

O M A N
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D A I L Y

Observer



4
TRACKING
DHO FAR'S HIDDEN
PREDATORS

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**98m flood protection project moves forward**

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 30

The Sultanate of Oman is moving ahead with a RO 98 million flood-protection system at Wadi Majlas in Qurayat, centred on a 140-million-cubic-metre dam designed to strengthen protection for communities and infrastructure exposed to major flood events.

The 95-metre-high concrete dam is estimated to cost RO 80 million, with a further RO 18 million allocated for associated drainage channels, according to Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources data

140mn-m³ dam anchors major protection programme as Muscat completes flood-hazard maps for events with return periods of up to

500
years

presented at a water-resources seminar in Salalah.

Eng Munir al Zadjali, of the Dams Department at the Directorate General of Water Resources Assessment, presented the figures in a paper examining the role of dams in reducing the impacts of extreme climate events.

At about 520 metres long, the Wadi Majlas structure would rank among Oman's largest flood-protection dams by storage capacity and is among the major protection projects included in the current five-year development programme.

TURN TO P2

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO TÜRKIYE PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye on the occasion of Victory Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Erdogan and the Turkish people. His Majesty also lauded the depth of relations and ties between the two countries, affirming the keenness to enhance and develop them to serve mutual interests.

HM’S GREETINGS TO KING OF MALAYSIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Sultan Ibrahim of Malaysia on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to the King and the Malaysian people. His Majesty lauded the strong relations between the two countries and affirmed the keenness to enhance and develop them to serve the interests of the peoples of both countries.

OMAN’S DIALECTS OFFER INSIGHTS INTO LINGUISTIC PAST

Oman occupies a quiet but significant place in the history of the Arabic language, with its dialects offering valuable insights into the linguistic heritage of southern Arabia, according to British Arabist, academic and travel writer Tim Mackintosh-Smith. Mackintosh-Smith, who has lived in the Arab world for more than 40 years, said the dialects of southern Arabia, including Oman, are more significant to the history of Arabic than is often recognised. “Oman sits on one of the oldest trade corridors in the world, and that geography meant its Arabic was shaped by merchants, sailors and poets long before modern borders existed,” he said. The historian, best known for *Travels with a Tangerine and Arabs: A 3,000-Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires*, has spent much of his career examining how Arabic evolved and spread across regions. **SEE P3**

NEPAL SEARCHES FOR THE MISSING



A woman reacts as she arrives at a mortuary to identify bodies of victims who died in flash floods and mudslides in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Sunday. **DETAILS ON P6**

SULTAN FAISAL BIN TURKI ROAD PROJECT REACHES 76 PER CENT



The completion rate of the Sultan Faisal bin Turki Road project (Dibba-Lima-Khasab) in the Governorate of Musandam has reached approximately 76 per cent. The project, valued at RO 151 million, being executed by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, is among the strategic infrastructure initiatives aimed at enhancing the road network and strengthening connectivity between the governorate's wilayats. **DETAILS ON P2**

QUALITY HEALTHCARE SERVICES TO PATIENTS

C o n t i n u o u s l e a r n i n g p i l l a r f o r d e v e l o p m e n t

THE number of enrollees in specialised training programmes for the academic year 2026/2027 at Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) stood at 388 (male and female) doctors and nurses from various health institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, including 217 male and female doctors in local residency and fellowship programmes, and 171 male and female nurses in specialised postgraduate diploma programmes.

The new batch includes 207 male and female doctors who joined local residency programmes in 21 specialties, alongside 10 doctors who joined seven local fellowship programmes, while 171 male and female nurses joined nine programmes in the specialised postgraduate diploma, as part of the board's efforts to develop the advanced medical education and training system and supply the health sector with qualified national cadres keeping pace with scientific and technological developments

The new batch includes 207 male and female doctors who joined local residency programmes in 21 specialties, alongside 10 doctors who joined seven local fellowship programmes, while 171 male and female nurses joined 9 programmes



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, affirmed the importance of science and continuous learning.

and meeting national health needs.

Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmi, CEO of Oman Medical Specialty Board, emphasised in a speech during the induction day for the new batch the importance of the training phase joined by the doctors and nurses, and

the board's role in providing an integrated academic and training environment that contributes to developing their professional and scientific knowledge and skills, reflecting positively on the quality of healthcare provided in of Oman.

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, also attended the induction day event and delivered a speech to the trainees joining the board this year.

During the speech, Dr Al Sabti affirmed the importance of science and continuous learning as a fundamental pillar for developing the health sector and elevating the quality of its services.

He urged the trainees to seize the educational and training opportunities provided by the board, embody responsibility and perseverance, and constantly strive towards excellence, thereby contributing to building qualified national competencies capable of keeping pace with health sector developments. — ONA

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FROMPAGE 1

RO 98M FLOOD PROTECTION PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

The project forms part of a wider shift in Oman’s water-management strategy towards integrated flood-defence systems as urban expansion and investment increase the value of communities, transport networks and other infrastructure located downstream from wadis and mountain catchments.

Another major scheme planned for Muscat Governorate is a flood-protection dam at Wadi Al Khoudh in Al Seeb, with a storage capacity of around 77 million cubic metres. The concrete structure is planned at 46 metres high and 1,170 metres long.

At Wadi Adai, meanwhile, a 23-million-cubic-metre dam is under construction at an estimated cost of RO 38.7 million.

The ministry put the estimated cost of the wider Wadi Adai flood-protection system at RO 146 million, covering a combination of completed, ongoing and planned dams across the catchment.

Alongside physical infrastructure, Oman is advancing the technical systems used to identify and manage flood risk.

HYDROLOGICAL STUDIES
Hydrological studies covering rainfall and wadis in Muscat Governorate have been completed, while final flood-hazard maps have been prepared for events with return periods of 10, 25, 50, 100 and 500 years, according to the presentation.

The maps were developed using digital elevation models with a five-metre resolution, while the associated mathematical modelling has also been completed.

A preliminary flood-management and emergency plan has been prepared and discussed with the National Centre for Emergency Management, with the final version to be issued after observations are incorporated.

The protection programme extends across the Sultanate of Oman. In Dhofar, consultancy studies have produced plans for 11 flood-protection dams, together with floodwater drainage channels, as part of protection systems covering Salalah, the Port of Salalah, Sadah and other areas of the governorate.

Three major protection projects were completed during the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

The Wadi Adawnib Dam, inaugurated in 2025, has a storage capacity of about 83.3 million cubic metres and cost around RO 23.3 million. The Wadi An’ar Dam provides a further 16 million cubic metres of capacity at a cost of about RO 22.9 million.

The Salalah Protection Dam adds another 77.2 million cubic metres of storage capacity at a cost of around RO 22 million.

Together, the three structures provide about 176.5 million cubic metres of flood-storage capacity in Dhofar, strengthening protection for populated and economically important areas exposed to runoff from the surrounding mountains.

DIBBA-LIMA-KHASAB ROAD 76% COMPLETE

KHASAB: The completion rate of the Sultan Faisal bin Turki Road project (Dibba-Lima-Khasab) in the Governorate of Musandam has reached approximately 76 per cent.

The project, valued at RO 151 million, being executed by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, is among the strategic infrastructure initiatives aimed at enhancing the road network and strengthening connectivity between the governorate’s wilayats.

The road extends over a total length of 72 kilometres and comprises three segments. The first



The project is valued at RO 151 million. — ONA

segment runs from the Wilayat of Khasab to Lima area, covering a distance of 20 kilometres. The second segment extends within Lima for 8 kilometres, while the third segment connects Lima to the Wilayat of Dibba over a length of 44 kilometres.

The journey between Khasab and Dibba is expected to take

approximately 55 minutes, while the trip between Lima and Khasab is projected at around 20 minutes, compared to the previous travel time of approximately two and a half hours.

Upon completion, the road is expected to enhance interconnectivity across the various regions of the Governorate of Musandam, facilitate smoother traffic flow, and contribute to the revitalisation of economic and tourism activity, while bolstering investment and development opportunities in the communities it serves. — ONA

BACK TO SCHOOL

SHOP SMART, SPEND LESS

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

AS THE new academic year approaches, families across Oman are preparing for one of the season’s most familiar rituals: back-to-school shopping. School bags, notebooks, pens, art materials, lunch boxes and other essentials can quickly turn a simple trip into a sizeable expense. With colourful displays, popular characters and seasonal promotions competing for attention, the challenge is no longer just finding supplies — it is knowing what children actually need and how to spend wisely.

For many families, this season can also be an opportunity to teach children about responsible consumption, budgeting and making informed choices.

The first step is planning. Parents should review the school’s requirements and make a clear list of essentials. A quick check of last year’s supplies may also reveal notebooks, folders, rulers or calculators that are still in good condition. This simple inventory can prevent duplicate purchases and cut unnecessary spending.

The Consumer Protection Authority has encouraged families to plan ahead and choose quality products at reasonable prices. Its “Back to School 2026” campaign, running from August 20 to September 6, focuses on responsible shopping and informed decisions. The Authority noted



A clear budget makes the season less stressful.

School bags, notebooks, pens, art materials, lunch boxes and other essentials can quickly turn a simple trip into a sizeable expense. With colourful displays, popular characters and seasonal promotions competing for attention, the challenge is no longer just finding supplies — it is knowing what children actually need and how to spend wisely.

that “responsible shopping begins with consumer awareness,” urging shoppers to compare products, check offers, and avoid buying what is not needed.

For children, appearance often matters. A bag with a favourite character or a bright notebook can be very appealing. But parents should look beyond design. When choosing a school bag, comfort, size, durability and weight matter as much as looks. The same applies to stationery that will be used daily.

The Ministry of Education has also highlighted the need to reduce the physical burden of school bags, especially for younger students. Its initiatives aim to regulate the number of books carried each day. As one education specialist put it, “the ideal school bag is not the largest or most attractive, but the one that fits the child’s age, size and

daily needs.” Promotions can be tempting. “Buy more, save more” deals may look like savings, but a discount is only valuable if the item is needed. Before buying, parents can ask: “Would we buy this if it were not on sale?” If the answer is no, the offer may be encouraging an unnecessary purchase. The Authority has also urged vigilance against unjustified price increases during peak demand.

Back-to-school shopping can double as a financial lesson. Set a budget for essentials, then let children choose within it — the colour of a notebook, the design of a pencil case, or the style of a water bottle. This gives them ownership while teaching that choices have financial consequences. The message is simple: it’s fine to have preferences, but not every preference needs to become a purchase.

Safety remains key, particularly for younger children. Check for age-appropriate designs, durable materials and safe components in stationery and accessories.

Sustainability is another way to shop smarter. Reuse items that are still good, choose durable products, and avoid excess packaging. This reduces waste and helps control costs. A clear budget makes the season less stressful. Divide spending into categories: stationery, bags, clothing, footwear, lunch boxes. Compare prices across stores, and consider spreading purchases over a few weeks instead of one large trip.

Survey launched to promote lifelong learning in Oman

MUSCAT: The proceedings of the survey on promoting lifelong learning in the Sultanate of Oman began on Sunday, implemented by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University and Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

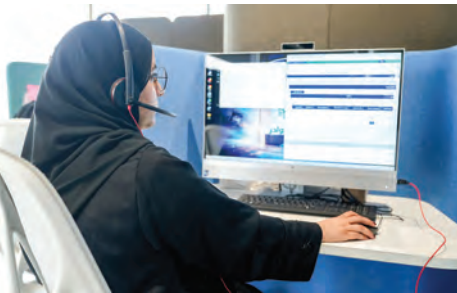
The survey is part of the research project ‘Promoting Lifelong Learning through Learning Cities in the Sultanate of Oman.’

The survey aims to measure the level of lifelong learning among members of Omani society in the targeted wilayats of Muscat, Nizwa, and Sur, identify available

learning and training opportunities and their accessibility, measure their participation levels, monitor associated competencies, and study the relationship between the availability of these opportunities, their utilisation, and their reflection on competencies and individuals.

The survey is conducted through telephone interviews with a random sample of 1,200 Omani citizens aged 18 years and above across the targeted wilayats.

Hood bin Ibrahim al Balushi, Acting Director of the Public Opinion Poll Department at the National Centre for Statistics and Information, stated that the survey



The survey is conducted through telephone interviews with a random sample of 1,200 Omani citizens.

represents an important step toward providing data that contributes to forming a more comprehensive picture of the reality of continuous

learning in Omani society, in terms of opportunities available to individuals, their participation levels, and the skills they possess.

He added that the survey results will contribute to identifying strengths and future needs, supporting planning and the development of relevant initiatives and programmes, and providing indicators that can be utilised to enhance community members’ access to learning opportunities and support national efforts aimed at keeping pace with cognitive and digital changes.

The project is expected to contribute to building a national

database that can be relied upon for future measurements, producing usable indicators, and yielding practical recommendations that contribute to developing learning opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

For his part, Dr Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Abri, Secretary-General of the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, pointed out that this survey comes within national efforts aimed at promoting lifelong learning as a primary driver for elevating learning quality and improving life and societal well-being.

— ONA

SHORT TAKES



The project is being developed on a land area of approximately 250,000 square metres. — ONA

SAMAYIL HOSPITAL PROJECT 89% COMPLETE

SAMAYIL: The completion rate of the new Samayil Hospital project in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has surpassed 89 per cent, marking a qualitative leap in the governorate’s healthcare system, as the facility will provide integrated and specialised health services with significantly greater capacity compared to the existing hospital.

The project is being developed on a land area of approximately 250,000 square metres, with a total built-up area of around 66,000 square metres, at an overall cost of nearly RO 45 million.

The hospital will initially operate with a bed capacity of 170 inpatient beds, totalling 252 beds, with the potential for future expansion to reach 300 beds. The main building comprises a basement and four floors, and houses five operating theatres, an emergency and accident department, outpatient clinics, radiology and imaging services, central laboratories, dialysis units, physiotherapy facilities, a burn unit, specialised centres, an operating and endoscopy wing, as well as intensive care units for adults, paediatrics, neonates and cardiac patients.

The project is expected to be substantially completed by the end of this year (2026), in line with the existing schedule. The commencement of patient services, however, will be contingent upon the finalisation of construction works, the installation of medical and technical equipment, the successful completion of testing and commissioning, and the fulfilment of all operational readiness requirements. — ONA

DHOFAR SEIZES 2.76 TONNES OF EXPIRED FISH

SALALAH: Consumer protection officials in Dhofar have seized 2,763 kg of expired fish from a commercial establishment after inspectors found that production and expiry dates on the products had been manipulated.

The Directorate-General of Consumer Protection in Dhofar carried out the operation in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality. Legal measures have been initiated against the establishment, while the seized products were held in accordance with applicable procedures.

The seizure is part of ongoing inspection campaigns to protect consumer health and ensure the safety of food products in the market.

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR FESTIVAL ATTRACTS OVER 300,000 VISITORS

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2026, held in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, has attracted over 300,000 visitors from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad over 45 days of diverse programming. Attendees were distributed across festival venues, villages, and various tourist destinations throughout the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al



The festival ran from 15 July to 29 August. — ONA

Akhdhar.

The festival, which ran from 15 July to 29 August, featured a multifaceted programme encompassing cultural, entertainment, sporting, and family-oriented events, alongside adventure programmes and activities tailored to the unique natural environment of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. — ONA

Recovery centre targets completion within 2 years

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 30

A DEDICATED recovery and rehabilitation centre planned for Thamrait is expected to be completed within 18 to 24 months, its developers told the Observer, outlining the first timeline for a project intended to form the foundation of a wider network of specialised recovery services across Oman.

The Thamrait facility will constitute the first phase of the Dhofar Recovery Center project and is expected to combine prevention, treatment and rehabilitation with longer-term support to help recovering patients reintegrate into their families, workplaces and communities.

