arenas. The two leaders exchanged views on ways to enhance security and stability in the region. The conversation also touched upon the deep-rooted fraternal relations binding the two countries and their peoples, as well as ways to develop them across various sectors in a manner that serves shared interests and common aspirations.

— ONA



US AND IRAN CLOSE TO ‘SOME SORT’ OF DEAL

4 CREW MEMBERS KILLED IN ATTACK ON CARGO VESSEL

PAKISTAN said on Tuesday the United States and Iran were close to “some sort” of deal, and fellow mediator Qatar said talks on managing the Strait of Hormuz were at an advanced stage, despite reports of new attacks on shipping in regional waters. The comments offered some hope that Iran and the US can end a stalemate that has in effect blocked the vital waterway, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas flowed before the war. Prospects for a deal had appeared to dim on Monday after the sides’ latest remarks and demands. In an interview with Bloomberg News, Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said “things are shaping up again in favour of a peace arrangement or a deal.” “The signals in the last two three days are that we are close to some sort of an arrangement.” Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi met Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran on Tuesday, Araqchi’s Telegram channel said.



People walk in the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, Iran, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Qatar’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson told a briefing earlier on Tuesday that discussions over management of the Strait of Hormuz were at an advanced stage. Iran’s Foreign Ministry’s Public Relations Office did not immediately respond to a call for comment. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday that Tehran and Washington were not holding direct talks, but that messages were being exchanged through intermediaries. Despite tentative signs of progress in diplomacy, there were reports of new attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, highlighting the widening threat to maritime trade. Four crew members were killed in a suspected attack by Yemen’s Ansar Allah fighters on a small cargo vessel in the Bab el Mandeb strait on Tuesday, Yemen’s Transport Ministry said. The fatalities aboard the Egyptian-owned Tihamah, if confirmed, would be the first deaths in a strike on shipping since the Iran war began.

— Reuters

Omani photographer wins best film award in Spain

MADRID: The film ‘Sufrat Ramadan fi Sur’ (Ramadhan Table in Sur) by Omani cinematographer Haitham al Farsi has won the Best Film award in the ‘Urban-Rural Connectivity’ category at the 2026 Food Film List competition, organised by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT), headquartered in Barcelona, Spain. The accolade was achieved in an international competition featuring over 100 films from around the

world vying across 14 categories. The winning film offers a visual and cultural journey into the Ramadhan dining experience in the Wilayat of Sur, showcasing the customs and traditions associated with the holy month of Ramadhan, as well as the distinctive dishes and social practices that characterise the Sur table — reflecting the depth of the wilayat’s cultural heritage and its historical uniqueness. The film also highlights the close connection between Sur’s culinary



The film highlights the close connection between Sur’s culinary heritage and its rich maritime history.

heritage and its rich maritime history, shaped over centuries by seafaring and commercial activity, as well as cultural exchange with numerous ports and communities. These influences are evident in aspects of the local cuisine, including its ingredients, flavours, and methods of preparation and presentation, rendering the Sur table a living testament to the region’s history and its social and cultural memory. This achievement holds particular significance amid the growing

global interest in culinary tourism, gastronomic arts, and experiential travel, where local cuisine has become a vital means of discovering destinations and engaging with their cultures and communities. The tourism experience is no longer confined to visiting landmarks and sites; rather, it encompasses the authentic experiences that visitors live — experiences that reflect a place’s identity and offer a deeper understanding of its culture, stories, and ways of life. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The ministry supported 61 youth initiatives in 2025 and 68 in 2026, benefiting some 12,000 people. — ONA

OMAN MARKS WORLD YOUTH DAY TODAY

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, along with other countries, marks World Youth Day (WYD) which falls on August 12 each year.

During the years 2025-2026, the ministry, through its Directorate-General of Youth, continued its efforts to build bridges of communication with young people, listen to their opinions and aspirations, and provide safe environments for discussing issues that impact and empower youth work.

Mohammed bin Marhoon al Maktoumi, Director of the Youth Initiatives Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said, “The ministry annually implements a programme to support youth initiatives aimed at empowering young people to carry out activities that contribute positively to society in various fields, including finance, culture, health, the environment, innovation, cybersecurity, and leadership. The ministry supported 61 youth initiatives in 2025 and 68 in 2026, benefiting some 12,000 people.” Al Maktoumi noted that, in the area of volunteering, the “Esnad Oman Youth Volunteering Programme” for 2026 is a key project for developing young volunteers through workshops, volunteering camps, and specialised training programmes. The programme aims to train 500 young volunteers from across the Sultanate of Oman as well as conducting a series of camps to refine their volunteer skills and enhance the role of youth in community development.

Faisal bin Nasser al Hosni, Head of the Youth Participation Department at the Youth Programmes Directorate at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that among the strategic programmes aimed at enhancing Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to develop the character of young Omanis in diplomatic, life, and disciplinary aspects, is the Youth Ambassadors Programme. The programme aims to prepare young leaders for international engagements, develop their communication and negotiation skills, and enhance their knowledge of the United Nations councils and committees.

He added: “The Mustaid (ready) camp, which targets the 18-29 age group, promotes self-reliance and teamwork. The programme is held annually, with 500 participants targeted in 2026. In addition, the Military Discipline Programme, carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education, and other government institutions, is another significant national programme.

It aims to instil values of citizenship and commitment in the participants through a four-week programme that includes military training, workshops, specialised lectures, and sports competitions. This year’s edition will see the participation of 1,000 young people from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.” — ONA

DATURA PLANT CLEARED FROM KHOR KHARFOUT

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Khor Kharfout Archaeological Reserve is considered an environmental and cultural treasure with unique biodiversity in Dhofar. The management of Khor Kharfot Archaeological Reserve implemented a campaign to remove the invasive datura plant after detecting it at an early stage.

In its statement, the Environment Authority stated that the removal of the datura is significant “before it bears fruit and spreads its seeds to mitigate its impact on local plants and



Khor Kharfot Archaeological Reserve implemented a campaign to remove the invasive datura plant after detecting it at an early stage.

biodiversity.” The initiative was held in coordination with the municipalities of Rakhyout and Dhalkout. The Khor Kharfot Archaeological Reserve is located between the wilayats of Rakhyout and Dhalkout in the Governorate of Dhofar on the coast of the Arabian Sea, stretching over an area of 143.4 square kilometres.

Considered to be a periodic settlement and a wetland with unique biodiversity, Khor Kharfout achieved the status of an archaeological reserve when His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued the Royal Decree in 2021.

It is an important source of

water. The Khor is considered to have been used as an ancient port for exporting frankincense.

The mountainous geographical range of the governorate falls under the areas affected by the annual monsoon rains.

Amongst the widespread greenery produced by the Khareef season is also the invasive datura plant, which is also considered toxic. The diversity of the physical features of the wetland includes an environment that includes mountains, woods, valleys, coastal areas, and semi-desert areas.

The habitat has also been an attraction for migratory birds.

Forum highlights readiness for govt’s sustainable future

THE PROCEEDINGS of the 25th Annual General Conference on “Government Readiness for a Sustainable Future” opened in the Wilayat of Salalah. The event is organised by the Ministry of Labour and the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO) of the Arab League.

The opening of the two-day conference was held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, in the presence of several officials, representatives of government entities and the private sector, and representatives of the Arab Administrative Development Organization of the Arab League.

Held as part of the activities of the Labour Forum 2026 in Dhofar Governorate, the conference discusses ways to enhance government readiness for future transformations, keep pace with economic, technological, and environmental changes, and achieve sustainable development. It also explores the role of digital transformation, innovation, and modern governance in developing government work, reviewing international experiences and practices in sustainability and government management, and enhancing the exchange of expertise among government, regional, and international entities.

The conference focuses on building more flexible and efficient government institutions capable of responding to future challenges, as well as deploying modern technologies and data to support decision-making and improve the quality of public services and policies.

Nasser bin Salim al Hadhrami, Director-General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, explained in a speech that organising the conference comes as part of the Labour Forum activities under the theme “A Nation’s Vision: Empowerment and Action,” within the framework of the Ministry of Labour’s efforts to enhance government work readiness to keep pace with future transformations and examine the challenges and opportunities associated with building more flexible, efficient, and sustainable



The opening of the two-day conference was held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour. — ONA

governments.

He said that the conference forms a platform for exchanging Arab and international experiences and expertise, and discussing sustainable government policies, digital governance, strategic foresight, artificial intelligence, and the development of government competencies. He pointed to several ministry initiatives, including the Strategic Human Resources Planning Project in the Government Sector, the National Occupational Competency Framework, the Human Resource Management and Development Matrix, the Institutional Innovation and Change Management System, and the Artificial Intelligence Initiative in Government Environments, contributing to developing institutional performance and building future-ready government capacities.

Dr Nasser bin Al Hatlan al Qahtani, Director-General of the Arab Administrative Development Organization of the Arab

League, affirmed in a speech that rapid changes in technology, artificial intelligence, and economic and climate shifts dictate that governments develop more flexible and efficient working models and enhance their ability to foresee the future and manage risks.

He noted that the conference represents a platform for exchanging expertise and knowledge regarding the readiness of Arab governments for sustainability requirements, and discussing issues of digital transformation, governance, artificial intelligence, and innovation. He emphasised the importance of Oman Vision 2040 as a model for future planning based on governance, sustainability, and building national capabilities, stressing that government readiness is not limited to technical infrastructure, but also requires qualified leaders, agile institutions, advanced digital infrastructure, and effective governance systems. — ONA

Dhofar launches National Addressing Project in Al Saadah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 11

Dhofar has begun the first phase of Oman’s National Addressing Project, with street-name signs and numbered building plates being installed in Al Saadah in the Wilayat of Salalah as the Sultanate of Oman moves towards a unified addressing system nationwide.

Dhofar Municipality said the initial phase covers Al Saadah and includes the installation of street-name signs and building numbers to organise addresses, make locations easier to identify and improve the efficiency of

public and private services.

Under the national system, properties will be assigned official addresses based on a standard structure, replacing varying address formats with a unified model to be used across Oman.

Al Saadah rollout marks the first phase of the project in Dhofar, which is being implemented nationwide under the regulatory framework established by Ministerial Decision No 200/2024, issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning on February 21, 2024. The decision was published in the Official Gazette on March 3 and came



The unified system would establish a common national structure and described the project as the result of more than two decades of cumulative efforts.

into force six months later.

The regulations require the ministry to establish a smart, unified addressing system covering all governorates, supported by a central

database containing address information supplied and updated by local authorities.

An official address consists of four basic elements — the governorate, wilayat,

street name and address unit number. A city, village or neighbourhood may also be included as a secondary element.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is responsible for establishing the national model and central database, while governorates implement the system in coordination with the relevant municipalities.

The standardisation is particularly significant for Dhofar. Eng Haitham bin Said al Badi, Director of the National Addressing Project at the ministry, said in June that Muscat, Al Batinah North and Dhofar had previously

followed different approaches to formulating addresses.

He said the unified system would establish a common national structure and described the project as the result of more than two decades of cumulative government efforts.

The physical signs follow a national design, with side-street signs in white and building and residential-unit plates in green.

Building plates include QR codes linked to the geographical location and international address of the property or establishment, adding a digital dimension to the addressing system.

SHORT TAKES



The event was held under the auspices of retired Major General Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Mantheri. — ONA

ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN CELEBRATES GRADUATION OF NEW RECRUITS

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) on Tuesday celebrated the graduation of a new batch of recruits at the military parade ground at Ghala Base and the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy.

The event was held under the auspices of retired Major General Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Mantheri, and in the presence of Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

The ceremony featured a series of diverse military displays. Then, the graduates chanted the anthem of the Royal Air Force of Oman, took the oath of loyalty, pledged allegiance and proclaimed thrice: “Long live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.” Outstanding performers of the course were also recognised. Recruit Ali bin Mohammed Belhaf secured first place overall for the course, Recruit Munthir bin Musabih al Ghamlasi achieved top honours in military drill, and Recruit Mohammed bin Nasser al Adawi earned first place in light weapons marksmanship. — ONA



FOUR PEOPLE RESCUED FROM DROWNING

The Coast Guard rescued three people from drowning after their boat capsized while kayaking near Al Qurum Beach in the Wilayat of Basher.

In a separate incident, a patrol from the Coast Guard unit in Al Batinah North Governorate rescued a child from drowning off the Silver Jubilee Park in the Wilayat of Suhar. The child was in good condition after receiving first aid.

ABOVE-AVERAGE RAIN FORECAST FOR OCTOBER

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Oman’s Civil Aviation Authority, in its August 2026 seasonal bulletin, forecast that rainfall in October is expected to be above the climatic average across Oman, following forecasts for the current and coming months, August and September, which pointed to below-average or near-average rainfall.

The forecast comes as several governorates have seen notable



rainfall activity in recent days. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources recorded varying rainfall amounts

across a number of wilayats between August 8 and 9, led by Al Hamra with 61mm, followed by Yanqul with 48mm, Ibri with 45mm and Salalah with 36mm, while amounts in Bahla, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Al Buraimi ranged between 21mm and 26mm.

Zaher al Shaqsi, a meteorology researcher, stated on social media that local cloud systems had formed, accompanied by thundery rain and active winds over parts of Al Sharqiyah North, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and Al

Buraimi, noting the possibility of dust storms extending into desert areas followed by thundery rain.

Dr Mazin al Busaidy, PhD in Artificial Intelligence & Cybersecurity, stated on social media, citing the latest radar imagery from the Civil Aviation Authority, that cumulus cloud activity continues along the Al Hajar Mountains and surrounding areas, with chances of thundery rain sometimes accompanied by active downdrafts and hail.

Usufruct contracts worth over 2 million signed



The signed contracts are distributed across the wilayats of Maqshin, Thumrait, Shaleem and the Hallaniyat Islands

THE MINISTRY of Housing and Urban Planning has signed ten agricultural usufruct contracts for the establishment of projects in the agricultural and livestock sectors in Dhofar Governorate, with a total investment value exceeding RO 2 million and covering an area of over 2,000 feddans. The signing took place as part of the activities of the 2026 Food Security Forum and Exhibition, currently being held in the Wilayat of Salalah.

The signed contracts are distributed across the wilayats of Maqshin, Thamrait, Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, and encompass a range of productive activities and projects, including crop cultivation, watermelon and cantaloupe production, poultry farming, and the cultivation of

both seasonal and non-seasonal crops. This reflects the diversity of investment opportunities linked to the food security sector in Dhofar Governorate.

The contracts are part of the ministry’s efforts to utilise government land in support of economically and developmentally viable investments, and to provide the real estate enablers for investment projects through the usufruct system.

This contributes to strengthening food security projects, boosting local production, and encouraging the private sector to establish sustainable agricultural and livestock ventures.

The contracts were signed on behalf of the ministry by Eng Khalfan bin Masoud al Naabi, Director-General of Housing and

Urban Planning in Dhofar Governorate, alongside representatives of a number of local companies and institutions. These projects are expected to support national objectives related to economic diversification, investment promotion, the development of productive sectors, and the achievement of sustainability within the food security ecosystem.

