

O M A N  D A I L Y

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PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 05:46 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:25 AM

DHUHR 12:09 PM

ASR 03:36 PM

MAGHRIB 06:32 PM

ISHA 08:02 PM



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SHNAIDER DOWNS ALEXANDROVA TO CLAIM MONTERREY OPEN TITLE

INBRIEF

HM’S CONDOLENCES TO EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the death of Shaikha Suad Abdullah Al Ahmad al Sabah, spouse of Shaikh Fadhel Al Khaled Al Jaber al Sabah and sibling of Shaikh Ahmad Al Abdullah Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased’s soul in peace in paradise.

HM’S GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF URUGUAY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Yamandú Orsi of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, on his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Yamandú Orsi in leading the people of his country and realising further progress and development.

YOUTH INITIATIVE BOOSTS DHOFAR TOURISM



Youth initiatives and entrepreneurship are essential pillars in supporting the national economy and enhancing sustainable development. They contribute to creating innovative projects that reflect the creativity of Omani youth and invest in natural and environmental potential, thereby boosting tourism and economic activity in various governorates. In this context, the ‘Lamer Al Mughsail’ has emerged as an innovative youth-led initiative. It was launched by a group of young people aiming to transform a waterway leading to Khor Fakheet into a modern, natural tourist destination. **DETAILS ON P13**

66,379 teachers resume duties for new academic year

MUSCAT: The teaching staff, administrative personnel and supportive categories will begin on Monday their work in schools across the Sultanate of Oman for the new academic year 2025/2026, with students returning to classrooms on August 31.

This year, the number of teachers in government schools has reached 66,379, distributed across 1,303 schools. The number of administrative and technical

staff in government schools stands at 11,183, including 4,420 males and 6,763 females. Meanwhile, special education schools employ 241 teachers and 46 administrative staff. The Ministry of Education has completed the appointment procedures for new teachers who passed written tests and personal interviews for this academic year to meet actual staffing needs across various specialisations.

Saif bin Mubarak al Julandani,

Director-General of the General Directorate of Educational Supervision at the Ministry of Education, stated that the Directorate will conduct the third orientation programme for new teachers across various specialisations on August 27-28. The programme, he said, focuses on practical preparation, equipping them with essential knowledge and skills, introducing educational projects and developments, and

fostering positive attitudes towards the teaching profession.

He pointed out that a national plan has also been implemented to prepare 100 government and private schools in Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Batinah South for external review by the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education. This effort aims to enhance administrative and technical readiness. — ONA

Israel pounds Gaza City, forcing more families out

ISRAELI planes and tanks pounded the eastern and northern outskirts of Gaza City overnight on Saturday to Sunday, destroying buildings and homes, residents said, as Israeli leaders vowed to press on with a planned offensive on the city.

Witnesses reported the sound of explosions non-stop overnight in the areas of Zeitoun and Shejaia, while tanks shelled houses and roads in the nearby Sabra neighbourhood and several buildings were blown up in the northern town of Jabalia.

Fire lit the skies from the direction of the explosions, causing panic, prompting some families to stream out of the city. Others said they would prefer to die and not leave. The Israeli military said on Sunday that its forces have returned to combat in the Jabalia area in recent days to dismantle tunnels and strengthen control of the area.

Israel approved a plan this month to seize control of Gaza City, describing it as the last bastion of Hamas. It is not expected to begin for a few weeks, leaving room for mediators Egypt and Qatar to try and resume ceasefire talks.

Hamas said in a statement on Sunday that Israel’s plan to take over Gaza City showed it wasn’t serious about a ceasefire.

It said a ceasefire agreement was “the only way to return the captives”, holding Israeli Prime



A displaced Palestinian girl eats chickpeas as she sits amid the destruction in Saftawi neighbourhood, west of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, on Sunday. — **AFP**

Hamas said in a statement on Sunday that Israel’s plan to take over Gaza City showed it wasn’t serious about a ceasefire

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responsible for their lives.

The proposal on the table calls for a 60-day ceasefire and the release of 10 living captives held in Gaza and of 18 bodies. In turn, Israel would release about 200 long-serving Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Once a temporary ceasefire begins, the proposal is for Hamas and Israel to begin negotiations on

a permanent ceasefire that would include the return of the remaining captives.

Last Thursday, Netanyahu said that Israel would immediately resume negotiations for the release of all 50 captives — of whom Israel believes around 20 are still living — and an end to the nearly two-year-old war but on terms acceptable to Israel. — **AFP**

Not drinking enough water causes greater response to stress: Study

LONDON: People who do not drink enough water have a stronger biological response to stress, according to a study.

Researchers found those who habitually drink less release greater levels of the stress hormone cortisol, despite not feeling any thirstier than people who drink more.

Keeping a water bottle nearby during stressful periods could be beneficial for long-term health, researchers suggest.

The study, led by experts at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), included 16 people who drank under 1.5 litres of water a day, along with 16 people who regularly met daily recommended guidelines for fluid intake.

Researchers used the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) guidelines,

Researchers found those who habitually drink less water release greater levels of the stress hormone cortisol, despite not feeling any thirstier than people who drink more



Men should drink 2.5 litres of water a day, while women should drink two litres.

which recommends men should drink 2.5 litres of water a day, while women should drink two litres.

In the UK, the Eatwell Guide suggests adults should drink between six and eight cups of fluid a day, which is roughly 1.5 to two litres. However, people may need to drink more when it is hot, if they are very active, if they are recovering from an illness, or if they are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Researchers monitored hydration in both groups over seven days using urine and blood samples, after which they were invited into the lab for a stress test.

The test involved an impromptu job interview, for which each individual was given 10 minutes to prepare.

After that time, they were invited into

another room where a fake camera was set up and asked to do the interview to a panel of three people dressed in white coats. Following the fake interview, individuals were then asked to do a mental arithmetic challenge which involved subtracting numbers as fast as they could.

Professor Neil Walsh, of the LJMU School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, described the test as “really flustering.”

Researchers collected saliva samples from the group before and after the stress test to measure cortisol levels.

Cortisol, known as the stress hormone, is produced by the adrenal glands in response to stress and also plays a role in immune response, metabolism and blood pressure. — **dpa**

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SHORT TAKES

Environmental initiative in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate supports 10-million-tree campaign

‘YOUR HOME TURNS GREEN’ DRIVE LAUNCHED

IBRA: The Environment Authority in the wilayats of Ibra and Sinaw, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, on Sunday launched an environmental initiative titled ‘Your Home Turns Green, Your Nation Blooms.’ The initiative includes the distribution of numerous agricultural seedlings for planting, supporting national efforts to expand tree cover and green spaces across the Sultanate of Oman.

Yousuf bin Ahmed al Harthy, Environmental Supervision Specialist at the Environment Department in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, stated that the three-day campaign involves distributing a number of wild seedlings and ornamental trees in cooperation with various public sector institutions in Ibra and Sinaw.

He explained that the environmental initiative aims to raise ecological awareness and support the national campaign to plant 10 million trees.

The campaign includes distributing hundreds of wild and local seedlings, such as Sidr, Ghaf, Talh and Moringa trees, along with ornamental plants, to encourage community members to engage in gardening, self-cultivation, and participate in preserving vegetation and combating desertification. — ONA

ROP WARNS AGAINST FAKE TAJAWOB WEBSITE

MUSCAT: There have been several reports of citizens and residents falling victim to fraud through a fake website (phishing) claiming to receive and process complaints and reports, the Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations said.

The National Platform for Suggestions, Complaints and Reports (Tajawob) does not request personal or banking information, nor does it require any payments or fees under any circumstances.

Any communication requesting such information is deemed a fraudulent attempt. Communication from the platform’s specialised teams is limited solely to completing information related to the submitted request.

The [tajawob.om](#) is a unified, centralised system with multiple access points, seamlessly connected to government entities that can be used by both citizens and residents in the country. It is a major step in digital transformation after the Unified Government Services Portal ([gov.om](#)), which was launched by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) to provide access to essential government services.

The platform offers citizens and residents to report even local and civic issues, such as roads in a local area that need attention from the authorities for repairs to ensure the safety of both drivers and pedestrians.

PALESTINIAN AMBASSADOR BIDS FAREWELL

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received here on Sunday Dr Tayseer Ali Farhat, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.

Al Numani expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the Ambassador for the efforts he exerted in enhancing bilateral

Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani receives Dr Tayseer Ali Farhat.

relations, wishing him success in his future endeavours.

On his turn, the Ambassador expressed his thanks for the cooperation and care that was extended to him by the government of His Majesty the Sultan. He lauded Oman’s steadfast stance in regards to the Palestinian cause. He also underscored the depth of bilateral relations between Oman and Palestine. — ONA

Omani-Bahraini ties strong through Royal visit

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabiyousef](#)

THE Omani-Bahraini Friendship Society, established to strengthen bilateral relations in cultural, social and economic spheres, lauded the Royal visit of King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa to Oman at the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The visit was described as a continuation of brotherhood, solidarity and historically rooted relations between the two nations.

Speaking to Observer, Radina bint Amer al Hajriyah, Chairwoman of the Society, highlighted that ties between Oman and Bahrain date back to the civilisations of Majan and Dilmun, built on kinship, mutual respect and shared traditions. She emphasised the monarchs’ commitment to maintaining strong relations and expanding cooperation across economic, scientific, cultural and health sectors.

“The bilateral relationship is a model for international relations and demonstrates what enduring cooperation between countries should look like,” she said, noting that the visit continues a legacy of private exchanges and strategic communication between the leaders.

Radina also outlined the Society’s key objectives, including promoting youth engagement, sports, cultural activities, social development and economic cooperation. Initiatives include seminars, art and science exhibitions, exchange visits by researchers and artists, and collaboration between business communities from both

The 5th edition of Omani-Bahraini Products Exhibition was held in Salalah recently

RADINA BINT AMER AL HAJRIYHA

Ties between Oman and Bahrain are built on kinship, mutual respect and shared traditions

countries. Areas such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, sustainability and entrepreneurship are also being actively explored.

As part of these efforts, the Society recently conducted the fifth Omani-Bahrain Products Exhibition in Dhofar, in cooperation with the Dhofar branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Bahraini Embassy in Oman. The ten-day exhibition, held under the auspices of Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, aimed to promote local products in domestic and Gulf markets, support SMEs, and enhance economic contributions aligned with Oman Vision 2040. It also served as a

platform for exchanging knowledge on production techniques and best practices between productive families in both countries.

Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Bahraini Ambassador to Oman, praised the development of Omani-Bahrain relations, noting the ongoing efforts to broaden cooperation in trade, tourism, culture and education.

The Omani-Bahraini Friendship Society stressed that such initiatives not only strengthen bilateral relations but also build bridges between the peoples of the two nations, ensuring continued collaboration and mutual prosperity.

Shabab Oman II visitors reach 1 million

AMSTERDAM: The Royal Navy of Oman vessel Shabab Oman II has reached a historic milestone, with its number of visitors surpassing one million.

This milestone is achieved for the first time compared to the vessel’s previous voyages.

This achievement reflects Shabab Oman II’s profound presence in global memory as a maritime icon that embodies the values of peace and human harmony.

This accomplishment was achieved during the ship’s participation in the SAIL Amsterdam Festival 2025, one of the world’s most prominent

Shabab Oman II at the SAIL Amsterdam Festival

maritime festivals. It adds to the ship’s impressive record as a mobile ambassador for

civilisational communication, building bridges of friendship between the Sultanate of Oman

and various peoples around the world.

At the port of Amsterdam, a historic scene unfolded as a young Dutch girl named Julie signed her name, becoming the millionth visitor to Shabab Oman II during its seventh international voyage, ‘Glories of the Seas’.

Shabab Oman II continues its noble mission of introducing Oman’s ancient maritime heritage and solidifying the country’s position on the map of international maritime events, reflecting Oman’s image as a civilisational bridge that transcends cultures. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



MoE, MCBS graduation ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education

138 STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM MOE’S VOCATIONAL TECH PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Modern College of Business and Science, on Sunday celebrated the graduation of the first batch of students from the Vocational and Technical Education Track in Business Administration and Information Technology for the academic year 2024-2025.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, emphasised the ministry’s commitment to implementing vocational and technical education, which was introduced in the 2023-2024 academic year. He described it as a strategic choice that responds to the requirements of sustainable national development and effectively contributes to building national capabilities by equipping youth with the practical and specialised skills demanded by the contemporary job market.

He explained that this track not only prepares students for the job market but also fosters a culture of work and self-reliance, opening broader horizons for Omani youth to innovate and lead in dynamic productive fields aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

On his turn, Mousa bin Abdullah al Kindi, Dean of the Modern College of Business and Science, noted that the graduation of 138 highly competent students embodies a comprehensive national strategy and ambitious vision for Oman, which places technical and vocational education at the forefront of its priorities and invests in building the capacities of youth as a cornerstone for shaping the nation’s future.

The ceremony included a visual presentation showcasing the journey of the BTEC programme. — ONA



ROYAL WARRANT OF WAR PRESENTED TO SANDHURST GRADUATE OFFICER

MUSCAT: Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), at Muaskar Al Murtafaa, on Sunday handed over the Royal Warrant of War to Lieutenant Suhail bin Ahmed al Mukhaini Bahwan, a graduate of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom.

The Major General, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, congratulated



Lt Suhail bin Ahmed al Mukhaini Bahwan is being honoured

the graduating officer on his graduation after

receiving military training, congratulating him on gaining the generous trust of His Majesty the Supreme Commander as an officer in the Royal Army of Oman, urging him to exert more effort and dedication in performing his upcoming duties, wishing him continued success.

The event was attended by a number of senior officers of the Royal Army of Oman. — ONA

Missing signboards a cause for concern in Al Khuwair

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUG 24

THE absence of a signboard indicating a detour or ‘road closed ahead’ on Al Khuwair service road, where construction work is ongoing, has been causing significant inconvenience to motorists and residents alike, with heavy traffic jams reported during peak hours, according to locals.