“We are going to build it in Thamrait. We signed the agreement today and will start now,” Diva Unnikrishnan, a partner in the project, said in an exclusive interview.

“The plan is to complete it within 18 to 24 months.”

The timeline provides further details beyond those contained in the agreement announced on Sunday at the Social Investment and Sustainable Development Forum 2026 in Salalah.

Under the agreement, the Social Investment Centre, the Directorate General of Health Services in Dhofar and the Dhofar Recovery Centre will study the establishment of a specialised facility under a non-profit and sustainable social investment model.

Sakshi Kyla Chhapolia, co-founder and partner of the Dhofar Recovery Center, said Thamrait would serve as the starting point for a broader expansion plan.

“We are starting phase one with Thamrait, and it will be expanded into Salalah and multiple centres across Oman,” she said.



The Social Investment and Sustainable Development Forum 2026 was held in Salalah.

First phase to focus on prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration, with wider expansion planned across Oman

The developers envisage establishing a wider network across the Sultanate over the next three to five years before considering expansion into other GCC markets.

No details have yet been disclosed on the investment value, capacity or financing structure for the Thamrait phase.

Investor material for the project outlines a larger long-term vision, describing an integrated healthcare and human-development ecosystem with a proposed total investment of \$130 million, a 300,000-square-metre campus and 13 specialised centres.

The proposed services would extend beyond addiction recovery to include mental health and psychiatry, physical and neurological rehabilitation, preventive healthcare, vocational reintegration, research and training.

However, the investor material identifies Salalah as the strategic location for the wider integrated development, while the developers told the Observer that Thamrait will constitute the first phase. The relationship between the Thamrait facility and the proposed larger Salalah development has yet to be

clarified.

The developers said the first phase would be built around a continuum of care, beginning with prevention and early intervention, followed where necessary by treatment, rehabilitation and longer-term support.

They said the model would draw on mental health specialists, international expertise and data-based approaches. Some services are also intended to be offered free of charge, although eligibility and funding arrangements have yet to be announced. The project is also being positioned as part of a broader effort in Oman to shift corporate social responsibility towards sustainable social investment.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that Sunday’s forum was the result of nearly two years of work since the chamber established its Social Investment Centre.

“Our aim is to move from social responsibility towards sustainable social investment with growing impact, and with an impact that can be measured in society,” he said.

Oman’s dialects offer insights into Arabia’s linguistic past: Historian

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

Oman occupies a quiet but significant place in the history of the Arabic language, with its dialects offering valuable insights into the linguistic heritage of southern Arabia, according to British Arabist, academic and travel writer Tim Mackintosh-Smith.

Mackintosh-Smith, who has lived in the Arab world for more than 40 years, said the dialects of southern Arabia, including Oman, are more significant to the history of Arabic than is often recognised.

“Oman sits on one of the oldest trade corridors in the world, and that geography meant its Arabic was shaped

by merchants, sailors and poets long before modern borders existed,” he said.

The historian, best known for Travels with a Tangerine and Arabs: A 3,000-Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires, has spent much of his career examining how Arabic evolved and spread across regions.

He argues that language, rather than ethnicity or politics, has been a key force connecting Arab peoples over centuries.

“Oman’s historic role in trade with India and China is part of the story of how Arabic loanwords moved into Swahili, Indonesian, Malay and other languages. Oman’s ports were key nodes in that spread,” said



Oman’s historic role in trade with India and China is part of the story of how Arabic loanwords moved into Swahili, Indonesian, Malay and other languages. Oman’s ports were key nodes in that spread.

MACKINTOSH-SMITH

Mackintosh-Smith, who is a visiting professor of Arab Studies.

He describes language as the “hidden thread” underpinning Arab cultural unity and points to the development of classical or “high” Arabic from the traditions of tribal poets and soothsayers.

Mackintosh-Smith, who lived in Yemen for more than 30 years, refers to the country as “dictionary land”, where a single word can have multiple meanings depending on its context.

He views Oman as part of the wider linguistic history of southern Arabia, where elements of classical Arabic have survived alongside local dialects.

“Southern dialects

like those in Yemen, and by extension Oman, are linguistically conservative and closer to Ancient South Arabian forms.

Oman’s history is also tied to the spread of Arabic through trade across the Indian Ocean,” he said.

In Travels with a Tangerine, Mackintosh-Smith retraces the route of the famed Moroccan traveller Ibn Battutah, including his journey through Oman. His work explores how Arabic travel literature has documented the region, including references to places such as Musandam in early texts.

“Oman is a good example of what I mean by mobility. People moved, goods moved, and words moved

with them. But because Oman also had deep local roots, not everything got washed away,” he said.

His work on Arab history combines a broad historical narrative with an examination of the evolution and spread of the Arabic language.

He traces how Arabic, after spreading beyond the Arabian Peninsula, influenced languages including Swahili, Indonesian and Malay through centuries of trade.

Omani ports such as Muscat, Suhar and Salalah played an important role in these Indian Ocean networks, connecting the Arabian Peninsula with East Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.



SIHAM AL SAIDI

DURING

Khareef, Dhofar is often viewed through a familiar lens — mist-covered mountains, green valleys and spectacular landscapes. But beyond the scenes that attract visitors lies a more secretive world, shaped by predators, prey and the constant struggle for survival.

Tracking these animals is among the most demanding forms of wildlife photography. Unlike photographing birds or landscapes, predator photography begins long before the camera is raised.

It requires reading tracks, identifying feeding sites, studying movement patterns, understanding the terrain and patiently waiting for an animal that may never appear.

The work can also be challenging and potentially dangerous. Predators are unpredictable, while

their habitats often lie in steep and isolated mountain terrain.

Photographers may spend long hours moving quietly through difficult landscapes, sometimes returning repeatedly to the same location before capturing a single meaningful image. The real skill lies not only in finding an animal, but also in knowing when to approach, when to wait and when to retreat.

In Dhofar, this expertise is becoming increasingly valuable in understanding the region's wildlife. Every documented track, feeding site or behavioural observation can contribute to the scientific understanding of species that remain poorly studied.

Among those who have dedicated years to this field is Mohammed bin Al Bahr al Rawas, a wildlife photographer, wildlife researcher and predator tracker in Dhofar.

His fieldwork has included tracking and photographing the Arabian leopard, Arabian lynx, Nubian ibex, Blanford's fox, rock hyrax, Arabian wild cat, Arabian

Khareef offers researchers and trackers a rare chance to observe how wildlife responds to increased vegetation, water availability and changes in prey movement

TRACKING DHOFAR'S HIDDEN PREDATORS



Tracking starts with understanding the animal and its environment. You are looking for the signs the animal leaves behind — its tracks, movement, feeding behaviour and relationship with the landscape. It may take months to get one scene.

MOHAMMED BIN AL BAHR AL RAWAS
Wildlife photographer & predator tracker



wolf, striped hyena, honey badger, Indian grey mongoose, white-tailed mongoose and porcupine.

"For me, tracking starts with understanding the animal and its environment," Al Rawas explains. "You are not simply looking for the animal itself. You are looking for the signs it leaves behind — its tracks, movement, feeding behaviour and relationship with the landscape. It may take months to get one scene."

His work has also crossed the boundaries between photography and scientific documentation. One of his recent achievements was documenting a Black Eagle nest in Jabal Samhan, providing valuable visual evidence of nesting activity within one of Dhofar's most significant mountain ecosystems. The project took four months to complete.

Al Rawas has also participated in three international documentary productions associated with National Geographic, Discovery and the BBC, helping

introduce Dhofar's wildlife to international audiences.

Today, his fieldwork continues through projects focused on the striped hyena, Arabian leopard and Arabian lynx in western Dhofar.

What makes this work particularly significant is its potential to transform wildlife photography into a form of field research. In a region where seasonal changes dramatically reshape habitats, Khareef offers trackers and researchers a valuable opportunity to observe how wildlife responds to increased vegetation, water availability and changes in prey movement.

The true wealth of Khareef, therefore, is not only what visitors can see. Some of its greatest treasures remain hidden in the mountains, leaving behind tracks, calls, nests and fleeting encounters for those with the knowledge and patience to follow them.

In Dhofar, tracking predators shows that the camera can do more than capture beauty — it can help decode it.



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SHORT TAKES



REGISTRATION OPENS FOR THEATRE FESTIVAL IN DECEMBER



EMAD BIN MOHSEN AL SHANFARI

MUSCAT: The Omani Theatre Association (OTA) has opened registration for the inaugural Muscat Theatre Festival, scheduled to take place in Muscat Governorate in December, providing a new national platform for theatre groups,

universities and colleges to showcase their productions and compete. Applications will be accepted until November 1, 2026, after which a specialised committee will review and evaluate the submitted productions and select the performances for the festival's final programme.

Participation is open to Omani theatre groups as well as universities and colleges. The competition is limited to group theatre productions, with monodrama, duodrama and pantomime excluded. Each participating entity may submit only one production, while the festival management reserves the right to exclude works that do not meet the requirements or are deemed unsuitable for the festival.

The competition allows both Omani and international theatrical texts. However, the Best Theatrical Text Award is reserved for Omani writers in accordance with the festival regulations. The association is also encouraging productions that address contemporary societal issues.

Emad bin Mohsen al Shanfari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Theatre Association, said the festival will provide a space for Omani theatre practitioners to meet, exchange experiences, compete and present their work.

He said the association aims to support the development of the Omani theatre movement and establish a renewed national platform for theatrical productions. Al Shanfari said the festival forms part of a broader vision for sustaining theatrical activity in Oman. He expressed hope that national theatre festivals would alternate annually, with the Muscat Theatre Festival held one year and the Omani Theatre Festival for Groups, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the following year. — **ONA**

OMAN UNVEILS CYBERSECURITY STRATEGY



MUSCAT: The National Cybersecurity Strategy (2026–2030) provides a national and institutional framework to strengthen cyber resilience, protect national interests, ensure the continuity of essential services and establish a secure and trusted cyberspace that supports innovation and the digital economy, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Prepared by the Electronic Defence Center in partnership with government and private-sector entities, the strategy seeks to safeguard Oman's national interests in cyberspace and strengthen the country's ability to address evolving cyber threats.

The strategy is built around five key pillars: cybersecurity governance, cyber resilience, cyber capacity-building and awareness, cyber cooperation, and the cyber economy. Its guiding principles include an integrated government approach, sustainable capacity-building, viable national initiatives, cyber foresight, effective local partnerships, international cooperation, and resilience and adaptability. Key priorities include strengthening cybersecurity governance, enhancing public-private sector cooperation, updating legislation, raising national preparedness, countering cyber threats, developing national capabilities. — **ONA**

Military Technological College organises orientation week

MUSCAT: The Military Technological College (MTC) organised the orientation week activities for students of the 14th batch for the academic year 2026-2027, comprising General Education Diploma students from the Higher Education Admission Center programme and applicants via training and educational programmes coupled with employment in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, to supply the Ministry of Defence, the Sultan's



Armed Forces, and security and civil entities with qualified national technical competencies. The orientation week included visual presentations on academic stages and learning resources at the college, alongside a number of different lectures. Brigadier Ahmed bin Khalfan al Hadidi, Dean of the Military Technological College, welcomed the students of the 14th batch, emphasising the importance of this stage and their joining. — **ONA**

SQU welcomes 41st cohort as 3,120 begin studies

SULTAN

Qaboos University (SQU) has welcomed its 41st cohort for the 2026-2027 academic year, with around 3,120 students admitted across its various colleges.

HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, met the new students at the Grand Hall of the University Cultural Centre as part of the orientation programme.

The programme introduces students to the University's colleges, departments, centres, services and facilities, including academic support, cultural and sporting activities, and social, psychological and health services.

Students are also briefed on the preparatory programme examinations, academic regulations and other requirements.

Addressing the students, His Highness emphasised that joining the University marks not only an important achievement but also the beginning of a new responsibility. He encouraged them to see their university years as an opportunity to build knowledge, skills and character, rather than simply earn a degree.

He stressed that university life requires students to take greater responsibility for their decisions, plan their futures and accept the consequences of their choices.

He also highlighted the



Students were briefed on the preparatory programme examinations and academic regulations.



Vice-Chancellor encourages students to see their university years as an opportunity to build knowledge, skills and character, rather than simply earn a degree

importance of participation in research, student activities, sports, community service and volunteering in developing well-rounded individuals.

The orientation programme will continue until September

10. Foundation Programme examinations will run from August 31 to September 7, while college meetings with students will continue for two weeks.

The 2026-2027 academic year will officially begin on September 13.

‘The Forum’ to turn student ideas into innovation

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

The Indian School Al Ghubrah (ISG) has launched The Forum, a multipurpose innovation hub designed to help students transform ideas into concepts, prototypes and real-world solutions by bringing together design, technology and human values.

The Forum was inaugurated by Dr Badr bin Hamoud al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, in the presence of ISG founder Dr P Mohamed Ali, ISG President Ahmed Rayees, Ministry of Education officials, school administrators and guests. The launch also featured an exhibition of projects developed by ISG students, offering a glimpse into the school's approach to innovation and interdisciplinary learning.

Addressing students, Dr Al Kharousi encouraged them to dream big, continue learning and ask questions. He stressed the importance of using technology responsibly and harnessing it to improve quality of life.

“My message to the students is to keep learning and asking questions; keep dreaming bigger and bigger as that makes our learning journey joyful and beautiful,” he said.

He added that Oman Vision 2040 seeks to develop students capable of contributing to the advancement of the country and society by embracing the skills and language of the future.

Dr Mohamed Ali, founder of ISG, said



The launch also featured an exhibition of projects developed by ISG students.

the Forum was built on the belief that innovation is a process, not a product. It serves students from Grades 3 to 12 through eight interconnected pods dedicated to presentation, collaboration, innovation, simulation, mentorship, media, creativity, and reading, research and reflection. He explained that an idea could begin with reading or observation, develop through research and collaboration, take shape through design and prototyping, and then be tested, refined and communicated.

“Technology enables this journey, but it is not the destination,” he said, adding that the ultimate aim was to develop students who think critically, connect knowledge, explore possibilities and create solutions ethically and responsibly.

ISG President Ahmed Rayees said the

concept grew from a vision he first shared nearly four years ago, supported by the continued encouragement of the founder to move beyond conventional approaches to education.

“As learning moved beyond textbooks, we envisioned a space where students could question, research, collaborate, design, experiment and create,” Rayees said.

He said the school deliberately moved beyond the idea of a conventional AI or robotics laboratory to create an ecosystem that could support innovators across disciplines. “The Forum gives that vision a physical form,” he said.

The initiative aims to help students identify meaningful problems, think across disciplines and use technology responsibly. It also seeks to move students from being consumers of technology to becoming thoughtful creators and innovators.

According to school officials, the Department of Design, Technology and Innovation (DTI) was challenged to develop an idea within 365 days with the potential to progress towards incubation and intellectual property.

The Forum is designed for the wider learning community, from preschool to Grade 12. DTI is integrated into classroom experiences for preschool through Grade 2, while students in Grades 3 to 12 have a dedicated weekly session at The Forum alongside cross-curricular integration.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pose after signing a joint defence agreement in Mecca. — Reuters file

Turkish, Saudi, Pakistani ministers to hold pact meeting

ISTANBUL: Türkiye will host Saudi Arabia and Pakistan for the first ministerial meeting of their new regional defence grouping on Monday. The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement signed earlier this month commits the three countries to mutual defence in the event of any of them being attacked. The pact came against a backdrop of war between the United States and Iran and attacks in the region. The meeting in Istanbul will set up a “political and defence strategic committee” involving foreign and defence ministers and military chiefs, Turkish foreign ministry sources said. The agreement unites Nato’s second-largest army, Türkiye, with the Islamic world’s only nuclear-armed state, Pakistan, and the leading Gulf power in Saudi Arabia.