The ministry emphasises the importance of integrated coordination between government entities and the private sector in creating a conducive investment environment, maximising the utilisation of government land, and directing it towards high-value-added projects, thereby reinforcing the food security system and enhancing the contribution of productive sectors to the national economy. — ONA

7.1% of general education diploma holders are job-seekers

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The rate of job-seekers among holders of higher education diplomas in the Sultanate of Oman stood at 7.1 per cent in June 2026, the highest among all educational levels, according to the latest Monthly Statistical Bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that the rate among holders of General Education Diplomas or equivalent qualifications stood at 3.4 per cent, while those without a General Education Diploma recorded a rate of 0.7 per cent. The rate

among holders of master’s and doctoral degrees stood at 0.5 per cent.

The bulletin highlighted disparities in job-seeker rates by gender and educational attainment. Among holders of higher education diplomas, the rate stood at 14.4 per cent among females, compared with 2.7 per cent among males. Among bachelor’s degree holders, the rate was 12.4 per cent for females, compared with 1.3 per cent for males.

For holders of General Education Diplomas or equivalent qualifications, the rate stood at 7.4 per cent among females and 2.5 per cent among males. Among holders of master’s and



The bulletin highlighted disparities in job-seeker rates by gender and educational attainment.

doctoral degrees, the rate was 1.1 per cent for females and 0.3 per cent for males.

By age group, those aged 15-24 recorded the highest job-seeker rate in June at 13.2 per cent, compared with 13.6 per cent in May. This was followed by those aged 25-29, at 4.3 per cent, and those aged 30-34, at 2.4 per cent.

The rate among those aged 35 to 39 stood at 1.2 per cent, while the 40-and-above age group recorded the lowest rate at 0.6 per cent. Among young people aged 15-24, the job-seeker rate stood at 15.2 per cent for females and 12.5 per cent for males.

Overall, the job-seeker rate in Oman stood at 2.4 per cent in June 2026, down from 2.5

per cent in May. The rate was 6.4 per cent among females, compared with 1.3 per cent among males.

At the governorate level, Al Dhahirah recorded the highest job-seeker rate in June at 4.6 per cent, followed by Al Batinah North at 3.4 per cent, Al Dakhiliyah at 3.3 per cent and Al Sharqiyah South at 3.1 per cent. Al Buraimi and Al Batinah South each recorded a rate of 3 per cent.

Al Sharqiyah North registered a rate of 2.8 per cent, followed by Dhofar at 2.2 per cent and Muscat at 1.1 per cent. Al Wusta recorded the lowest job-seeker rate among Oman’s governorates at 1 per cent.



خريف
ظفار
KHAREEF
DHO FAR

SALALAH DAZZLES



IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

WHEN much of the region is sweltering under the summer sun, Salalah is putting on a spectacle of its own. With mist-shrouded mountains, lush green landscapes, cool drizzle and gentle rain, Khareef Dhofar Season 2026 is drawing visitors from across the region and beyond, offering a summer experience unlike almost anywhere else.

For Iraqi content creator Ashhad al Ajil, the magic was compelling enough to bring him back for a second consecutive year. Driving his own car to Dhofar, he has been documenting his journey to

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Salalah and sharing its landscapes, attractions and atmosphere with his followers.

He highlighted the striking contrast between Iraq's summer temperatures, which can approach 50°C, and Salalah's cool, misty weather. The sight of rain, fog and greenery in the middle of summer has generated strong engagement with his videos, with viewers inspired to make the journey themselves. He noted that another vehicle from Mosul had arrived in Oman after its occupants watched his content.

Qatari social media influencer Abdul Latif bin Ahmed Al Hajin al Nuaimi also captured Salalah through his lens, showcasing its mountains, fog, natural landscapes and bustling markets. His videos

offer his audience a visual journey through the destination during the Khareef season.

For Yemeni visitor Mohammed al Hasani, however, the experience began before he even reached Salalah. He recalled being greeted by the first Omani security officer he encountered with a smile and respect, saying the warm welcome immediately shaped his affection for the country. He described the people he met as welcoming, generous and courteous.

Tour guide Hisham al Kharousi recalled a particularly memorable encounter while accompanying an Australian family travelling around Oman. As they headed towards the airport, one of the children remarked, "I have not seen anyone sad in Oman." Al Kharousi said

many visitors tell him they chose Oman following recommendations from friends who had experienced the hospitality of its people. One tourist even joked that in Oman, there was no need to buy coffee; simply walk through a market.

Meanwhile, Mazen al Qasmi, an automotive technology engineer, praised initiatives bringing prominent content creators to experience Khareef Dhofar, especially Bilal al Haddad, a prominent Lebanese sports content creator and football commentator whose coverage of Khareef Dhofar Season gained over millions of views, describing them as an effective way of showcasing Salalah's cool summer climate and captivating scenery to audiences worldwide.

SHORT TAKES



The digital spatial portal reflects efforts to enhance the digital transition to develop public services. — ONA

MUSANDAM LAUNCHES DIGITAL SPATIAL PORTAL

KHASAB: The Governorate of Musandam recently launched its digital spatial portal in both Arabic and English.

The digital spatial portal, launched on the governorate’s website, reflects efforts to enhance digital transition and use modern technologies to develop public services. It provides an interactive platform designed to enable users to easily access geographical and spatial information and data related to the governorate.

The Director of the Department of Information Technology at the Directorate-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs in Musandam Governorate, Amna bint Mohammed al Shuhhi, said the portal provides accurate, up-to-date information in a user-friendly, interactive digital environment.

She added that the portal features a range of digital services and tools, including interactive maps and advanced search components that can be used in planning and decision-making. The portal also contributes to linking geographical data within an integrated digital environment that supports the work of government units and enhances the efficiency of urban planning and infrastructure development.

The new portal constitutes a cornerstone for future projects and initiatives that use technologies of smart cities and emerging technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI) and digital twins. This consolidates integration among different systems and services and supports the development of a smarter and more sustainable future for the governorate, she said.

— ONA



Educator releases books for neurodivergent students

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Marking A MILESTONE in the care for children with special abilities worldwide, a Muscat-based educator who established a special centre for children in India has released a curriculum comprising a set of textbooks exclusively designed for neurodivergent children. These books are designed for children with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and intellectual disability.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr Gayatri Narasimhan, a passionate special

educator, inclusive education specialist, vocational trainer, and counsellor, who holds years of hands-on experience in the special education field, said that her Chennai-based Prakramika Vocational Institute has brought out textbooks for the special children across the world to ensure their education is not broken. “A uniform curriculum for neurodivergent children does not exist. Special schools follow their own based on the broad needs of the child; however, the continuity in their education might be broken as they move around different



DR GAYATRI NARASIMHAN

schools,” said Dr Gayatri, adding that a structured curriculum provides a common academic framework which enables consistency in teaching and continuity in learning across special schools.

She brought out a curriculum called ‘Beyond Labels’ with 23 textbooks to cater to neuro-divergent children from birth to 25 years. Dr Gayatri said the

set of books covers topics including communication skills, mathematics, functional academics, computer skills, activities of daily living, financial literacy, safety, personality development, self-advocacy, soft skills, physical fitness, yoga, and vocational education. “The books are designed for children with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and intellectual disability, among others,” she said.

These books, co-authored by 8 parents and teachers who have lived alongside neurodivergent

children, aim at integrating academic learning with communication, functional independence, life skills, workplace readiness, and community participation in order to ensure that education extends beyond the classroom and prepares learners for independent lives.

Launched in February 2026, the Beyond Labels books cater to five developmental stages: early childhood (0-6 years), pre-skill (6-10 years), basic (11-15 years), intermediate (16-20 years), and advanced (21-25 years).

DELEGATION EXPLORES OPPORTUNITIES IN EGYPT

A BUSINESS delegation from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Batinah North Governorate explored investment opportunities and avenues for commercial cooperation between Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The visit’s programme included organising the “Industrial Forum” in Cairo through joint efforts between the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Cairo and the OCCI branch in Al Batinah North, with the participation of a number of Omani businesspeople and their Egyptian counterparts in the fields of food and pharmaceutical industries, aluminium, shipping and maritime transport, and real estate and industrial development.

The forum’s activities were held under the auspices of Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League, in the presence of officials from the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones and the Commercial Representation Service in Egypt.

In his speech, the ambassador emphasised the importance of direct meetings between business sectors in both countries, noting that the governorate delegation’s visit about three years ago resulted in the launch of three investment projects in the Wilayat of Suhar. He expressed his hope that the current visit would lead to new economic partnerships that enhance investment integration, particularly in the fields of food and pharmaceutical security and real

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A business delegation from Al Batinah North explores investment opportunities in Egypt.

estate development.

For his part, Eng Said bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the OCCI branch in Al Batinah North Governorate and head of the delegation, explained that the visit aims to mutually showcase investment opportunities and provide a platform for delegation members to develop their businesses and expand the horizons of commercial and industrial cooperation.

The competent Egyptian entities presented a review of the facilities and incentives granted to investors.

The forum witnessed a visual presentation prepared by Mohammed bin Qasim al Shizawi, Head of the Investment Development Department at the Office of the Governor of Al Batinah North, in which he highlighted

the comparative advantages and economic indicators of the Sultanate of Oman, the incentives available in economic zones and industrial cities, and investment opportunities in the industrial, agricultural, and real estate development sectors.

On the sidelines of the visit, the delegation held talks with the General Authority for the Suez Canal Economic Zone to discuss investment cooperation prospects, and conducted a field tour that included Ein El Sokhna Port and several industrial projects in the area.

The delegation also visited the headquarters of the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce. The programme concluded with a visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo. — ONA

MUSANDAM LAUNCHES DIGITAL SPATIAL PORTAL

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth is organising the 28th edition of the Literary Forum in Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate, from October 25 to 29, 2026.

The forum is accorded great attention by talented people in the cultural community as it provides a platform for them to showcase their contributions to cultural life.

The forum’s programme includes a competition in classical Arabic poetry, popular poetry and short stories.

The programme also includes sessions for critical insights into the texts presented in the competition, in addition to specialised cultural sessions in the fields of classical poetry, popular poetry and short stories.

The forum, which hosts writers and poets from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad, also includes competitions in singing, photography, monodrama, and fine arts. — ONA

وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal Tenders

Tender No.	111/2026/MHT/HQ-18	Tender Name	Provision of Cleaning Services for the Department of Heritage and Tourism Building in Musandam Governorate and its Affiliated Sites for the Years 2027–2028
	113/2026/MHT/HQ-19 - Recall - 1		Provision of Cleaning Services for the Department of Heritage and Tourism in South Al Batinah and Its Affiliated Sites for the Years 2027 and 2028
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25	
Tender Document Sales End Date	111/2026/MHT/HQ-18	19/8/2026	
	113/2026/MHT/HQ-19 - Recall - 1	23/8/2026	
Last Date for Bid Submission		21/9/2026	
Grade	111/2026/MHT/HQ-18	SME (Local) First, Second, Third, Fourth	
	113/2026/MHT/HQ-19 - Recall - 1	First	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.

The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.

All companies submitting bids for this tender are required to attach a valid and recently issued Omanization Compliance Certificate from the Ministry of Labour, provided that the certificate is not older than 30 days from the date of issuance.

This certificate is considered a mandatory document, and failure to submit it — for any reason — shall result in the outright disqualification of the bid, without being evaluated technically or financially.

The certificate must also demonstrate the company’s compliance with the Omanization percentage required by the Ministry of Labour. If the required percentage is not met, the bid shall be automatically disqualified.

The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids

The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om or 24402244
For further information	Email : sotlc@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A fire in a storage tank burns as firefighters work to control the blaze in Zawiya, Libya. — Reuters

LIBYA SAYS ZAWIYA REFINERY MAY HALT OPERATIONS

TRIPOLI: Renewed violence in the strategic Libyan city of Zawiya has once again disrupted the oil industry in the Opec member country, with state oil firm NOC saying it could declare force majeure if drone attacks on energy assets in the city continued. Zawiya has seen repeated clashes between armed groups. Most recently, drone attacks over the weekend into Monday targeted its oil complex, causing a tank containing about 4.5 million litres of gasoline to collapse after a fire. Although intense, the blaze, which firefighters are still battling to put out, has not caused any damage to the refinery at the complex, the engineers said. However, it led to a partial shutdown of operations at the Zawiya oil depot and a temporary disruption to fuel supply to several stations in the western region, said a spokesperson of Brega Petroleum Marketing, which is in charge of Libya’s fuel supplies. The overall supply situation within the country remained stable, the spokesperson added, due to available volumes of gasoline at the Tripoli oil depot and tankers loading additional shipments. Libya’s National Oil Corp said it could completely halt operations at the Zawiya refinery after the attack. — Reuters

SYRIA SENTENCES BASHAR AL ASSAD TO DEATH IN ABSENTIA



Bashar al Assad

DAMASCUS: A Syrian court on Tuesday sentenced former ruler Bashar al Assad to death after a trial in absentia, convicting him of atrocities committed during the country’s nearly 14-year civil war. It is the first such ruling under Syria’s transitional leaders who ousted Assad in December 2024, vowing to provide justice and accountability for crimes committed under his rule. Assad fled to Moscow as forces closed in on Damascus after a lightning offensive. At a court in Damascus on Tuesday, Judge Fakhr al Din al Aryan convicted Assad of crimes including “premeditated murder, the intentional killing of more than one person, the intentional killing of children under 15 years... torture, torture leading to death, and deprivation of liberty on multiple occasions — classified as crimes against humanity and war crimes”. “He is therefore sentenced to death,” the judge said. Syria in April began proceedings against Assad and other officials accused in person and in absentia of atrocities during the country’s civil war The court also sentenced six former military and security officials in absentia to death. — AFP

DEADLY ACCIDENT

Crash kills 18, including children, in Egypt



At least 18 people, many of them children aged 13 to 14, were killed on Tuesday in northern Egypt when two pick-up trucks carrying agricultural day labourers crashed. Egypt’s health ministry had earlier said there were 47 casualties including some 30 injured in the crash in the Dawawis area of Ismailia governorate. “Most of the dead are children 13 and 14 years old,” the source said. Local media Al-Masry Al-Youm reported the youngest victim was 10 years old. — AFP

SOMALIA MALNUTRITION HIT BY MORE THAN 80% FUNDING DROP, SAYS MSF

BAIDOA: Funding to tackle acute malnutrition in parts of Somalia has dropped by more than 80 per cent this year, Médecins Sans Frontières said on Tuesday, even though one in every four children screened in displacement camps in the southwest is severely malnourished. MSF Health Adviser Mitchell Sangma said the United States had cut its support to aid agencies in the country from \$70 million last year to no funding this year, leaving aid groups struggling to respond as needs rise.