“I was caught unawares when I saw the road right in front of me was closed after driving a kilometre or so to take the Centrepoin exit on Al Khuwair service road, located adjacent to Sultan Qaboos Street in Bausher, while heading to an important meeting on Saturday. I had to return and take the side road near Danube, which caused me great inconvenience,” said Sulaiman al Jardani, a resident of Sidab.

The Muscat Municipality, in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), had announced both a partial and full closure of the Al Khuweir service road on July 14, 2025, through the media. However, the construction contractor’s failure to install proper signage for the road closure has left motorists and residents unaware, causing ongoing difficulties.

“Not everyone reads newspapers, and one cannot expect that they do,” Al Jardani added, highlighting the challenges faced by commuters who rely on clear signage.

Residents of nearby buildings reported



The lack of warning signs continues to disrupt motorists and residents alike

further disruptions, with some having to keep their vehicles parked inside their designated parking lots for 24 hours. Those whose cars were parked outside were unable to access their compounds due to the haphazard closure and excavation work.

“My car, as well as my husband’s, was trapped inside the parking lot for 24 hours when the road was fenced off for digging on August 5. We only managed to go out by requesting a friend to help us run errands,”

said Dhanya Manoj, a teacher and resident of one of the nearby buildings.

“Usually, notices are placed or residents are informed via SMS. In this case, we received neither, which left us unable to access our cars,” she added.

Another resident expressed frustration, stating that he could not find any signage indicating the road closure and often had to drive up and down, only to be forced to reroute. This service road serves as the only exit for his family to reach Sultan Qaboos Street for daily commuting.

When contacted, authorities confirmed that the closure is part of the ongoing Al Khuwair Path Improvement Project, which aims to enhance road infrastructure and improve traffic flow in the area.

Partial closure of the road was implemented from the morning of Monday, July 14, 2025, until the morning of Tuesday, July 15, 2025, while full closure began on Wednesday, July 16, 2025, and remained in effect until the morning of Tuesday, July 22, 2025. Despite this, the absence of signage at least 200 metres ahead of the construction site continues to cause inconvenience to both motorists and residents using this route.

The lack of clear communication and advance warning has left many residents and daily commuters frustrated, emphasising the importance of proper signposting to ensure smooth traffic flow and public safety during ongoing construction projects.

MWASALAT LAUNCHES OPEN-TOP BUS TOURS IN DHOFAR



SALALAH: The public transport company, Mwasalat, has unveiled open-top bus tours as part of the #BreakTheBarrier campaign launched during the khareef in Dhofar Governorate.

The initiative, in partnership with Omantel, seeks to enhance the community experience during the #DhofarKhareef season. The Governor of Dhofar who toured the bus and was briefed on the most services and unique tourism experiences offered by the company to the visitors to Dhofar as part of the #DhofarKhareef season. He said the importance of promoting such initiatives that contribute to supporting the tourism sector and developing modern means of transportation.

GCC workshop highlights judicial accounting practices

SALALAH: A five-day workshop on judicial accounting in GCC states kicked off on Sunday in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate. The workshop is organised by the State Audit Institution as part of a training plan for financial and accounting audit authorities in GCC states.

The workshop is attended by representatives of GCC audit departments, in addition to specialists in the fields of auditing

and accounting.

Salim bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Director of the Training and Development Centre, said that the workshop focuses on judicial accounting practices as basic measures for combating financial crimes. He pointed out that those practices help integrate accounting aspects with legal procedures, use advanced analytical tools to collect and present evidence to judicial



The workshop is attended by representatives of GCC audit departments.

authorities and ensure sufficiency of evidence and related data during the process of litigation.

Al Ghassani underscored the growing importance of judicial accounting amid a rising trend in methods of fraud and digital technologies. He explained that updating audit practices plays a key role in protecting public funds, enhances transparency and accountability, consolidates investor confidence and addresses

modern economic challenges.

The workshop deals with four main topics include ‘Basic principles of judicial accounting’; ‘Relevant international standards’; ‘Financial analysis techniques used in the field of auditing’ and ‘Criteria of drafting reports’.

The workshop also deals with legal procedures associated with judicial accounting and the roles undertaken by specialists before the courts. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

FOR
HEALTHY
AND
HAPPY
SCHOOL
YEAR

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 24

BACK to school is not just about purchasing supplies and apparel. Parents must prepare their wards mentally for the upcoming school year. Studies indicate that good preparations significantly impact children’s performance and well-being.

The return to school period can be stressful for many students, especially first graders and families, so we need to help students overcome some of the challenges including anxiety, getting up early in the morning to go to school and staying away from parents.

Psychological preparations are a shared responsibility of families and schools. Students may face challenges at the beginning of the school year, including fear of classrooms and teachers. All of these concerns can cause students to feel overwhelmed and stressed at the beginning of school. Fortunately, children are capable of adapting to change.

Dr Mohammed al Ameri, a psychologist, highlighted the importance of preparation, saying, “Returning to school seems like an automatic event that happens every year, but the educational and psychological reality reveals quite the opposite. Students undergo profound behavioural and emotional transformations during the vacation period. Therefore, the moment of returning to school becomes not just a resumption, but a “transition” that requires a bridge of organised and supportive preparation.”

Educational psychology studies also confirm that many cases of school anxiety, difficulty in concentrating, or even silent school refusal appear in the first weeks of the school year due



Returning to school after the long summer holidays often brings stress and fatigue, but also an opportunity for new beginnings. Parents and teachers must proactively prepare students, especially first graders, for the new school year. Children face a change in routine, while parents face additional obligations.

to a lack of adequate psychological preparation. Students at this stage show a variety of emotions, ranging from excitement to tension, from curiosity to withdrawal, depending on their supportive environment, their level of personal preparedness, and the nature of the educational transition, especially when moving between grades or schools.

There’s no doubt that preparing your child for school, returning to a routine, and waking up early is not easy. Children often grumble and cause chaos, unable to accept the end of their summer vacation filled with fun. Therefore, as school approaches, it’s important to prepare your child psychologically so they can welcome the school season with diligence and energy.

Parents must talk to their children about their fears about returning to school and ways to overcome them, familiarise them with potential changes, establish a family school routine a week or two before school starts, including training the child to go to bed and wake up early, preparing

school bags and study materials, and providing healthy meals.

Show empathy for your child by letting them know you understand what they’re going through and that you’ll always be there to support them when they face any challenges or fears. Talking to your child about change can be difficult, but it doesn’t have to be bad.

HOW DO I PREPARE MY CHILD FOR SCHOOL?

Preparing a child for school isn’t just about buying a new bag and clothes. Many children experience initial shock, so proper preparation spares the child this difficult transition and makes school a pleasant and safe place in their eyes. When a student takes their first steps into school, the first thing they encounter isn’t the curriculum, but rather the teacher’s face, the tone of their voice, and the welcoming look in their eyes. Here, the teacher’s crucial role in shaping the first impression becomes apparent, establishing the student’s feelings toward their school, their knowledge and themselves.

MANY STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE EARLY GRADES OR THOSE RECENTLY TRANSFERRED, ARRIVE AT SCHOOL WITH VARYING EMOTIONAL STATES: FEAR, SHYNESS, ANXIETY OR EVEN AGGRESSION. THEREFORE, THE TEACHER’S ROLE HERE IS NOT ONLY TO CONTROL THE CLASS, BUT ALSO TO CALM THEM THROUGH:

- 1

A friendly welcome for each student with a sincere smile
- 2

Greeting with a light, festive feel
- 3

Decorating the classroom with motivational phrases and student drawings from previous years
- 4

Telling an inspiring story at the beginning of the class and encouraging interaction
- 5

Calling each student his/her name and using it during conversations
- 6

Giving space for students to discuss their feelings and expectations
- 7

Activating individual or group ice-breaking activities
- 8

Expressing pride in students and expecting success from all of them, without exception

Oman Animal Welfare Association

Invitation to Attend Inaugural Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of the Oman Animal Welfare Association is pleased to invite all founding members to attend the inaugural annual general meeting, to be held at *Feel Boutique Plaza*, Ghubra, Muscat, on Tuesday, 30/09/2025 at 18:00 PM.

Agenda: Approval of the 2026 annual plan and draft budget. Election of the Board of Directors. – Discussion and approval of membership fees. – Launch of the association's logo. – Any other matters.

Members are kindly requested to confirm attendance or submit a written authorization of another member to attend, in accordance with Article 18 of the association's constitution, prior to the meeting date.

Nominations of the association board of directors can be submitted via the QR code. The final date for receiving nominations will be 13 September 2025. No nominations will be accepted after this date. Please note that nominations are restricted to the founding members.



For inquiries, please contact **93203379**
or email : **contact@omananimalwelfare.com**

RAO STARTS
OFFICER
CANDIDATE
RECRUITMENT
REVIEW

MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO), in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, has initiated evaluation and acceptance procedures for military service enrolment of officer candidates. The recruitment process includes holders of bachelor’s degrees, post-general diploma qualifications and general diploma certificates.



Applicants undergo multiple assessment stages in accordance with the RAO’s employment procedures, progressing through to the final acceptance phases. The RAO is mobilising its administrative and technical capabilities to facilitate military service enrolment procedures and support joining the fields of honour and national duty. — ONA

Sohar Fort Museum
set for major revamp

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, AUG 24

THE Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has unveiled plans to redevelop the Sohar Fort Museum, marking a significant step in preserving and promoting one of Al Batinah North Governorate’s most iconic landmarks. Closed since 2008, the museum is now set for a comprehensive transformation designed to blend cultural preservation with modern visitor experiences.

The project will revamp existing exhibition halls and introduce new galleries, supported by the latest technologies in displays and storytelling.

Facilities will also be upgraded, alongside the addition of cultural and educational activities aimed at engaging schools, researchers and local communities.

The initiative is not limited to conservation, it seeks to turn the museum into a dynamic cultural hub where heritage and innovation intersect.

Highlighting the importance of the project, Sultan al Maqbali, the manager of Sohar Fort Museum, said: “The redevelopment of Sohar Fort Museum reflects our vision to present heritage in ways that speak to today’s audiences.

It is about more than preservation, it is about strengthening citizenship,



Closed since 2008, the museum is now set for a comprehensive transformation.

enhancing cultural awareness and ensuring that our historic treasures continue to inspire future generations.” The revival of the museum comes within broader national efforts to invest in Oman’s forts and castles, which are increasingly being restored, repurposed and activated as living spaces of culture and identity.

Through usufruct agreements with the private sector, the ministry is enhancing visitor services while safeguarding architectural integrity and authenticity.

There are 12 historical landmarks in Al Batinah North Governorate,

which have been restored, with three handed to private operators for management and operation.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, these initiatives integrate heritage into sustainable development and tourism strategies, reinforcing the forts and castles not only as symbols of history but as platforms for education, community engagement and national pride.

With its new identity, the museum is also expected to play a vital role in stimulating tourism in the Wilayat of Sohar, adding momentum to the region’s cultural and economic development.

8,000 SEEDLINGS DISTRIBUTED IN AL DHAHIRAH

IBRI: The pastoral nursery affiliated to the Directorate-General of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah Governorate has seen a notable increase in the number of seedlings distributed to beneficiaries in 2024, exceeding 8,000 seedlings of various types.

The Directorate emphasised that pastoral plants are among the fundamental components of the local environment, as they grow naturally and

withstand harsh climatic conditions, contributing to soil protection, increased vegetation cover and the provision of a suitable habitat for wildlife.

In a statement to ONA, the Directorate indicated that the number of pastoral seedlings produced at the nursery reached approximately 8,347, which were distributed to 385 beneficiaries, including farmers, beekeepers, and a number of governmental and private entities.

The distributed seedlings included a range of indigenous species with environmental and economic value.

These seedlings are distributed free of charge to livestock breeders, honeybee keepers, rural women, and farmers to help improve soil quality and provide the nectar necessary for producing high-quality local honey — particularly Sidr and Samar honey — thereby boosting economic returns for beneficiaries. — ONA

ISG shines with record Cambridge results

MUSCAT: ISG International has once again raised the bar of academic excellence, celebrating an outstanding performance in the Cambridge June Series examinations — a shining testament to the school’s unwavering commitment to nurturing global achievers.

This year’s results stand as a resounding endorsement of ISG International’s pursuit of excellence, with students securing 10 prestigious IGCSE ICE Distinction Awards and 3 ICE Merit Awards.

The cohort amassed an extraordinary 48 A* and 27 A grades at the IGCSE level, while at the advanced stages of study, remarkable achievements continued with 4 A* at A Level. Together, these accomplishments highlight not only the students’ dedication and perseverance but also the school’s exceptional academic standards and inspiring learning environment.

Adding to the school’s triumph is the performance of Vaibhavi



ISG Intl students not only secured ICE awards, but also set records in top-grade achievements

Ashok Shetty, who secured A* in all four A Level subjects — Biology, Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science. Zarifa Karim aced all five AS subjects with A grades, while Devansh Paresh Kumar Navin Shah and Alap Samir Ketkar also emerged with perfect results in their respective four-subject combinations. Several other students achieved multiple distinctions, underscoring the depth of talent nurtured at the school.

At the IGCSE level, the school celebrated equally remarkable results. Asmi Sameer Raniga and Nandana Kamala Menon topped the list with A* in all subjects taken, while several others earned a mix of distinctions and merits across a wide range of disciplines.

The IGCSE results this year at ISG International mark a milestone, with students not only securing ICE awards, but also setting records in top-grade achievements.