Monday’s meeting will be chaired by the Turkish foreign and defence ministers as well as the chief of the general staff. Pakistan is sending Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, along with the defence minister and the commander of the defence forces. Saudi Arabia will be represented by its foreign minister, the defence minister and the chief of the general staff. The participants plan to address boosting defence capabilities. — AFP

Israeli strike kills two people, including a 3-year-old boy



A boy mourns during the funeral of Palestinians who were killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza City. — Reuters

CAIRO: An Israeli air strike killed two Palestinians, including a three-year-old child, in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday, health officials said. Gaza medics said the Israeli air strike near a bakery in Deir Al Balah killed one man, Hussam Nusair, a three-year-old boy, Tayyem Hamdan, and wounded several others. The Israeli military said it attacked and killed a Hamas fighter. It said that Nusair advanced attacks against Israeli forces and civilians. Hamas did not immediately comment on the military’s allegation.

An October 2025 US-backed ceasefire halted major fighting in the shattered territory, but it failed to end strikes by the Israeli military, which it said aimed to thwart attacks by Hamas and other Gaza fighters. Hamas accuses Israel of violating the ceasefire and undermining efforts to implement a broader plan by US President Donald Trump to end the Gaza conflict, which also includes Israeli withdrawals and Hamas disarmament. More than 1,300 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect last October, according to Gazan health officials, while the Israeli military says four Israeli soldiers have been killed. — Reuters

BRUTAL HEATWAVES

Austria records more heat-related deaths



Austria saw its highest-ever recorded number of heat-related deaths this June and July, the health agency said, as Europe reels from a summer of brutal heatwaves. The AGES agency said those two months saw 646 heat-related deaths, as compared to the previous high of 570 in June and July 2024. Austria has seen records tumble in this summer’s heatwaves and drought. A new temperature record of 41.2C was set in eastern Austria in early August. — AFP

NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

Zambia’s oppn leader charged with treason



Zambia’s detained opposition leader Brian Mundubile has been charged with treason. Mundubile was taken into custody after more than two weeks in hiding. Police accuse him of posing a national security threat after security forces raided his home a day after the vote and said they found rifles and other military equipment. “I can confirm that Brian Mundubile and Makebi Zulu have been formally charged... with the offence of treason,” lawyer Kambwa Aongola said. — AFP

CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE

Pakistan suspends 8 officials over ward fire



Pakistan’s prime minister said that eight officials were suspended and called for criminal proceedings against them after 14 infants were killed. Among those suspended were hospital staff, including its executive director and the head of the neonatal department, as well as the director-general of Islamabad’s emergency services. Sharif said that “those responsible for criminal negligence do not deserve any concession” and that they will be “brought to justice”. — AFP

Rescuers battle in the Himalayan disaster



An aerial view shows a vehicle driving past houses covered in mud in the aftermath of flash floods at Baireni in Nepal’s Dhading district. — AFP

RESCUERS

IN Nepal and China raced on Sunday to find thousands of people missing after a glacier collapse unleashed a catastrophic mudslide across the Himalayas, as they faced challenging weather conditions and rising water levels. Authorities said the death toll rose to nearly 800 on Sunday, with more than 3,000 people missing on both sides of the Nepal-China border after a torrent of ice, rock, mud and debris swept through mountain valleys and rivers on Wednesday, causing widespread devastation. The Red Cross has estimated that more than 90,000 people are likely to have been affected by the disaster, which China has linked to the effects of climate change.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Nepalese counterpart during a Saturday telephone call that the mudslide was their “most severe cross-border disaster” in recent years and that rescue operations had risen to an unprecedented level of difficulty and complexity, state broadcaster CCTV reported. Nepal’s disaster authority said 781 people had died, with 2,502 missing. On the Chinese side, authorities said 16 people were killed in Gyirong County and 546 were missing.

Beijing said 261 foreign nationals from 23 countries were unaccounted for in Tibet, near a key border crossing with Nepal. The scale of the disaster has complicated rescue efforts across the rugged Himalayan terrain. Local police in Nepal said that residents and rescue workers had moved to higher ground after the Trishuli River’s water levels rose in recent hours following fresh rainfall, raising fears of additional flooding. Rescue operations have been

FIGURES FROM AUTHORITIES PUT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSING AT 3,048, WITH 797 CONFIRMED DEATHS

MORE THAN 100 WORKERS ARE BELIEVED TO BE TRAPPED INSIDE MULTIPLE HYDROPOWER TUNNELS

HAMPERING RESCUE OPERATIONS WAS THE FORMATION OF A NEW LAKE NEAR THE TIBET BORDER

ABOUT 85 AMERICANS REMAIN MISSING, THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID ON SUNDAY



Nepal Army personnel rescue a man following deadly flash floods and mudslides, in Rasuwa, Nepal. — Reuters

suspended several times since Friday because of bad weather and concerns that a lake formed across the Nepal-China border by the disaster could trigger fresh flooding after it began overflowing into Nepal’s Lhende Khola and Trishuli Rivers. CCTV reported that the lake threatening downstream areas had been largely drained by Saturday evening. But drones detected a landslide late on Saturday that is 2.8 kilometres (1.7 miles) downstream of the lake, forming a new dam and a fresh pool of water.

In Nepal, rescue efforts have increasingly focused on five hydropower projects inundated by the floods, including the Upper Trishuli complex, where authorities said on Friday they received

information that around 350 people could be trapped inside a tunnel. About 10,000 Nepali troops have been deployed alongside specialist teams from China and India. Nepal’s military airlifted heavy machinery to the remote site on Sunday and rescuers reached the entrance of one tunnel, beginning to clear debris blocking access. Authorities said teams carrying oxygen supplies and cameras would enter once access was secured.

“It’s very tough because there’s a lot of debris and we cannot blast things to make our way through,” said Dharam Raj Uprety, chief of Nepal’s national disaster management authority. Lok Bahadur Chhetri, a spokesperson for Nepal’s foreign ministry, said Nepal required international assistance in specialised areas, including tunnel rescue operations, DNA testing, refrigerated storage for bodies and forensic identification of decomposed remains.

Days after desperate relatives moved between hospitals, morgues and relief centres searching for loved ones, authorities in Nepal began mass burials of hundreds of unidentified victims whose bodies had started to decompose. In Chitwan district, about 200 km from the disaster zone, authorities dug hundreds of graves in a forest at Devghat for bodies swept downstream from the flood-hit Rasuwa region. “We were left with no other option,” said Ganesh Aryal, chief district officer of Chitwan. “Our concern was the risk to public health posed by the rapid decomposition of the bodies.”

Authorities buried 96 unidentified bodies on Saturday and planned to bury more than 100 others on Sunday as recovery teams continued retrieving victims from rivers and debris. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Police officers secure the area where a shooting occurred, in Aarau, northern Switzerland. — AFP

Police manhunt in Switzerland after fatal rave shooting

AARAU: Swiss police were on Sunday hunting gunmen who opened fire at a rave, killing one person and wounding five others, some of them seriously. The shooting, which happened in the early hours in Aarau, near Zurich, and sent partygoers running for cover, is a rare event in the Alpine nation.

According to local media, shots were fired before 3:00 am near the Aarauer Rave, an annual techno party attended by some 3,500 people at the Aarau racetrack from Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning. “A 22-year-old woman died of her injuries at the scene. Four men and one woman, aged between 24 and 27, were taken to hospital. They are suffering from injuries ranging from minor to serious,” local police announced on X. “Searches to find the perpetrators, who are currently unknown, are under way,” it added. “Any possible motives as well as the exact circumstances of the act remain to be clarified.” Police were unable to say how many suspects there were nor the type of firearms used in the shooting. A large-scale police operation swung into action in the area and beyond “as a precaution”, the authorities said. — AFP

BOAT CAPSIZES OFF NORTH CYPRUS



At least six people died when a ferry capsized off Northern Cyprus on Sunday, the head of the local government said, in a preliminary toll to Turkish media. Unal Ustel, prime minister of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), said the vessel had been carrying a total of 267 people when it rolled over shortly after leaving port, according to Turkish state news agency Anadolu. Türkiye’s ambassador to Nicostia, Ali Murat Basceri, confirmed there were deaths, without giving a number. He told Turkish state television network TRT that “the large majority of the 259 passengers have been rescued”. — AFP

Russia preparing ‘massive strikes’ on Ukraine’s energy

MOSCOW: Russia’s defence ministry on Sunday said it was gearing up for large-scale attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure in a tit-for-tat response to strikes by Kyiv. “Russian forces have begun preparations for massive strikes against facilities in Ukraine’s energy sector in response to the ongoing attacks by the Kyiv regime on civilian infrastructure and on Russia’s oil and energy complex,” it said on Telegram. Last winter, Moscow repeatedly

hit Ukrainian power plants, devastating the country’s energy sector and plunging millions of people into cold and darkness in sub-zero temperatures. Both sides have for several months escalated long-range strikes, targeting infrastructure such as warehouses, businesses, oil and port facilities, as well as ships, increasing civilian casualties. On Sunday, the Russian army claimed to have struck a plant in Kyiv

producing asbestos and cement whose warehouses, it said, were used to store explosives, as well as a manufacturer of drones and munitions. The death toll from a Russian strike on an arms depot near Kyiv has risen to 38, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday. The strike on the Ukrainian military depot storing ammunition, drones and explosives triggered a huge explosion and fire, and

secondary detonations that sent flames shooting into the surrounding area. Emergency services in the town of Myla have managed to put out most of the fires and bomb disposal teams are working to clear the site, Zelensky wrote on Telegram. Russia launched at least two missiles and 267 drones at Ukraine between late on Friday and early on Saturday, according to the Ukrainian air force. — AFP

ICELAND VOTES ‘NO’ TO RESUMING EU TALKS

ICELAND VOTED ‘No’ to resuming membership negotiations with the European Union, final referendum results showed on Sunday, dealing a blow to Brussels which had been keen to welcome a new wealthy member. In a vote held on Saturday, 52.8 per cent of Icelanders rejected the resumption of EU entry talks suspended 13 years ago, while 47.2 per cent voted ‘Yes’, according to the official tally published by RUV, the public broadcaster. The result will be a disappointment to Brussels, which had appeared willing to compromise on thorny issues to facilitate Iceland’s accession. The result will also likely bury the EU question in Iceland until at least 2028. Far-right leaders in Britain and France hailed the result. “At a time when some are pushing for greater federalism and the transfer of sovereignty to the European Commission, this vote reminds us that another Europe is possible, a Europe of free, sovereign nations cooperating voluntarily on matters of common interest,” France’s Marine Le Pen wrote on X. “Congratulations to Iceland on voting to keep their independence,” Reform UK leader Nigel Farage wrote on the same platform. The country of just under 400,000 people applied to join the EU in the wake of a 2009 financial crisis that devastated its economy. Membership talks were then suspended in 2013



Supporters of the ‘No’ campaign wave Icelandic flags during a rally in Reykjavik, Iceland. — AFP

when a Eurosceptic government came to power. Amid growing international tensions, Iceland’s current government headed by Social Democratic Prime Minister Kristrun Frostadottir wanted to sound out Icelanders on deepening their ties to the EU. The island is already closely linked to the EU as a member of the EEA and the free-movement Schengen zone, ties which will remain unchanged. The referendum result is non-binding but the government has vowed to respect it. Debates ahead of the vote had mainly revolved around domestic and economic issues, though the war in Ukraine and US President Donald Trump’s ambitions for neighbouring Greenland — which he has mixed up with Iceland on

several occasions — also featured. The campaign had “lifted discussions about the EU, about Iceland’s place in the world, about our general geopolitical situation and status, to a higher level”, Frostadottir said on Saturday after she cast her ballot. She was openly in favour of a ‘Yes’, but “we will be fine also if it’s a ‘No’,” she said. Frostadottir had vowed that in the event of ‘No’, the EU membership issue would not be put back on the political agenda during her mandate, which ends in 2028. Political analysts said it was unlikely the government would resign in the event of a ‘No’ victory, though it could emerge weakened by the rejection. The campaign divided Iceland down the middle. According to RUV, voter turnout was 82.5 per cent,

the highest participation in any Icelandic vote since April 2009 parliamentary elections during its crippling financial crisis. Had the ‘Yes’ camp won, the government would have had a mandate to resume negotiations with Brussels, including on the hotly contested issue of fishing — a pillar of Iceland’s economy and part of its national identity, and over which Reykjavik wants to retain exclusive control. Any accession agreement would have then been put to a new referendum in Iceland. The fisheries sector has been fiercely opposed to joining the bloc — 90 per cent of companies in the industry are against the idea — and the EU had tried to woo them with a conciliatory approach ahead of the vote. EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos had said Brussels and other EU member states would be willing to “find creative solutions” to Iceland’s “unique specificities on fisheries and agriculture”. An EU source in Brussels said: “I don’t think anyone (in the EU) wants to block an accession over a question of fish.” Brussels had hoped to be able to present wealthy Iceland as an example of positive enlargement that could also make it more palatable for member states to agree to take in poorer countries like Montenegro. It would also have enabled it to enlarge its presence in the strategic Arctic region, and perhaps helped change some minds in ultra-wealthy non-EU member Norway. — AFP

Nasa launches Roman telescope on cosmic mapping mission

WASHINGTON: Nasa launched its new flagship space telescope on Sunday, embarking on a multi-year mission to create an unprecedented map of the cosmos and shed light on some of the biggest mysteries in physics. Designed to take a panoramic view of the vast reaches of space, the Roman Space Telescope “will help unlock the secrets of the universe,” US President Donald Trump said on Friday during a ceremony at Nasa headquarters in Houston, Texas. Standing over 12 meters tall, the state-of-the-art observatory launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 7:26 am aboard a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket. Developed over more than a decade at a cost topping \$4 billion, the telescope is named after pioneering US astronomer Nancy Grace Roman, who became known as the “Mother of Hubble,” another of Nasa’s flagship telescopes. While Hubble revealed that the universe is expanding faster than previously thought, Roman will seek to answer some of the other unsolved mysteries, including those of dark matter and dark energy. “Roman will give the Earth a new atlas of the universe,” Nasa

Developed over more than a decade at a cost topping \$4 billion, the telescope is named after pioneering US astronomer Nancy Grace Roman, who became known as the “Mother of Hubble,” another of Nasa’s flagship telescopes

administrator Jared Isaacman said in April when he unveiled the project to the press. With a field of view more than 100 times larger than Hubble’s — and significantly wider than James Webb’s — Roman will survey vast swaths of the sky from a vantage point 1.5 million kilometres from Earth, which it will take about 100 days to reach. Designed to work in tandem with other observatories such as Webb, which offers greater power and precision, Roman aims to discover thousands of exoplanets as well as tens of thousands of supernovae, the explosive deaths of massive stars. “It will be the biggest catalogue of astronomical objects anybody’s ever produced, and it will help us understand how common are solar systems like our own,” Dave Content, Roman’s technical manager, said. The new telescope will also shed light on two of the biggest mysteries in physics: dark matter and dark energy. Their origins remain unknown, but together they are believed to make up about 95 per cent of the universe. Dark matter is thought to act as a kind of gravitational glue, while dark energy is believed to be a repulsive force driving



A SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket lifts off carrying Nasa’s Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. — Reuters

the universe’s expansion. With its infrared vision, Roman will be able to detect light emitted by celestial objects billions of years ago, effectively looking back in time and offering scientists a glimpse into the universe’s distant past and helping them better understand these two mysterious phenomena.