Other Western donors have also cut funding. “This year we have admitted 22,000 nutrition cases, more than 80 per cent higher than last year. When we need this massive scale-up in intervention measures, we are seeing less interest from donor support,” Sangma said. At the Elbet 1 camp, a collection of makeshift tents constructed by a patchwork of tarpaulins in the southwestern town of Baidoa, parents bring their children to a

clinic under a corrugated iron roof. They are weighed and measured for height and the thickness of their arms, which is an indicator of malnutrition. At the nearby Bay Regional Hospital in Baidoa, which treats people from the town, semi-nomadic communities and the camp for displaced, a dozen gaunt children lay on beds in one ward, some with drips in their hands as others were given oxygen to help them breathe. — Reuters

Israeli forces continue to destroy homes in West Bank

ISRAELI FORCES on Tuesday demolished the home of a Palestinian who died in July in the most lethal clash in months in the occupied West Bank, residents and the army said. The clash broke out on July 24 when a group of Israeli settlers approached the town of Tell, leaving dead one settler, one soldier and four Palestinians including Farouq Ramadan, whose home was demolished. “At around 8:15 am (05:15 GMT), the Israeli army blew up the apartment where the martyr Farouq Ramadan lived with his wife and five daughters,” Tell Mayor Walid Zaidan said. Zaidan said that about 30 Israeli military vehicles and engineering teams entered the village on Monday evening, evacuating residents of 30 houses surrounding Ramadan’s home before the demolition. Journalists saw army engineers set up explosives and detonate the second-floor apartment where Ramadan had lived, after troops amassed from Monday evening. The army in a statement said troops “demolished the house where the man who carried out the shooting” had lived. “We will continue to take proactive and offensive action to thwart fighters throughout Judea and Samaria and to bring to justice Palestinians who sought to harm the citizens of the State of Israel,” it said,



Smoke rises as Israeli forces blow up the house of Palestinian Farouq Ramadan, near Nablus in the West Bank. — Reuters

Israel routinely demolishes family homes of Palestinians it accuses of being involved in attacks, seeing the policy as a deterrent, but critics say it amounts to collective punishment that leaves innocent family members homeless. Settlers have been attacking Palestinians on a nearly daily basis in the West Bank

using a biblical name for the West Bank. Israeli army radio said the two-week timeline to demolish the house was an “unprecedented record time”. Israel routinely demolishes family homes of Palestinians it accuses of being involved in attacks, seeing the policy as a deterrent, but critics say it amounts to collective punishment that leaves innocent family members homeless. Palestinians say the villagers in Tell came under attack from settlers. On July 24, footage showed Ramadan seizing an Israeli’s weapon during a clash with settlers, leading an emergency response team from a nearby settlement to rush to

the scene with ensuing gunfire. A military probe last week said that the soldier was killed by Palestinian fire, but could not conclusively determine whether the settler was killed by Palestinian or friendly fire. Ramadan was killed in the exchange of gunfire, but it was unclear who by. The Israeli army said on Monday it was banning from most of the West Bank a settler accused of physically abusing a Palestinian, despite an intervention his behalf by the defence minister. West Bank commander Major General Avi Bluth published an order banning Tal Yinon Dardik from all of the occupied territory with the exception of his settlement where he will be required to report to police twice daily. The army put Dardik in administrative detention, which it can do without charges or trials, but which is almost only used for Palestinian detainees. The case took on a political dimension when Israel Katz, defence minister in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s cabinet, visited Dardik and criticised his detention. Settlers have been attacking Palestinians on a nearly daily basis in the West Bank since the massive October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas, which is based in the separate Gaza Strip, subsequently devastated by an Israeli retaliatory offensive. — AFP



TYPHOON DOLPHIN FLOODS CENTRAL CHINA

BEIJING: Typhoon Dolphin churned deeper inland to the central Chinese province of Hubei on Tuesday, flooding streets, forcing the closure of tourist areas and halting construction projects, as forecasters warned of extreme rainfall across a broad swathe of the country. Parts of Beijing, including its Shunyi district, northeast of the main financial area, also saw severe flooding by Tuesday evening with rains forecast to intensify overnight. The strongest typhoon to hit China this year, Dolphin packed an unusually resilient storm system that travelled nearly 6,000 km before making landfall over the weekend, drenching the country’s eastern coast and bringing with it a sprawling cloud field. Downgraded to a tropical depression on Tuesday afternoon, the storm’s reach extended as far as Beijing, more than 1,000 km north of Hubei. The National Meteorological Centre renewed an orange alert for heavy rain, the second-highest warning level, with Hubei expected to receive as much as 250 mm of rain in a 24-hour period. Hubei, a major auto and high-tech electronics manufacturing hub and home to more than 58 million people, was just recovering from two rare tornadoes last month in the wake of Typhoon Maysak, which killed at least 11 people. — Reuters

FASTEST-SPREADING DISEASE

Ebola deaths surpass 2,000 in DR Congo



Democratic Republic of Congo said on Tuesday that confirmed Ebola deaths had reached 2,011, the latest grim milestone in what health officials have described as the fastest-spreading outbreak on record. The latest data from Congo’s public health institute also reported 4,381 confirmed cases across five provinces. The current outbreak, Congo’s 17th, is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, for which there are no approved vaccines or treatments. — Reuters

ALLEGED DEATH THREAT

Philippine VP Duterte hit with criminal charge



Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte was hit with a criminal charge on Tuesday over an alleged death threat against the country’s president, a key part of the case against her at her ongoing Senate impeachment trial. The charge of “grave threats” was filed in a Quezon City courtroom, Department of Justice spokesman Polo Martinez said. Lawyers for Duterte on Tuesday argued the case could not be pursued while she was being impeached. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Hungary's newly elected President Andras Baka delivers a speech after taking his oath of office at the parliament in Budapest. — Reuters

Hungary parliament approves Andras Baka as president

BUDAPEST: Hungarian lawmakers on Tuesday approved former supreme court chief Andras Baka, a critic of Viktor Orban who was fired during the ex-premier's time in power, as the country's next head of state. The post became vacant following the contested removal last month of the previous president, an Orban ally, as pro-EU conservative Prime Minister Peter Magyar pushes to loosen his predecessor's lingering hold over state institutions.

Parliament, where the ruling Tisza party holds a two-thirds majority, elected Baka — who served 17 years as a judge on the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) — with 140 votes in favour and six votes against. Tisza on Saturday nominated Baka, 73, for the largely ceremonial role. Magyar said Baka's life served "as an example of commitment to the democratic rule of law and constitutional principles" as the central European country needs to be "guided back onto the path of the rule of law and constitutional governance".

Orban's Fidesz party, along with its ally KDNP, boycotted the parliamentary vote, arguing Sulyok's ouster was "tyrannical" and "illegitimate". Baka has not been critical of Sulyok's removal, despite the fact he was terminated with a similar legislative act. — AFP

HEAT BECOMING FREQUENT & INTENSE



Periods of extreme heat are becoming more frequent, intense and longer-lasting as climate change warms the planet, the UN weather agency said. Parts of Europe are enduring their fifth heatwave of a summer marked by drought, wildfires and record-breaking temperatures. "Extreme heat is becoming more frequent, more intense, it's lasting longer, and covering much wider areas than in the cooler climates of the past," John Kennedy, the World Meteorological Organization's head of climate information, said. Kennedy said the current pattern of heat across Europe, the world's fastest-warming continent, reflected the interaction between a persistent pattern of high-pressure systems across the Northern Hemisphere and a warmer climate. — Reuters

Indonesia races to contain fires as haze spreads across the region

JAKARTA: Indonesia is stepping up efforts to contain forest and land fires across six priority provinces, deploying cloud-seeding aircraft to induce rain as it works to slow the haze now spreading across the region, officials said.

Indonesia is facing a longer and more severe dry season this year as El Nino intensifies, raising the risk of drought, forest fires and air pollution.

Forestry Ministry data showed that 107,465 hectares of land were hit by fires from January to June, a 110 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2023, when El Nino last affected Indonesia. "We are on alert because the weather conditions really make it possible for these fires to become larger," chief security minister Djamari Chaniago told reporters on Monday.

He said there were signs that El Nino had already reached its most intense level in Indonesia. El Nino and the dry season do not themselves cause fires but "act as catalysts" allowing them to spread more widely, Indonesia's disaster mitigation

Around 43 helicopters and 15 fixed-wing aircraft have been deployed to put out the fires. Authorities have also conducted cloud seeding operations, shooting salt flares to stimulate rainfall, but the operations are challenging because of the scarcity of rain clouds



A drone view shows boats docked at the Musi river as smog covers it due to recent wildfires in Palembang, South Sumatra province, Indonesia. — Reuters

agency chief Suharyanto said on Tuesday. However, Dana Prima Tarigan of Indonesian environmental group WALHI said that rapid deforestation to make way for palm oil plantations and mines has also contributed to the problem, leaving

the land dry and more vulnerable to fires. The government has identified the six priority provinces as Riau, Jambi and South Sumatra on Sumatra island, as well as West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan on Borneo island,

though fires have also struck elsewhere, including on the islands of Java, Papua, and Nusa Tenggara.

Djamari said 43 helicopters and 15 fixed-wing aircraft have been deployed to put out the fires. Authorities have also conducted cloud seeding operations, shooting salt flares to stimulate rainfall, but Djamari said the operations are challenging because of the scarcity of rain clouds.

"That is why we closely monitor even small changes in the weather. Whenever something is likely to produce rain clouds, we immediately carry (cloud seeding operations) out," he said. Pollution from the fires is a growing concern. In Pontianak, capital of West Kalimantan, all classes have been moved online to protect students from hazardous smog, the city's mayor said.

11 areas in Malaysia's Sarawak state, which shares a border with Indonesia on Borneo island, also recorded unhealthy air quality levels, according to Malaysia's environmental department. — Reuters

WHO DEFENDS IMMUNISATION AFTER TRUMP ORDERS FEWER CHILDHOOD SHOTS

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Tuesday defended the science-based process used to determine childhood immunisation schedules after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order aimed at reducing the number of recommended childhood vaccinations in the United States. On Monday, Trump signed an executive order calling for a reduced childhood vaccination schedule of 11 immunisations. Trump said the move would provide US children

with "gold-standard" protection and align the United States more closely with other developed countries that recommend fewer shots.

Vaccine experts say that other developed countries that may recommend fewer shots face different disease risks and have different healthcare systems. The order advances a long-standing objective of US Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr, who has questioned vaccine safety and promoted claims linking vaccines to autism even

though scientific studies and public health authorities have found no evidence of a link.

WHO spokesperson Tarik Jašarević told a press briefing in Geneva that vaccination recommendations were based on more than 60 years of research by WHO, national authorities and independent expert groups.

Jašarević said countries typically relied on national immunisation technical advisory groups made up of multidisciplinary expert. — Reuters

Colombia scrambles to find survivors as quake toll rises



Emergency personnel work at the site of a damaged building following an earthquake, in Pereira, Colombia. — Reuters

from the second floor of their homes," Quibdo resident and law student Wilmer Cuesta recalled. Dentist Julian Pena said he "ran outside carrying nothing" after feeling strong tremors and found hundreds doing the same. "People were praying in the street. It was overwhelming," he said. "There are many buildings with gaps, with cracks. There are others that have completely collapsed."

The quake was felt across Colombia, including the capital Bogota, where crowds rushed out into the street in their pajamas. At a depth of 110 kilometres (68 miles), the quake was also felt in neighbouring Ecuador and Panama. Experts at the US Geological Survey said the quake was likely caused by movement along a deep fault within the Nazca tectonic plate.

Hospitals in five Colombian

cities were put on red alert on Monday and a night-time curfew was declared in Cali, according to local authorities. At least six local airports suspended operations, the civil aeronautics agency said. Colombian pop megastar Shakira led the calls for unity.

"All my strength and love to my homeland. Let's hold each other tight," she said.

In Cali, Colombia's third-largest city, volunteers quickly went to work with picks, basic tools and their hands to try to find survivors. "Getting here was unbelievable. It felt like the end of the world — cars and motorcycles driving the wrong way, everyone searching for their loved ones," said volunteer rescue worker Nelson Moreno. "What we need now are flashlights and goggles" to keep working through the night, he said.

Rescuers formed human chains to remove bricks and masonry, stopping every few minutes to listen for signs of life from those trapped below. "We are trying to get everyone out alive," said Andres Felipe Mejia, another volunteer. "A lot of people have come, with supplies, with food, helping the firefighters, helping the people," he said.

Messages of support came in from countries across the region and the world. Pope Leo XIV is "deeply saddened" and "raises his prayers to the Lord for the prompt recovery of those affected by this tragedy," the Vatican said on Tuesday.

In addition, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States was "closely monitoring" the situation and "stands ready to support the people of Colombia." — AFP

OPINION

Are we actually living the good life?



HYESHA
BARRETT

The writer is a
Master Life Coach
and Positive Parent
Specialist

THIS WEEK, our beloved Oman has climbed to third place globally in Numbeo's Mid-Year 2026 Quality of Life index, while retaining its position at the top in Asia and the Arab world. The index considers factors including safety, purchasing power, healthcare, housing affordability, pollution, commuting and climate. By many of the measures that determine how comfortably people can live, Oman is doing remarkably well.

Yet, perhaps a ranking about quality of life also gives us an opportunity to ask a more personal question. If we are fortunate enough to live somewhere considered one of the best places in the world, are we actually experiencing the life available to us?

There is an important difference between quality of life and quality of living. One can be measured through statistics, infrastructure, safety and opportunity.

The other is much harder to quantify. It is measured in whether we have time for the people sitting beside us, whether our homes feel peaceful rather than simply beautiful, whether our success leaves room for enjoyment, and whether we can reach the end of an ordinary day feeling that we were actually present for it.

We have become very good at improving the conditions around our lives, while sometimes neglecting the experience within them. We work towards the next promotion, the bigger house, the better school, the next holiday and the future version of life where everything will finally settle down.

Parents rush because they want to give their children more. Professionals work longer because they want to create security. We keep achieving, in the hope that somewhere on the other side of achievement, we will finally have permission to enjoy ourselves.

The strange part is that life rarely announces when we have arrived. A country can offer safe streets, but it cannot make us feel grateful while walking them. It can shorten our commute, but it cannot stop us from rushing through the evening once we get home. It can give us mountains, beaches, wadis and extraordinary natural beauty, but it cannot make us notice them. It can create opportunities for families to thrive; however, the conversations around the dinner table, the patience we offer one another and the memories created inside our homes remain entirely ours to build.

Perhaps that is what makes this ranking more meaningful than simply another statistic.

There is something wonderful about living in Oman, recognised for its quality of life. Perhaps the greatest way to honour that privilege, however, is not simply to live here, but to become more conscious of how we are living

It is a reminder of what is already here. Oman offers something increasingly precious in a noisy, hurried world: space, safety, community, nature and a culture where family and connection still matter deeply. The challenge is not simply protecting those qualities nationally. It is protecting them personally.

Maybe the next measure of a successful life should not only be how much we have accumulated, achieved or provided. Perhaps we should also ask how often we laughed this week, whether our children experienced our attention rather than merely our provision, whether the people we love know it without having to assume it, and whether there was a part of the day when we were not mentally racing towards the next one.

There is something wonderful about living in a country recognised for its quality of life. We should be proud of it. Perhaps the greatest way to honour that privilege, however, is not simply to live here, but to become more conscious of how we are living.

A good life is not only one the world can measure. It is one we are present enough to feel. After all, there is little point living in one of the best places in the world if we are too busy being busy to notice that the good life may already be happening around us.

5 YEARS INTO POWER, THE TALIBAN GOVT BUILDS DIPLOMACY

ROSIE SCAMMELL

Five years after returning to power, Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have built working relationships with a slate of countries, despite a lack of formal recognition.