With each success story, ISG International reaffirms its commitment to fostering academic excellence and holistic growth, preparing students not only to achieve top grades, but also to thrive as confident, capable global citizens. The Principal and School Management Committee extended heartfelt congratulations to the students and expressed deep gratitude to the dedicated faculty and supportive parents whose combined efforts made this success possible.



Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
020/2025	Road Works – Izki	First and Above Specialized in road asphaltting	04 September 2025	06 October 2025	75/- R.O
024/2025	Building works – MAM	Excellent	04 September 2025	06 October 2025	910/- R.O
027/2025	Building works – Sarfait	Excellent	04 September 2025	06 October 2025	863/- R.O
028/2025	MEP works – Thumrait	First & Above Specialized In MEP Works (STP)	04 September 2025	06 October 2025	588/- R.O
031/2025	Building works – Masirah	Excellent	04 September 2025	13 October 2025	472/- R.O
032/2025	Building works – Sarfait	First & above	04 September 2025	13 October 2025	210/- R.O
033/2025	Building works – Salalah	Excellent	04 September 2025	13 October 2025	1,428/- R.O
038/2025	Building works – Ghala	Excellent	04 September 2025	13 October 2025	662/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY** (USB) in two separate files:

A. financial (bill 1&2 separated file from bill3)

B. Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting, in Tehran. — Reuters

KHAMENEI STRESSES UNITY OVER CONFRONTATION

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday called for a united national front to confront what he described as US efforts to subjugate Iran. The remarks, delivered at a mosque in the capital Tehran and published on Khamenei's official website, come two months since fighting halted between Iran and its sworn enemy Israel in a war that the United States had briefly joined, and as Tehran is engaged in talks with world powers about its nuclear programme.

He said that a day after "Iran was attacked" by Israel at the start of the war, "American agents" met in Europe "to discuss what government should rule Iran after the Islamic republic". Khamenei added that the United States was ultimately seeking to make Iran "obedient to it". "The Iranian nation, by standing firm alongside the armed forces, the government and the system, delivered a strong blow" to its enemies, Khamenei said. The supreme leader, who has the final say on state affairs, also warned against internal divisions he said foreign powers were fomenting. — AFP



Sri Lanka's ex-president Ranil Wickremesinghe appears as he leaves the Magistrate's Court in Colombo. — Reuters

FORMER PRESIDENTS BACK SRI LANKA'S JAILED EX-LEADER

COLOMBO: Three former presidents of Sri Lanka expressed solidarity with jailed ex-leader Ranil Wickremesinghe on Sunday and condemned his incarceration as a "calculated assault" on democracy. The trio, former political rivals of Wickremesinghe — president between July 2022 and September 2024 — said the charges against him were frivolous. He has been accused of using \$55,000 in state funds for a stopover in Britain while returning home after a G77 summit in Havana and the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2023. Wickremesinghe, 76, was rushed to the intensive care unit of the main state-run hospital in Colombo on Saturday, a day after being remanded in custody. Doctors said he was suffering from severe dehydration on top of acute diabetes and high blood pressure. "What we are witnessing is a calculated onslaught on the very essence of our democratic values," former president Chandrika Kumaratunga said in a statement. — AFP

SYRIA DELAYS PARLIAMEN-TARY VOTE IN SWEIDA AFTER VIOLENCE

DAMASCUS: Syria's first parliamentary election under its new administration, scheduled for September, will not include the southern province of Sweida and two other provinces due to security concerns, the electoral commission said.

Hundreds of people were reported killed in July in clashes in Sweida, and government forces were sent to the city to quell the unrest.

Next month's ballot will also be

delayed in the northern Hasaka and Raqqa provinces - parts of which are mostly controlled by the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces - until there is a "safe environment", state media quoted the electoral commission as saying. Seats allocated to the three provinces will remain vacant until elections can be held there, a spokesperson for the Higher Committee for People's Assembly Elections said.

"The elections are a sovereign

matter that can only be conducted in areas fully under government control," he added. The decision drew criticism from Kurdish authorities. "These elections are not democratic and do not express the will of the Syrians in any way. They represent nothing but a continuation of the approach of marginalisation and exclusion," the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria said in a statement on Sunday. — Reuters

ISRAEL STRIKES YEMENI CAPITAL

ISRAEL struck Yemen's capital Sanaa on Sunday, killing at least two people, according to the country's Ansar Allah group who has repeatedly launched missiles and drones at Israel throughout the Gaza war. Images showed a large fireball lighting up the skies over the rebel-held Yemeni capital, leaving behind a column of thick, black smoke.

The Yemeni health ministry reported "two martyrs and 35 wounded" in the Israeli raid. A security source said that the air raid targeted a municipal building in central Sanaa, while the group's Al Masirah TV reported that the two dead were in a strike on an oil company facility in the city. The channel said the targets also included a power station in Sanaa's south that was previously hit last Sunday.

The Israeli army said it had targeted military sites in Sanaa, including areas near the presidential palace, two power plants and a fuel storage facility.

"The strikes were conducted in response to repeated attacks by the regime against the State of Israel and its civilians," the military said in a statement. Late on Friday, Ansar Allah fired a missile that Israeli authorities said had "most likely fragmented in mid-air". Since the October 2023 start of the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, the Yemeni group has repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Israel, claiming to be acting in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Most of the attacks have been intercepted, but they have prompted retaliatory Israeli air strikes on the



Smoke billows after an Israeli air strike on Yemen's capital Sanaa. — AFP

group's targets in Yemen. On August 17, Israel said it targeted an energy infrastructure site in Sanaa linked to the group, with Al Masirah reporting at the time the capital's Haziz power station was hit. The latest Israeli statement said the Haziz facility was targeted again on Sunday.

A photographer working with AFP reported significant damage after the August 17 strike. Beyond attacks on Israel itself, Ansar Allah has also targeted ships they say are linked to the country in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden off Yemen. The group

broadened its campaign to target ships tied to the United States and Britain after the two countries began military strikes aimed at securing the waterway in January 2024.

In May, Ansar Allah cemented a ceasefire with the United States that ended weeks of intense US strikes, but vowed to continue targeting Israeli ships. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said earlier this month that the Yemeni group would "pay with compound interest for every attempt to fire at Israel". — AFP



RSF SHELLS HOSPITAL, ABDUCTS 8 IN EL FASHER

PORT SUDAN: Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces shelled a hospital in North Darfur's besieged city of El Fasher and abducted six women and two children from a nearby displacement camp, rescuers and a medic said on Sunday. El Fasher, under RSF siege for over a year, is the last major city in western Darfur still held by the army and a flashpoint in the war that erupted in April 2023.

The Emergency Response Room at the Abu Shouk camp near El Fasher on Sunday said RSF fighters stormed the site, seizing eight unarmed civilians — six women, a 40-day-old baby and a three-year-old child — and taking them to an undisclosed location. More than 20 camp residents were missing, the rescuers said, warning the actual number could be higher. — AFP

WEATHER ALERT

Vietnam to evacuate 300,000 residents



Vietnam said on Sunday it plans to evacuate more than 300,000 people and has cancelled over a dozen domestic flights as Typhoon Kajiki approaches. More than 325,500 residents in five coastal provinces will be moved to schools and public buildings turned into temporary evacuation centres. "The situation is extremely dangerous and not safe for any vehicles or structures, such as tourism or fishing vessels and aquaculture raising facilities," said disaster authorities. — AFP

MASS KIDNAPPINGS

Nigeria military rescues 76 held captive



Nigeria's military rescued 76 people kidnapped by criminal gangs known as "bandits" in northwestern Katsina state, though one child captive died in the operation. The rescue took place in the Kankara local government area. The operation was staged following an air force strike in the hunt for a "notorious bandit kingpin" and his gang, suspected to be behind an attack on a mosque and on nearby villages that claimed 50 lives. — AFP

MILITARY BATTLING

Myanmar historic railway bridge 'bombed'



Myanmar's junta said a colonial-era bridge that was once the world's highest railway trestle had been "bombed and destroyed" by anti-coup armed groups. Junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said that the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and People's Defence Forces had "bombed and destroyed" Gokteik bridge. Videos showed the bridge — which connects Mandalay to northern Shan State by rail and draws a number of tourists — partly collapsed and damaged. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A child walks past members of the National Guard, in Washington. — AFP

TRUMP PLANS TO DEPLOY TROOPS IN CHICAGO

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration has been planning for weeks to deploy National Guard troops in Chicago as part of an expanded crackdown on crime and immigration, according to reports in US media. The Pentagon has been sketching out plans that could mobilize several thousand National Guard members to the nation’s third-largest city as early as September.

The Pentagon refused to confirm the reports. “We won’t speculate on further operations,” a defense official said. “The Department is a planning organization and is continuously working with other agency partners on plans to protect federal assets and personnel,” the official said.

Trump said that Chicago and New York were set to receive similar treatment. “We’re going to make our cities very, very safe,” Trump told reporters at the White House. “I think Chicago will be our next and then we’ll help with New York.” The potential deployment in Chicago would follow a similar pattern to Trump’s controversial June operation in Los Angeles, where he sent 4,000 California National Guard members and 700 active-duty Marines. — AFP

SPACEX EYES REUSABILITY MILESTONES



Elon Musk’s SpaceX is set to launch its massive Starship rocket for a tenth time from Texas to achieve several long-sought development milestones missed due to past tests ending in early failures. The 232-foot tall Super Heavy booster and its 52 meters tall Starship upper half sat stacked on a launch mount at SpaceX’s Starbase rocket facilities ahead of an expected 7:30 p.m. ET liftoff time. Development of SpaceX’s next-generation rocket has faced repeated hiccups this year as Nasa hopes to use the rocket as soon as 2027 for its first crewed moon landing since the Apollo program. — Reuters

BOSNIA’S SERB CALLS REFERENDUM ON VERDICT AGAINST LEADER

SARAJEVO: Bosnia’s Serbian entity faced international criticism for ordering a referendum on whether it accepts a federal court verdict banning its president Milorad Dodik from public office. Lawmakers in Republika Srpska’s (RS) regional assembly voted late on Friday to hold a referendum on October 25 that would be a new challenge to the state’s weak central government.

The European Union delegation in Bosnia said on Saturday the court ruling against Dodik

“must be respected”. “Subjecting a court decision to a public vote runs counter to the rule of law and the independence of judicial authorities,” it added in a post on X. “We expect the Republika Srpska authorities to de-escalate the situation and respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional and legal order of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Britain’s ambassador to Bosnia, Julian Reilly, made a similar call, saying that any referendum on the

court decision would be “illegal”. Bosnian Serb lawmakers voted to put the question: “Do you accept the decisions of the unelected foreigner (envoy Schmidt) and the unconstitutional verdict of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Court against the president of the RS, as well as the decision of the Bosnian Electoral Commission to revoke the mandate of the president of the RS, Milorad Dodik?” Fifty of the 65 lawmakers present voted in favour. Opposition lawmakers refused to vote. — AFP

US envoy visits Ukraine as peace efforts stall

US President Donald Trump’s envoy Keith Kellogg attended Ukraine’s independence celebrations on Sunday in Kyiv, as the push to end the war appeared to have stalled, with Ukraine and Russia trading accusations of hampering the peace efforts. Ukraine launched a wave of drone strikes on Russia on Sunday, triggering a fire at a nuclear power plant as Ukrainians marked their independence day against a backdrop of a grinding conflict now in its fourth year.

After a flurry of diplomacy and a push by US President Donald Trump to broker a summit between his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, hopes for peace dimmed when Russia on Friday ruled out any immediate meeting between Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused Western countries on Sunday of looking “for a pretext to block negotiations” and slammed Zelensky for “demanding an immediate meeting at all costs” with Putin. On Friday, Lavrov said “no meeting” between Putin and Zelensky was planned. Zelensky for his part said Russia was “trying to wriggle out of holding a meeting”. “Together, Ukrainians and our partners, we are working to push Russia to peace. And it is possible,” Zelensky said at independence day celebrations attended by Kellogg and other Western officials.

Zelensky also awarded the US envoy with the Ukrainian Order of Merit at the ceremony. The war, which has killed tens of thousands of people, is largely stalemated, though Russia has managed to eke out recent advances in its offensive — including claiming two villages in the eastern Donetsk region on Saturday.

Ukraine hit back on Sunday by sending drones on fresh attacks on Russian territory, including one that was shot down over the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant in western Russia, which detonated upon impact and sparked a fire, according to the facility. The plant said the fire had been extinguished, adding there were no casualties or increased radiation levels.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly warned of the dangers of



Local residents look at captured military equipment in Kyiv on Ukraine’s Independence Day. — AFP

fighting around nuclear plants following Russia’s full-scale attack of Ukraine in February 2022. Russian authorities said Ukrainian drones had also been shot down over areas sometimes far from the front, including Saint Petersburg in the northwest. Ten drones were shot down over the port of Ust-Luga on the Gulf of Finland, sparking a fire at a fuel terminal owned by Russian energy group Novatek, regional governor Aleksandr Drozdenko wrote on Telegram.

Ukraine’s outgunned army has relied heavily on drones to respond to Russia’s attack, notably targeting oil infrastructure to hit a key source of Moscow’s revenues to fund the war. Russia has seen soaring fuel prices since the attacks began. Ukraine meanwhile said Russia had attacked it overnight with a ballistic missile and 72 attack drones, 48 of which the air force said had been shot down.

The latest fighting came as Ukraine

marked the anniversary of gaining independence in 1991 in the break-up of the Soviet Union. “This is how Ukraine strikes when its calls for peace are ignored,” Zelensky said in an independence day address. “Today, both the US and Europe agree: Ukraine has not yet fully won, but it will certainly not lose. Ukraine has secured its independence. Ukraine is not a victim; it is a fighter.”

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, in Kyiv for the commemorations, called for “a just and lasting peace for Ukraine”.