Roman’s observations will complement the work of the Rubin Observatory in Chile and the European Space Agency’s (ESA) Euclid probe, and are highly anticipated because they could challenge scientists’ understanding of the universe’s structure. Julie McEnery, Roman’s senior project scientist, said recent research suggests the way scientists have been thinking about the universe’s early expansion, based on the predictions of existing models, may be wrong. “Recent observations hint that our standard model of the universe is incorrect,” she told a press conference on Saturday, adding that Roman will help clear that up. “It will definitively say, ‘Yeah, the model works, or it doesn’t.’ And if it doesn’t, it’s going to provide us with the precision and quality of data that will allow us to start to distinguish between those options.” Scientists and the general public will have access to all of Roman’s data. But the sheer volume will be daunting, Content warned. The telescope will be generating about 1.3 terabytes of data a day, “which means you basically can’t download the data to anybody’s laptop,” he said. — AFP

OPINION

Why the classroom needs a student-centred approach



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

AS THE new academic year approaches, teachers look ahead with a certain amount of excitement and trepidation. Students in higher education were born after 2006 or so, well after the Internet and digital devices became commonplace. For schools, the demographics are even more startling, as primary school students are now part of a post-Covid era. Both Gen Z and Gen A have become part of everyday parlance and recognising their unique needs and circumstances is essential in education. For thoughtful teachers, these are important considerations. The traditional classroom is teacher-fronted, with the syllabus, the methodology and assessment being determined by teachers long before the actual cohort comes into class. Such a style of teaching is now seen to be nearly defunct and incapable of addressing core issues that face a generation that will enter the employment market with multiple technological and demographic challenges. This is where a student-fronted curriculum could be introduced. Essentially, this means that student needs and styles of learning are centred and that they also have a say in the running of a course. It has been defined as ‘an educational

approach that shifts the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student. It recognises that each learner is unique, with their own interests, motivations, and learning styles.’ Such a learning system assumes that the teacher’s role is not to deliver information, much of which is readily available online, but rather to act as a facilitator and a “designer of learning experiences.” This form of learning system is impactful for a number of reasons. Firstly, it recognises students, or learners, as the actual stakeholders of education. This has been lost over the many years when education has been seen as an industrial tool to impart content. This format recognises students as central to the learning process and empowers them to take ownership of their learning, in terms of content, pace and style. Such a system also encourages collaboration and community development among a cohort as they decide on how and what is important to their specific situation and level. This adds to the stakes in learning while creating a shared goal in the classroom. A major development in this system is the method of assessment. As students take ownership of how they would like to be assessed, there is added focus on real-world projects and tasks that will develop knowledge

A student-centred curriculum would give learners a ring-side view of the process of education and support individual strengths and needs

as a process rather than rote learning. The advantages of student-fronted curriculum are clear: they offer personalised, competency-based learning that speaks to the learning styles of each student personally. It also assumes that learners are engaging with topics and areas which are important to them and their community, raising their own stakes in learning while allowing them to determine their own pace. A student-fronted curriculum is not separated from the traditional classroom. Neither does it shift the onus of teaching and learning from professionally qualified teachers to novice and young learners. All it does is to make students be seen as individuals for whom the classroom has a life-long impact, not as a homogeneous, passive unit of similar faces. Education is more than learning content. Today, it is seen to be a holistic path to the development of individual skills, interests and competencies. A student-centred curriculum would give learners a ring-side view of the process of education and support individual strengths and needs. In an age when the very purpose of education is being questioned, learners ought to have a voice in what and how that learning should take place, even if partially.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS REVEAL HERITAGE AMID WAR

RITA EL HAGE

From a Roman temple to ancient olive presses, Lebanon keeps turning up archaeological treasures even as the latest Israel-Hezbollah war has caused excavations to grind to a halt at precious heritage sites in the country’s south. Important discoveries in recent years include the remains of columns and bases from a Roman temple in Maasser al Shouf in the mountains southeast of Beirut, nestled next to a millennia-old cedar forest. “A whole system was built around this temple,” which dates to between the first century BC and the second century AD, said Myriam Ziade, regional antiquities official with the culture ministry. She said the site was turned into a Crusader fortress between the 12th and 13th centuries. The local municipality reported finding huge stone blocks on the hill in 2017, and excavations began five years later with a team from an Italian university, with the dig revealing the ruins of the large temple, she said. Archaeologists are to soon resume work at the site, located “on a network of roads leading from the Mediterranean coast to the Bekaa valley” in the country’s east, she said. The eastern city of Baalbek has one of Lebanon’s best-known landmarks: a stunningly well-preserved Roman temple complex set against the mountainous border with Syria. Lebanon is brimming with archaeological finds showcasing its rich history over thousands of years, from the Phoenician, Persian, Roman and Byzantine periods, the Crusades, and Arab and Islamic sultanates and empires. The United Nations cultural agency Unesco last month added several Lebanese sites to its World Heritage in Danger list. They include the southern coastal city of Tyre, home to a Roman triumphal arch and a second-century hippodrome. The list also includes five castles in south Lebanon’s Jabal Amel area, among them the Crusader-era Beaufort fortress, which Israeli forces captured in May. Sarkis Khoury, head of antiquities at Lebanon’s culture ministry, said the war had forced archaeologists to switch tack. We are “now focused on protecting endangered heritage in southern Lebanon and in the Bekaa, particularly in the Baalbek region”, he said. “Excavations in dangerous areas have come to a halt, and archaeological missions are going through a period of minimal activity throughout Lebanon, especially in the southern regions.” — AFP

I’m not gossiping, I’m just checking the facts

DON’T gossip. I want to make that very clear from the beginning. Of course, I sometimes share useful information about people who are not present, but you may agree with me that this is okay. I may also pass on something interesting that someone told me in confidence, but only to one or two people I trust. And maybe they tell one or two people they also trust. That is not gossip but a problem with the meaning of the word ‘secret’. Come on, guys! Having a larger audience doesn’t make the secret any less safe. I rarely meet anyone who admits to gossiping. Apparently, millions of people gossip, but none of them are people we know. The rest of us simply “share information” or “show concern”. I become worried when I hear myself say, “I don’t gossip, but...” The word but is usually where my good behaviour ends.

A study by psychologists Megan Robbins and Alexander Karan at the University of California, Riverside, looked at 467 people. Published in Social Psychological and Personality Science in 2019, researchers sampled their real conversations and estimated that people spent about 52 minutes every day talking about someone who was not there. Almost an hour a day! Quite an achievement for something nobody seems to do. Even more surprising, about three-quarters of the gossip was neutral. Women gossiped more overall, but mainly in a neutral way and were not more likely than men to spread negative gossip. Younger people did more negative gossip than older people. So gossip welcomes everybody. Finally, something bringing humanity together. Another study of 460 people, published in Frontiers in Psychology in 2019 by Terence Dores Cruz and



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colleagues from universities in the Netherlands and Italy, examined why we gossip. Reasons included enjoyment, getting information, checking whether something is true, protecting others and getting something off our chest. I particularly like “checking whether something is true”. It sounds very professional. When I ask, “Really? What happened next?”, I am not being nosy but just checking the facts. Somebody has to do it. Another experiment, published in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B in 2021 by researchers Flóra Samu and Károly Takács, found that people used about 87 per cent of the opportunities they were given to share information about others. About 46 per cent of the gossip was positive, 30 per cent neutral and 23 per cent negative. Researchers also say gossip can bring people closer. When someone tells me, “I probably shouldn’t tell you this,” I immediately feel important. I have been chosen to receive top-secret information,

so naturally, I would listen more carefully, as it would be rude not to. Gossip may also have helped our ancestors. By talking about others, they could learn who was trustworthy, who was helpful and who should be avoided, especially the person who disappeared when there was work to do and returned when the food was ready. I find this comforting because maybe I am not gossiping but just continuing an ancient human survival skill. Naturally, I find all this research fascinating until the gossip is about me. I am hesitant to say that gossip can inform us, protect us, bring us closer and entertain us. But it can also hurt someone who is not there to explain what happened. The best questions I think are: Is it true? Why am I sharing it? Could it hurt someone? And would I still say it if that person suddenly walked into the room? As for me, I still don’t gossip. I just thought you should know all this. And please, don’t tell anyone I told you.

When remembrance becomes a way of life



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
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THERE ARE moments in history that belong to history and there are moments that continue to speak to every generation! The commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) birth marks one of them. For Muslims, it is a time of remembrance, prayer and reflection.

Perhaps it is also something more personal; a moment to hold a mirror to ourselves and ask whether the values we admire in the Prophet’s life are visible in our own. The story of the Prophet (PBUH) is not simply a story of the past, but it is a story of character. This has been stated in the Holy Quran: “Indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

In a world that often celebrates success through wealth, status and influence, the Prophet’s life offers a different definition of greatness. That meaning is to be trustworthy when no one is watching, be kind when you have the power to be harsh, and remain humble when you have every reason to be proud.

We often associate strength with power, but the Prophet (PBUH) showed that strength can also look like mercy. He faced rejection, hardship and hostility, yet compassion remained key to his character. He cared for the weak, valued his neighbours, treated people with dignity and encouraged generosity.

Today, when society can become divided so

quickly, that example deserves our attention. Perhaps we do not need more arguments; instead, we need more people willing to listen. Perhaps we do not need louder voices, but we need kinder ones.

One of the most difficult lessons in life is learning how to forgive. The Prophet (PBUH) experienced pain and harassment, yet his life demonstrated that anger does not have to become hatred and suffering does not have to produce bitterness. Forgiveness does not remove what happened. It simply refuses to allow yesterday’s wounds to control tomorrow. That is a powerful lesson for families, friendships and communities.

The modern world has many definitions of leadership. The Prophet’s example offers a simple one: leadership is responsibility; he listened, consulted, cared, and served. His example reminds those trusted with authority, whether in a family, workplace, institution, or community, that leadership is not about standing above people. It is about standing for them.

The strongest leader may not be the person with the loudest voice, but the person whose presence makes others feel protected, respected and valued.

Probably, the most beautiful lesson from the Prophet’s life is that character is revealed in ordinary moments. How do we speak when we are angry? How do we treat someone who cannot help us? Do we keep promises? Do we admit when we are wrong? Do we

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help without expecting recognition? Do we forgive?

These questions sound simple, but living by their answers is much harder. Yet that is where remembrance becomes meaningful.

As communities commemorate the Prophet’s birthday, there will be gatherings, prayers, recitations and expressions of love and respect. All of these have meaning. But perhaps the most meaningful tribute begins after the gathering ends.

It is the patience we show at home. The honesty we practice at work. The kindness we offer to a stranger. The meal we share with someone who needs it. The apology we finally make. The anger we choose not to return. The person we help without telling anyone. These are small acts, but great values often survive through small acts.

Centuries after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) walked among people, his example continues to challenge us with a simple question: If we truly admire his character, what part of it can be seen in ours? Perhaps that is the real meaning of commemoration. Not merely looking backward, but carrying something forward.

Not simply telling the story, but living its lessons. Not only remembering a life that brought light, but becoming a source of light for someone else. And perhaps, in the end, that is the most beautiful way to celebrate a birthday that changed history: to let its message change us.

TESTS LOOM FOR BURNHAM AS PARLIAMENT RETURNS

PETER HUTCHISON

Andy Burnham has enjoyed a honeymoon first month as UK prime minister, but the hard trade-offs involved in governing are about to get real as parliament returns from its summer break in the coming days.

Since succeeding Keir Starmer on July 20, Burnham has pleased voters with several low-cost sweeteners, including cutting electricity bills and bus fares, while burnishing his casual man-of-the-people vibes.

He played guitar in Ukraine, and kept up a prolific output of slick social media videos during a self-styled “listening tour” of Britain.

Projecting a sunnier outlook than the straitlaced Starmer, and benefiting from the woes besetting hard-right rival Nigel Farage, Burnham has sparked a poll bounce for his ruling Labour Party.

A YouGov survey published on August 18 found that 46 per cent of Britons view him favourably, up 12 percentage points from when he first arrived at Downing Street.

With lawmakers on holiday, the new prime minister has largely avoided thornier issues during his first weeks in office.

“He’s benefited enormously from parliament not being there,” former senior civil servant Jill Rutter said, adding that it had allowed the 56-year-old Burnham to “control the narrative” so far.

MPs return to Westminster on Tuesday, when Burnham is expected to deliver his first speech to parliament as prime minister.

His government will detail a watering down of contentious plans to release thousands of prisoners early to ease chronic overcrowding in jails.

Burnham said on Sunday that hundreds of more serious offenders will remain behind bars, but conceded he was pushing the prison system to “the very limits of what’s possible without risking... (it)... collapsing within months”.

Then on Wednesday, MPs and the public will learn whether Burnham is any good at facing down the weekly grilling by the leader of the opposition when he takes part in his first Prime Minister’s Questions session.

Looming on the horizon is his government’s first budget on October 28, when Burnham must demonstrate that he can fund his pledges regarding cost-of-living support and ending rough sleeping, all while plugging a huge gap in defence spending.

He must do so against a backdrop of strained public finances and with limited levers to pull due to his commitment not to raise income tax, employee payroll contributions, or a value-added tax on consumer goods.

“That might be when reality starts to hit,” former minister Tony McNulty, who served alongside Burnham in Labour governments of the early 2000s, said. — AFP

To end global hunger, invest in rural communities

THE United Nations recently released its State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2026 report, which, perhaps surprisingly, delivered some encouraging news. While roughly 645 million people experienced hunger in 2025, that was nearly 14 million fewer than in the previous year. For the first time in a decade, the number of hungry people in Africa also declined.

But despite these positive developments, significant regional disparities persist. Most notably, the report finds that food insecurity remains more prevalent in rural communities and disproportionately affects women. The key question facing governments and development organisations, then, is how to improve food security in those communities and accelerate progress towards eliminating hunger.

Four priorities stand out. First, enhancing food security in rural communities requires boosting agricultural productivity on existing farmland in ways that are sustainable and minimise environmental impacts. As growing populations place increasing demands on agricultural systems, simply expanding farmland risks accelerating deforestation and environmental degradation. Producing more on existing farmland is thus essential to meet rising demand without further damaging natural ecosystems.

Healthier soils are critical to efforts to boost agricultural productivity. Any strategy to strengthen food security in rural communities must therefore begin with a simple but fundamental question: Are soils healthy enough to support sustainable increases in crop production?

Unfortunately, recent studies suggest that agricultural productivity in hunger-affected regions remains severely constrained by extensive soil degradation despite decades of attempts to improve soil health.



A farmer prepares the soil for planting at a farm in Kigali, Rwanda. — AFP file photo



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Enhancing food
security in rural
communities
requires boosting
agricultural
productivity on
existing farmland
in ways that
are sustainable
and minimise
environmental
impacts

Recognising that poor soil threatens food and nutrition security, rural livelihoods, and environmental sustainability, African leaders endorsed the ten-year African Fertiliser and Soil Health Action Plan and the longer-term Soil Initiative for Africa Framework in 2024.

The good news is that once the foundational questions about soil health and quality have been answered — using available soil-health tests, as well as science-based indicators and assessments — corrective measures can be taken. There are numerous principles and practices for building soil health, including cover cropping, intercropping, crop rotation, rotational grazing, and the use of organic fertilisers and biofertilisers, as well as minimising soil tillage, maximising soil cover, increasing biodiversity, and maintaining living roots.

Second, efforts to improve soil health must be accompanied by investments in rural farming communities. Food producers need access to improved seed varieties, biofertilisers, water, and emerging technologies such as precision agriculture. Together, these investments could further boost agricultural productivity and bolster food security.

Third, stronger land tenure is crucial to improving food security in rural communities. Land-tenure security has long been recognised as a fundamental pillar of agricultural

production, development, and rural transformation, incentivising farmers to make long-term investments in restoring soil health and adopt other productivity-enhancing practices.

The link between stronger land rights and agricultural productivity is well documented. This link is particularly important for women, who contribute significantly to agricultural production yet remain disadvantaged in land ownership and tenure security. Although the effects of greater land-tenure security vary across regions and policy contexts, ensuring women’s ownership rights can advance gender equality, enhance agricultural productivity, support rural livelihoods, and deliver lasting improvements in food security.