Russia remains the only nation to officially recognise the Taliban government, and many Western countries have demanded to see domestic reforms on human rights before considering doing the same. But many states are nevertheless engaging with Afghanistan's leaders — including Britain and European Union members — driven largely by practical considerations.

Beyond the high walls of the foreign ministry in central Kabul stand embassies, rows of travel agencies, and an airline billboard promising: “We’re all connected.” While few Afghans have the means to go abroad, their government “seeks relations with all countries”, according to Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

The authorities’ diplomatic strategy has involved hosting envoys in Kabul — and frequently publishing the photos — including those from China, Japan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Britain.

“The countries of the region and our neighbouring states have particular importance, because our economic ties and interests are closely linked,” Mujahid said last month.

This year, officials from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan gathered in Kabul, as landlocked Central Asia seeks trade routes through Afghanistan to access the sea beyond.

Erica Gaston, who was part of a team mandated by the UN Security Council to identify strategies for addressing the challenges in Afghanistan, said regional nations were “always more pragmatic” in dealing with the Taliban authorities.

“You had much more receptivity among regional member states to say, ‘this is the reality that we have in our region and engagement is inevitable,’” said Gaston, who heads the Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace Programme at the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research. As well as coordinating on security, Taliban officials have been touting cross-border infrastructure projects to boost the country’s fragile economy while Afghans are hit hard by international aid cuts.

Seeing potential in untapped natural resources, the government has expanded the mining sector, attracting firms from neighbouring China and elsewhere. But foreign funds have been scarce as investors remain wary of the Taliban government’s limited official recognition, with rumours that Iran would follow Russia falling flat. — AFP

Summer reading boosts critical thinking, creativity

SUMMER VACATION provides children with valuable opportunities for recreation, exploration, and personal development. However, the absence of structured educational activities during this period has been associated with declines in academic achievement, a phenomenon widely known as summer learning loss.

Research has consistently shown that differences in learning outcomes between the school year and the summer months contribute to educational stratification and reflect the varying influences of schools, families, and communities on children's academic development.

During the academic year, children benefit from the combined support of home, school, and community environments, whereas summer learning is primarily shaped by family and community resources.

This relationship was first highlighted by Heyns (1978) in Summer Learning, who demonstrated that academic achievement gaps associated with family background increase more substantially during the summer months than during the school year, a finding that was later confirmed by Alexander et al. (2007).

Among the various interventions designed to address summer learning loss, summer reading programmes have emerged as one of the most effective approaches. By encouraging sustained engagement with books, these programmes not only preserve and enhance literacy skills, but also promote critical thinking, creativity, vocabulary development, and independent learning.

Given the growing emphasis on developing 21st-century competencies, understanding the educational value of summer reading has become increasingly important.

In their book Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/Poor Reading



Children who participate in voluntary summer reading activities maintain or even improve their academic achievement, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.



DR ZAINAB
AL AJMI
zeinbf@moe.om

The writer is with
the Ministry of
Education

During the summer vacation, reading serves as an essential educational bridge that sustains learning, promotes literacy development, and helps prevent skill deterioration

Achievement Gap, Allington and McGill-Franzen (2012) argue that, although yearly achievement scores are important indicators of academic success, fostering student ownership of reading is essential for improving literacy during the summer months.

Studies have consistently demonstrated that children who participate in voluntary summer reading activities maintain or even improve their academic achievement, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Consequently, educators and policymakers increasingly emphasise organised summer reading programmes as an important component of educational enrichment. Furthermore, opportunities for extensive self-selected reading provide a strong foundation for students’ identity development and foster intrinsic motivation to read.

Unlike passive forms of entertainment, reading requires active cognitive engagement, imagination, interpretation, and reflection. During the summer vacation, when formal classroom

instruction is suspended, reading serves as an essential educational bridge that sustains learning, promotes literacy development, and helps prevent skill deterioration.

Whether achieved through participation in high-quality summer reading programmes, consistent access to books, or a combination of both, summer learning supports year-over-year reading growth by preventing the erosion of skills acquired during the school year.

It also promotes reading stamina and confidence, which are developed through sustained engagement with extended texts, and enhances knowledge acquisition and vocabulary development, which are fostered primarily through extensive and diverse reading rather than through isolated skill practice.

In conclusion, summer learning experiences play a decisive role in shaping children's reading trajectories, often exerting a greater influence on long-term reading development than learning that occurs during the academic year (Scholastic Research & Validation, 2026).

Consequently, summer reading represents a valuable educational investment that extends learning beyond the classroom and contributes significantly to children's cognitive and academic development.

Furthermore, well-designed summer reading programmes, supported through collaboration among schools, libraries, and families, have been shown to mitigate summer learning loss, sustain academic progress, and cultivate lifelong reading habits.

As a result, children who participate in such programmes are better equipped with the literacy, critical thinking, and creative thinking skills needed to succeed in an increasingly knowledge-based society.

Solar eclipse sparks scramble for protective glasses



ROBIN BJALON

The writer is based in Madrid and currently covers Spanish news for AFP, with a focus on energy, economics, as well as diplomacy and politics

THE SCRAMBLE for protective glasses has reached fever pitch across Europe ahead of Wednesday’s rare total solar eclipse, as pharmacies, opticians and other shops struggle to keep them in stock. In Spain, where parts of the country will be in the path of totality, finding certified protective glasses has become increasingly difficult, with many distribution points reporting they have run out.

A notice posted at the entrance of Madrid’s National Museum of Natural Sciences said its supply of protective glasses was exhausted. The museum was among 30 science institutions across the country taking part in a campaign organised by the government to distribute two million pairs of glasses for free.

Some pharmacies in central Madrid still had supplies on Tuesday, generally selling certified glasses for safely viewing the Sun for between three and four euros (\$4.60) a pair.

But Carles Sisquella, who runs an optical shop in Barcelona, said his store had been out of stock for 10 days.

“There are now a lot of people who obviously won’t be able to get glasses,” he said.

Doctors warn that looking directly at the Sun during a solar eclipse can damage the retina, potentially harming the cells responsible for sharp central vision.

“I’ve been asking around since Friday, but they’re nowhere to be found,” a woman named Mabel said in Barcelona after another

fruitless search.

The rush is being repeated across Europe. In Brussels, where about 90 per cent of the Sun will be covered by the Moon, people were also racing to find glasses.

With a seeming majority of opticians and pharmacists out of stock, pastry chef Arno Dossogne, 37, struck gold at a small opticians’ store that received a last-minute shipment Monday afternoon.

“I got some for me, my boyfriend and a couple of friends whose online order got cancelled!” he said.

“It was this or nothing. You can’t mess around, or you’ll burn your eyes.”

The opticians’ manager Fouad Mehdaoui said he acted on a tip from his pharmacist wife, placing large orders of glasses early on, but even then was outrun by demand and had to order more.

“Two boxes just came in with 100 pairs in total – they were gone in 30 minutes,” he said as a stream of eclipse enthusiasts filed into the store, by chance or word of mouth, while an employee fielded non-stop phone enquiries.

In France, where the eclipse will be partial, some pharmacies have been stripped of their supplies while others were still receiving shipments - and charging significantly more.

Customers lined up outside La Pharmacie du Soleil in Paris on Monday afternoon to buy glasses for 5.95 euros a pair, only to be disappointed when staff displayed an empty

Some pharmacies in central Madrid still had supplies on Tuesday, generally selling certified glasses for safely viewing the Sun for between three and four euros a pair

box. The pharmacist asked customers to check back later, saying another shipment of 500 pairs was expected that evening.

“Come back in an hour or tomorrow morning,” he told customers. “It’s pure madness.”

A pharmacy employee said the supplier had been so overwhelmed by orders that it could no longer make deliveries itself, forcing it to ship the glasses by Uber.

Philippe Besset, president of France’s Federation of Pharmaceutical Trade Unions, said demand had been far greater than expected.

A few months ago, suppliers had offered pharmacies around 200 pairs each, enough to equip about four million people, he said.

“But obviously more people want to watch the eclipse,” he said.

His pharmacy sold its entire order of 200 pairs within a week.

In Portugal, the Club da Visao network of more than 600 opticians had been offering certified glasses free of charge, limited to one pair per person.

Despite several restocks, supplies had run out at many locations.

The shortage has prompted eye specialists to warn people against buying uncertified alternatives.

In Spain, authorities on Monday withdrew six models from the market because of the risk of eye injuries.

FRENCH BUYERS RETHINK HOUSING CHOICES AFTER HEATWAVES

GUILLAUME BONNET AND JULIETTE VILROBE

After multiple severe heatwaves in a single summer, French residents are increasingly factoring high temperatures into their home hunts, realtors say, bumping up features such as shutters, air conditioning and indirect sunlight on their priority lists.

In Paris in particular this summer, the steep temperatures turned apartments directly beneath the zinc-covered roofs of iconic Haussmann-era buildings into virtual ovens.

“On the top floor of a Haussmann-style building, the heat indoors can become truly unbearable,” said Joseph Denke, an estate agent with FredeLion in Paris. He has noted a shift in buyers’ priorities in recent months, including being wary of south-facing windows.

The heat risk in a studio apartment under the eaves with no through air – windows on just one side, for example – was a negative point for Camille Couturier during a viewing with Denke.

“We’re seeing that heatwaves are happening in June, or even May,” the 30-year-old said.

For his future flat, he is thinking “at least 10 to 15 years ahead” and is concerned about whether he will be able to “live comfortably in it” or end up “having to flee like everyone else because it’s too hot”. According to a study by Pouget Consultants and IGNES, one in two homes in France is effectively a heat trap.

Among 1,750 users of the classified ads platform Leboncoin surveyed in June, eight out of 10 said they had experienced discomfort during periods of extreme heat, with a quarter saying they would consider moving if heatwaves became more intense.

Experts have warned that due to climate change, this is to be expected. France’s national weather agency said on Monday as France braced for its fifth heatwave of the season that “future summers will generally be hotter than those experienced to date”.

For Leboncoin’s marketing director Sophie Bourg, heatwaves are now “firmly recognised as a structural factor in housing choices” in France.

“Coolness and summer comfort have become a property criterion in their own right,” she said.

Orientation, floor level, swimming pools, air conditioning, shutters, the ability to create through-draughts, outdoor space, shaded terraces and even the presence of trees in a neighbourhood are now among the issues increasingly raised by buyers or tenants.

“Buyers are no longer looking only at the property itself, but at how liveable it is,” said Yann Jehanno, president of the Laforet estate agency network. “They are asking estate agents very practical questions about temperatures during the last heatwave, whether it is possible to ventilate the home at night and whether people sleep well in the bedrooms,” he said. — AFP

Migration, history and politics collide in Ceuta



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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



Migrants wait to receive drinking water in the Spanish North African enclave of Ceuta last Friday. — AFP

who believe they have little prospect of building the future they want at home, the possibility of reaching Europe can become worth an extraordinary level of risk. Reports from Ceuta have documented migrants hoping simply to find employment and eventually reach mainland Spain.

That desperation should concern Morocco as much as Spain. When thousands of citizens are prepared to swim through dangerous waters because they believe life will be better on the other side of a border, migration becomes more than an immigration issue. It becomes an indication of social and economic dissatisfaction.

Politically, the crisis also places the relationship between Morocco and Spain under renewed pressure. This is not the first time Ceuta has been at the centre of diplomatic tensions. In May 2021, around 9,000 people entered the territory after Moroccan border controls were temporarily relaxed during a dispute with Madrid over Western Sahara.

The European Parliament subsequently accused Moroccan authorities of using migration controls, including the movement of minors, as political pressure against Spain.

Spanish intelligence reportedly considers this latest movement largely spontaneous and driven by

social media, misinformation and economic frustration. Nevertheless, the crisis demonstrates how dependent Spain remains on Moroccan cooperation to control one of the EU’s most sensitive external borders. That dependence also concerns the European Union.

Ceuta may be Spanish territory, but people entering it are effectively attempting to reach the EU. This means migration management cannot remain solely a Spanish-Moroccan issue.

EU Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Magnus Brunner has already argued that the EU should use its political leverage, including trade and visa policy, to receive stronger cooperation from Morocco.

The crisis has even created tensions within Europe itself. Italy introduced temporary controls on travellers arriving from Spain following the Ceuta surge, while Spain responded with checks on arrivals from Italy. The dispute has challenged the principle of passport-free movement at the heart of the Schengen system and demonstrated how quickly migration at Europe’s external borders can create political consequences inside the bloc.

Most of those who crossed have now returned or been returned to Morocco, although some migrants remain in Ceuta hoping eventually to reach mainland Spain.

SPORTS

BELFASTWIN



AFGHANS SEAL 2027 WC BERTH, WINDIES TO GO THROUGH QUALIFIERS AGAIN

BELFAST: Afghanistan secured automatic qualification for the 2027 World Cup with a win over Ireland on Monday, leaving twice champions West Indies to go through qualifiers for the third successive edition of the 50-overs tournament.

The top eight teams in the one-day rankings on September 30, excluding co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe, qualify directly for the event.

Afghanistan's win in Belfast ensured they will finish among those teams, joining Australia, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England and Bangladesh.

The West Indies are ranked 10th and cannot make up enough ground to qualify directly despite having two ODIs against India left to play before the cut-off date.

The Caribbean side failed to seal an automatic spot at the 2023 edition and lost in the qualifiers, resulting in their absence from a men's 50-overs World Cup for the first time.

They successfully negotiated the qualifiers to play at the 2019 edition.

Under the new format for 2027, the winner of the qualifier will advance directly to the second stage of the World Cup, while the teams placing second, third and fourth will play in the first round known as the Super Series.

The 2027 event will be played in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The full tournament schedule has yet to be released. — Reuters

Oman to face Australia, Japan and Bahrain

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

OMAN'S men's national volleyball team have been drawn in a challenging Pool A alongside hosts Japan, Australia and Bahrain for the 2026 AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship, which will be held in Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan, from September 4 to 13.

The draw places Oman against three experienced sides in what promises to be one of the most competitive pools of the tournament. Japan will enter as hosts and one of Asia's leading volleyball nations, while Australia bring extensive continental and international experience. Bahrain, meanwhile, have established themselves as a strong force in Asian and Gulf volleyball.

Oman head into the continental championship with renewed confidence following a strong run of results, highlighted by their historic triumph at the second West Asia Volleyball Association (Wava) Men's Volleyball Championship Muscat 2026.

The national side claimed the West Asian crown after defeating defending champions Qatar in straight sets in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Oman produced an impressive performance to win 25-19, 25-15 and 25-23, securing the regional title for the first time.

The achievement provided another indication of the progress made by the national team under Tunisian head coach Nizar al Shukaili, with the players showing greater consistency, tactical discipline and composure in high-pressure matches.

Oman will now look to carry that momentum into Japan, where the level of competition will rise considerably. Matches against Japan, Australia and Bahrain will provide a significant test of the team's ability to compete with some of the continent's established sides.

The technical staff are expected to use the coming weeks to sharpen the team's technical and tactical preparation, while continuing to strengthen coordination among the players ahead of the opening match.