Zelensky thanked other world leaders including Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping, French President Emmanuel Macron, King Charles and the pope for sending messages to mark the occasion. Norway on Sunday said it would contribute seven billion kroner (\$700 million) as part of its pledge to, together with Germany, provide Ukraine with two complete US Patriot systems that Germany already possesses. — AFP

UK vows to speed up asylum claims as hotel protests spread

LONDON: The UK government vowed on Sunday to overhaul its asylum system after weekend protests broke out across the country at hotels housing migrants. The government said it will establish a new independent body to hear appeals by failed applicants more quickly as it attempts to end the costly use of asylum hotels, which have become the target of protests.

The Labour government said that it would appeal a court ruling blocking it from housing asylum seekers at one hotel in southeast England that became a flashpoint for demonstrations. The ruling triggered the announcement of protests and counter-protests outside hotels accommodating asylum seekers around the country.

Demonstrations under the “Abolish Asylum System” slogan were held in cities and towns including Bristol, Exeter, Tamworth, Cannock, Nuneaton, Liverpool,

Wakefield, Newcastle, Aberdeen, Perth and in central London. Police separated rival groups in Bristol, with officers scuffling with protesters. “Our officers have dealt admirably with a really challenging situation,” said Keith Smith, a senior officer with Avon and Somerset Police “While there were moments of disturbance, we’re pleased to say the two protests have passed without significant incident,” he added.

The protests began outside a hotel in Epping, southeast England, after one resident was charged with sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl. Further protests were planned on Sunday in Manchester, northwest England, and Dudley in the Midlands.

The policy of housing migrants in hotels was introduced by the last Conservative government, which was ousted in 2024 elections. The latest official data showed that 32,345 asylum seekers were



A protestor holds a flag during an anti-immigration protest, south of London. — AFP

temporarily housed in UK hotels at the end of March. The government is battling to reduce the backlog of initial asylum claims and court

delays over appeals, which it says is the biggest cause of pressure in the asylum accommodation system.

A total of 111,084 people applied

for asylum in the in the year to June 2025 — the highest number ever. There are currently 106,000 cases waiting to be heard, including at least 51,000 appeals.

The average wait time for an appeal is 53 weeks. The government said that “lessons are also being learned from other European countries”, including nations where appeals are decided by an independent appeal rather than absorbed into the slow-moving main judiciary system.

“We inherited an asylum system in complete chaos with a soaring backlog of asylum cases and a broken appeals system,” said interior minister Yvette Cooper in a press release. “We are determined to substantially reduce the number of people in the asylum system as part of our plan to end asylum hotels... we cannot carry on with these completely unacceptable delays in appeals,” she added. — AFP

OPINION

Innovative ways for modern learning in a changing world



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

AS the new academic year begins in Oman today for teachers and administrators, it is a good opportunity to look at the challenges which face teachers and the ways in which they could be addressed. Teaching has seen a massive change in the last decade. No longer is the emphasis on teaching, but on learning, thus shifting the focus to the learners and the classroom. This has major implications for teachers, many of whom may still have been trained using traditional methods and strategies like lecturing and, at best, showing PowerPoint slides, if such technology is available in class. Surely, we have moved far beyond this teaching format. Students, right from grade 1 to 12, are no longer willing, or even capable, of learning by passively listening to teachers. Continuous research has shown that students learn far better by actively doing tasks, discussing in class, and even teaching content to others in the class. Interactive learning is key to effective teaching. This means that teachers need to be quick

to introduce effective strategies to capture the attention of a generation known for its very short attention span. This includes coming up with engaging activities, using whatever technology is available, and creating spaces for reflection and analysis in class time. The major obstacle to such innovative practices worldwide is twofold: there is always the pressure of time, as all classes are about 40 minutes, and there is not enough time to finish the syllabus. Nor is there any incentive to do experimental teaching which may require training and even infrastructure. This is where innovation becomes important. Given the constraints of time and resources, teachers can look for ways to add value to their classes in their own way. This could be in the form of using short-term strategies to make a specific chapter interesting, or working with easily available material to do short projects in class. There are endless ideas and tips available online, and teachers don't even have to fall back on professional development programmes for training. In fact, there are

Given the constraints of time, teachers can look for ways to add value to their classes and they could use short-term strategies to make a specific chapter interesting

free online courses to enhance teaching strategies. It is commonplace, and often rightly, to blame forces outside us for the problems that plague education today. But that does not actually solve the problem. At an individual level, teachers can implement smart strategies which address specific issues and concerns. This has the added advantage of being sensitive to specific learning contexts where teachers can implement unique strategies which may be more effective than mass-produced suggestions. Early career teachers demonstrate this through the fresh enthusiasm, energy and ideas they bring. Keeping that motivation alive is important and can be easily done by networking online and staying committed to students whose future is at stake. The new academic year is always full of promise and possibility. Turning that possibility into reality through in-class innovations will remain an exciting challenge.

SPAIN’S HEATWAVE WAS ‘MOST INTENSE ON RECORD’

A 16-day heatwave Spain suffered this month was ‘the most intense on record’, the country’s State Meteorological Agency (AEMET) said on Sunday. Provisional readings for the August 3-18 heatwave exceeded the last record, set in July 2022, and showed an average temperature 4.6°C higher than for previous such phenomena, the agency said on X. The August heatwave exacerbated tinderbox conditions in Spain that fuelled wildfires that continue to ravage parts of the north and west of the country. More than 1,100 deaths in Spain have been linked to the heatwave, according to an estimate released on Tuesday by the Carlos III Health Institute. Since it began its records in 1975, AEMET has registered 77 heatwaves in Spain, with six of them going 4°C or more above the average – five of those since 2019. Scientists say climate change is driving longer, more intense and more frequent heatwaves worldwide. AEMET said a 10-day period within the last heatwave, covering August 8 and 17, was the hottest 10 consecutive days recorded in Spain “since, at least, 1950”. The agency said that it is “a scientific fact that current summers are hotter than in previous decades”. It added: “Each summer is not always going to be hotter than the previous one, but there is a clear trend towards much more extreme summers. What is key is adapting to, and mitigating, climate change.” Meanwhile, a fourth Portuguese firefighter died of injuries sustained battling a wildfire on Saturday as Spain slowly got the upper hand over fires that have scorched vast swathes of territory. Eight people have now died in the two countries that have been gripped by a summer of fires fuelled by heatwaves, tinderbox conditions and strong winds. Portugal’s presidency said that a firefighter had died of injuries suffered this week in Sabugal in the northeast. Media said the 45-year-old had been working for a private company battling the fires. Spain has also counted four deaths. But with weather conditions improving, Spanish authorities said that the tide appeared to have turned in the fight against the fires, mainly raging in the country’s west and northwest. Meanwhile, German firefighters helping to tackle the wildfires ravaging much of Spain have been redeployed to the northern Castile and León region after a successful deployment further south, Spanish media reported. The Spanish authorities have despatched them to La Baña, a village north of the Portuguese border, where the flames have been approaching. Some 330 residents have already been evacuated, according to a report in the Leonoticias newspaper. — AFP

5 untapped sectors in Oman poised to attract billions

AS Oman strides confidently towards its Vision 2040, the nation stands at the threshold of a transformative economic era. Oman’s geographic location, stable governance and proactive investment policies uniquely position it to attract global investors. While traditional sectors like oil and gas have long been pillars of the economy, the future lies in diversification and innovation. This blueprint unveils five high-impact sectors with immense potential to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), create high-skilled jobs and position Oman as a regional leader in sustainable development. 1. Precision Agritech & Aquaculture Opportunities for agricultural innovation are significant. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies in hydroponics, vertical farming and aquaculture, Oman can transform its agricultural sector. The aquaculture market alone is projected to grow from \$676.26 million in 2025 to \$913.56 million by 2030, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2 per cent. Investing in agritech and aquaculture not only enhances food security, but also opens avenues for export, contributing significantly to GDP growth. 2. Renewable Energy & Green Hydrogen Oman’s abundant solar and wind resources position it as a potential leader in renewable energy. The nation’s green hydrogen strategy aims to produce 1 million tonnes of renewable hydrogen by 2030, scaling up to 8.5 million tonnes by 2050. This ambitious plan aligns with global trends towards decarbonisation and offers substantial FDI opportunities. By capitalising on renewable energy, Oman can diversify its energy exports and attract international investments, fostering economic resilience. 3. Health & Longevity Innovation



Investing in agritech and aquaculture not only enhances food security, but also opens avenues for export, contributing significantly to GDP growth



IMAD EDDINE OUBIRI

The author is public policy & international cooperation expert

By embracing these untapped sectors, the nation can not only diversify its economy, but also shape the future of the regional economy

Ecosystems With a growing aging population and increasing health awareness, Oman has the opportunity to become a hub for healthcare innovation. Investments in telemedicine, specialised medical services and wellness ecosystems can cater to regional demographic needs. The pharmaceutical market in Oman is poised for significant expansion, valued at approximately \$303 million in 2024. Developing a robust healthcare ecosystem not only improves quality of life, but also attracts FDI, creating high-skilled jobs and enhancing Oman’s global competitiveness. 4. Smart Digital Services & SaaS The digital transformation wave presents Oman with the chance to lead in smart digital services and Software as a Service (SaaS). By developing cloud solutions, cybersecurity frameworks and region-specific software products, Oman can export its expertise to GCC clients. This sector promises high-value exports and job creation in the tech industry. Investing in digital services positions Oman as a regional tech hub, attracting global

investors and fostering innovation-driven economic growth. 5. Eco-Friendly & Niche Manufacturing Sustainable manufacturing practices are gaining traction globally. Oman can capitalise on this trend by producing eco-friendly construction materials, modular housing solutions and desert-ready innovations. These products not only meet local demand, but also have significant export potential, aligning with Oman Vision 2040’s emphasis on sustainable development. Eco-friendly manufacturing enhances Oman’s export portfolio, supports sustainable development and attracts FDI in green technologies. Strategic takeaways for investors 1. FDI multiplier effect: Strategic investments in these sectors could attract \$8–10 billion in foreign investment by 2030. 2. First-mover advantage: Early engagement positions Oman as the innovation pioneer in the GCC, offering competitive returns. 3. Human capital development: These sectors create high-value jobs and knowledge hubs, boosting human capital and economic resilience. 4. Global branding: Oman can become recognised internationally as a destination for strategic, sustainable investment, enhancing its global standing. 5. Sustainable wealth creation: Economic growth aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and long-term environmental stewardship ensures sustainable wealth creation for future generations. Oman stands at a pivotal moment in its economic journey. By embracing these untapped sectors, the nation can not only diversify its economy, but also shape the future of the regional economy. This blueprint serves as a call to action for investors, entrepreneurs and policymakers to collaborate and realise the immense potential that lies ahead.

The roads where flowers never grow



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

THERE are stretches of roads in every town where flowers never grow. People say roads connect us, but nowadays, many lead to one place: silence. Not the silence of peace, but the silence that follows a car crash. The silence in a hospital’s waiting room. The silence of unanswered phones. The silence in a house where someone is never coming back home.

We live in a world built for speed, but actually it is killing us slowly. Every day, tens of thousands of people wake up expecting nothing more than to go to school, work, or have lunch. Unfortunately, some never make it. Why? Because a missed stop sign becomes a broken spine, a late-night drive becomes a final breath, and a text message behind the wheel becomes a shattered future.

Every morning, we wake up and feed the machines called “cars”. We slide into them, turn the keys and give them our time, our thoughts, our trust. However, these machines are more like beasts — sleek, fast, roaring things with metal skin and rubber feet.

Lately, they seem hungrier. As we rush to arrive, we forget how to survive inside them. A mother misses a stoplight, a teenager checks a notification on his mobile phone, and a father falls asleep after a 12-hour shift. And then, somewhere tyres scream and

silence falls.

After fatal moments like these, we count the dead, but we don’t count the grief. We publish statistics not the silence that follows. Road crashes cost the global economy hundreds of billions of dollars annually. But what is the real cost of a mother who never comes home? What is the price of a son’s laugh, silenced forever?

These are just a few of the priceless losses hidden behind every headline. Insurance pays for the car only and not for the birthdays missed, the incomes lost, or the dreams erased. Behind the numbers are real names, real lives and severe pains.

People think of car accidents as isolated events, but they are not. They are dominoes falling one after another. A crash is not just a single moment; it is a chain reaction. Yes, not everyone dies, but those who survive often live differently. They carry memories like shattered glass in their pockets. They see headlights and remember a moment they couldn’t stop.

So, what do we really carry behind the wheel? It is more than a licence. We carry the lives of strangers, passengers, pedestrians — people who trust we won’t make them a headline. Victims are rarely the reckless. They are the careful drivers, the child in the backseat, the man crossing the street.

Every morning, we wake up and feed the machines called “cars”. We slide into them, turn the keys and give them our time, our thoughts, our trust. However, these machines are more like beasts — sleek, fast, roaring things with metal skin and rubber feet

They did everything right and still lost everything. We must remember that driving is not just a skill. In fact, it is a moral responsibility. The road is not yours alone — it is a shared promise. A promise to protect, to respect, to arrive alive. And when that promise is broken, it echoes in funerals, in hospital wards and in empty chairs.

Such aching memories are not healed with speed limits alone and not with apologies or with small fines. So why are reckless drivers still getting away with it? Where is the justice for those left behind? Where is the fear in those still speeding? Perhaps what we need is more than awareness — we need strict actions and unforgiving penalties.

Let there be harsher sentences for reckless drivers. Zero tolerance for repeat offenses. Immediate licence suspensions for dangerous behaviours. Mandatory educational and disciplinary programmes for offenders.

But people tend to forget quickly. They pass a car crash, see the flares and flashing lights, and simply whisper, “That could’ve been me.”

Let’s stop whispering. Let’s remember — every day — that when you drive, you are holding power. Every time you touch the wheel, you are writing a story, so make sure it is not a tragedy.