Lastly, governments must invest in the infrastructure that connects rural producers to markets, including electricity, refrigerated transportation, and roads. Better access to urban markets can help farmers generate additional income by enabling them to sell more of what they produce. Improved transport networks can also lower costs, enabling farmers to reinvest their savings in advanced technologies, thereby reducing post-harvest losses while diversifying into a wider range of higher-input crops.

With healthy soils, access to agricultural inputs and emerging technologies such as precision agriculture and AI, robust land-tenure rights, and upgraded infrastructure, rural farms around the world could sustainably increase agricultural productivity. Greater productivity would, in turn, protect livelihoods and help rural communities move from hunger to abundance.

But time is of the essence. While the latest decline in global hunger is encouraging, sustaining and building on this progress will require considerable investment in the rural communities where food insecurity is most entrenched, in Africa and beyond.

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SPORTS

WRESTLINGGLORY



Anas Rex and his partner Sam X during the QPW Tag Team Championship in Doha, Qatar.

OMANI PRO WRESTLERS MAKE HISTORY WITH TEAM TITLE IN QATAR

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

First Omani professional wrestler Anas Rex and his partner Shathan al Balushi (Sam X) have made history by capturing the QPW Tag Team Championship in Qatar on Friday night. This was the first time Omani wrestlers have won a professional wrestling championship outside the Sultanate of Oman.

“This victory means a lot to me, both personally and professionally. I’ve been wrestling professionally for four years now, and winning the QPW Tag Team Championship is without a doubt the biggest milestone of my career so far. To capture officially sanctioned championship gold from QPW in Qatar, a promotion whose championships have previously been held by major WWE stars such as Carlito and Chris Masters, makes this achievement even more special,” Anas al Riyami (Anas Rex) told Oman Observer after winning the crown in Doha with Shadhan bin Ahmed al Balushi (Sam X).

The historic victory of their ‘Omani Daggers’ team sees the two Omanis crowned as champions on an international stage, representing a significant milestone for professional wrestling in the country. Their achievement not only adds a major championship to their careers, but also establishes a landmark moment for Omani wrestling, as two Omani athletes have successfully competed at the highest level and claimed championship gold beyond their national borders.

“The victory is expected to further strengthen the presence of Omani talent in the regional professional wrestling scene and inspire a new generation of wrestlers from the Sultanate of Oman,” the 23-year-old from Barka said.

“More importantly, this victory carries a much greater meaning for me as an Omani. To become one of the first Omani wrestlers to capture professional wrestling championship gold outside of Oman is something I’m extremely proud of.”

In May 2026, Anas al Riyami had made his debut in Saudi Arabia, competing against top contenders in the Arab Championship.

“I hope this accomplishment shows that Omani wrestlers can compete on the regional and international stage and that there is a future for professional wrestling talent coming out of Oman. I’m grateful to everyone who has supported me throughout these four years, and I believe this is only the beginning,” Anas added.



Oman U20 face Qatar in Asian Qualifiers opener

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

OMAN’S NATIONAL under-20 football team will begin their AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers campaign on Monday when they take on hosts Qatar at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha.

Kick-off is scheduled for 8 pm Oman time as the young Red Warriors look for a positive start in Group E, which also includes Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong, China.

Head coach Hamad al Azzani and his squad arrived in Doha on Saturday and held their first training session later in the evening as preparations entered their final stage ahead of the opening fixture. The session focused on sharpening the players’ readiness and helping the squad settle into match conditions following their arrival in the Qatari capital. The Qatar encounter will be an important opening test for Oman, with points at a premium in a compact group where every result could prove decisive in the race for qualification.

Oman will face Saudi Arabia in their second match on Thursday, September 3, before concluding their group campaign against Hong Kong, China, on Sunday, September 6.

The qualifiers are being played under the AFC’s new competition format, with 32 teams divided into eight groups of four. The eight group winners and the seven best runners-up will qualify for the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Finals, joining hosts China.

Al Azzani has named a 23-player squad for the Doha campaign following months of preparation



The young Red Warriors train in Doha ahead of their opening qualifier against hosts Qatar.



Oman will face Saudi Arabia in their second match on Thursday, September 3, before concluding their group campaign against Hong Kong, China, on Sunday, September 6.

that included domestic and overseas training camps as well as a series of international friendly matches.

The final squad comprises Mudathir al Batrani, Al Hassan al Qasimi, Ali al Alawi, Abdulrahman al Busaidi, Khalil Bait Sultan, Ahmed al Fahdi, Fahad Bait Rabia, Abdulmunim al Habsi, Muath al Hinai, Abdullah al Saadi, Al Mutasim al Maqbali, Ibrahim al Shamsi, Yazan al Khaldi, Ziyad al Faraji, Abdullah al Oraimi, Mohammed al Sameen, Abdulaziz al Manwari, Sulaiman al Kharousi, Muzn al Hinai, Hassan al Hinai, Husam al Naabi, Al Waleed al Buraiddi and Esam al Mukhaini.

The current squad represents the final selection from a larger group assessed by the coaching

staff throughout a lengthy preparation programme. Oman’s most recent camp included two friendly matches against Syria, with the first ending in a 1-1 draw before Syria won the second 2-1.

Qatar, meanwhile, will enter the competition on home soil with their own 23-player squad. The hosts have also undergone an extensive preparation programme, including an overseas camp in Slovenia, where they played several friendly matches.

With qualification potentially decided by fine margins, Oman will be aiming to begin strongly against the hosts before turning their attention to the equally demanding encounters against Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong, China.

Oman athletics team set for final Thailand camp

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

Oman’s national athletics team will enter in an intensive preparations stage for the upcoming 20th Asian Games with a final overseas training camp in Bangkok, Thailand, from September 7 to 19, as the athletes will target strong performances at the continental showpiece in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. The Asian Games which will be held from September 19 to October 4, bringing together the leading athletes from across Asia.

Oman’s athletics delegation will feature a strong mix of sprint and field-event specialists, with the national team using the Thailand camp as the final stage of its preparation before travelling to Japan.

The sprint squad featured from Ali bin Anwar al Balushi, Mulhim bin Darweesh al Balushi, Rashid bin Hewishel al Asmi, Mohammed bin Obaid al Saadi, Anas al Riyami and Ahmed al Jabri, who will compete in the 100m, 200m and men’s 4x400m relay. In the women’s sprint events, Mazoon bint Khalfan al Alawi and Azza bint Sultan al Yaarubi will compete in the 100m and 200m. The field-event contingent



Sprinter Ali al Balushi in his recent participation at GCC Games in Doha.

comprised from jumper Salim bin Abdullah al Rawahi, alongside Fatik Abdulghafoor, Mubeen al Kindi and Aliya bint Faiq al Mugheri.

FINAL TEST BEFORE JAPAN

Speaking to Oman Observer, national sprint coach Mohammed al Hooti said the team had been following a continuous preparation programme involving a series of training camps at home and abroad. “The sprint team, including Mulhim al Balushi, Mohammed al Saadi and Mazoon al Alawi are currently in Salalah for a nine-day internal camp as part of our preparation following the

successful camp in Izmir, Türkiye, earlier this month” Al Hooti said.

“We also had a training camp in Spain in June. These continuous camps have helped us maintain momentum and ensure that the athletes are progressing well towards the major competitions ahead.”

The Thailand camp will bring together all members of the national athletics team and will serve as the final preparation phase before the athletes travel to Japan. “We selected Bangkok for the final camp because the weather and climate are relatively similar to the conditions expected in Japan. This will

help the athletes adapt to the environment and prepare for the technical and physical demands of the Asian Games,” Al Hooti explained.

The athletes will undergo two training sessions each day, in the morning and evening, with particular attention given to sprint technique, starting strategies and race execution.

Before heading to Thailand, Oman’s athletes will compete in the inaugural Muscat Grand Prix – World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze, scheduled for September 5 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

Al Hooti believes the home event will provide an important competitive test for the national team. “The Muscat Grand Prix will be a very good opportunity for our athletes to compete before travelling to Thailand. It will give them valuable race exposure and serve as an important test of their readiness ahead of the Asian Games,” he said.

Competing against international athletes in Muscat will allow the Omani sprinters to assess their current form under competitive conditions and make final adjustments to their preparations before the continental event.

SHORT TAKES



Shakeel Ahmad in action against Singapore on Sunday

OMAN START STRONG AT ACC PREMIER CUP

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

Oman began their ACC Men’s Premier Cup campaign in emphatic fashion on Sunday, overcoming an early wobble with a powerful batting recovery before their bowlers completed a comprehensive 131-run victory over Singapore in their Group B opener at the Bayuemas Oval in Malaysia.

After Singapore won the toss and opted to field, Oman were quickly reduced to 9 for two and later slipped to 52 for three with the dismissals of Hasnain Ul Wahab, Jatinder Singh and Karan Sonavale. But the middle-order trio of Hammad Mirza, Mujibur Ali and captain Vinayak Shukla combined to turn the innings around, lifting Oman to an imposing 316 for nine from their 50 overs.

Mirza was central to the recovery, sharing a valuable 75-run fourth-wicket partnership with Mujibur. He brought up a composed half-century from 60 balls, hitting five fours and a six, before falling for exactly 50.

Mujibur continued the rebuilding job and then accelerated, scoring a fluent 71 from 80 deliveries with 10 fours. His dismissal at 192 ended another important stand, this time a 65-run fifth-wicket partnership with Shukla.

The Oman captain then took centre stage. Shukla, leading the side in his first major assignment as captain, produced the innings’ defining assault, smashing 88 from only 56 balls. His knock contained nine fours and three sixes and came at a strike rate of more than 157 as Oman transformed a competitive total into a formidable one.

Jay Odedra added an unbeaten 29 from 25 balls and Hassnain Shah chipped in with 18 from 13, helping Oman add useful runs in the closing overs.

Singapore’s chase never gained sustained momentum. Skipper Manpreet Singh top-scored with 49 from 56 balls, while opener Suryansh Gulecha provided a brief burst with 30 from just 16 deliveries. Pranav Sudarshan also struck a quick 23 from 13 balls, but Singapore repeatedly lost wickets before any partnership could develop into a serious challenge.

Oman’s left-arm spinner Shakeel Ahmed was particularly impressive, claiming three wickets for 35 runs from his 10 overs, including a maiden, to keep the Singaporean middle order under pressure.

He was matched by pacer Hassnain Shah, who also finished with three wickets, conceding only 29 runs in seven overs. Their combined figures of six wickets for 64 runs effectively broke the back of the chase. Jitenkumar Ramanandi added one wicket for 17 from five economical overs, while Karan Sonavale took one for 31.

Singapore were eventually bowled out for 185 in 42.3 overs.



Players compete for possession during the beach handball contests at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment. — Yousef al Siyabi

Beach sports championship opens in Dhofar

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

THE FIFTH edition of the Oman Schools Beach Sports Championship opened in Salalah, Dhofar, with intense competition in beach volleyball and beach handball.

Organised by the Oman School Sports Federation, the event runs from August 29 to September 3 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment, bringing together 102 students from education directorates across Oman.

The opening round featured 12 matches, six in each sport, as teams began their campaigns seeking strong results and places in the knockout stages.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL
Al Batinah North defeated Dhofar 2-0, while Al Batinah South beat Al Buraimi by the same score. Muscat also recorded a 2-0 win over Al Sharqiyah South, while Al Sharqiyah North overcame Al Wusta 2-0. Al Batinah North then beat Al Batinah South 2-0, with Al Dhahirah closing the round with a 2-0 victory over Al Buraimi.

Six more volleyball matches are scheduled for Monday, including Al Sharqiyah South against Al Sharqiyah North, Al Wusta against Al Dakhiliyah, and Al Batinah South against Al Dhahirah.

BEACH HANDBALL
Al Dakhiliyah edged Al Sharqiyah South 2-1 in a closely fought match. Al Batinah South defeated Al Sharqiyah North 2-0, while Muscat beat Al Batinah North 2-0. Musandam overcame Dhofar 2-1, Al Sharqiyah South defeated Al Sharqiyah North 2-0, and Al Batinah North beat Al Dhahirah 2-0.

The second round continues on Monday with six matches, including Al Dakhiliyah against Al Batinah South, Muscat against Dhofar and Al Batinah North against Musandam.

PREPARATIONS
Mohammed al Kindi, Secretary of the School Sports Committee in Al Dakhiliyah, said the governorate began preparations early by selecting outstanding school players for its beach volleyball and beach handball teams. Training started after July, with three sessions a week focused on technical skills, fitness, teamwork and tactics suited to beach sports.

He added that both teams played friendly matches before the championship to assess their levels and correct weaknesses, helping improve their readiness. The preparations, he said, aim to ensure a strong representation while giving players valuable experience and strengthening teamwork and competitive spirit.

Salim al Najashi said the Directorate

General of Education in Al Sharqiyah South had completed intensive preparations for its two teams through training sessions and friendly matches designed to assess the technical and physical levels of students selected from school competitions.

He said the beach volleyball team is determined to retain the title it won in 2024 and 2025, with a new young line-up featuring three players.

The beach handball team, runners-up in 2025, will seek a strong performance with a renewed squad selected according to the specified age categories.

The championship features nine beach handball teams and 10 beach volleyball teams, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semifinals. The semifinals will be held on Wednesday, followed by the finals and awards ceremony on Thursday.

The event is supported by OQ Group, the strategic sponsor of the Oman School Sports Association , in cooperation with Oman Development Bank and Badr Al Samaa Medical Centre, and in partnership with the Directorate General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar and the Oman Handball and Volleyball Association.

The championship also serves as a platform for identifying and developing young talent and strengthening the pathway from school sport to national teams.

OFA STEPS UP FAN ENGAGEMENT FOR JINDAL LEAGUE

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

The Oman Football Association (OFA) on Sunday unveiled a new fan-engagement strategy for the 2026-27 Jindal League season, sponsored by Jindal Steel, with RO 132,500 allocated in awards and incentives to boost attendance, strengthen ties between clubs and their supporters and enhance the overall matchday experience. The strategy was announced during a press conference held at the Hormuz Grand Muscat, attended by OFA officials, Sami al Sahib Vice-President Corporate Strategy at Jindal Steel, and media representatives.

Under the theme “Full stands, engaged clubs,

connected communities,” the initiative is built around the principle that supporters are not merely numbers in the stands, but an integral part of the competition, club identity and the development of the football product. The OFA, in partnership with Jindal Steel, has allocated RO 100,000 for fan excellence awards, to be distributed in two phases at the end of the first round and at the conclusion of the season.

Clubs will be assessed according to measurable criteria covering attendance and consistency, positive support and interaction, promotion of club identity, media and fan content, community initiatives and sportsmanship. A specialised committee will oversee



Media representatives attend the press conference announcing the new fan-engagement strategy for the Jindal League in Muscat.

the evaluation process using unified criteria to ensure fairness and equal opportunities. Mohammed al Yahmadi, Secretary-General of the OFA, said the initiative represents a new approach to fan engagement that goes beyond increasing attendance and focuses on building a

sustainable supporter culture.

“We aim through this strategy to move from the concept of attendance to belonging, where the supporter is not merely a spectator but a partner in creating the atmosphere of the competition, highlighting the identity of the club and

strengthening its presence in the community,” he said.

A further RO 32,500 has been allocated for incentive awards during league rounds, including categories such as Best Supporters’ Group and Player of the Round, bringing the total value of awards and incentives under the initiative to RO 132,500.

Sami al Sahib said Jindal Steel’s support reflects the company’s commitment to sustainable initiatives that strengthen community engagement and encourage greater participation by youth and families in football.

The strategy is based on six main pillars: bringing supporters back to stadiums and improving the fan experience; the

Best Supporters’ Group competition; media and content; identity and culture; community involvement and volunteering; and impact measurement. It also seeks to encourage supporters to showcase the identity of their clubs and wilayats through Omani culture, arts and heritage, while creating greater opportunities for young people in media, design, organisation, marketing and volunteering.