Pool B consists of Iran, China, India and



Oman players in action against Qatar during the final of the West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship, which the hosts won in straight sets.



Oman head coach Nizar al Shukaili

New Zealand, while Pool C features Qatar, South Korea, Chinese Taipei and Thailand, completing the 12-team field.

The championship also carries major international significance. According to the Asian Volleyball Confederation, the

tournament winners will secure direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, while the top three teams will earn places at the 2027 FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship.

For Oman, the tournament represents another important step in the team's development after a series of regional and continental appearances. Recent performances have demonstrated an increased ability to compete in demanding matches, including recovering from difficult situations and maintaining composure during decisive stages.

The West Asian title has further raised expectations, but the challenge in Japan will be considerably greater. Facing the hosts as well as Australia and Bahrain from the preliminary stage will require Oman to maintain a high level throughout each match, with serving, blocking, reception and concentration likely to prove decisive.

Oman will be aiming to build on the confidence generated by their regional success and translate their recent progress into a stronger presence on the continental stage, as the national team seeks to continue the upward trajectory of Omani volleyball.

OOC holds Elite Athletes Forum to gear up for Asian Games

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), represented by Oman Athletes Commission (OAC), organised the Elite Athletes Forum for athletes taking part in the 20th Asian Games (Aichi-Nagoya 2026). The forum was held on Tuesday at the IntercityHotel Al Khuwair, with the participation of athletes and the administrative and technical staff of the national teams that will represent the Sultanate of Oman at the Games.

The forum forms part of OOC efforts to enhance the readiness of athletes competing at the Asian Games and to equip them with the knowledge and information needed to support their participation and ensure they represent Oman in the best possible manner, while also strengthening direct communication between the athletes, the OAC and the relevant stakeholders.

Oman will compete at the Games with 10 national teams, in athletics,



taekwondo, shooting, hockey, golf, fencing, cricket, weightlifting, sailing and beach volleyball.

The forum covered a range of awareness and knowledge-based themes addressing the sporting, administrative, health, psychological and rights-related aspects of athletes' participation in major sporting events. These included raising athletes' awareness of their rights and duties in line with the principles of the Olympic Movement, promoting a culture of athlete safeguarding and the provision of a safe sporting environment, raising awareness

of anti-doping and compliance with the relevant international rules and regulations, as well as strengthening psychological preparedness and the management of the pressures associated with major competitions.

The forum also sought to familiarise athletes with administrative procedures, travel arrangements and the official representation of the Sultanate of Oman, and to clarify roles and responsibilities and raise levels of readiness before and during the Games.

The programme featured a

variety of presentations and awareness and discussion sessions addressing a number of themes related to athletes' readiness for the Asian Games. Wafa bint Saif al Samri, member of the OAC, delivered an introductory presentation on the commission, its mandate and remit, and its role in communicating with athletes and following up on matters concerning them.

Shuaib bin Mohammed al Zadjali, certified Doping Control Officer and member and rapporteur of the Oman Anti-Doping Committee, presented an

awareness session on anti-doping, addressing the importance of complying with international anti-doping rules and regulations and raising athletes' awareness of their responsibilities in safeguarding the integrity of sporting competition.

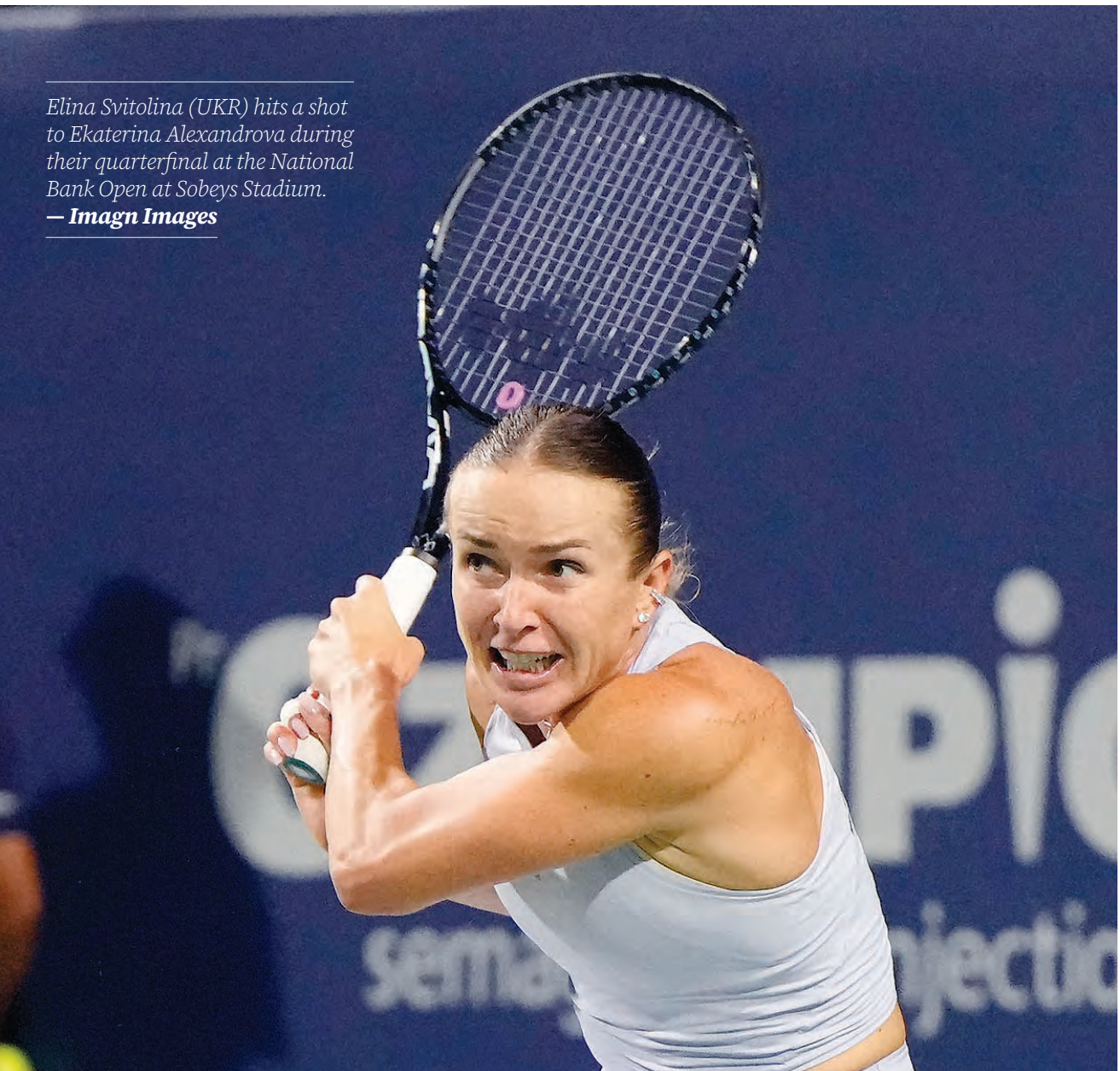
Salim bin Mohammed al Rawahi, OOC Legal Researcher, addressed the theme of safeguarding in sport, reviewing its concept, the importance of awareness of the relevant procedures, and the channels available for dealing with the various cases and practices that may affect the safety of all those concerned with safeguarding in sport.

Dr Afrah bint Hamoud al Jabri, member of Oman Sports Medicine Committee, delivered a session on nutrition and athletes' mental health, highlighting the importance of proper nutrition in supporting athletic performance, alongside the psychological aspects associated with competition, stress management and coping with the demands of participating in major championships.

SWIATEK DOMINATES SHNAIDER TO SET UP TORONTO SEMIFINAL WITH SVITOLINA



Iga Swiatek (POL) plays a shot against Diana Shnaider during their quarterfinal at Sobeys Stadium. — **Imagn Images**



Elina Svitolina (UKR) hits a shot to Ekaterina Alexandrova during their quarterfinal at the National Bank Open at Sobeys Stadium. — **Imagn Images**

FORMER

WORLD number one Iga Swiatek cruised into the Toronto Masters semifinals on Monday to set up a clash with Elina Svitolina who fought back from a set down to reach the last four. Poland's Swiatek, a six-time Grand Slam champion, took just 64 minutes to sweep past Russia's Diana Shnaider 6-2, 6-1. Ukraine's Svitolina, the ninth seed, beat Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova 3-6, 6-0, 6-3. Swiatek reached just her second WTA semifinal this year after Rome and is seeking her first final appearance since winning the Korea Open almost a year ago in Seoul. "From the beginning I went for it. I felt like I could dominate," Swiatek said after dropping just three points on her first serve.

"I was quite happy with the way I played. It was a tricky match with the wind. "I thought I needed to adjust to that. I just wanted to be more solid," added the 25-year-old world number eight. Svitolina won eight consecutive games after losing the first set on the way to dispatching Alexandrova in 93 minutes. Swiatek leads Svitolina 4-3 in their WTA career rivalry, but lost both their meetings this year. "I'm gonna talk with my team to adjust a little bit for Iga's game," said Svitolina. "Of course she's a great champion. She plays really well this tournament. I have to bring my best." Swiatek established a 5-2 lead in the first set when she broke Shnaider a second time, courtesy of the Russian netting a backhand, and served out to take it in 31 minutes. The Pole broke for a 2-1 lead

in the second when Shnaider netted. A forehand winner gave Swiatek a 4-1 lead and a third break sealed victory. Svitolina had more of a battle after sending a backhand long on serve to drop an evenly matched first set. It fired up the Ukrainian who reeled off four breaks to blank Alexandrova in the second set and take a 2-0 lead in the third. Svitolina served for the match in the eighth game of the final set only for a double fault to allow Alexandrova a lifeline. But a pumped-up Svitolina roared back, broke to love and finished the match with a searing return winner. "Very pleased with my performance. With the fighting spirit," said Svitolina. "She was playing really well in the first set. I had to really step into like a fighting mode." — **AFP**

Uefa, Concacaf and AFC renew attacks as Trump backs Infantino

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Monday it would be "a terrible mistake" to replace Gianni Infantino, the embattled Fifa president who tried, and failed, to sell off part of the World Cup to private investors. Infantino came under renewed fire in an open letter signed by three confederations — Europe's Uefa, North and Central America's Concacaf and Asia's AFC — accusing the world football boss of breaking trust "through deception". But Trump backed Infantino, who awarded the US president a 'Fifa Peace Prize' at the World Cup draw ceremony last year. "Fifa would be making a terrible mistake if, for any reason, they even considered replacing President Gianni Infantino," Trump posted on Truth Social. Trump called Infantino "fantastic" and said he "presided over the most successful World Cup, by four times, ever presented".

"If he is gone, it will never be as successful or profitable again!" added Trump, who attended the World Cup final with Infantino last month. Trump's backing of Infantino is at odds with US Soccer, who joined the voices lining up against the Fifa president. Infantino launched, and then withdrew in the face of scathing criticism, a plan to bring private investment into Fifa competitions, including World Cups. Fifa hit back on Saturday at efforts "to undermine" football's governing body and Infantino. However, Monday's joint letter from Uefa, Concacaf and the AFC retorted: "Leadership in football is not a possession. It is not about holding — or demanding — power to be held. "When trust is broken through deception, when an individual places himself above the collective that entrusted him with authority, that duty has been abandoned."



Fifa president Gianni Infantino waves on arrival for the swearing-in ceremony of Colombia's new President Abelardo de la Espriella at Universidad Santiago de Cali in Cali, Colombia on August 7. — **AFP**

UEFA BOYCOTT THREAT Concacaf president Victor Montagliani is viewed as a potential challenger to Infantino, who will be up for re-election for a fourth and final term at the Fifa Congress in March, 2027. Candidates have to be declared by November 18. Infantino had looked certain to be unopposed for a fourth term after overseeing a successful World Cup in

the United States, Mexico and Canada until his plans were revealed. The 56-year-old Swiss, who has been in the seat for 10 years, has received the backing of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) while South American governing body Conmebol is largely supportive. Individual member associations, not confederations, vote in the Fifa election, Infantino

has received support from Concacaf's Mexico and two AFC members — Kuwait and 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar, where he has a house. **'SHABBY, BACKROOM DEAL'** Uefa's threat to boycott World Cups if the private investment plan went ahead proved pivotal in Infantino withdrawing his sell-off plan. Uefa had called it "a shabby, opaque, backroom deal" and lashed out at Infantino again on Monday for a "failure of judgment". After the furore, Infantino received "full support" of senior Fifa directors in an emergency meeting in Morocco last week, but the three confederations said that was meaningless. The recent meeting, where "a select number of members of the Fifa Management Committee" were present, they said, "represents a continuation of the very pattern of conduct that brought us to this moment". "It is not the conduct of a custodian of the game, but of

one who believes the game is answerable to him." Infantino had been basking in the afterglow of the largest ever World Cup involving 48 teams until his plans divided the sport. "The growth over the past decade has been real. But that progress was never the work of one individual," declared the letter. "It was the product of Fifa, the Confederations, the Member Associations, and the thousands of people who dedicate their lives to the game. "The expanded tournaments... were shared achievements, agreed together, delivered together." Under Infantino's leadership "there is silence where there should be accountability, distance where there should be openness", they said. "That is why we have taken this stance: not lightly and not alone, but together, and out of duty to the game we serve. "Football's strength has always been its unity." — **AFP**

SPORTS

SENSATIONAL

Ingebrigtsen

CLAIMS SEVENTH GOLD

Schilder clinches third straight win in women’s shot put as Fabbri defends men’s title; Hunt storms to women’s 100m gold; Warholm among Norwegian quartet that won 4x400m mixed relay at European Athletics

JAKOB INGEBRIGTSEN sealed a sensational comeback from achilles tendon surgery to win a record-extending seventh European championship gold in Birmingham on Monday.

As the Norwegian produced a devastating trademark finish for gold in the 5,000m, it was hard to believe that it was the 25-year-old’s first competitive race in 324 days.

His last outing in anger was a 10th placed finish in the 10,000m at last year’s Tokyo world champs.

Back to his barn-storming best after surgery, Ingebrigtsen did not disappoint in Birmingham, delivering a true masterclass in measured middle-distance running.

He timed 13min 15.29sec for victory to further cement his place as the most successful male athlete in European history. He is unbeaten at the Euros since taking a golden 1,500/5,000m double as a fresh-faced teenager back in Berlin in 2018.

Germany’s Florian Bremm took silver and France’s Etienne Daguinos bronze in Birmingham, but the race was all about the returning Ingebrigtsen.

“Coming from the lowest of lows to be European champion again means the world to me. Not even I believed it could happen coming here,” Ingebrigtsen said.

“I am starting to feel more like myself. I was hoping my fitness would be okay. Before this race I worked on my breathing and really tried to focus on running smooth.”

The Norwegian added: “I doubted myself every day coming in to this and every minute leading up to the last lap today, but I’m always hoping to do my best.”

Bronze medallist Daguinos said Ingebrigtsen was “a legend of our sport. We knew if he’s here tonight it was because he is good shape”.

There was reason for late local cheer at the Alexander Stadium as Amy Hunt made the most of her rich vein of form for victory in the women’s 100m in 11.00sec.