UK’S MASS FACIAL RECOGNITION ROLL-OUT ALARMS RIGHTS GROUPS

CLARA LALANNE

Outside supermarkets or in festival crowds, millions are now having their features scanned by real-time facial-recognition systems in the UK — the only European country to deploy the technology on a large scale.

At London’s Notting Hill Carnival, where two million people are expected to celebrate Afro-Caribbean culture over Sunday and Monday, facial-recognition cameras are being deployed near entrances and exits.

The police said their objective was to identify and intercept wanted individuals by scanning faces in large crowds and comparing them with thousands of suspects already in the police database. The technology is “an effective policing tool which has already been successfully used to locate offenders at crime hotspots, resulting in well over 1,000 arrests since the start of 2024,” said Metropolitan Police chief Mark Rowley.

The technology was first tested in 2016 and its use has increased considerably over the past three years in the United Kingdom. Some 4.7 million faces were scanned in 2024 alone, according to the NGO Liberty. UK police have deployed the live facial-recognition system around 100 times since late January, compared to only 10 between 2016 and 2019. Examples include before two Six Nations rugby games and outside two Oasis concerts in Cardiff in July.

When a person on a police “watchlist” passes near the cameras, the AI-powered system, often set up in a police van, triggers an alert.

The suspect can then be immediately detained once police checks confirm their identity.

But such mass data capture on the streets of London, also seen during the coronation of King Charles III in 2023, “treats us like a nation of suspects”, said the Big Brother Watch organisation.

“There is no legislative basis, so we have no safeguards to protect our rights, and the police is left to write its own rules,” Rebecca Vincent, its interim director, said.

Its private use by supermarkets and clothing stores to combat the sharp rise in shoplifting has also raised concerns, with “very little information” available about how the data is being used, she added. Most use Facewatch, a service provider that compiles a list of suspected offenders in the stores it monitors and raises an alert if one of them enters the premises.

“It transforms what it is to live in a city, because it removes the possibility of living anonymously,” said Daragh Murray, a lecturer in human rights law at Queen Mary University of London.

“That can have really big implications for protests but also participation in political and cultural life,” he added.

Often, those using such stores do not know that they are being profiled. “They should make people aware of it,” Abigail Bevon, a 26-year-old forensic scientist, said by the entrance of a London store using Facewatch. — AFP

The return to the classroom... A time for reflection

AS teachers and students return to physical classrooms after a seasonal break, education systems are presented with a critical opportunity to move beyond traditional routines.

This is evident in reflection on past learning experiences, reconnection among members of the learning community and dynamic curriculum activation. Each of these three elements can be further explained as follows: Reflection: Learning from the past to inform the future. The transition back to the classroom provides an opportune moment for both teachers and students to engage in reflective practices. Educators must ask: What worked well in previous teaching experiences? What challenges were encountered? What lessons have we learned about learners, pedagogies and ourselves? Reflection is not merely a retrospective exercise; it is a formative tool that cultivates growth-oriented mindsets. Teachers may reflect on instructional methods that supported engagement during remote learning or consider how differentiated strategies impacted student outcomes. Similarly, students benefit from guided reflection on their learning processes, agency and resilience. This shared process of reflective inquiry supports a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth.

The second key element is the reconnection among members of the learning community, which plays a critical role in restoring the human dimension and emotional aspects of education. Returning to school also marks a moment of relational renewal. Learning is inherently social, and strong interpersonal connections form the foundation of safe and effective learning environments. After extended periods of physical separation or routine disruption, re-establishing trust, empathy and community within the classroom becomes essential. Educators must intentionally create spaces for dialogue, emotional expression and collaborative learning. Reconnection is not just about familiarity; it is about



Returning to school also marks a moment of relational renewal.



DR ZAINAB AL AJMI

The writer is with the Ministry of Education

rebuilding a learning community where every student feels seen, heard and valued. This aligns with contemporary approaches to social-emotional learning (SEL) and trauma-informed education, emphasising the importance of belonging and psychological safety in promoting academic success.

As for the third element, dynamic curriculum activation, this refers to the shift from passive content delivery to active, meaningful engagement with curriculum materials. The classroom should no longer be a space where knowledge is merely transmitted. Instead, it becomes a vibrant arena where students co-construct meaning, apply learning in authentic contexts and pursue inquiry-based tasks. Moreover, curriculum activation often requires reconsidering traditional pedagogical approaches and lesson delivery formats, shifting towards more student-centred models through the lens of project-based learning, real-world problem-solving and formative assessment practices. It calls for

teachers to be designers of learning experiences, not just implementers, who align instructional choices with students’ needs, interests and current realities. This activation also acknowledges the role of technology, interdisciplinary learning, and 21st-century competencies, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity in shaping relevant and responsive curriculum.

To conclude, an active and safe return is regarded as a critical period for the implementation of new, practical strategies. Goals should be set at the outset through reflective consideration of students’ needs, such as rest, personal growth, social connection and creative engagement. A digital detox is recommended to facilitate cognitive recovery by minimising screen time. Additionally, balance must be maintained to prevent the early phase of the return to school from being overwhelmed by excessive workload caused by overplanning or the undertaking of numerous activities.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Mundher al Balushi in action during the race

AL BALUSHI A TRAINER SHAPED THE GLORY OF OMANI HORSE RACING

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
BARKA, AUG 24

Mundher al Balushi is a prominent figure in Oman’s horse racing scene, building a career that combines his role with the Royal Cavalry and the management of his own private stable. While horse breeding has long been part of his family’s heritage, Al Balushi went beyond tradition to secure his place among the nation’s leading trainers.

His achievements include first place in the Super Cup, third place in the His Majesty Sultan Haitham’s Race, and nine victories in total — five of them consecutive — a record that underlines his consistency and determination at the highest level.

Among his standout horses are RB Free Bird, Anwar, Humam Al Shahania, and Tawafuq Bainunah. Of these, RB Free Bird shone brightest last season, achieving top results and competing in the prestigious “Top One” race. The horse is now being prepared for the new season, which begins in October.

Al Balushi describes his training philosophy as one based on patience and harmony between trainer and horse, noting: “Horses recognise genuine commitment and give back on the track.”

As for preparations, he explained that his programme focuses on gradual fitness conditioning, starting with strength and endurance before building speed. He also emphasises careful selection of preparatory races to test readiness, supported by precise nutrition, veterinary care, and maintaining a calm environment for the horses.

Looking ahead, Al Balushi says his ultimate ambition is to achieve regional and international titles, proudly representing Oman abroad. “We have the horses and the expertise,” he says. “All we need are opportunities and support to raise the Sultanate of Oman’s name on the global stage.”

On the future of horse racing in Oman, he highlights the importance of hosting international races, providing stronger support for owners and trainers, and investing in locally bred horses capable of competing globally.

From humble beginnings to national acclaim, Al Balushi’s story proves that ambition and perseverance can turn dreams into lasting achievements.

Bahla win, Dhofar and Al Nasr draw in Jetour Cup



Dhofar and Al Nasr players fight for the ball

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 24

BAHLA CLUB began their campaign in the Jetour Cup Football Tournament with a valuable 2-0 win over Sur, in a match played at Nizwa Sports Complex as part of Group One, which includes Al Nasr, Sur, Samayil, Oman Club, Seeb, Bahla, and Dhofar.

The first half of the match was of average quality, with Sur holding the upper hand offensively through the movements of Yousuf bin Nasser al Mukhaini, Ayman bin Ibrahim Haikal, Mohammed al Subhi, Mani Sbeit, and Badr al Farsi.

However, Bahla goalkeeper Salah al Handhali was in fine form, denying them any goals. On the other side, Bahla failed to show their true potential despite attempts from Majid al Shukaili, Abdulsalam al Shukaili, Issam al Makhzoumi, and Hatem al Ghaithi, as the first half ended goalless. In the second half, both sides sought

to break the deadlock with a series of substitutions. Sur coach Abdelghani Bouamira made five changes at once to bolster his attack, while Bahla’s coach Abdelhalim al Warimi introduced influential substitutes that restored balance to his side.

In the 80th minute, substitute Mohammed al Hosni broke the deadlock with a powerful strike that caught Sur goalkeeper Yousuf al Shiyadi off guard. Near the final whistle, Faisal al Balushi added a second goal, sealing all three points for Bahla and giving them a perfect start to the tournament.

THRILLING 1-1 DRAW BETWEEN DHOFAR AND AL NASR

In the same group, Dhofar and Al Nasr kicked off their first week fixtures of the 2025/2026 Jetour Cup Football Tournament with an exciting 1-1 draw, in a match held at the Al Saada Sports Complex.

The game began at a quick pace, with Dhofar taking an early lead in the 16th minute through Ammar bin Abid Bayt Sbeeh, who converted a penalty awarded

after Abdullah Zahir was fouled inside Al Nasr’s box. Ahmed al Shanfari nearly doubled the score in the 20th minute after going one-on-one with the goalkeeper, but his shot hit the side netting. The first half ended with Dhofar leading 1-0.

In the second half, Al Nasr applied more pressure in search of an equaliser, while Dhofar relied on counter attacks to exploit their opponent’s high pressing. Al Nasr came close to scoring in the 70th minute when substitute foreign player Abdal Fadi Saonina met a cross with a header that narrowly missed the post.

The closing minutes turned heated when the referee issued red cards to Anwar Mubarak of Dhofar and Yazid al Maashani of Al Nasr after a clash, forcing both sides to continue with ten players each.

In the 90th minute, Al Nasr managed to equalise through Abdulhafidh Hadid, who pounced on a rebound inside the penalty area and smashed it past goalkeeper Mazin al Kasbi. The thrilling encounter ended with both sides sharing the spoils in their opening fixture.

Al Harthy gears up for Himalayas world’s highest ultra marathon

MUSCAT: Omani ultra-runner and endurance icon Hamed al Harthy is preparing to embark on one of the toughest races on Earth: the Silk Route Ultra, a 122-kilometre high-altitude ultra-marathon held in the formidable Himalayan region of Ladakh, India.

Officially recognised as the world’s highest ultra-marathon, the race reaches staggering elevations of up to 5,400 metres above sea level, confronting runners with freezing temperatures, low oxygen levels and unforgiving terrain.

Al Harthy is set to depart Oman on August 28, allowing nearly two weeks of advance acclimatisation ahead of the race’s September 11 start. The early arrival is a deliberate part of his physical and mental strategy, providing vital time for his body to adjust to the

extreme altitude. At this elevation, even the most seasoned athletes are tested not only in stamina, but in resilience to oxygen deprivation, altitude sickness, and sub-zero nighttime conditions.

This marks a powerful return to the Himalayas for Al Harthy, who completed the 72 km Khardung La Challenge in the same region in 2023 — a race known as the highest marathon in the world. This year’s race, however, significantly raises the stakes in both distance and difficulty, transforming the challenge into a multidimensional test of strategy, self-reliance and psychological endurance.

“The Silk Route Ultra is more than a race,” Al Harthy shared. “It’s a journey through extremes — of terrain, weather, and the human spirit. I bring with me the memory of every trail I’ve run across the



Hamed al Harthy prepares for India race

world, but this race demands something else entirely. I approach it with humility, discipline, and deep respect for the mountain. I run not only for the finish line, but to inspire others in Oman and across the region to dream bigger, train harder, and discover new parts of themselves.”

His return to the Himalayas comes on the heels of another impressive feat: completing a punishing 100 km ultra marathon in the Chongli district of China, one of the key venues for the 2022 Winter Olympics. The course challenged athletes with steep elevation gains, narrow passes, and unshaded stretches under the sun — a grueling environment that required strategic pacing and hydration planning.

Yet beyond the medals and milestones, Al Harthy is driven

by a deeper calling — one that ties adventure to meaning.

“Trail running is where I find my balance. It is a sport that combines movement with introspection, physical challenge with cultural discovery.

Every race gives me new perspectives. And with each step, I feel more connected to nature, to myself, and to the people who follow this journey.” His path has inspired a growing community of ultra-endurance athletes in Oman and across the GCC, many of whom now look to the mountains as more than a test of fitness — but a space for transformation.

Al Harthy continues to play a key role in shaping the future of trail running in Oman as a board member of the Himam Trail Run, the country’s premier mountain running event.

SHORT TAKES



Australia captain Mitchell Marsh smashes century.

HEAD, MARSH, GREEN CENTURIES POWER AUSTRALIA TO CONSOLATION WIN

MACKAY, Australia: Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh and Cameron Green smashed blistering hundreds as Australia steamrolled South Africa by 276 runs in the final one day international in Mackay on Sunday.

South Africa had already clinched the series, which they won 2-1 after Australia claimed the T20 series between the sides, and the 50 overs world champions were left playing for pride in the last match.

A 250-run opening partnership between player of the match Head (142) and Marsh (100), and an incendiary hundred by Green powered Australia to a mammoth 431-2.

The hosts hit 18 sixes as they posted their second highest total in ODIs — behind their 434 against the same opposition in 2006.

South Africa were all out for 155 in 24.5 overs with spinner Cooper Connolly completing figures of 5-22. “A pretty crazy day, wasn’t it?,” Australia captain Marsh said.

“A full performance from the lads. Shame, it was a little bit too late but full credit to South Africa. They played outstandingly well in the first two games.”

Electing to bat, Head and Marsh milked 86 runs from the first 10 overs to signal Australia’s intentions.

With Kagiso Rabada missing the series due to injury and Lungi Ngidi rested for the final ODI, South Africa’s pace attack lacked its usual firepower.

Australia raced to the 100-mark in the 13th over and Head reached his hundred off 80 balls, taking a single off spinner Senuran Muthusamy to reach the milestone.

Australia got to 250 in the 34th over but immediately lost Head, who was caught off spinner Keshav Maharaj after hitting five sixes and 17 fours.