The season-ending awards will also recognise outstanding performers, including Best Player, Promising Player, Goalkeeper, Top Scorer, Coach, Administrator, Referee and Assistant Referee, along with awards covering media, organisation and match coordination.

SPORTS

MESSI SCORES 4 AS INTER MIAMI ROUTS MONTREAL

LIONEL MESSI scored four goals in a Major League Soccer match for the first time in his career and added an assist to help host Inter Miami snap a five- game winless skid across all competitions with a 7-1 rout of CF Montreal on Saturday night.

Messi broke a 1-1 tie shortly before halftime, added a second goal in the 52nd minute, a third in the 83rd minute and a fourth on a free kick in the sixth minute of second-half stoppage time. Messi has 18 goals this season and passed Dallas’ Petar Musa (16) for the lead in the MLS Golden Boot race. Musa and Dallas visit St. Louis City SC on Sunday.

It was also the ninth time in Messi’s pro career that he’s scored four or more goals in a match.

Inter Miami (12-4-6, 42 points) secured a needed three points while Montreal (5-11-6, 21 points) had a four-game unbeaten streak in league play snapped.

Casemiro, Luis Suarez and rookie Alexander Shaw each also scored one goal.

Inter Miami assistant coach Rafael Perez coached the match with Guillermo Hoyos watching from a skybox at the stadium. Hoyos was suspended for the match for violating the league’s Late Kickoff Policy multiple times in recent matches. Hoyos will soon be replaced by Argentine Kily

Gonzalez, who was hired this week but is waiting for the necessary paperwork to clear so he can join the team in the United States.

Casemiro headed home a ball off a corner kick by Telasco Segovia to open the scoring in the 20th minute.

Montreal leveled the match in the 37th minute when Fabian Herbers scored his first goal of the season.

Noah Streit took a long ball inside the 18-yard box and swung it to the top and just outside the box to Herbers, who then fired a shot past Miami keeper Dayne St. Clair.

It was the 21st goal of Herbers’ career.

Messi answered quickly in the 40th minute, angling a free kick just inside the near post that Montreal goalkeeper Thomas Gillier was unable to deflect.

Messi’s second goal was a masterpiece, as he wove his way among three defenders and fired a shot past Gillier.

Suarez’s goal in the 80th minute came on a counterattack, as did Shaw’s, which he scored in the 89th minute of just his third career MLS match.

— Reuters



Lionel Messi reacts during the Major League Soccer (MLS) regular season football match between Inter Miami CF and CF Montreal. — AFP



Lionel Messi shoots the ball against CF Montreal during the first half at NU Stadium. — **Imagn Images**

Lionel Messi celebrates with his teammates after his team scored a goal during the Major League Soccer. — **AFP**

In-form Marc Marquez wins Aragon MotoGP Grand Prix

Alcañiz, Spain: Marc Marquez claimed a dominant victory at the Aragon MotoGP on Sunday, with Pedro Acosta finishing second and Marco Bezzecchi third.

Seven-time MotoGP champion Marquez has a strong record at the MotorLand circuit and climbed to second in the overall standings behind Jorge Martin, who came fifth.

Marquez trails his compatriot by just 19 points, knocking Italian Bezzecchi down to third, 24 points behind Martin.

It was Marquez’s fourth win of the season, all of those

coming within the last six races as he reignited his title bid in spectacular fashion, and a sixth victory from six races for Ducati in Aragon between sprints and Grands Prix.

“Once I got the lead I put my foot down and turned up the pressure and opened the gap so that there would be no doubt about victory,” said Marquez, who finished 1.754 seconds clear of the field.

Aprilia riders Bezzecchi and Martin started well and took a 1-2 but Marquez quickly repassed Martin to move into second.

Bezzecchi built a lead



Team Ducati Lenovo Team’s Marc Marquez celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP race. — **AFP**



of eight-tenths ahead but Marquez snatched the lead on lap six at Turn 15, the pair brushing wheels out of the corner, allowing Pedro Acosta in to snatch second.

“I heard Marc Marquez’s engine when we were side by side on the straight, but with his experience and the extra power of his bike he was able to get the better of me,” said Bezzecchi.

“It is a shame I lost second straight away to Pedro. I would have preferred to fight harder for runner-up but I am still very happy.”

Francesco Bagnaia and Franco Morbidelli both

crashed out, while Raul Fernandez retired to the garage.

Marquez extended his advantage to more than a second on lap 14 and continued to pull away from Acosta, stretching it to 1.4sec by lap 16 and finishing nearly 1.8sec ahead.

Marc’s brother Alex Marquez came in fourth, ahead of Martin, Fermin Aldeguer and Fabio Di Giannantonio, who is fourth overall.

Injured Japanese rider Ai Ogura did not compete and dropped to fifth in the standings. — **AFP**

MUSCAT
STOCK
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7,577.846

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



The framework further seeks to regulate and govern number portability procedures, ensuring their seamless execution and thereby fostering fair competition within the telecommunications market.

TRA ISSUES NUMBER PORTABILITY REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued the Number Portability Regulatory Framework, a strategic move designed to empower end-users to select the telecommunications service provider that best aligns with their requirements in terms of pricing, service quality and network coverage, while retaining their existing numbers.

The framework further seeks to regulate and govern number portability procedures, ensuring their seamless execution and thereby fostering fair competition within the telecommunications market.

The regulation aims to institutionalise and standardise number portability processes, automate transfer operations and establish a clear time-bound framework for service completion — thereby accelerating number transitions, streamlining procedures and enhancing the overall user experience.

Concurrently, it reinforces equitable competition among licensees and solidifies the Authority’s supervisory role in monitoring service delivery in accordance with the highest regulatory standards.

The regulation addresses both licensed telecommunications service providers and end-users, delineating the roles, obligations and entitlements of each party, so as to ensure more efficient and transparent service provision, bolster user confidence in the telecommunications market and keep pace with the sector’s ongoing evolution within the Sultanate of Oman.

The Sultanate of Oman first introduced number portability services in 2006, enabling end-users to switch between telecommunications service providers while retaining their numbers. — ONA

Oman water demand: 85% goes to agriculture

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 30

AGRICULTURE and green areas account for around 85 per cent of water demand in Oman, placing agricultural efficiency at the centre of efforts to protect the country’s groundwater resources, a water specialist said on Sunday.

Eng Hamad bin Khamis al Hatmi, a member of the Oman Water Society, said groundwater levels were declining while coastal aquifers faced deteriorating water quality due to seawater intrusion.

Speaking at the Water Resources Sustainability: Water and Climate Change symposium in Salalah, he said municipal use represented about 15 per cent of overall demand. His presentation cited a 2024 water-balance deficit of about 213 million cubic metres and highlighted low agricultural productivity per cubic metre of water as one of the sector’s main challenges.

Official 2024 statistics show that 92 main desalination plants produced 455.36 million cubic metres of water, while 67 treatment plants produced about 119.5 million cubic metres of treated water.

Al Hatmi said modern irrigation systems were still not widely used across significant agricultural areas, while some farming activity did not generate sufficient economic value relative to the water consumed. Population growth and urban expansion are adding to demand, while the presentation also pointed to declining participation of the national workforce in agriculture and, in some cases, limited awareness of water scarcity among workers.

The recommendations called for traditional agriculture



Municipal use represented about 15 per cent of overall demand.

Falling groundwater levels, seawater intrusion and inefficient irrigation among pressures highlighted at Salalah water forum

to be transformed into more economically viable production through research and modern technology, with greater emphasis on maximising the value generated by each cubic metre of water.

Al Hatmi also said water availability should be considered when new water-consuming activities are established, including industrial, tourism, sporting and recreational projects. The presentation recommended redistributing activities in line with the availability of water sources. Other proposals included

integrated management of water catchments, dedicated committees to oversee implementation, further research and innovation in non-conventional water sources and better use of non-renewable aquifers to extend their operating life.

The two-day symposium concludes on August 31 and is organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources with Dhofar Municipality, Nama Dhofar Services and partner organisations including Unesco and the Oman Water Society.

Entrepreneur readiness matters more than paperwork: Development Bank

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 30

Entrepreneurs seeking financing should focus first on the readiness and viability of their projects rather than viewing banking procedures as the main obstacle, according to the Development Bank’s branch manager in Salalah.

The official said between 70 and 80 per cent of the documents requested as part of a financing application are requirements originating from other government entities and are necessary for a business to operate legally, including commercial registration, licences and approvals related to the activity.

“In my experience, I do not see the application process itself as a major challenge”, he said. “The main issue is how prepared the entrepreneur is before approaching the bank.”

He said business owners should assess their projects not only from the perspective of the entrepreneur but also from that of the financier, taking into account commercial viability, regulatory requirements and the project’s



Access to funding is closely linked not only to documentation or collateral, but also to the quality of the business proposition: Development Bank.

ability to meet its financial obligations.

The bank operates within banking regulations and government requirements that cannot be bypassed, he added, making early preparation and completion of the necessary

documentation important for applicants.

The official also sought to clarify perceptions surrounding guarantees, saying they are used as a tool to manage financing risk but are not necessarily required in the same form for every project.

“It is not accurate to say that the Development Bank requires a guarantee in every case”, he said. “Guarantees are a risk-management tool, but the decision also depends on the strength of the project, its cash flows and its credit assessment.”

According to the official, the bank evaluates financing applications against several factors, including the nature of the business, its risk profile, internal credit assessment and its capacity to generate sufficient cash flow to meet repayment obligations.

He said he had seen projects financed without guarantees in the traditional sense, with each application assessed individually according to the project’s circumstances and level of risk.

For established businesses, account activity and cash-flow history can provide the bank with a clearer picture of financial performance. Indicators may include revenues, deposits, withdrawals and the consistency of business activity.

Such assessments are generally more meaningful for businesses with an operating track record

than for newly established ventures that have yet to build sufficient financial history.

The bank may also consider factors such as the project’s market record, business model, brand strength and demonstrated performance, particularly in the case of established companies and franchise businesses. For some low-cost or interest-free financing programmes, the bank may nevertheless require a form of security such as a guarantor as part of its risk-management framework.

The official said such arrangements do not necessarily involve direct deductions from the guarantor’s salary, but may instead constitute a documented commitment within the financing agreement.

The comments point to a broader issue facing small businesses seeking finance: access to funding is closely linked not only to documentation or collateral, but also to the quality of the business proposition, its financial discipline and its ability to demonstrate that the project can generate sustainable cash flow.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



All-New Nissan X-Terra 2021 (2)

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The Nissan X-Terra delivers a robust four-wheel-drive system, including four-wheel lock, Brake Limited Slip Differential and Electronic Locking Rear Differential, while offering generous interior space and comfort.

The Nissan X-Terra is available in three 4WD variants — SE 4WD, Titanium 4WD and Platinum 4WD — offering customers a choice of specifications to suit different requirements and preferences.

The SUV's rugged frame reinforces its durability and practicality, while its distinctive design is highlighted by quad LED projector headlamps and Nissan's signature V-motion grille. The sculpted rear design and LED taillamps contribute to the X-Terra's athletic stance, reflecting Nissan's dynamic and modern design philosophy.

A DESIGN FOR TODAY'S ADVENTURES
Developed at Nissan's Global Design Studio in Japan, the X-Terra combines rugged character with modern design. Measuring 4.9 metres in length, 1.9 metres in height and just over 2.1 metres in width, its bold proportions and commanding stance reflect its adventure-ready capability.

The hood is tall and horizontal, the body is muscular and the elevated driving position provides a commanding view of the road.

The overall image is imposing and rugged, while expressions of sophistication and technology add a contemporary character. This is underlined by the unique C-shaped LED signature headlamps. The quad LED projector lamps have a high-tech appearance, with each lamp intricately framed in its own bezel.

The front bumper features layered elements that create a protected yet sophisticated appearance. Combined with sleek, high-tech headlamps and a powerful grille, the front end gives the X-Terra a distinctive face that looks tough, modern and refined.

At the rear, the width of the vehicle is highlighted by the strong horizontal movement of the tail lamps.

KR Shipping celebrates debut author Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi

MUSCAT: KR Shipping, part of the Khimji Ramdas Group, hosted a special felicitation ceremony at its Head Office to celebrate the literary achievement of Omani author Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi and the release of his debut novel, Shaheen.

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Shanfari, Group Chief Officer, Corporate Affairs & Human Resources; Vijayakumar Ramasamy Manickam, General Manager, KR Shipping; Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi, author of Shaheen; along with KR Shipping team members and invited guests.

Through this felicitation, KR Shipping aimed to celebrate the maiden work of the author. With initiatives such as this, the



The ceremony was attended by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Shanfari, Group Chief Officer, Corporate Affairs & Human Resources; Vijayakumar Ramasamy Manickam, General Manager, KR Shipping; Anwar Abdulstar Al Blushi, author of Shaheen; along with KR Shipping team members and invited guests.

Bank Muscat wins women empowerment award

In recognition of its continued commitment to developing and enhancing human resources and promoting women empowerment in the workplace, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been awarded the “Company of the Year for Excellence in Women Empowerment in the Workplace 2026” title at The Origin Awards ceremony, organised by Muscat Media Group at JW Marriott Hotel Muscat.

The event was held under the auspices of Lujaina bint Mohsin Darwish al Zaabi, Chairperson of MHD — ITICS, and attended by prominent female executives, board members and professionals from a range of sectors. Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager of Transaction & Government Banking received the award on behalf of Bank Muscat.

The Origin is a leading platform celebrating inspiring women and organisations that contribute to creating meaningful and tangible change in society.

This year's event featured panel discussions led by prominent women from the fields of business, science, sports, the arts and other sectors, while highlighting experiences and initiatives that strengthen women's roles and contributions across various fields.

Bank Muscat participated in the panel discussion titled “Beyond Expectations: Women at the Forefront of Progress”, during which Al Ajmi highlighted Bank Muscat's role in empowering women throughout their professional and leadership journey, as well as the tools needed to turn potential challenges into opportunities for growth and development.

She also discussed the role financial institutions can play in supporting women, not only as employees but also as entrepreneurs and active contributors to the national economy and emphasised the importance of providing an integrated



Excellence for Women Empowerment in the Workplace 2026

ecosystem of solutions, services and opportunities that enables women to achieve their economic and professional aspirations.

Additionally, the importance of collective efforts by institutions and society was highlighted to showcase how this relationship is central to overcoming barriers that may limit women's access to leadership positions and to develop a new generation of confident, future-ready Omani female leaders.

Commenting on the achievement, Wafa al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager of Transaction & Government Banking at Bank Muscat, said: “This recognition reflects Bank Muscat's leadership in establishing a corporate culture that supports women empowerment and strengthens their role in achieving success at both the professional and personal levels, while enabling them to

make an active contribution to sustainable social and economic development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Omani women today have attained a prominent position in society, enabling them to take on key roles and responsibilities, as well as overcome challenges and obstacles.

We are proud of all efforts that Bank Muscat puts into the empowerment of its female employees and, therefore, would like to reaffirm the Bank's commitment to providing an exemplary workplace that encourages creativity and innovation for all employees through diverse training opportunities and ongoing development programmes”.

At Bank Muscat, Omani women play a pivotal role in developing the banking sector and supporting the Bank's growth and performance across its various operations.

Bahar launches advanced detergent formula

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to innovation and evolving consumer needs, Bahar, the flagship brand of National Detergent Company (NDC), has entered a new era of Unmatched Brightness with the launch of its upgraded detergent powder, featuring refreshed packaging and a 100% Improved Advanced Duo Brightness Formula.