Poland’s Ewa Swoboda took silver and Belgium’s Delphine Nkansa bronze as Hunt’s teammate and defending champion Dina Asher-Smith came in fifth.

SCHILDER WINS THIRD TITLE
A dominant Jessica Schilder of the Netherlands claimed a third successive victory in the women’s shot put.

Jakob Ingebrigtsen timed 13min 15.29sec for victory to further cement his place as the most successful male athlete in European history. He is unbeaten at the Euros since taking a golden 1,500/5,000m double as a fresh-faced teenager back in Berlin in 2018.



Norway’s Jakob Ingebrigtsen celebrates after winning the gold medal in the men’s 5000m final at the European Athletics Championships at the Alexander Stadium, Birmingham, Britain. — Reuters

Schilder managed a best of 20.73 metres with her last effort in a Dutch one-two as teammate Jorinde van Klinken took silver with a personal best of 19.64m.

Germany’s Olympic champion Yemisi Mabry, formerly Ogunleye, rounded out the podium with 19.50m in the first medal event of the August 10-16 championships.

“I will never get tired of this feeling, I will never get bored of winning these medals,” said Schilder.

“I shouldn’t be saying this, maybe, but this was the easiest (of the three European titles). There was quite a gap with the other competitors.”

Schilder’s victory saw her become the first woman to win this event on three occasions since Nadezhda Chizhova of the Soviet Union did so four times in a row between 1966 and 1974.

There was a similar story in the men’s shot put as Italy’s Leonardo Fabbri defended his title in some style.

Fabbri launched a best of 22.31m in an Italian 1-2 with Zane Weir (21.12), while Sweden’s Victor Petterson claimed bronze (20.86).

There was a first gold of the champs for three-time 400m hurdles champion Karsten Warholm, who was part of the Norwegian quartet that won the 4x400m mixed relay.

Amalie Iuel, Andreas Ofstad Kulseng and fast-finishing Henriette Jaeger clocked a championship record of 3:09.62 for victory ahead of Britain and the Netherlands. — AFP



Gold medallist Netherlands’ Jessica Schilder celebrates with silver medallist Netherlands’ Jorinde van Klinken after winning the women’s shot put final. — Reuters



Gold medallist Great Britain’s Amy Hunt celebrates after winning the women’s 100m. — Reuters

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,466.926

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$89.12
BRENT \$87.6
LIGHT \$82.11



BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The forum reflects the Ministry of Information's commitment to developing innovative approaches to marketing its media products by creating direct engagement between advertisers and media professionals.

MARKETING FORUM HIGHLIGHTS OMAN FM'S COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Commercial Department at the Ministry of Information hosted a marketing forum for Oman FM on Tuesday at the Grand Millennium Muscat, bringing together representatives from advertising agencies, media buyers and corporate partners to showcase the station's commercial offerings and explore new opportunities for collaboration.

The forum featured a presentation by Talal al Shahri, Director of Specialised Radio Stations, who, together with Oman FM's producers and presenters, outlined the station's programming strategy, highlighted its recent achievements and shared its future plans for expanding audience engagement and strengthening its content.

A key part of the forum was the presentation of Oman FM's audience performance indicators, including listenership, reach and engagement metrics. The data provided advertisers and partners with insights into the station's audience profile and demonstrated the effectiveness of its programming in reaching diverse listener segments.

The event also showcased Oman FM's advertising and sponsorship opportunities, highlighting how organisations can use the station's platforms to deliver targeted communication campaigns and build stronger connections with their audiences.

Dr Fatma al Kalbani, Director of the Commercial Department, said the forum reflects the Ministry of Information's commitment to developing innovative approaches to marketing its media products by creating direct engagement between advertisers and media professionals.

be'ah expands landfill capacity by 2.2m tonnes

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

OMAN Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) commissioned some 2.2 million tonnes of new engineered landfill capacity during 2025 and is developing a further 3.4 million tonnes at Thamrait, as waste volumes across its national network continued to climb, according to the company's newly published 2025 Sustainability Report.

Municipal solid waste received rose to 2.88 million tonnes during the year, up from 2.57 million tonnes in 2024, while industrial waste intake more than tripled to 43,216 tonnes from 12,649 tonnes a year earlier, the report's data appendix shows.

The largest completed expansion was at Tahwa Landfill, where a new engineered cell added 1.9 million tonnes of disposal capacity supported by a 5,000-cubic-metre leachate evaporation pond. The project was delivered ahead of schedule and fully commissioned, the report said. At Izz Landfill, the closure of Cells 1 and 2A was combined with a first-phase expansion of Cell 4 that added 300,000 tonnes of capacity, while the closure of Cell 2 at Barka Landfill included the commissioning of a dedicated biogas extraction and collection system. The ongoing Thamrait Landfill Cell 2 development — the largest in the programme at 3.4 million tonnes — incorporates a 10,000-cubic-metre evaporation pond, groundwater monitoring wells and a permanent leak detection system.

The expansion drive builds on a decade-long transformation of the sector that has seen 317 historical dumpsites closed and



The largest completed expansion was at Tahwa Landfill, where a new engineered cell added 1.9 million tonnes of disposal capacity.

Circular economy initiatives featured across special waste streams. Of some 3 million tonnes of construction and demolition waste received, 2 million tonnes were processed through five crushers for reuse as backfilling, sand and aggregate.

35 critical sites rehabilitated, with disposal now concentrated in 11 engineered landfills served by 23 transfer stations.

In industrial waste, the Al Duqm facility received 32,400 tonnes of the national total, with Suhar handling 10,400 tonnes and the recently developed Raysut site 426 tonnes. Around 40,400 tonnes were processed during the year. Construction of Phase 2 of the Industrial Waste Treatment Facility at Suhar, which will add physical-chemical treatment and incineration units, reached 47 per cent overall completion, with engineering 82 per cent advanced. The company's accredited laboratory cut analysis turnaround times from 21 to 14 days and expanded its ISO/IEC 17025-accredited scope by 21 parameters.

The report also detailed progress on the National Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) Facility in Bahja, mandated by the government in September 2024 to centralise

the treatment and disposal of radioactive waste from oil and gas operations. Construction is planned to commence in the third quarter of 2026, with operations targeted by the end of 2028. A symposium on integrated radioactive waste management, co-organised with the Environment Authority in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency, was held in Muscat in December 2025. In healthcare waste, be'ah treated about 3,961 tonnes collected from 2,165 institutions nationwide, using autoclaving for 2,652 tonnes and incineration for 1,309 tonnes at its Liwa, Al Amerat and Thamrait facilities. Services were extended to veterinary clinics during the year, while a CRM integration initiative cut service response times from four days to one.

Circular economy initiatives featured across special waste streams. Of some 3 million tonnes of construction and demolition waste received, 2 million tonnes were processed through five crushers for reuse as backfilling, sand and aggregate. Shredded end-of-life tyres are being supplied to Oman Cement Company as alternative kiln fuel under a strategic agreement, while green and bulky waste offtake arrangements directed material into composting, biochar and animal feed production. A further 83,196 tonnes were collected from Petroleum Development Oman concession areas, nearly 60 per cent of it construction and demolition material.

The operational push comes as be'ah completes the transition of waste collection services to municipalities, recorded as a 2025 milestone, refocusing the company on downstream infrastructure, treatment capacity and resource recovery in line with Oman Vision 2040.

OMTC launches Oman's first integrated chromite shipment

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Oman Minerals Trading Company (OMTC) has launched its first integrated shipment of Omani chromite ore, with a cargo exceeding 50,000 tonnes through the SOHAR Port and Freezone, marking a new step in the marketing and export of Omani chromite to international markets.

The company — a subsidiary of Minerals Development Oman (MDO) — also reported an 8 per cent increase in the average selling price of gypsum exports compared with the same period last year.

The integrated chromite shipment combined several grades of Omani ore in a single cargo, enabling the company to meet the requirements of a wider range of buyers and industrial users. The move is aimed at expanding the customer base, opening new marketing channels and strengthening the position of Omani chromite in global markets. OMTC's marketing efforts have targeted Asian and European markets, alongside direct engagement with industrial plants using Omani chromite ore for the first time. The approach is designed to diversify export destinations, expand access to end users and establish long-term commercial relationships.



The integrated chromite shipment combined several grades of Omani ore in a single cargo.

In the gypsum sector, the company has marketed and exported more than 1.8 million tonnes to 11 countries, through over 32 vessels departing from the Port of Salalah. This was accompanied by an 8 per cent rise in the average selling price compared with the same period last year. Gypsum export destinations included several Gulf markets, including Kuwait, as well as new African markets. The company also resumed exports to the South Korean market, as part of its efforts to diversify destinations and reduce reliance on a limited number of markets.

Hussain bin Ali al Lawati, Chairman — OMTC, said the launch of the integrated chromite shipment represents an important step in developing markets for Omani minerals. He said that market diversification and direct access to end users are key pillars of the company's marketing strategy, adding that the performance recorded in gypsum exports — including the increase in average selling prices and expansion of market reach — highlights the importance of managing marketing and export operations through a more integrated approach.

Al Lawati said the company's priority is to achieve the highest possible commercial value for Omani mineral resources, while continuing to meet the requirements of the local market.

He added that OMTC is also working to support the growth of mineral-related downstream industries in Oman by balancing exports with the supply requirements of local industries. This approach aims to increase the added value generated from Oman's mineral resources and support related investments.

OMTC is responsible for marketing and exporting gypsum and chromite ore through the centralised management of export operations and negotiations with international buyers.

The company commenced its commercial operations with the export of its first gypsum shipments through the Port of Salalah, as part of its mandate to manage the export of gypsum and chromite from Oman.

Established under Ministerial Decision No 18/2025, OMTC was granted exclusive rights to export gypsum and chromite ore effective June 2026, while domestic sales remain outside the company's mandate.

Through its centralised export model, the company aims to streamline marketing and negotiations, improve access to international markets and buyers; and enhance transparency and competitiveness in the marketing of Omani mineral exports — supporting their commercial value in global markets.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



OAB RECONNECTS
RUWAD TO ADVANCE
LEADERSHIP
CULTURE

Oman Arab Bank hosted the Ruwad Alumni Gathering 2026, bringing together graduates of the Ruwad Leadership Development Programme for an evening dedicated to reconnecting, exchanging experiences and celebrating the programme’s continued impact. The event was held under the auspices of Mr Ashraf al Mamari, Group CEO of OQ, at the Tivoli La VIE Hotel. The gathering welcomed Ruwad alumni from different batches, alongside senior management, managers and representatives from partner organisations. More than a reunion, the event provided a platform for graduates to reflect on their professional journeys, strengthen their networks and continue learning from one another.

The programme opened with welcoming remarks by Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, who highlighted the importance of sustaining a strong alumni community and encouraged graduates to view leadership development as an ongoing journey.

“Ruwad is a leadership development programme that created a thriving community of leaders who continue to learn, connect and leave a lasting impact. This gathering renews the bonds between alumni, transforming individual experiences into shared knowledge and new opportunities for collaboration. Investing in national leadership is a direct investment in the future of our institutions, which ultimately affects our economy and, thus, our nation”, said Al Harthy.

The gathering featured a presentation highlighting the impact and key milestones of the Ruwad programme, followed by alumni testimonies and an interactive panel discussion. Participants shared perspectives on their evolving roles, the leadership challenges they have encountered and the ways in which they have applied lessons from the programme within their workplaces.

A keynote leadership talk was delivered by Ashraf al Mamari, who explored the importance of continuous learning, personal growth and lifelong leadership development.

“True leadership is measured not by titles, but by the impact we create and the opportunities we open for others to grow. The Ruwad Alumni Gathering reflects the power of continuous learning and a leadership network built on shared experience and inspiration. When ambitions unite, their collective impact can help shape a more prosperous future for Oman”, said Al Mamari.

TOYOTA
OMAN
LAUNCHES
AKEED
CAMPAIGN

Saud Bahwan Automotive announces the launch of the Toyota Akeed Offers, a new campaign designed to reward customers with greater value on every Toyota purchase across the Sultanate of Oman. Running until October 7, the campaign brings together a 5-year or 50,000 km (whichever is earlier) service package, Thiqah Loyalty Points and one year of complimentary registration, applicable across the Toyota lineup excluding all diesel grades (Terms & Conditions Apply).

At the heart of the offer is long-term peace of mind. The 5-year or 50,000 km service package,



whichever comes first, takes care of maintenance well beyond the point of purchase, while Thiqah Loyalty Points add ongoing value as part of Toyota’s loyalty programme. One year of complimentary registration rounds out the offer, making the ownership journey simpler from day one.

The Akeed campaign spans

Toyota’s diverse lineup in Oman, each model bringing its own strengths to the table. The Camry offers a choice between a 2.5-litre 201 HP engine and a 226 HP hybrid setup, giving buyers flexibility between traditional power and electrified efficiency. Corolla buyers get a similar choice, with a 168 HP 2.0-litre Dynamic Force engine on one side and a more economical 1.6-litre unit on the other, both known for consistent, dependable performance. The Yaris, built with city life in mind, runs on a 104 HP 1.5-litre Dual VVT-i engine and CVT combination that keeps daily driving light and efficient.

Lexus: Beyond measure, beyond expectations

LEXUS continues to elevate the ownership experience in Oman as Saud Bahwan Automotive announces the latest Lexus Benefits Campaign, inspired by the philosophy of “Crafted Beyond Measure...Rewarded Beyond Expectations”. Running until October 7, 2026, the campaign offers customers enhanced benefits across the Lexus range, including a service package of 10-year/100,000 km or a 5-year/50,000 km service package on selected Lexus models. Customers will also enjoy one year vehicle registration, along with NUKHBAH Loyalty Points worth RO 100, making the Lexus ownership experience even more rewarding. (Terms & Conditions Apply.)

Leading the range is the LX 700 HEV, a flagship SUV that pairs a twin-turbo 3.5L V6 engine with an advanced hybrid system to deliver a commanding 457 hp, while achieving efficiency of 10.8 km/l, proof that power and responsibility can coexist in a single vehicle. Alongside it, the LX 600 offers a more traditional take on power, with a 3.5L twin-turbocharged engine producing 409 hp, appealing to drivers who favour a classic, uncompromising drivetrain. Both models bring together rugged SUV capability and a refined, tech-forward cabin, giving drivers the confidence to move seamlessly between city streets and more demanding terrain, all without sacrificing the comfort and craftsmanship expected of a true flagship Lexus.

In the sedan range, the ES 350 remains one of the most sought-after names in Oman’s luxury segment, offering buyers the effortless pull of a V6 engine paired with a smooth 8-speed automatic transmission, delivering the kind of composed, refined handling that has made the ES a favourite



among Oman’s discerning drivers. The IS brings a sportier character to the lineup, with the 311 hp turbocharged IS 350 offering spirited, engaging performance for daily drives and the IS 350 F Sport sharpening that experience further with a more focused chassis tune and driver-oriented setup, appealing to those who want their sedan to feel as dynamic as it looks.