Marsh, who also struck five sixes, brought up his hundred before he fell fluffing a slog sweep to Muthusamy, but there was no respite for South Africa as Green produced a sensational display of power hitting. — Reuters



FC Barcelona's Lamine Yamal in action with Levante's Diego Pampin. — Reuters

Barca stun Levante, Atletico slip in LaLiga

BARCELONA

fought back from two goals down at newly-promoted Levante to win 3-2 on Saturday, while Atletico Madrid dropped more points from a winning position.

First half goals by Ivan Romero and Jose Luis Morales gave Levante a shock lead against the champions in Valencia, before Pedri and Ferran Torres struck twice in quick succession after half-time to level the match.

Hansi Flick's side looked destined for a draw on a near waterlogged pitch until an Unai Elgezabal own-goal in injury time gave them a second win to start the new season.

“They made it very difficult for us, we have to improve a lot,” Flick told his post-match press conference.

Levante went ahead on 15 minutes when the ball was knocked across the Barcelona box to Romero, who bamboozled Pau Cubarsi with a superb shoulder-drop before rifling past new signing Joan Garcia.

Torres looked certain to level in the 37th minute when Pedri's deft first time pass found the forward unmarked in the box, but his fierce strike rattled the bar rather than the net.

After Lamine Yamal lost the ball on the edge of the Levante box, the hosts broke and as Roger Brugue prepared to shoot Alejandro Balde appeared from nowhere to save his side with an excellent piece of last ditch defending.

However, as Balde got back to his feet another shot was fired at him which the referee decided struck the 21-year-old's arm in an unnatural position following a VAR intervention.

Morales, 38, duly doubled Levante's lead from 12 yards seven minutes into first half added time.

Stung by the decision, Barcelona came out roaring in the second half.

Midfield metronome Pedri took matters into his own hand four minutes after the interval as he powered a 25-yard drive into the top corner to spark the comeback.

“They always tell me to shoot and look, in the first half I had a shot like a kid and in the second half I was able to score,” the 22-year old told Movistar. Flick's side were back level three minutes later when Torres made amends for his earlier miss with a close range finish from a corner.

Raphinha forced a great sprawling save from Pablo Campos on 83 minutes after his shot was diverted goalwards by a defender.

But Levante's luck failed to hold as Yamal floated in a cross from the right in the 91st minute which Elgezabal glanced into his own net under pressure from Torres.

ATLETICO WOES

Diego Simeone's Atletico are still without a win this season after they drew 1-1 with promoted Elche, leaving them on one point after two frustrating outings.

Just like in their 2-1 loss at Espanyol last weekend, Atletico went ahead in the first period at the Metropolitano on Saturday.

“We wanted to win, we deserved to win the match,” said Diego Simeone. — AFP

Marc Marquez coasts to seventh successive victory in Hungary

HUNGARY: Marc Marquez's remorseless march to a seventh world title continued on Sunday as he coasted to victory in the Hungarian MotoGP.

The 32-year-old Spanish Ducati rider recorded his seventh successive sprint race/MotoGP double as he beat compatriot Pedro Acosta on a KTM with Marco Bezzecchi riding an Aprilia third.

Almost as eye-catching as Marc Marquez's performance — he is three off equalling his career best of 10 MotoGP victories in a row — was 2024 world champion Jorge Martin's fourth place, from a lowly 17th on the grid.

His season has been ruined by injury — something Marquez knows all about having had a series of

injuries — but back to full fitness he finally found some form.

Marquez holds a 175-point lead over his younger brother Alex Marquez, who finished 14th, with eight races remaining.

Marquez had a terrible start in what was the first Hungarian MotoGP since 1992 and almost went to ground when he clipped Bezzecchi on the second corner.

He dropped to third while his Ducati team-mate Francesco Bagnaia, who had a disastrous qualifying session, surged from 15th to seventh.

Marc at least remained in contention but his younger brother Alex saw is already slender title hopes diminish yet further as he crashed on the first lap.



Ducati Lenovo Team's Marc Marquez celebrates with his trophy on the podium after winning the MotoGP race. — Reuters

He remounted but dropped to 19th and last — Italian Enea Bastianini fared even worse, his race over before the end of the first lap.

He slid across the track, his rivals doing brilliantly to avoid hitting him, before he rose up and shook his fists in frustration back to the pits.

Marc Marquez moved into second, passing Franco Morbidelli, and was less than a second off Bezzecchi with 21 laps to go.

Two laps later he slipped past Bezzecchi but the Italian quickly reclaimed the lead.

It was a game of cat and mouse between the two for the following few laps before Marquez went past at the beginning of the 11th of the 26 laps.

Pedro Acosta had crept up on

the leading two and was onto Bezzecchi's shoulder at the halfway mark by which time Marquez was already a second clear of them.

Acosta's compatriot Fermin Aldeguer tried passing Morbidelli in fourth but his hopes were dashed as he came to grief on the first corner of the 14th lap. More in hope than anything else, he remounted but coasted round in last place.

It was at the same point that Bagnaia's miserable campaign took another hit.

The Italian, who has been a shadow of the rider that won two world titles (2022 and 2023) since Marquez joined the team this term, was penalised with a long lap penalty for going through a chicane.

— AFP



Russia's Diana Shnaider celebrates with the trophy after winning the Monterrey Open. — Reuters

SHNAIDER DOWNS ALEXANDROVA TO CLAIM MONTERREY OPEN TITLE

RUSSIAN DIANA SHNAIDER continued her impressive winning streak in tour level finals at the Monterrey Open on Saturday, beating compatriot Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-4 4-6 6-4 in the WTA 500 event's final.

Shnaider had little trouble in the opening set but struggled in a topsy turvy second, as Alexandrova clinched the set's fifth and decisive break at 5-4 to force a decider.

Third seed Shnaider carved out an advantage early on in the third set when she broke Alexandrova in the first game and held serve to go 2-0 up, an advantage she would not relinquish.

World number 12 Shnaider is now unbeaten in her last five finals on the WTA Tour, adding the Monterrey



Russia's Diana Shnaider poses with the trophy after winning the Monterrey Open alongside runner up Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova. — Reuters

crown to her triumphs in Hong Kong, Budapest, Bad Homburg and Hua Hin last year.

The win also saw Shnaider level her head-to-head record with Alexandrova, who was faced with a quick turnaround for the final after her semifinal against Czech Marie Bouzkova was moved from Friday to Saturday due to a rain enforced suspension.

"It was harder to switch from one match to another because when you're playing one match and you're done, your mind is going like 'today is off so you can relax,'" Alexandrova said.

"Today it was different, so after the semifinal you still need to be fully focused and be ready for the final, so maybe that was missing in the first set. I couldn't find the rhythm, I wasn't quite ready to play right from the first point."

Both players will have little time to rest after the final before they make the nearly 2,000 mile journey from Monterrey to New York to play in the first round of the U.S. Open, which begins on Sunday.

"I hope that I will carry this momentum with me. For sure, it's going to be a different tournament, different conditions," said Shnaider, who reached the fourth round of the U.S. Open last year.

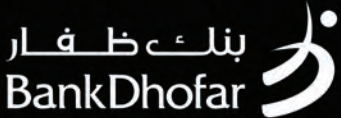
"I will just try to go there, rest tomorrow and then we'll try to prepare for New York. We will see how it goes. I definitely spent a lot of energy this week, but I will just try to recharge and do my best in New York also."

Shnaider will face Germany's Laura Siegemund, while Alexandrova takes on Anastasiya Sevastova of Latvia. — Reuters



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SHORT TAKES



A group of young Omani entrepreneurs has invested in tourist amenities that enhance the waterfront's overall appeal

LAMER PROJECT ENHANCES AL MUGHSAIL'S TOURIST APPEAL

SALALAH : A novel initiative by young Omani entrepreneurs has enabled the transformation of part of picturesque Al Mughsail into a popular tourist destination.

Titled 'Lamer Al Mughsail', the project represents a qualitative addition to Al Mughsail's growing popularity as a tourist draw during the Khareef Dhofar Season.

According to Nader bin Bakhit Fadhil, founder of the project, Lamer Al Mughsail was first launched during the 2022 Khareef Dhofar Season. A group of young Omanis got together to invest in tourist facilities and amenities that leverage the natural appeal of a creek leading to Khor Fakheet at Al Mughsail. Those investments have capitalised on Al Mughsail's white-sandy beaches, natural blowholes and its proximity to the popular Al Marneef Cave.

Central to the project is a vision to create a sustainable investment model that enhances the governorate's attractiveness and consolidates its position as a diversified tourist destination, he said.

The project's facilities were designed to meet the aspirations of various segments of the community and include a corner for restaurants and cafes, a children's play area and a bicycle ride area, in addition to boat tours to explore the waterway in Khor Fakheet, an artificial waterfall that adds an aesthetic and recreational element and beach seating areas prepared for visitors' comfort.

He pointed out that the project's economic and social value lies in providing a seasonal source of income for young people, supporting the local economy. — ONA

Oman banks on investors for Green Hydrogen push

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 24

AS Oman prepares to host the Green Hydrogen Summit later this year, the spotlight is firmly on, among other imperatives, foreign direct investment (FDI), bankability of projects and the international partnerships needed to anchor the Sultanate of Oman as a global player in the energy transition.

Dr Firas al Abduwani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, emphasised that Oman is putting investor confidence at the heart of its green hydrogen strategy.

The financial viability of projects will ultimately dictate the pace and scale of development, he said in an interview with The Energy Talks. "That's why we are prioritising the fundamentals — bankability, clear regulations for foreign investors, predictable taxation and transparent land allocation.

These are the reassurances international financiers look for and Oman is working to provide them".

According to the official, Oman's track record as a reliable energy hub gives it an edge in securing such backing. Having hosted mega oil and gas projects in the past, the country is no stranger to attracting large-scale financing through global banks, export credit agencies and institutional investors.

What is different now is the type of project — low-carbon, renewables-driven ventures that appeal to financiers committed to green and ESG-linked investments, he noted.



It's really about matchmaking between exporters and importers", he explained. "These partnerships aren't only about molecules — they're about technology transfer, energy security and shared goals

DR FIRAS AL
ABDUWANI

Director General of
Renewable Energy
and Hydrogen at the
Ministry of Energy
and Minerals

Significantly, many developers are already bringing their own financiers, either through support mechanisms from their home governments or through institutions focused on climate finance.

Domestically, the Ministry of Finance is advancing green bond initiatives under the Estidama framework, signalling Oman's intent to create aligned financing pathways, he said.

"The Green Hydrogen Summit provides the right platform", he explained. "It brings together financiers, developers, policymakers and local banks to build confidence that projects are structured to succeed — even when renegotiations are needed due to shifting market dynamics".

Oman's fundamentals also strengthen its case: world-class renewable energy resources, a stable political and regulatory landscape, a rebounding economy with improved sovereign credit ratings and a strategic geography that connects East Asia with Europe.

"Oman has always honoured its obligations", Dr Al Abduwani emphasised. "That reliability is a competitive advantage for investors".

Beyond financing, the success of Oman's green hydrogen drive also hinges on strategic international collaboration, the official pointed out. The country is rapidly building on its legacy LNG and hydrocarbon trading relationships to forge new hydrogen corridors and partnerships.

Recent highlights include the planned liquid hydrogen corridor to Amsterdam, an agreement via the Port of Rotterdam securing access to German markets and

expanded partnerships with the UK, US, Korea, Japan and increasingly China.

"It's really about matchmaking between exporters and importers", he explained. "These partnerships aren't only about molecules — they're about technology transfer, energy security and shared decarbonisation goals".

Dr Al Abduwani pointed to Belgium as a case in point. In addition to opening a channel into Europe, Belgium's energy infrastructure group Fluxys has also become a direct strategic investor in Omani gas transportation operator OQGN, motivated in part by the green hydrogen opportunity.

In Asia, Korea and Japan remain long-term partners, while China's growing interest promises scale. "All these nations see mutual benefit. The challenge is in defining the right modalities — market volumes, hydrogen vectors and subsidy structures. These are complex, evolving questions", he said.

Global platforms like Germany's H2Global, which now serves as a neutral facilitator of buyer-supplier agreements, illustrate the potential for structured collaboration. "Whether through H2Global or other mechanisms, these forums are essential", he said.

Few countries will achieve self-sufficiency in green hydrogen, he added, underscoring Oman's ambition to position itself as a trusted partner. "Our goal is to create an ecosystem attractive to investors, bankable for financiers and beneficial for our international partners. The Summit is where those pieces come together".

RO 12m projects underway to link internal roads in Al Mudhaibi

AL MUDHAIBI: The Al Sharqiyah North Municipality has begun implementing a series of internal and connecting road paving projects in several villages across Al Mudhaibi, with a total length of approximately 71 kilometres and a combined investment exceeding RO 12 million.

The projects form part of the 2025 road paving plan for the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Eng Mohammed bin Salem al Toubi, Director of Projects at Al Sharqiyah North Municipality, said the initiatives include multiple packages.

Key works comprise 18 km of internal roads connecting the villages of Al Khashabah and Jafr Al Dham, at a cost of RO 1.54 million; a 9.5 km road to Al Hammah; and a 4 km road to Al Ruq village, with this package reaching 17.6% completion.



ENG MOHAMMED
BIN SALEM AL
TOUBI

Director of Projects at
Al Sharqiyah North
Municipality

He added that connecting road projects currently in progress include the 4.838 km route to Zakt village, costing RO 1.81 million; and a 6.895 km road linking Zakt, Al Ram and Shih villages, at

RO 1.78 million, both with 15% completion.