The upgraded product represents a significant evolution for the brand, combining Bahar's trusted heritage with modern detergent technology to deliver enhanced cleaning while helping garments maintain their brightness and vibrancy for longer. At the core of the upgraded Bahar is its Advanced Duo Brightness mechanism, a technology-driven approach that combines powerful cleaning with care and brightness. Its robust enzyme-backed detergent system



works to remove soil and stains from their roots, while the formula's whiteness-enhancing system helps fabrics achieve a cleaner, brighter appearance.

Complementing this, the brightness-

retention system helps both coloured and white garments preserve their original vibrancy and shine through repeated washes, helping clothes look newer for longer.

Murali Sundar CEO of National Detergent Company, said: “The launch of the upgraded Bahar marks an important milestone in the brand's evolution.

We wanted to build on the trust Bahar has earned while responding to what consumers increasingly expect from their laundry products — effective cleaning combined with care for the appearance of their clothes over time. Our 100% Improved Advanced Duo Brightness Formula brings these priorities together through modern washing technology, helping deliver powerful stain removal while enhancing and retaining brightness”.

SHORTTAKES



The forum aims at supporting institutional practices that improve performance efficiency, optimise the use of resources and prevent conflict of interests

MADAYN ORGANISES AWARENESS FORUM ON ‘INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY’

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates “Madayn”, in cooperation with the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority, organised the First Institutional Integrity Forum, with the participation of Madayn officials, specialists and employees.

The two-day forum comes along the lines of efforts to disseminate auditing awareness, promote the principles of integrity and transparency; and highlight legislation and regulations related to the protection of public funds.

The forum aims at supporting institutional practices that improve performance efficiency, optimise the use of resources and prevent conflict of interests.

The forum is also designed to strengthen integration and coordination between the State Audit and internal audit units and promote a work environment built on responsibility, commitment and institutional discipline.

These efforts align with the pillars of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasise the principles of transparency, justice and integrity as keystones for building effective institutions, strengthening trust and achieving sustainable development.

Speaking at the forum, Aliaa al Hinai, Director of Internal Audit Department at Madayn, emphasised the significance of promoting integrity and transparency and strengthening a culture of auditing and responsibility across Madayn.

She noted that the forum presents an ideal platform for exchanging expertise and knowledge; and highlighting practices that contribute to enhancing governance and institutional integrity.

Three gas pipeline projects set for end-2027

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

THREE major gas pipeline projects designed to strengthen supply capacity to key industrial and economic growth hubs across Oman are set for completion by the end of 2027, according to senior executives of OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the Sultanate of Oman’s exclusive operator of the natural gas transmission network.

Details of the projects were shared during an investor conference call hosted by OQGN to discuss its financial and operational performance for the first half of 2026. Representing the company were Eng Mansoor Ali al Abdali, Chief Executive Officer; Eng Saif al Hosni, Chief Business Development & Commercial Officer; and Sultan al Balushi, Acting Chief Financial Officer.

Currently under development is the 193-km, 42-inch Fahud–Suhar Loop Line, a major capacity-expansion project designed to debottleneck the northern gas network and accommodate growing industrial demand in Suhar and Ibri. Running from the Fahud Compressor Station towards Suhar, parallel to the existing Fahud–Suhar pipelines, the new line will add around 11 million standard cubic metres per day (MMSCMD) of transmission capacity to the northern network.

Also making headway is the 31-km, 14-inch Budoor–Tayseer pipeline, a gas-supply integration project designed to connect the Budoor Tayseer Gas Plant with OQGN’s national transmission network. The



When operational, the projects will contribute to expanding OQGN’s overall pipeline network to 4,717 km by 2027

project is expected to add approximately 2 MMSCMD of transmission capacity.

In the southeast, OQGN is advancing the 13-km, 32-inch Al Duqm Growth pipeline, which is designed to augment gas supplies to the Port of Duqm area and support the expanding cluster of industries requiring natural gas.

Slated for completion by the end of 2027, the three projects form part of an RO 294 million capital expenditure programme earmarked for infrastructure growth during the current Price Control period, officials said.

When operational, the projects will contribute to expanding OQGN’s overall pipeline network to 4,717 km by 2027, up from 4,368 km at the end of 2025. Total network

capacity is projected to rise to 80.3 billion standard cubic metres (bn scm), from 76.3 bn scm in 2025, while gas transportation volumes are forecast to reach 47.1 bn scm, compared with 42.4 bn scm in 2025.

In another key operational highlight, OQGN’s national pipeline system transported more than 22 billion cubic metres of gas during the first half of 2026, representing a 9 per cent increase from the corresponding period of 2025.

Later in a Q&A with investors, OQGN executives acknowledged a broader slowdown in the development of the green hydrogen economy, both globally and in Oman, citing market conditions, geopolitical factors and continued reliance

on established energy sources.

Oman’s hydrogen development plans nevertheless remain in place, they stressed, although individual projects are being recalibrated around more realistic implementation timelines and production volumes. This has resulted in some downsizing of planned projects rather than their outright cancellation.

OQGN, meanwhile, continues to prepare for the eventual scale-up of the hydrogen sector. As the designated transporter, the company has plans and conceptual designs for hydrogen transportation infrastructure in place and says it remains ready to support the industry as market conditions improve and projects move towards implementation.

Salalah targets 300% rise in water storage by 2040

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 30

Greater Salalah is targeting a 300 per cent increase in water storage capacity as part of a long-term infrastructure plan designed to support urban growth, strengthen water security and improve resilience to climate risks through 2040.

The Greater Salalah Structure Plan also targets 100 per cent coverage of water and sewerage networks, while providing an additional 23.8 million litres a day of treated water available for reuse, according to a presentation by Eng Haitham al Shanfari of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

Al Shanfari presented the plans during the Water Sustainability: Water and Climate Change symposium in Dhofar on Sunday.

The structure plan is designed



The Greater Salalah plan seeks full water and sewerage coverage and 23.8 million litres a day of additional treated water for reuse as the city prepares capacity for 674,000 people

to accommodate 674,000 people in Greater Salalah by 2040, within an overall planning area of around 427 million square metres, highlighting the scale of future pressure on water, energy and urban infrastructure.

Alongside the expansion in storage, planners are targeting 23.8 million litres of water savings per day and 400 MW of green energy capacity within the plan.

Water security forms part of a

wider framework of 41 indicators covering four areas central to the future resilience of Greater Salalah.

These comprise nine water-security indicators, 13 climate-resilience indicators, 12 covering khawrs, ecosystems and water; and seven related to clean energy.

The water indicators include access to drinking water, sewerage coverage, water storage, wastewater management and recycling, smart water systems, household water-use performance, water efficiency and rainwater harvesting.

Climate measures include early-warning systems, flood resilience, coastal resilience, emergency preparedness and strengthening the ability of critical infrastructure to withstand climate-related risks.

The presentation also highlighted the role of Dhofar’s natural systems in future urban planning, including the protection of khawrs,

agricultural areas and watersheds, as well as irrigation efficiency and ecosystem health.

Under the Dhofar Regional Spatial Strategy, water is addressed through four direct policies covering groundwater monitoring and management, protection of water resources, optimal use of available water resources and flood-risk management.

These policies are translated into seven identified plans and projects.

They include regional groundwater-management plans, monitoring of the coastal aquifer and water sources, reuse of treated wastewater, reuse of water associated with oil production, utilisation of brackish groundwater and a flood-management and mitigation plan.

Three of the seven initiatives are classified as high priority, while four have medium priority.

BANKING IN EUROPE

ECB fears more turbulence with US



Europe’s central bankers are leaving an annual getaway with their US counterparts far from reassured that long-standing norms in global cooperation remain intact and worried that more turmoil is ahead for an already testy relationship with Washington, sources familiar with the discussion said. — Reuters

US DEBT

Bessent faces tough G20 test



US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent faces a major test of his economic diplomacy skills this week as he presses finance leaders from the G20 major economies to shrink global trade imbalances, boost growth and sever business ties to Iran, while trying to calm worries about rising US debt and bond yields. — Reuters

OIL SPIKE

PetroChina H1 profit jumps 22%



China’s largest oil and gas company, PetroChina, reported on Sunday a 22% jump in first-half net profit, as higher oil prices and stronger fuel sales boosted earnings.

Net profit attributable to shareholders came in at 103.94 billion yuan (\$14.65 billion), compared with 84 billion yuan a year earlier. — Reuters

OPINION

AI agents could redefine how consumers use the Internet



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

THE Internet is changing with new protocols, players and models; keeping pace with the speed of change is becoming nearly impossible. The main innovation that skyrocketed Internet growth was the World Wide Web, which created seamless worldwide access to information. This innovation was further driven by the web becoming open and accessible. The Internet has grown into an infrastructure of global connections among people, businesses, governments and devices. A couple of vital questions face consumers, governments and businesses: first, how will the Internet evolve in the coming years? Will the future of the Internet be centralised in the hands of a few dominant players, or decentralised, with new entrants gaining access and profitability? Will the new rules, regulations, ownership structure and AI systems be accessible, open, accountable and transparent? Generally, internet interactions can happen in three ways. First, consumers may visit a company’s homepage directly; second, they can interact through search engines or paid Google advertisements; and third, they can purchase products or services on intermediary platforms like Amazon, Booking.com, or other marketplaces. Some behavioural patterns could persist and others could change. Consumers may still visit a company website directly, but instead of navigating the home page, they may frequently interact with the company’s AI agents. Platforms like Amazon could

retain their role in the value chain with their interface. Discoverability, that is, the search space may significantly change. In the traditional web model, users type keywords, search options and click the link of their choice. Earlier, consumers were actively involved and owned the experience. But now, in the agentic web or emerging AI-mediated model, systems like Perplexity, ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude will own the experience end to end. They become powerful horizontal platforms, operating across sectors rather than being confined to a single field like e-commerce, travel, or insurance; they can do everything. This paradigm shift creates a formidable challenge for companies. If AI platforms increasingly handle consumer transactions and requests, businesses may lose consumer connectivity and visibility. As a result, the digital value chain will begin to reshape. The key question is how much consumer traffic, transaction revenue, customer data and brand loyalty flow to the original business and how much the AI platforms that control discoverability and the interface capture. In the future, businesses will compete not only for product and service sales but also for ownership of the consumer relationship. The way we engage with the Internet could also change substantially. AI models introduce a new interaction possibility that will allow consumers to engage with intelligence in a totally new way. Until now,

Generally, internet interactions can happen in three ways. First, consumers may visit a company’s homepage directly; second, they can interact through search engines or paid Google advertisements; and third, they can purchase products or services on intermediary platforms like Amazon, Booking.com, or other marketplaces.

we have had a browser-based experience, but now agents can act based on consumer intent, requiring a new generation of evolving interfaces. Text-based assistants, voice interfaces, digital assistants, robots and other conversational systems may give consumers more ways to engage with digital intelligence. Businesses that control these interfaces may gain a powerful advantage as they can influence product discoverability, provider choice and complete transactions. In this perspective, control of the interface may become control of distribution. Businesses face different bottlenecks. General-purpose AI models do not automatically understand businesses, as they do not necessarily understand proprietary data, business processes, internal rules, customer relationships, or technology architecture. To be genuinely useful, an AI system must connect securely to the organisation’s data, software and workflows. Hence, integration will become the source of competitive advantage. Scaling agentic AI depends not only on powerful models, but also on governed data, interoperability, orchestration and human accountability. The internet will shift from an attention to an action economy. In the emerging model, AI systems could compete to comprehend intent and complete tasks. The central question will be whether businesses can remain connected to customers when an AI agent increasingly stands between the customer and the company.

A DIVISIVE PARTNER IN TRUMP’S VENEZUELA OIL DEAL



The Trump administration’s highly unusual deal to develop Venezuela’s vast oil resources would have the US government collaborate with an influential and polarising Venezuelan businessperson. Under the deal that President Donald Trump announced late Friday, the United States would work with Alejandro Betancourt López, whose family controls Venezuela’s second largest private oil producer, North American Blue Energy Partners, according to four people familiar with the arrangement. The federal government is expected to back the development of a significant portion of Venezuela’s proven oil reserves through the Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Capital, while Betancourt’s company would lead operations, three of the people said. The deal covers 17 oil fields spread across Venezuela. Venezuela’s president, Delcy Rodríguez, backed the deal, saying in a statement late Friday that it would have a “significant impact on our nation’s revival” and generate more than \$200 billion in tax revenue for the government. Trump described the deal as giving the United States “majority control” over a large portion of the country’s reserves, though many of the details of the highly unorthodox arrangement remained unclear Saturday afternoon and were expected to change as the project gets going. The deal represents Trump’s most direct foray into Venezuela’s oil industry since he sent US Special Forces in January to seize the country’s leader, Nicolás Maduro and began working closely with his vice president, Rodríguez, who now runs the government. For Trump, the deal advances his quest to reshape the global energy market and enhance America’s energy security, according to a person familiar with his thinking. Trump believes, the person said, that additional oil from Venezuela would reduce the market power that Middle Eastern countries have and would help stabilise energy prices, which have risen sharply since the United States and Israel started attacking Iran in February. — The New York Times

Skills development vital to manufacturing ambitions

TECHNICAL education and training (TVET) is a key enabler of Oman’s Manufacturing Strategy 2040, supporting the development of a skilled national workforce capable of responding to the changing needs of industry. The strategy identifies human capital development and the availability of relevant technical skills as important foundations for achieving key industrial outcomes, including higher productivity, competitiveness, technological advancement and employment opportunities. As Oman moves towards more diversified, technology-intensive and higher-value manufacturing, strengthening the alignment between technical education, training and industry will become increasingly important. The development of TVET should therefore be driven by the actual and evolving skills requirements of the manufacturing sector. This requires regular assessments of skills needs and training practices across priority and high-tech industries, with particular attention to digital skills, automation and emerging technologies. Such assessments can help identify skills gaps, guide the design of targeted training programmes and determine the specialisations required by industry, including chemical engineering, mechatronics and electrical engineering. A stronger relationship between vocational education and industry is equally important. Vocational secondary schools serving priority and high-tech sectors can combine general education with technical and vocational learning, while providing students with meaningful work-based learning opportunities. Greater industry participation in curriculum development, advisory boards, internships and student supervision would help ensure that graduates acquire practical skills that reflect the requirements of real manufacturing environments.



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

The writer is Director of the Technical Office of Under-Secretary of Commerce and Industry, MoCIIP

A stronger relationship between vocational education and industry is equally important. Vocational secondary schools serving priority and high-tech sectors can combine general education with technical and vocational learning, while providing students with meaningful work-based learning opportunities

This industry connection should extend across the wider training ecosystem. Oman can strengthen collaboration between public and private training institutions and the industrial sector, creating more flexible pathways for developing skills in line with market demand. Partnerships with the Industrial Innovation Academy can support TVET programmes in industrial areas, while cooperation with Riyada can provide training and capacity-building opportunities for SMEs. Private technical institutes can further complement public institutions by addressing skills gaps in specialised areas that may not be sufficiently covered by existing training provision. Another priority is to establish technical training programmes at basic, intermediate and advanced levels for priority and high-tech industries. These programmes should be based on occupational standards and continuously updated to reflect emerging skills, technological developments and international trends. Expanding in-company training, internships and apprenticeship programmes would further strengthen the practical capabilities of trainees and facilitate their transition from education and training into productive manufacturing employment. Industry-specific training centres can provide an additional mechanism for responding directly to current and future workforce requirements. Such centres can be developed in partnership with manufacturing companies and designed around their specific technical and operational needs. At the same time, stronger links between companies and universities can support recruitment, internships, applied research, innovation, knowledge transfer and the development of specialised talent. Looking ahead, TVET must also anticipate the skills required by the future of manufacturing.