Rounding out the lineup, the UX HEV and NX HEV bring hybrid efficiency to a compact and mid-size SUV footprint respectively. The NX offers the same versatility with conventional power and the RX 500h F Sport adds a sportier, electrified option to the

range. Every model listed above is included in the current Lexus Benefits campaign. Customers are encouraged to visit their nearest Lexus showroom to explore the range and take advantage of these benefits before the campaign concludes.

For more information, please visit www.lexusoman.com, subscribe to the YouTube channel “Lexus Oman”, like Lexus Oman on Facebook, follow [omman.lexus](https://www.facebook.com/lexusoman) on Instagram or follow [lexus.oman](https://www.instagram.com/lexusoman) on Snapchat. For further details and to ascertain the availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom or call 99450244.

Bank Muscat launches Active Oman Challenge 2

In line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and its longstanding commitment to supporting youth, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced its participation as Gold Sponsor of Active Oman Challenge 2, taking place from August 8 to 22, 2026 at Active Oman.

Active Oman Challenge 2 is a youth-focused sports and entertainment event expected to draw around 8,000 participants and visitors.

The event combines sports, gaming, educational activities and interactive entertainment, offering a dynamic platform that brings together young people and families across a wide range of competitions, including Go-Karting, Jackaroo, Billiards, Chess, Bowling, Shooting, Virtual Golf, Card Games and E-Gaming.

Visitors can learn about Floosi and Shababi, Bank Muscat’s specialised banking propositions designed for young people.



Floosi is a dedicated banking proposition tailored for youth aged 7 to 17, while Shababi is designed for youth aged 18 to 22.

Both aim to instil healthy financial habits from an early age, helping young customers learn how to spend, save and manage their money independently while enjoying a range of benefits and offers. The booth also features an interactive screen where Floosi and Shababi card holders can play and enter a draw, with 5 winners to be chosen at the end of the event, each winner will receive a PS5.

To make the experience more engaging, visitors will get a special passport at Bank Muscat’s booth, allowing them to collect stamps from participating businesses across the centre and enter a draw where 32 winners will receive valuable prizes.

Visitors can also enjoy exclusive discounts offered by participating businesses across a variety of sectors, including food and beverage, automotive, retail and activity centres.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “Our participation in Active Oman Challenge 2 reflects our continued commitment to engaging with the youth through platforms that speak to their interests and lifestyle.

Floosi and Shababi were created to give young people the tools and confidence to manage their finances from an early age and events like this allow us to connect with them in a fun, interactive setting while reinforcing the value of smart money habits from a young age”.

Bank Muscat has a longstanding track record of supporting youth development and financial inclusion across the Sultanate of Oman through a wide range of services and community initiatives. Its participation in Active Oman Challenge 2 forms part of the Bank’s broader strategy to support youth by providing banking solutions that grow alongside them and support their aspirations for the future.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Visual design of Rixos Salalah

OMAN’S FIRST RIXOS RESORT TO OPEN IN SALALAH IN 2027

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Salalah is set to welcome Oman’s first Rixos-branded resort in early 2027, bringing the chain’s luxury all-inclusive model to Dhofar’s coastline and adding a new international flag to the governorate’s expanding hospitality offering.

Overlooking the Indian Ocean, the beachfront property will comprise 286 rooms and suites, supported by multiple pools, a spa, kids’ and teens’ clubs, ballrooms and four restaurants set in lush gardens near Al Haffa Souq. Located some 15 minutes from Salalah International Airport, the resort is designed as a tranquil retreat expected to be particularly appealing during the Khareef Dhofar Season.

The first Rixos property in the Sultanate of Oman under the Accor/Ennismore portfolio, the resort is positioned as blending Omani heritage with the brand’s signature hospitality, offering spacious rooms and private villas, family facilities, wellness amenities and varied dining aimed at families and couples alike.

UAE-based law firm The Bench led by Alexandra Plain commented: “It was a real pleasure working with the owners on the project. Rixos Salalah is a landmark for Oman’s tourism sector and I’m delighted to have helped the owner put the right agreements in place. I look forward to seeing the resort open in 2027”.

Rixos, founded by Fettah Taminec, joined Accor in 2017 and has since more than tripled its network, establishing itself as a leading player in luxury all-inclusive resorts with growth across Türkiye, the Middle East, Egypt and Asia. The brand sits within Ennismore, the lifestyle hospitality group whose portfolio spans 16 brands and more than 200 hotels worldwide, while parent group Accor operates more than 45 brands across the luxury, lifestyle, premium, midscale and economy segments.

SDG Index: Debt, AI gaps test Arab path to 2030

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 11

THE Arab region received an overall score of 60.5 out of 100 on the 2025 Arab Region SDG Index, while 14 of the 22 Arab League member states did not receive a single green rating across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, data presented in Salalah on Tuesday showed.

Dr Mahmoud Mohieldin, United Nations Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda, cited the findings while addressing the opening day of the 25th Annual General Conference on “Government Readiness for a Sustainable Future”.

He said governments were confronting interconnected pressures from artificial intelligence, climate change and public debt, requiring them to manage the links between policy, financing, technology, institutional capacity and risk rather than addressing each challenge separately.

The three-day conference opened under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, in the presence of a number of senior officials, alongside representatives of government institutions and the private sector.

The event is organised by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation, an affiliate of the League of Arab States, in cooperation with Oman’s Ministry of Labour and runs until August 13.

The 2025 Arab Region SDG Index, prepared by the Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government and the Sustainable Development



The 3-day forum has been organised by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation, in cooperation with Oman’s Ministry of Labour.

Solutions Network, covers all 22 Arab League member states.

Its score is a composite measure of progress towards the 17 goals, rather than a count of how many goals have been completed. The index is designed as a complementary analytical tool and is not an official United Nations monitoring mechanism.

The report found that all Arab countries received a red rating on Goal 5, which covers gender equality, indicating major challenges across the region. It also recorded a gap of about 28 points between Tunisia, the highest-ranked Arab country and Somalia, the lowest-ranked.

Mohieldin said government readiness increasingly depended on how countries responded to disruptive forces that could either accelerate development or deepen existing inequalities.

The International Monetary Fund’s AI Preparedness Index, which covers 174 economies, recorded an average score of 0.68 for advanced economies, compared with 0.46 for emerging markets and 0.32 for low-income countries.

The average index score for advanced economies was therefore more than double that of low-income countries, highlighting substantial differences in their capacity to benefit from artificial intelligence. Mohieldin argued that purchasing ready-made applications did not in itself constitute AI readiness.

Preparedness required digital infrastructure, reliable data, investment in human capital, responsive labour-market policies, innovation, economic integration, regulation and ethical safeguards.

Debt pressures presented a second major constraint. UN Trade and Development figures showed that global public debt reached a record \$102 trillion in

2024, with developing countries accounting for about \$31 trillion.

Net interest payments by developing countries rose by 10 per cent in one year to a record \$921 billion, while 61 developing countries allocated more than 10 per cent of government revenue to interest payments.

Since 2020, developing regions have also borrowed at rates two to four times those in the United States, raising the cost of financing development and limiting the fiscal space available for public investment.

The financing pressure has been compounded by a decline in external assistance. According to preliminary OECD data, official development assistance from Development Assistance Committee members and associates fell by 23.1 per cent in real terms in 2025 to \$174.3 billion — the largest annual contraction on record.

Climate change formed the third major disruptive force identified in the presentation. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that between 3.3 billion and 3.6 billion people live in contexts highly vulnerable to climate change, while roughly half of the world’s population experiences severe water scarcity during at least part of the year.

The risks extend across water supplies, agriculture and food security, public health and essential infrastructure, requiring governments to pursue adaptation and mitigation simultaneously.

Mohieldin’s presentation illustrated how an initial energy shock could spread through transport and food costs, contribute to inflation, increase public debt pressures, affect labour markets and ultimately undermine social stability.

Oman boosts pharma investment via offtake, price deals

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Oman is stepping up efforts to attract investment into pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing by offering prospective producers preferential access to government procurement, tax and customs exemptions, full foreign ownership and other incentives, according to the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

At the heart of the package are advance purchase agreements covering up to 30 per cent of the Ministry of Health’s requirements for locally manufactured pharmaceutical products. As the Sultanate of Oman’s largest customer for medicines and pharmaceutical products, the Ministry of Health



Oman’s industrial parks currently host as many as 13 pharmaceutical projects and manufacturing centres.

provides a potentially significant and predictable source of demand for investors establishing production capacity in Oman.

The government is also offering price-based incentives, including a price preference of up to 30 per cent for locally manufactured products and 20 per cent for products undergoing secondary packaging. The measures are designed to improve the competitiveness of Oman-made medicines in government procurement and encourage investors to move beyond importation towards domestic manufacturing.

OPAZ said the incentives form part of a broader effort to establish Oman as a regional centre for pharmaceutical and medical industries. “Oman’s pharmaceutical industry is accelerating, powered

by a business-friendly investment environment, competitive incentives and diverse investment opportunities”, OPAZ said.

The authority highlighted 13 pharmaceutical projects and manufacturing facilities already distributed across Oman’s special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, spanning opportunities such as generic pharmaceutical manufacturing, research laboratories, active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) production, vaccines and biopharmaceuticals.

“13 pharmaceutical projects and manufacturing facilities across Oman’s Special Economic Zones, Free Zones and Industrial Cities — offering investors a strategic platform to scale and grow”, OPAZ said. The investment proposition

extends to medical devices, with opportunities in medical equipment, digital health solutions, surgical instruments and smart health-monitoring devices.

Financial incentives include tax exemptions for up to 30 years, customs exemptions on raw materials and equipment, no minimum capital requirement and permission for 100 per cent foreign ownership. OPAZ also highlights exemptions from personal income tax, value-added tax and capital gains tax.

Investors can additionally benefit from streamlined establishment and licensing procedures, work permits issued within 24 hours, long-term residency visas and freedom to transact in all currencies. Usufruct agreements can extend for up to 50 years and are renewable.

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold slips as oil clouds rate outlook



Gold prices fell on Tuesday after hitting a more than two-month high earlier in the session, as fading hopes for a US-Iran peace deal lifted oil prices and fuelled concerns that inflation and interest rates could remain elevated.

Spot gold was down 0.4% to \$4,371.92 per ounce by 08:55 GMT, after hitting its highest level since June 5 earlier at \$4,434.84. — Reuters

ASIAN EQUITIES

Asia equity outflows rise on AI fears



Foreign investors sold Asian equities on a net basis for a ninth consecutive month in July, with heavy selling in Taiwan and South Korea as concerns over AI spending and chip demand weighed on the region’s technology-heavy markets. Regional tech exporters came under pressure last month after Alphabet and Tesla reported negative cash flows, raising worries over the durability of growth and mounting cash burn. — Reuters

OIL ON FIRE

Oil rises as US-Iran peace hopes fade



Oil prices rose more than 2% on Tuesday to over one-week highs as hopes for a US-Iran deal to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz faded after President Donald Trump demanded compensation from Tehran. Brent crude futures rose \$1.92, or 2.19%, to \$89.64 a barrel by 08:05 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up \$1.91, or 2.33%, to \$84.04 a barrel, with both benchmarks trading at their highest levels since July 31. — Reuters

OPINION

The Gulf’s solar lead depends on mastering energy storage



MARYAM AHMED YOUSEF AL NOFLI

The writer is a researcher, academic faculty and Head of the Continuous Education and Community Service Department at UTAS Musandam

PICTURE a solar park in the Omani desert at three in the afternoon, running at full tilt and picture the same park at nine that evening, contributing nothing at all. That gap between abundance and darkness is no longer a technical footnote. It is fast becoming the single variable that will decide which Gulf economies turn cheap sunlight into durable industrial advantage and which end up with stranded panels and unmet demand. The region has already won the race to build solar at scale. The race that will actually determine its energy future is the one now under way to store it.

For over a decade, the Gulf’s clean-energy narrative has been told in gigawatts installed and record-low tariffs bid, as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman have each claimed some of the cheapest solar electricity ever contracted.

That achievement is real, but it obscures a harder question: what happens to an economy built on cheap daytime power once factories, desalination plants, data centres and hydrogen electrolyzers need electricity at every hour, not just the sunniest ones? The answer increasingly determines whether renewables strengthen energy security or quietly undermine it.

The global numbers show how quickly the ground has shifted. The International Energy Agency’s Electricity 2026 report finds that utility-scale battery storage capacity worldwide grew more than twelvefold

between 2020 and 2024, to around 124 gigawatts, while average costs fell by roughly 58 per cent over the same period, from about \$511 to under \$213 per kilowatt-hour. The IEA’s Global Energy Review 2026 shows the pace still accelerating, with 108 gigawatts added globally in 2025 alone.

To support a global tripling of renewable capacity by 2030, the agency estimates storage deployment must grow roughly sixfold, to some 1,500 gigawatts. That is not an engineering detail. It is the difference between renewables that merely generate electricity and renewables that can actually replace baseload power.

Oman’s response illustrates what strategic thinking on storage looks like in practice. In June 2026, a consortium led by EDF Power Solutions signed a framework agreement to develop the 2,000-megawatt Jabal Abyad pumped-hydro project near the Wadi Dayqah Dam, with approximately 17,970 megawatt-hours of storage set to become the largest facility of its kind in the Middle East.

It sits alongside the Manah 1 and Manah 2 solar plants, which added a gigawatt of capacity to a grid where peak demand has been climbing by around 2.7 per cent a year, reaching 7.5 gigawatts in 2024. Individually, these are infrastructure projects. Together, they mark a shift from generating renewable electricity to managing it as a dependable national asset, which is precisely the shift Oman Vision 2040 requires if renewables are to underpin, rather than merely decorate, the country’s economic diversification.

For over a decade, the Gulf’s clean-energy narrative has been told in gigawatts installed and record-low tariffs bid, as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman have each claimed some of the cheapest solar electricity ever contracted.

That logic extends into manufacturing. Future Fund Oman has backed Orion Solar’s integrated solar cell and module facility in the Sohar Freezone, with an annual production capacity of six gigawatts — the first facility of its kind in the Middle East — alongside the Gallant Industrial Project, which will produce 66,000 tonnes a year of lithium iron phosphate cathode material, the chemistry that now dominates grid-scale batteries. With global battery supply chains still heavily concentrated in Asia, this is a wager that Oman can capture value as a producer of storage technology, not merely a buyer of it, strengthening both industrial competitiveness and supply security.

The stakes extend well beyond electricity grids into the hydrogen economy Oman is betting on. Oman has earmarked some 50,000 square kilometres of land, chiefly around Al Duqm and Salalah, to support renewable hydrogen production targeted at 8.5 million tonnes a year by 2050, an effort estimated to require some \$140 billion in investment, alongside a nearer-term goal of around one million tonnes by 2030. The Gulf has proven it can out-build almost anyone on solar. Its next test and its more consequential one is whether it can turn that sunlight into power that is there when it is actually needed — at nine in the evening, in a hydrogen plant running through the night, in a factory that never stops. That is the race Oman and its neighbours are now running and it is the one that will decide who leads the region’s clean-energy economy, not just who built the most panels.

SURGE IN CHINA’S COAL IMPORTS MAY START TO TAPER OFF

China’s coal imports surged to the highest this year in July but the strength is deceiving and built on short-term factors that are unlikely to persist.