Among the larger packages, the first phase of connecting roads spans 20.936 km, costing RO 2.43 million, linking Al Mudhaibi — Sinaw road to Al Ghamisah, Telul



The projects form part of the 2025 road paving plan for Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Al Sharq village and Al Masron — Ibra route to Al Salmi farms, plus roads connecting Al Aflaj and Al Zahira villages. The second package covers 11.26 km, costing RO 2.08 million, connecting Al Mudhaibi with Dima W'attayeen, from Al Jarra through Al Rak to Al Rahbah villages.

The third package includes a 9.42 km route linking Sultan Turki bin Said road in Al Jarra to Wadi Abd village, costing RO 2.68 million, serving the villages of Al Mahdutha, Al Aswad, Al Manzifah and Wadi Abd.

The total 2025 road paving programme across Al Sharqiyah North Governorate spans 145 km, with a total investment of RO 25.5 million. The projects are expected to improve traffic flow, boost economic and tourism activities, and enhance connectivity between villages. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The honour adds to a growing list of customer-centric recognitions received by BankDhofar.

BANKDHOFAR NAMED OMAN’S MOST CUSTOMER-FOCUSED BANK 2025

MUSCAT: Adding to its growing list of accolades for customer service excellence, BankDhofar has been named the “Best Customer-Centric Banking Brand — Oman, 2025” at the 13th Annual Global Brand Awards hosted by UK-based Global Brands Magazine. The award recognises the bank’s dedication to placing customers at the heart of its operations and its ongoing efforts to redefine service standards in Oman’s banking sector.

Global Brands Magazine organises the annual awards to celebrate companies demonstrating outstanding performance across industries, with a focus on vision, service, innovation and customer-focused products. This year’s competition evaluated over 20,000 companies worldwide.

The honour adds to a growing list of customer-centric recognitions received by BankDhofar, highlighting its consistent efforts to exceed customer expectations through innovation, creativity and a personalised approach.

The bank has demonstrated this through its emphasis on digital banking, bespoke solutions for different customer segments and a robust customer feedback system.

In recent months, BankDhofar has received several notable awards, including the “Best Bank in the MENA Region 2025” from Gazet International, recognising achievements in customer-centric innovation, digital transformation and financial inclusion.

The Qorus Reinvention Awards — MEA 2024 honoured the bank for its “Enterprise Voice of the Customer” programme, while the Verint EMEA Inspire Awards 2024 awarded it a silver prize for the strategic use of AI and customer analytics to enhance service delivery.

The bank also earned top recognition at the CX Live Show Awards for Best CX Transformation Project, Best Customer Journey Mapping and Best Change Management in the banking sector.

BankDhofar’s success in customer service excellence is built on several core strategies.

The bank leverages technology to enhance customer experience, improve safety and offer convenience, while relationship banking remains central to its model, with tailored services for youth, women, SMEs and priority clients.

Accessibility is another key focus, with an expanding branch and ATM network designed to deliver superior service experiences. The bank also prioritises customer engagement through its call centre, email, social media, website and a dedicated Customer Experience Centre to efficiently address customer needs.

LIBYA’S NOC TO HOST US ENERGY FORUM

CAIRO: Libya’s state-run National Oil Corporation (NOC) said on Sunday it will host a Libyan-US energy forum to boost partnerships and investment in the country’s oil and gas sector. No date has been set for the event, which will be held with US company Freedom First and attended by



General view of the Libyan state National Oil Corporation (NOC) in Tripoli, Libya. — Reuters

representatives from leading US energy firms, Libyan investors and officials. The announcement follows a memorandum of understanding recently signed between NOC and US oil giant ExxonMobil, marking renewed engagement after a decade of limited activity in Libya due to security concerns. — Reuters

MHD launches exclusive luxury holiday offer

MOHSIN

Haider Darwish LLC (MHD), the exclusive distributor of Land Rover Defender in Oman, has announced a limited-time offer for customers purchasing the iconic Defender. Buyers will receive a luxury holiday or travel credit of up to RO 4,000, redeemable through Oman Air Holidays for flights, accommodation, or curated travel experiences.

Engineered to embrace the impossible, the Defender is more than a vehicle — it is a modern-day icon combining purposeful design, advanced capability and timeless appeal. Available in three body styles — Defender 90, 110 and 130 — with up to eight seats, each model offers its own character and strength, whether for urban drives or extreme off-road adventures.

The lineup also includes the electric hybrid Defender 110, the professional Hard Top variants and the high-performance Defender OCTA, which redefines luxury and durability on and off the road. As part of this offer, customers purchasing the Defender 90 will receive RO 2,500 in assured travel credit, while those choosing the Defender 110 or 130 will enjoy



Defender remains a beacon of capability and innovation, supported by over 75 years of expertise.

RO 4,000. All travel credits are exclusively redeemable through Oman Air Holidays.

In addition, buyers will benefit from free first-year insurance (Oman & UAE), free first-year registration, a 5-year/105,000 km service package, 5-year/150,000 km roadside assistance and a 5-year/150,000 km warranty

(whichever comes first). The offer is valid from August 10 to October 9, 2025 for private retail customers who purchase and take delivery of a new Defender from MHD’s official showrooms in Oman. Fleet and corporate sales are excluded and terms apply. “Defender represents the spirit of adventure — built to conquer

every terrain while delivering luxury and comfort. With this exclusive holiday offer, we are giving our customers the opportunity to extend their adventures far beyond the road. It’s more than owning a Defender — it’s owning the journey”, said Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE.

Royal Academy launches ‘Bawsala’ programme

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Administrative Science has launched the “Bawsala for Emerging Leaders” programme in partnership with the ‘Bawsala’ initiative, aiming to empower young Omanis to play a key role in building a sustainable and prosperous future.

The programme continues the Academy’s efforts to develop national talent and promote sustainable development.

Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati,



‘Bawsala’ programme equips young Omanis with leadership skills and mentorship to shape the nation’s future.

President of the Academy, said the programme prioritises youth empowerment by equipping participants with leadership knowledge and practical skills. Designed by the ‘Bawsala’ team of Omani university students, the programme targets 20 students aged 19–25 and focuses on three main tracks. The first includes mentoring sessions with specialists aligned with participants’ fields of study and one-on-one dialogues with decision-makers. Participants

will also take part in field visits to leading institutions in Oman to observe how leaders create impact. Interactive workshops and inspiring dialogues aim to enhance leadership thinking, foster initiative and strengthen a sense of national responsibility. The initiative provides young Omanis with the tools, mentorship and exposure needed to contribute meaningfully to Oman’s development and economy. — ONA

Ahlan KIA! Bring home your dream Kia SUVs with exclusive bonuses

MUSCAT: This season, drive home your dream Kia and enjoy rewards like never before! Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor for Kia in Oman, is offering a Purchase Bonus of RO 300 on all Kia models, or a mega RO 3,000 bonus when you choose an electric vehicle. Additional benefits include 50,000 km/ 5 years’ service, one-year insurance; and first-year registration on the purchase of your favourite Kia vehicle. That’s not all — customers can try their luck with assured Scratch & Win prizes for exciting 3M Body Care Packages or take part in the



Experience the SUV range at your nearest Kia showroom with a test drive and get a detailed guide from our experienced sales staff to help you throughout your buyer’s journey and beyond

Test Drive & Win raffle for a chance to grab amazing household gifts. These

exclusive offers are available for a limited time only. Kia’s impressive range

of mid-size SUVs embodies the brand’s commitment to its motto, “Movement that inspires”. The all-new 7-seater Kia Sorento AWD is a crossover SUV delivering impressive fuel efficiency with a 3.5L V6 engine producing 272 horsepower paired with an 8-speed transmission. Perfect for urban families, the Sorento offers premium leather-fitted ventilated seats, spacious leg and headroom, horizontal air vents for a sense of wideness, a curved infotainment display integrated with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, a wireless charging tray; and USB ports for front and rear occupants.

This SUV is available with the Ahlan Bonus of RO 300, 50,000 km service, insurance and Scratch & Win Body Care coupons. The 2025 Kia Sportage L returns with the “Make Space for Adventure” concept, offering a longer wheelbase of 2,755 mm and increased luggage capacity of 543 litres. Available in two high-performance engines — a 2.0T AWD producing 233 HP and a 1.5T producing 197 HP — both mated to an 8-speed Shift-by-Wire transmission, the Sportage L also comes with the Ahlan Bonus, 50,000 km service, insurance and Scratch & Win Body Care coupons.

For urban driving, the Kia Seltos offers innovation and efficiency. Powered by a 1.4T engine producing 138 HP or a 1.5L engine producing 113 HP paired with a CVT transmission, the Seltos delivers excellent performance, fuel efficiency of 17 km/litre and ample space for city families. The Ahlan Bonus, 50,000 km service, insurance and Scratch & Win Body Care prizes are also available with Seltos purchases. Experience Kia’s SUV range at your nearest showroom, take a test drive and receive guidance from experienced sales staff throughout your buying journey.

SHORT TAKES



New Delhi called Washington’s move “unfair” but is seeking to cushion the impact. — AFP

INDIA’S MODI PROPOSES TAX CUTS AMIDST LOOMING US TARIFFS

MUMBAI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s plan to cut consumption taxes on everyday goods could provide billions in annual relief and boost demand in an economy facing potential US tariffs.

US President Donald Trump has threatened to double import duties on India from 25 to 50 per cent to punish New Delhi for buying Russian oil, which he says funds Moscow’s war in Ukraine.

The prospect of higher tariffs has clouded the outlook for India’s economy, with exporters warning of falling orders and job losses.

New Delhi called Washington’s move “unfair” but is seeking to cushion the impact. Modi last week pledged to “bring down the tax burden on the common man” during a speech marking India’s independence.

The proposed cuts to the goods and services tax (GST) would reduce taxes on items from small cars to air conditioners. Currently, GST has a four-tier system, with rates from 5 to 28 per cent.

Under Modi’s reforms, most goods would fall into just two tiers, taxed at either 5 or 18 per cent. Modi described the change as a “Diwali gift”, referencing the festival when consumer spending peaks. Trump’s tariffs and their impact on ordinary Indians depend on progress in a Russia-Ukraine peace deal and whether India secures alternative oil suppliers before the US deadline on August 27. Experts say Modi’s tax reform could reduce tax collections by \$13–17 billion, helping support domestic demand.

Analysts at Emkay Global Financial Services called it a “welcome reform towards boosting domestic consumption”, while Motilal Oswal noted benefits across sectors and “sizeable savings” for households.

The proposal requires approval from the GST Council, which includes state government representatives and has struggled to reach consensus. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA EXPANDS LABOUR PROTECTIONS WITH NEW UNION RULES

SEOUL: South Korea’s parliament passed new rules on Sunday expanding protections for subcontracted workers, despite business concerns that the legislation could hurt competitiveness and labour relations.

The Democratic Party, led by President Lee Jae Myung, pushed amendments to the Trade Union and Labour Relations Adjustment Act to provide more support for workers.

The law allows subcontracting firms’ labour unions to negotiate directly with client companies, restricts employers from seeking damages for strike-related disruptions and broadens executive liability for avoiding collective bargaining.

Lawmakers promoting the bill have dubbed it the “Yellow Envelope Act”, referencing envelopes used by supporters to send money to union workers covering strike-related legal costs.

The measure reverses policies under former President Yoon Suk Yeol, whose administration had taken a hard line on unions and vetoed similar bills. Lee, who supports the legislation, is expected to sign it into law while attending summits in Japan and the United States.

Conservative opposition and some business groups criticised the bill, arguing it could weaken South Korea’s investment appeal.

— Reuters

Ueda expects tightening job market to boost wages

GOVERNOR

Kazuo Ueda said wage increases are spreading beyond large firms and are likely to accelerate due to a tightening labour market, signalling that conditions for another interest rate hike may be forming.

Speaking at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City’s annual Jackson Hole Economic Symposium, Ueda noted that decades of stagnant wages in Japan were driven by “entrenched deflationary expectations”. However, global inflation shocks following the Covid-19 pandemic have disrupted this pattern.

“Notably, wage growth is spreading from large enterprises to small and medium enterprises”, Ueda said, adding that the labour market is expected to remain tight and continue to exert upward pressure on wages barring a major negative demand shock.

Japan has seen three consecutive years of significant wage increases during annual spring wage negotiations. Labour mobility has risen as younger workers seek better-paying jobs, forcing companies to raise pay to retain talent.

Ueda emphasised that demographic shifts from the 1980s are now producing acute labour shortages and persistent wage pressures, alongside supply-side adjustments such as higher workforce participation

Japan has seen three consecutive years of significant wage increases during annual spring wage negotiations. Labour mobility has risen as younger workers seek better-paying jobs, forcing companies to raise pay to retain talent.



Governor of the Bank of Japan Kazuo Ueda attends the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City’s 2025 Jackson Hole Economic Symposium. — Reuters

and increased mobility. Ueda’s remarks come as part of a panel with Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey and European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde discussing labour market challenges. The BOJ exited its decade-long stimulus last year and raised interest rates to 0.5% in January, aiming to achieve its 2% inflation target. While underlying

domestic inflation remains below target, sustained wage growth and high food inflation have led some BOJ officials to warn of second-round price effects that could justify another rate hike.

Nearly two-thirds of economists surveyed by Reuters expect the BOJ to raise its key rate by at least 25 basis points later this year.

— Reuters

China says ‘rampant’ US protectionism threatens agricultural ties

BEIJING: US protectionism is undermining agricultural cooperation with China, Beijing’s ambassador to Washington said, warning that farmers should not bear the price of the trade war between the world’s two largest economies.

“It goes without saying that protectionism is rampant, casting a shadow over China-US agricultural cooperation”, said Xie Feng, according to the transcript of a speech published by the Chinese embassy on Saturday.

Agriculture has emerged as a major point of contention between China and the US as the superpowers are locked in a tariff war launched



US agricultural exports to China fell 53% in the first half of the year from the same period in 2024. — Reuters

by President Donald Trump.