The increasing importance of digitalisation, automation, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies makes it essential to continuously assess future skills requirements and use the findings to inform training programmes. This will help Oman move from a reactive approach to skills development towards a more forward-looking national TVET and future-skills system capable of anticipating industrial transformation. The strategic importance of this agenda is reinforced by the scale and diversity of Oman’s manufacturing workforce. The sector employs around a quarter of a million workers, including approximately 50,000 Omanis, across a broad spectrum of occupations, functions and levels of technical specialisation. These workers are distributed across a diverse industrial landscape, spanning manufacturing activities and industrial locations that include industrial estates, free zones and economic zones across Oman. This expanding and increasingly diverse industrial base generates sustained demand for a wide range of skilled occupations, including technicians, engineers, machine operators, maintenance specialists, supervisors, digital and automation specialists and other technical professionals. Meeting this demand requires a strong, responsive and industry-oriented vocational training system that can continuously develop and upgrade the skills required by manufacturers. In this context, Oman’s eight government vocational colleges, distributed across several governorates, play an important role in building the national technical skills base. With around 5,000 students, these colleges provide practical, skills-based education designed to equip young Omanis with technical competencies aligned with labour market requirements.

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I, MUHAMMED SALEEM KHAN, (holder of Indian Passport No V9075889) son of Mohd Aness Khan, (complete postal address in India) and presently Residing in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, Ali Shiahani B-4 Building -Flat No 44, North Al Ghubra (complete postal address in Oman) intend to change my name from MUHAMMED SALEEM KHAN (old name) to, MOHD SALEEM KHAN (new name) for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, PO Box No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

LOST

MAIMUNA YUSUPH ABRAHMANI has lost Tanzanian Passport No TAE805907. Finder please hand over to ROP.

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ART/LIFE



FILIPINO FIESTA BRINGS CULTURE, MUSIC AND COMMUNITY TO MUSCAT

> 20

RICHFRUIT

VIETNAMESE COFFEE FARMERS RIDE CHINA’S DURIAN WAVE



TRAN THI MINH HA & LUNA LIN

Vietnam’s Central Highlands produce around one-sixth of the world’s coffee, but farmers are switching their traditional crop for durian to cash in on surging Chinese demand for the pungent “king of fruits”.

“You can live okay with coffee, but it’s durian that makes you rich,” said Pham Xuan Lan, as he showed journalists around his farm.

Blessed with a tropical climate and rich basalt soil, the lush Central Highlands produce vast quantities of robusta beans, and Vietnam trails only Brazil in coffee output.

But the area dedicated to durian has soared more than fivefold to 200,000 hectares nationwide over the past decade, according to the agriculture ministry.

Vietnam only officially entered the Chinese durian market after a 2022 trade protocol but last year became the country’s biggest supplier by volume, ending Thailand’s near two-decade dominance.

Lan was an early adopter, diversifying his crop two decades ago and now boasting 400 durian trees in Ea Knuec commune, part of Dak Lak province.

They produce 60 tonnes of the sweet yet smelly fruit, which is driven in frozen containers thousands of kilometres north into China. The 56-year-old expects to make \$76,000 this year - against \$10,000 had he stayed with just coffee.

“With durian, I bought a car, houses for my children and built a villa for my family,” he said, his affluence evident around him.

Other local farmers have followed suit, focusing on the premium Ri6, Musang King and Dona varieties.

During the August-October harvest, Dak Lak’s roads are packed with trucks loaded with the spiky fruit, and at a durian festival this month, 525 vehicles formed what the Guinness World Records declared the largest ever parade of fruit-carrying vehicles. The boom is driven by demand from China, fuelled by a combination of expanding supply and growing popularity on social media, particularly among young people.

On Douyin, China’s equivalent of TikTok, videos of users cracking open fruit with their bare hands have been watched billions of times.

“This tastes really sweet. It’s almost like it’s been coated in sugar,” said Douyin influencer Liulianzi in a clip liked more than 17,000 times.

Once a luxury food, increased competition between Thailand and Vietnam and improved transport links have helped cut prices and make the fruit more affordable.

At a durian tasting event in Beijing last month, Ada Song said that she had spent almost \$150 on the fruit in recent weeks.

“I have tried nearly 20 different varieties,” Song said. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



TRIBUTE

British actor Tim Curry poses for photographers as he arrives for the American Theatre Wing’s 59th Annual Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall.

— Reuters



LITERATURE

Actors operating giant puppets depicting Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, writer Nikolai Gogol and author Fyodor Dostoevsky perform on a street in St Petersburg.

— AFP



MUSIC

Brazilian singer-songwriter Tiago Iorc performs during a concert celebrating the 10th anniversary of his album ‘Troco Likes’ at Vivo Rio in Rio de Janeiro.

— AFP

INSTA PICKS



“Silent wings, soaring free”



“Nature at its finest in Salalah”

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FOR ‘ASSASSIN’S CREED’
CREATOR, NEW GAME ENDS
A ‘VERY PERSONAL’ BATTLE



More than 15 years, a bankruptcy and a legal battle later, “Assassin’s Creed” creator Patrice Desilets is finally looking ahead with “1666: Amsterdam”, a game that returns to the past. Set during the European witch hunts, the action-adventure was warmly received when presented at Summer Game Fest in Los Angeles in June. Desilets, 52, said he was nearly in tears before taking the stage, calling the moment the end of a “very personal” battle. Developed by a team of about 70, “1666: Amsterdam” puts players in control of a witch and spans three eras, 1666, 1999 and the present. The first two chapters entered PC early access on Tuesday, with the final game expected to contain about a dozen chapters. Desilets said he was “very satisfied” with early feedback. He conceived the game after visiting Amsterdam in 2011, shortly after leaving Ubisoft Montreal, where he helped create “Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time” and the first two

“Assassin’s Creed” games. Development began at THQ Montreal but was halted when the studio went bankrupt in 2013 and was acquired by Ubisoft. Desilets was later dismissed, leading to years of legal disputes. He regained the game’s rights in 2016. He subsequently founded Panache Digital Games and released “Ancestors: The Humankind Odyssey” in 2019, before returning to “1666: Amsterdam”, whose development was further delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Desilets also addressed criticism over generative AI, saying AI elements used during pre-production were removed from the final game. Despite Ubisoft developing its own witch-hunt-themed “Assassin’s Creed: Hexe”, Desilets said he has no interest in returning to the franchise. “I want to be the Clint Eastwood of video games”, he said, “to be old and keep making video games”. — AFP

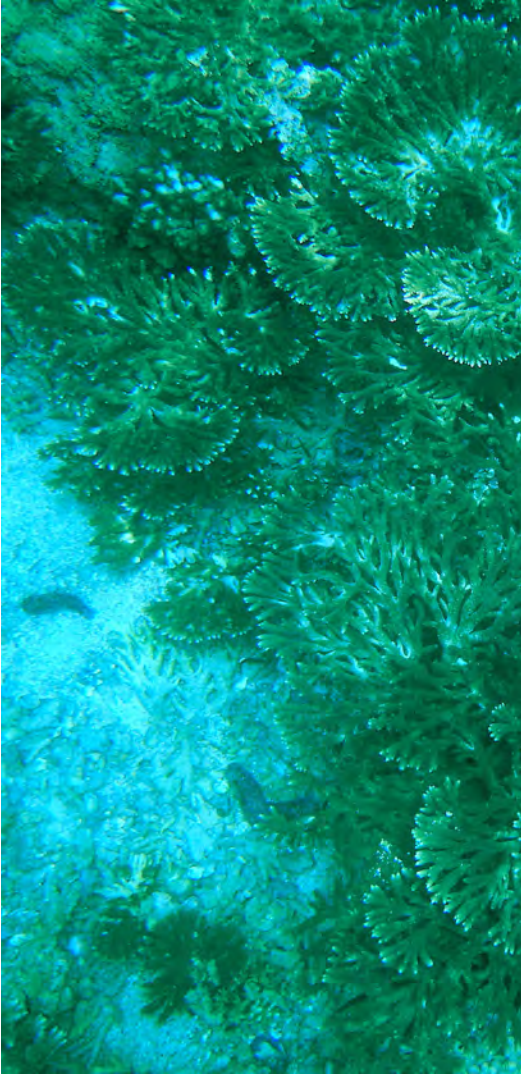
Beneath the blue: Bandar Al Khairan’s hidden world



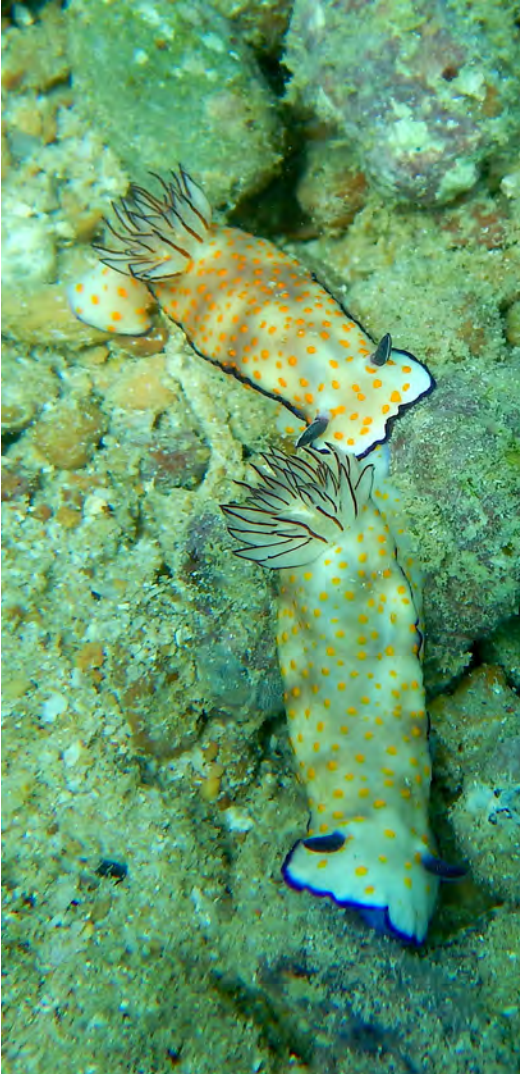
The rugged beauty and tranquil waters of Bandar Al Khairan.

DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

LAST week, my friend and canyoning partner Hamood and I decided to take a breather from our usual canyon explorations and spend the day chilling at Bandar Al Khairan. This spot is one of my personal favourites for snorkeling. Years ago, I discovered a perfect area there that offers natural shade and easy swimming access from the well-known ‘Banana Beach’. I love it because I can go on my own without needing someone to take me there by boat. I picked Hamood up from his place in Bausher around 9 am and we made our way to Bandar Al Khairan, reaching ‘Banana Beach’ by about 10 am. The only way to access this beach is by a 4x4. As I have a small SUV car we had to hike down a steep slope to reach the shore. To my surprise, I ran into Abou Mohamed, a local I first met back in 2000 when we filmed him for a French TV documentary about traditional fishing in his village, Al Khairan. It was great to reconnect with an old friend and reminisce about those good times. After our brief catch-up, we loaded our waterproof bags with snacks and phones for pictures, donned our fins and masks, and set off for ‘Inverted C Island’, a name I came up with due to its shape. Once we reached the island’s beach, we crossed it to swim to the other side, where we plunged into the water again to find ‘Our’ shaded spot inside a massive shallow cave. The weather was quite pleasant with the refreshing sea breeze. The bay was home to numerous acropora table



Colourful corals and fascinating marine life thrive beneath the waves.



A vibrant underwater world beneath the surface of Bandar Al Khairan.

corals that remained unharmed during Cyclone Gonu in June 2007. We were lucky enough to spot two stunning nudibranchs that Hamood had never seen before. The waters here are teeming with exotic, colourful fish, including butterflyfish, surgeonfish and puffers, among others like cute clownfish hiding in anemones or poisonous and well camouflaged scorpionfish. I had a little surprise planned for Hamood. We swam about 300 metres to discover a small cave filled with stunning calcite formations — stalactites, stalagmites, and extraordinary eccentrics.

After a short exploration and some pictures to capture the moment, we swam another 200 metres to find another beach. There, we took some time to snorkel and admire the abundant soft corals. Eventually, we made our way back to our sheltered spot where we had left our food and drinks. We enjoyed our snacks and after a couple of hours, we returned to ‘Banana Beach’, hopped in the car and headed home. It was a relaxing day compared to our usual physically demanding canyoning trips, yet we relished this break before tackling two more canyons scheduled for the following week.

FEATURES

FILIPINO
FIESTA BRINGS
CULTURE, MUSIC
AND COMMUNITY
TO MUSCAT



Photos by [Seraj Media](#)



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

THERE was something familiar in the air at Muscat Grand Mall over the weekend, the sound of Filipino songs drifting through the venue, the aroma of home cooking, bursts of laughter and the unmistakable warmth of a community coming together.

For three days, from August 27 to 29, the Grand Filipino Fiesta Bazaar 2026 transformed the mall into a colourful celebration of Filipino culture, bringing together Filipinos, Omanis and visitors through food, music, dance and shared moments of joy.

Organised by Amplify Media & Advertising, the fiesta was more than a showcase of traditions. For many Filipinos living far from home, it was a chance to reconnect with a familiar part of themselves, while giving Omanis and other visitors an invitation to experience the warmth of Filipino culture.

The first day, “Parangal at Pagdiriwang” (Honour and Celebration), set the tone. The Filipino and Omani national anthems opened the ceremony, followed by prayer and messages from Claudia Halaby of Amplify Media & Advertising, Dr Jackie Orlanes of the Filipino Community Social Club (FILCOSOC) and Labour Attaché Alice Visperas.

Halaby described the fiesta as a celebration of Filipino culture, talent, food, music, family and community, while highlighting its role in strengthening the friendship between the Philippines and Oman.

Dr Orlanes spoke proudly of the Philippines’ rich heritage and strong community values, expressing hope that gatherings such as the fiesta would continue to give Filipinos opportunities to share their traditions and support one another.

Visperas centred her message on Bayanihan, the Filipino spirit of helping and standing beside one another. She spoke of how Filipinos living far from home can build a new family through a community that celebrates its successes and offers support in difficult times.



The Grand Filipino Fiesta Bazaar 2026 brought three days of Filipino culture, music, food and community spirit to Muscat Grand Mall, celebrating heritage while strengthening the warm cultural ties between the Philippines and Oman.

When an Igorot cultural dance took to the stage, colourful costumes and traditional movements drew the audience in, followed by warm applause. The Little Miss Philippines finalists added to the celebration before DX Band opened the entertainment with an Aegis medley, followed by the New Generation Movers and TNT Grand Champion 2025 Season 1 Joane J. Cheers and applause filled the mall as the performances unfolded.

By the second day, “Araw ng Kultura at Musika” (Day of Culture and Music), the fiesta had found its rhythm. OPM music accompanied visitors around the bazaar, while children’s games brought families together.

Members of the Filipino Performing Artists Club in Oman (FIPACO), alongside solo performers and musicians, shared their talents, while an open-mic session gave fellow Filipinos, or kababayans, their own moment in the spotlight. The graceful Cariñosa dance by ALAB drew applause, while Vamoz Band added another wave of energy before the night ended with community Zumba and dancing.

The final day, “Bayanihan” (Community Spirit and Collective Cooperation), placed family and togetherness at its centre. Children enjoyed games and face painting while an Arabic traditional band performed nearby, creating a fitting meeting of Omani and Filipino musical traditions.

The afternoon unfolded through fashion, music and cultural performances before the grand raffle and finale. Filipino artists returned to the stage for a final celebration, bringing the three-day gathering to a spirited close with confetti.

For Omani visitor Ahmed al Farsi, the fiesta felt “authentic yet welcoming to everyone”, capturing the warmth and hospitality of Filipino culture while showcasing its distinctive traditions and cuisine.

Perhaps that is what made the fiesta resonate beyond the Filipino community. It did not ask visitors simply to observe another culture. It invited them to sit, listen, taste, dance and celebrate alongside it.