Total coal imports rose 23% in July from the same month last year to 43.73 million metric tonnes, according to official data released last week. This was up from 42.78 million tonnes in June and almost a third more than the low so far this year of 33.1 million tonnes from April.

The rebound in coal imports comes after China imposed safety inspections at mines after an accident left 82 people dead at a mine in Shanxi province on May 22.

Safety inspections have a track record of lowering output in the world’s biggest coal producer, meaning China turns to imports to make up for any shortfall.

Domestic coal production fell 9.7% in June from the same month a year earlier to 380.88 million tonnes, with average daily output of 12.7 million tonnes being the lowest since July 2025, according to

official data. It’s likely that production was also constrained in July, with official data expected next week, but reports from China-based analysts suggest output in August should be close to the same level as it was in 2025. This suggests that China’s need for imported coal may start to ease from August onwards. A factor to consider is that China receives imports from two main sources, the seaborne market and overland from neighbours, mainly Mongolia but also some volumes from Russia. Seaborne coal imports account for about 75% of the total, but this share has been trending lower in recent years as more coal is sourced from Mongolia, especially metallurgical coal used to make steel. China’s August seaborne imports of all coal types are estimated at 31.23 million tonnes by analysts DBX Commodities, down from 33.91 million in July and the first decline in four months.

The August figure is still subject to revision as more cargoes are assessed, but the end result is likely to be that August seaborne imports will be below July’s, indicating that China’s need for imports is easing as safety inspections taper.

Seaborne coal prices have started to flatten out after rising as China imported more in June and July. Indonesia is the world’s biggest coal exporter and top supplier to China and the price of 4,200 kilocalorie per kilogramme (kcal/kg) fuel, a grade popular with Chinese buyers, was assessed by commodity price reporting agency Argus at \$62.51 a tonne in the week to August 7.



CLYDE RUSSELL

The writer is an Asia commodities and energy columnist at Reuters

THE Firm for Business and Economic Consulting Oman made an early and deliberate pivot to Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) as a vehicle of economic diversification — projects designed to attract foreign investment, anchor tourism in the domestic economy and give visitors a reason to stay rather than pass through. That decision sits within a broader story: under Oman Vision 2040, tourism has become a cornerstone of diversification, contributing directly about 2.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or RO 1.14 billion in 2025 — almost half of the 5% the Vision aspires to achieve. Two decades on, that pivot has delivered something greater than investment alone.

However, the ITC value proposition is beyond the foreign investment and real estate story. There are a multitude of economic boons that materialise as a result of such projects. An ITC combines a number of economic activities under one proverbial roof. Designed to attract inbound visitors who seek to establish residency in Oman, these projects offer an opportunity for freehold ownership of real estate and, more importantly, for prolonged stays in the country. Moreover, investment in the properties provides a lucrative diversification opportunity for both locals and foreigners who find Oman an attractive destination.

In its recent study, The Firm for Business and Economic Consulting measured the socio-economic impact of Al Mouj Muscat on the Omani economy over the past two decades. The study has shown that Al Mouj Muscat has contributed a total of RO 878 million to the Omani economy. This impact stems from infrastructure and real estate development and its direct effects on different economic activities within the Omani economy.

How does an ITC create this value? The study identified a number of pathways through which Al Mouj Muscat has contributed to



the Omani economy; these activities included Construction, Real Estate, Hotels & Accommodation, Food & Beverages and Retail. What is more important is the value created at each stage of development. The impact it has on the national economy emphasises the connectivity of different economic activities.

The real estate story is supported by continued growth in return values for investors and property values over the past 20 years. That story has also drawn RO 843 million in foreign direct investment — the ITC model delivering precisely what it was designed to do. This impact is further reinforced by meaningful in-country value of spending, reaching 43.6%, matching other vibrant sectors of the economy.

The in-country value or local content is realised through different channels. Direct value is created in construction and real estate services; beyond that, it includes small businesses that operate in retail, food & beverages and services across Al Mouj Muscat. This ecosystem creates a hive of economic activity that generates jobs and supply chains that permeate beyond the project itself.

The impact is felt in a number of areas including over 2,200 permanent jobs created and high Omanisation rates within Al Mouj Muscat, standing at 67%. Moreover, the inclusion factor sees more than 40% female participation in senior leadership, a relatively high share within the wider region. Equally important is the development of

a cadre of specialised talent that is well equipped to manage ITC projects.

ITCs can create hubs for local and international communities. Events are economic catalysts that an ITC’s infrastructure can crowd in — a marina, a golf course and public spaces offer ready venues that the wider economy would otherwise lack. The study estimated the combined impact of the events hosted at Al Mouj Muscat, from international sailing to an annual marathon, at RO 245 million, with a further RO 86 million in media and promotional value — exposure that markets Oman as a destination well beyond any single event.

Ultimately, what the study finds is that the impact is not a collection of figures but a pattern. One project, conceived as an Integrated Tourism Complex, has advanced the economic, social and environmental aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 at once — value created and kept within the country, opportunity opened to Omanis, an environment left richer than it was found. No single number carries that conclusion; it is their convergence in one place that does.

This is what ‘integrated’ means. Yet the fuller measure of economic transformation is capability. Twenty years of building, operating and hosting — events, an international marina, a marathon — leave behind more than infrastructure. They leave Omani firms that have delivered to international standards, a workforce that has run world-class operations and institutions that know how to host the world. As Oman and the wider region deepen their commitment to tourism, the lesson learned here is that an ITC can create a truly diversified ecosystem. Diversification, in the end, is not a target to be reached but a capacity to be built. That is what an Integrated Tourism Complex such as Al Mouj Muscat offers Oman Vision 2040: not only the numbers that check its boxes, but the national capability that makes transformation permanent.



ADHAM AL SAID

The writer is the Founding Partner of the Firm for Business and Economic Consulting

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

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

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

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

SENIOR Accountant: Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

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ART/LIFE



THE YOUNGEST OMANI GAME DEVELOPER AT JUST 15

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

A REAL ESTATE CONVERSATION



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

A friend recently told me that he was ready to buy a property in Oman. He had studied developments, compared prices and imagined it as a home and long-term investment. Then the regional situation changed and so did the conversation.

“Perhaps I should wait”, he said.

He is not alone. Across social media and property discussions, potential buyers are asking whether this is still the right moment to commit. Some worry about regional stability, resale demand and rental returns. In unsettled times, even an attractive apartment can begin to look like a large question mark, especially when headlines make every decision feel urgent.

The concern is understandable. Property ties up savings, carries costs and depends on confidence about what life might look like five or ten years from now.

Yet the numbers tell a more complicated story. Oman’s property market remained active during the first half of 2026. According to Savills, the total traded value reached around RO 1.43 billion by the end of June, an annual increase of 5.4 per cent. Mortgage activity and foreign investment also continued to support the market despite regional pressures.

That does not mean every concern is misplaced, or that every development is a good investment. National figures can hide differences between locations, property types and projects. A home in an established community with genuine rental demand is very different from an off-plan unit sold through promises of future appreciation.

This is where experts offer less exciting but more useful advice: look beyond the showroom. Buyers should examine the developer’s record, ownership rules, service charges, completion guarantees, rental demand and ease of resale. Foreign purchasers must understand that ownership remains limited to approved areas and residency benefits should never be assumed without checking current regulations.

Regional uncertainty may delay decisions, but fear alone is not a property strategy. Neither is optimism. Waiting could offer clarity, protect savings and provide more time to study the market. Buying now, however, could secure the right property before prices or demand move further.

Neither option comes with a guarantee.

My friend could step back until the picture becomes clearer, or decide that a carefully chosen property in Oman remains worthwhile despite the uncertainty.

Market reports can provide evidence, experts can identify risks and friends can offer opinions. But property is personal. Every buyer has a reason for purchasing, capacity for risk and idea of how long they are prepared to wait.

Perhaps that is where the real conversation begins: would you wait for greater certainty, knowing the opportunity might change, or buy based on the fundamentals in front of you today?

The market can present the options. The final choice and its consequences will always belong to the buyer.

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



NATURE

Cows graze on an alpine pasture during the heatwave below the Kleiner Pyhr gas in Spital am Pyhrn, Upper Austria, Austria. — **Reuters**



FASHION

Designer Kat Eberley works on a wedding dress at the Jenny Yoo bridal boutique in New York City, US. — **Reuters**



WORLD PREMIERE

Demi Lovato attends the world premiere for the film Camp Rock 3 in Los Angeles, California, US. — **Reuters**

INSTA PICKS



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SELF-TAUGHT TURKISH ‘LINGUIST’ KEEPS DEAD LANGUAGE ALIVE



Mehmet Kusman spent little time at school, but his fascination with the ancient Urartian kingdom began when he encountered inscriptions carved into the black basalt walls of Cavustepe fortress in eastern Türkiye.

Now 86, Kusman has devoted six decades to the site and to studying the language of Urartu, an ancient kingdom that flourished between the ninth and seventh centuries BC.

After completing military service in the 1960s, Kusman worked as a labourer on excavations at Cavustepe, where he discovered his first stele. Fascinated by its cuneiform inscription, he began copying texts unearthed across Türkiye, Iran and Armenia, despite being discouraged from learning the difficult script.

He said he mastered its alphabet within three years, but spent another 22 years learning around 650 words.

Kusman has since become a

local celebrity, giving lectures about Urartu abroad and calling himself “one of the last seven people in Türkiye to speak the Urartian language”. However, academics caution that the claim is difficult to verify.

Erkan Konyar of Istanbul University said historians still do not know exactly how Urartian was pronounced and have only a limited vocabulary and number of surviving texts.

Mehmet Isikli of Ataturk University added that Urartian may have been primarily a written language rather than one commonly spoken by the kingdom’s people.

Despite the doubts, Kusman continues to welcome visitors to Cavustepe. Calling himself “a descendant of the Urartians”, he remains determined to keep their culture and history alive.

For Kusman, the ancient kingdom may have disappeared, but its memory lives on through him. — AFP

ARIANA GRANDE TOPS GERMAN CHARTS WITH ‘PETAL’



Ariana Grande celebrates a landmark moment as ‘petal’ reaches No 1 on the German album charts.

US pop icon Ariana Grande reached the top of the German charts for the first time on Friday with her new album “petal”, marking a new milestone in the singer’s career.

With her eighth studio album, the 33-year-old singer secured her first-ever number-one position in Germany, according to GfK Entertainment, which compiles the country’s official music charts. The achievement adds another significant chart success to Grande’s career, which has seen her become one of the most commercially successful pop performers of her generation.

Grande released “petal” last week, with the album featuring songs including “hate that i made you love me”. The release has attracted considerable attention from fans and music audiences, arriving as Grande continues to balance her music career with an increasingly demanding schedule of film, theatre and touring commitments.

Shortly after the album’s release, it was reported that Grande plans to step back from the public eye for an unspecified period following

the conclusion of her current tour. Her management said that the singer would be taking a break after months of what it described as “endless, ongoing public scrutiny”.

The announcement has also reignited discussion surrounding the intense public attention Grande has faced over her appearance and body for several years. The singer has previously spoken about the pressures of being constantly scrutinised, particularly through social media, highlighting the difficulties celebrities can face when their appearance becomes a subject of public debate.

Grande is currently on tour promoting her 2024 album “Eternal Sunshine”, which has also returned to the German Top 100 album chart at No 53. Another of her previous releases, “Dangerous Woman”, is also enjoying renewed attention, sitting at No 30.

The German chart success comes as Grande continues to maintain a strong international presence more than a decade after the release of her debut album. Her latest achievement further underlines the enduring popularity of her music

among audiences outside the United States.

Meanwhile, the No 1 position on Germany’s singles chart remains unchanged. The World Cup song “Dai Dai” by Shakira and Burna Boy has retained the top spot for a sixth consecutive week, extending its run at the summit. — dpa



Grande’s latest album continues its strong run, topping the German charts in its first week.

FEATURES

THE YOUNGEST OMANI GAME DEVELOPER AT JUST 15



Al Kindy began creating games at the age of nine, inspired by his desire to bring his ideas to life.

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

AT an age when many teenagers are discovering their favourite games, 15-year-old Omani Saleh al Kindy is busy creating his own.

Al Kindy began his game development journey at just nine, encouraged by his father and driven by a desire to turn the ideas in his imagination into experiences others could enjoy. When his parents bought him a licence for game-making software, he immediately began learning through trial and error, creating countless small projects along the way.

“I’ve had ideas I wanted to bring to fruition for others to experience”, he said, describing game development as something he found exciting from a young age.

Years of experimentation eventually led to Shapes N Music, a rhythm-based challenge game that combines music, visuals and fast-paced gameplay. Players must dodge bullets and hazards timed precisely to the music, while increasingly difficult levels test their ability to react, plan and master each challenge without taking a hit.

The game is designed to be difficult but fair, with partially randomised hazard locations preventing players from relying solely on memorised patterns. Every hazard also appears in time with the music, giving each level its own identity while allowing players to anticipate incoming dangers.

Al Kindy developed the game using Construct 3, a visual game-making platform. He taught himself largely through experimentation, while occasionally turning to online forums for help. He also uses AudioMass to identify precise beats in the music and synchronise them with gameplay.

The journey has not been without challenges. Al Kindy said one of his biggest struggles was staying committed to a project instead of moving on whenever a new idea excited him. Completing Shapes N Music, however, taught him lessons extending beyond game design, including publishing commercially, editing fonts and responding to player feedback.

A demo of the game is already available on Steam and has received positive reviews, with players praising its aesthetics, music, level design and challenging gameplay. Their feedback has also helped him improve the experience.

The full game is planned to offer hours of content and multiple modes, with future updates possible depending on demand.

For other young Omanis interested in game development, Al Kindy has a simple message: “Creating games is a challenging but rewarding path that teaches skills which will matter throughout your life”.

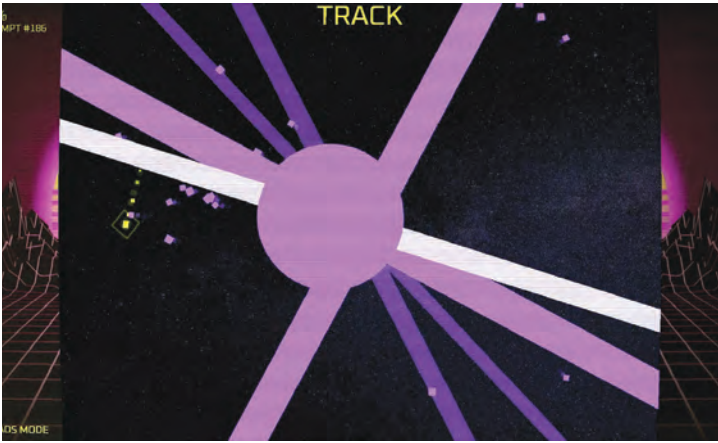
And he is not stopping there. With several future projects already planned, he promises that players can expect “bigger, better and more creative games” as his journey continues.



Al Kindy taught himself game development through years of experimentation, gradually turning small projects into a full game.



At just 15, Saleh al Kindy is making his mark as one of Oman’s youngest game developers.



Every hazard in Shapes N Music is synchronised with the music, creating a challenging rhythm-based experience.