China in March slapped levies of up to 15% on \$21 billion worth of American agricultural and food products in retaliation for sweeping US tariffs.

Washington and Beijing this month extended a truce for 90 days, staving off triple-digit duties on each other’s goods.

US agricultural exports to China fell 53% in the first half of the year from the same period in 2024, with a 51% decline in soybeans, Xie said in the speech to a soybean industry event in Washington on Friday.

“American farmers, like their Chinese counterparts, are hardworking and humble”, Xie said.

“Agriculture should not be hijacked by politics and farmers should not be made to pay the price of a trade war”. The envoy said agriculture is a promising area of cooperation and a “pillar of bilateral relations”. China has a comparative advantage in labour-intensive products, while the US excels in land-intensive bulk commodities through mechanised, large-scale production, he said.

Last month US Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said Washington would curb farmland purchases by “foreign adversaries”, including China.

The Department of Agriculture said it had fired 70 foreign contract researchers after a national security

review intended to secure the US food supply from adversaries including China, Russia, North Korea and Iran.

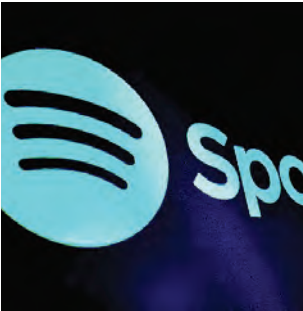
Xie dismissed the US concerns. “Chinese investors hold less than 0.03% of US agricultural land, so where does the claim of ‘threatening US food security’ even come from”, he said, calling the US restrictions a “political manipulation”.

US soybean exporters risk missing out on billions of dollars worth of sales to China this year as trade talks drag on and buyers in the top oilseed importer lock in cargoes from Brazil for shipment during the key US marketing season, traders say.

— Reuters

STREAMING INDUSTRY

Spotify to hike prices



Spotify, the music streaming service, will raise prices as it invests in new features and aims to reach 1 billion users, the Financial Times reported, citing Co-President Alex Norstrom.

Premium subscription costs will rise in multiple regions from September. Price increases, alongside past cost-cutting, helped Spotify achieve its first annual profit last year. — Reuters

OIL PRODUCTION

Iraq boosts oil refining capacity



Iraq has increased its oil refining capacity to 1.3 million barrels per day, the prime minister’s office said on Sunday. The OPEC member aims to reach 1.65 million barrels per day by the end of the year.

The expansion is part of Iraq’s broader strategy to strengthen domestic fuel supply, reduce imports and maximise export revenues. — Reuters

SPACE SECTOR

SpaceX Starship launch



Elon Musk’s SpaceX is set to launch its Starship rocket for the tenth time from Texas on Sunday, aiming to achieve long-sought development milestones after earlier tests ended in failures. The Super Heavy booster will attempt a water landing while Starship releases mock Starlink satellites, testing reentry heat shields and flaps for future rapid reusability. — Reuters

OPINION

AI personalised pricing: the impact on consumer welfare



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat.

AI now acts as a super analyst and it can tweak prices instantly across millions of data points. The result is that two people searching for the same product or service could be offered a higher or lower price.

This is the latest trend: AI-powered dynamic pricing across multiple industries. For instance, airlines have been using dynamic pricing for years, where the fares fluctuate based on demand, booking time, availability and holiday seasons.

However, AI has taken dynamic pricing a step further, creating personalised prices tailored for each individual. Some AI systems can analyse purchase history, time of day, device used, the lifetime value of customers, as well as whether the customer is booking at home or work.

AI scans historical and behavioural data to predict the likelihood of price acceptance by each customer. Though the trend is not widespread, it is being used by many companies.

For example, Delta Airlines is implementing dynamic AI pricing for 3% of its domestic tickets, with plans to expand it to 20% by the end of 2025. This model is so customised that two passengers sitting adjacent to each other might have paid vastly different amounts due to differences in price sensitivity.

In retail, prices are being adjusted in real-time to match customer profiles by analysing

shoppers’ loyalty, purchase time and location. E-commerce giants like Amazon adjust prices multiple times a day and it has boosted their revenue by 25%.

Walmart adjusts prices at the store level by using AI to make demand forecasts. And they have cut inventory costs by 10% and improved availability by 15%.

Some retailers use digital price tags that can also be adjusted based on local conditions, resulting in a 20% increase in sales during holidays.

AI dynamic pricing is also evident in the transportation sector, with companies like Uber and Lyft utilising AI models to analyse real-time data, such as weather and driver availability, to adjust prices during peak times.

In the logistics sector, companies are tweaking delivery rates based on fuel cost, weather conditions and capacity. Even in the travel and hospitality sector, rooms and meals are not fixed, as hotels and vacation platforms have adopted AI-powered, personalised, dynamic pricing.

Airbnb has a sophisticated pricing system that adjusts the room price based on a customer’s booking history, local events and demand.

Prices of items on the menu fluctuate with the cost of ingredients or changes in competitor pricing. Even in manufacturing and wholesale, AI is working to handle complex, real-time pricing for raw materials

For example, Delta Airlines is implementing dynamic AI pricing for 3% of its domestic tickets, with plans to expand it to 20% by the end of 2025. This model is so customised that two passengers sitting adjacent to each other might have paid vastly different amounts due to differences in price sensitivity.

and bulk goods. Steel manufacturers utilise AI to monitor and adjust prices, thereby maintaining their margins.

It impacts everyday prices, including the cost of groceries.

This approach is driven by machine learning, which allows the company to predict what consumers are willing to pay. This trend demonstrates the role of technology in creating inequality and raising serious concerns about consumer rights.

This practice leads to a breach of trust and indiscriminate use of personal data. If the AI personalised dynamic pricing trend continues, it would add trillions to global profits and companies could enjoy a 30% increase in profits.

Still, it raises serious questions about a lack of transparency, ethical issues, potential discrimination, especially against vulnerable groups, privacy violations and poses a threat to consumer welfare.

In conclusion, the increased use of AI-powered dynamic pricing could amplify social biases in training data and widen socioeconomic gaps. The inability to predict and comprehend AI algorithm functionality erodes trust and accountability, posing a serious threat to consumer welfare and awareness.

Despite regulations, data protection and transparency norms, there are gaps in global enforcement that hinder assessment of fairness in profitability.

THE KEY TO AFRICA’S ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

GWEN MWABA

There is no silver bullet for expanding trade and commerce in Africa — or anywhere else, for that matter. But we can say with certainty that trade finance forms the backbone of sustainable growth and economic revitalisation on the continent.

It is critical for promoting the integration of African economies and drawing a line under postcolonial fragmentation, which is essential for enabling small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to grow and diversify.

By strengthening their ability to export, import and invest with confidence, African countries can unlock their vast potential and bolster their resilience in an increasingly uncertain world.

By the end of 2023, intra-African trade reached \$192.2 billion, up from \$186.3 billion the previous year, partly owing to an increase in trade finance.

That number is expected to rise with the continued implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which became operational in 2021.

To date, 49 countries have ratified the AfCFTA Agreement, demonstrating their commitment to eliminating intracontinental trade barriers. Africa’s current share of global trade is less than 3% — most of which is merchandise trade — and yet it has one of the world’s fastest-growing economies, with GDP growth predicted to rise to 4% in 2025.

But securing new trade opportunities requires addressing Africa’s limited banking infrastructure and high transaction costs. To reduce costs, increase transparency and expand access to underserved SMEs, the continent’s trade-finance sector must embrace mobile banking and digital payment platforms.

One promising development is the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System. In three years, 17 central banks and more than 150 commercial banks have joined the platform, developed by Afreximbank, the African Union and the AfCFTA Secretariat.

Trade finance — the “silent engine” of development — has the potential to accelerate Africa’s economic integration if leaders remain committed to innovative and inclusive practices.

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Non-dom crackdown driving the rich from UK

THE hordes of wealthy foreigners leaving Britain to escape the government’s non-dom (not domiciled) crackdown are being joined by high-net-worth Brits capitalising on an arcane element of the policy that has made it easier for them to avoid paying inheritance tax (IHT).

Wealth advisors and tax lawyers have reported a “second wave of interest” from middle-aged rich UK nationals looking to relocate in the knowledge that under new tax rules introduced in the overhaul, their estate would no longer be liable to UK IHT.

As part of her contentious non-dom changes at last year’s Budget, Rachel Reeves opted to change the tax system from one that focused on where people were domiciled — an esoteric concept meaning the country someone treats as their permanent home — to one focused on residence.

Doing so allowed her to abolish the centuries-old ‘non-dom’ status in favour of a less generous system — known as the Foreign Income and Gains regime — that deems wealthy immigrants resident after just four years.

The move — which was accompanied by a sharp tightening of how the Exchequer treats non-doms’ foreign-held trusts — is said to have sparked an exodus of rich foreigners who claimed the status.

It has emerged that several high-profile non-doms — including the well known Aston Villa football club co-owner and Goldman Sachs’ Richard Gnodde — left in the aftermath of the changes, leading to warnings from advisors and economists that the change has backfired and might cost the Treasury money.

But wealth experts are now sounding the alarm that the decision to shift to a residence-based scheme is inadvertently incentivising their wealthy British clients to leave the UK too, causing fears that the hit to public finances may be greater than first feared.

James Quarmby, founding partner



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

The continued rise in wealthy residents leaving the UK has caused super-prime property sales in London to plunge by over £100 million this year, according to a fresh study that brings the woes afoot at the upper end of London real estate into even sharper relief.



Wealth experts are now sounding the alarm that the decision to shift to a residence-based scheme is inadvertently incentivising their wealthy British clients to leave the UK too

of Stephenson Harwood’s private wealth team, said that he had seen a “large increase in British clients” seeking relocation advice since April because the new rules mean they can escape liability to UK IHT after spending just 10 years abroad.

“The rules are driving away non-doms and probably stop many more coming over”, he said. “But it will also encourage wealthy Brits to expatriate”.

Quarmby highlighted that many of the jurisdiction seeking to attract wealthy retirees generally have no or low inheritances taxes, adding: “What could be better — retiring abroad in the sun, lower tax on your pension — Greece has seven per cent, Cyprus has seven per cent — and after 10 years no UK IHT? It’s an amazing deal”.

A spokesperson for the Treasury said: “The UK remains highly attractive. Our main capital gains tax rate is lower than any other G7 European country and our new residence-based regime is simpler and more attractive than the previous one, whilst it also addresses tax system unfairness”.

Effect on real estate: The continued rise in wealthy residents leaving the UK has caused super-prime property sales in London to plunge by over £100 million this year, according to a fresh study that brings the woes afoot at the upper end of London real estate into even sharper relief.

During the first half of this year, the total value of sales worth 15m or more in the capital dropped by £100m compared with the first six months of 2024, the Beauchamp Estates research found, due to their being considerably fewer transactions.

The fall comes off the back what was already dire 2024 for the top-end of London property, when super-prime valuations fell to their lowest level in over a decade.

In the first half of last year, total transactions plummeted by 23 per cent year on year, falling from £1.1 bn in the first six months of 2023 to £795m the same period a year later.

This year, between January and June total transactions in London fell by a further 13 per cent, taking the total value of sales to £694m.

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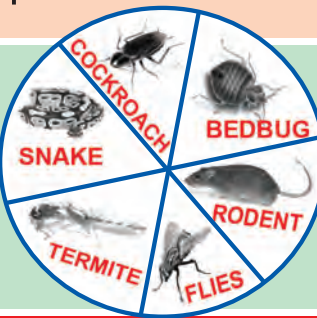
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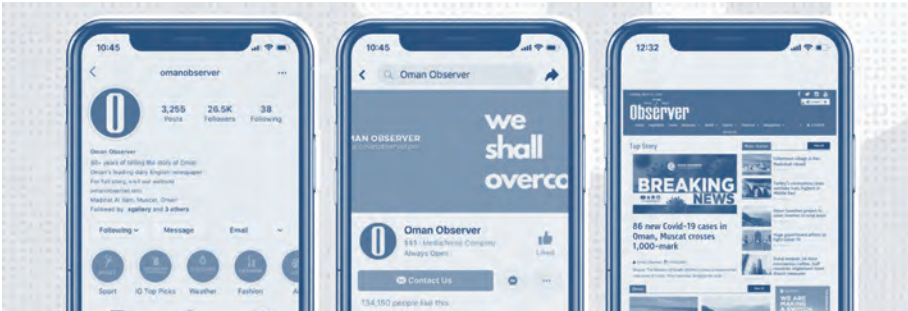
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ART/LIFE



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ENTERTAINMENT

‘KPop Demon Hunters’ craze hits theatres after topping Netflix, music charts



NETFLIX’S gargantuan hit film “KPop Demon Hunters” has captured the global zeitgeist this summer, smashing streaming and music chart records. Now it is coming for movie theatres.

An animated musical about a trio of Korean pop starlets who fight demons with infectious songs and synchronised dance moves, “Demon Hunters” has been watched 210 million times and currently has five of the global top 10 songs on Spotify.

In an unlikely journey, the streaming mega-hit is tipped by analysts to hit number one at the box office this weekend, with thousands of cosplaying fans headed to sold-out “singalong screenings” in theatres across five countries.

“Insane, crazy, surreal”, singer EJAE, who co-wrote the film’s biggest track “Golden” and performs heroine Rumi’s songs, told an advance screening at Netflix’s Hollywood headquarters this week.

“I’m just really grateful I’m able to be part of this crazy cultural phenomenon”.

For the uninitiated, the film’s premise is bizarre yet simple.

Demons who feed on human souls have been trapped in another realm by the powerful voices of girl group HUNTR/X.

To fight back, the demons secretly send their own devilishly handsome boy band to steal HUNTR/X’s fans and feast on their essences.

Rivalries ensue, loyalties fray and an unlikely romance evolves over 90 minutes of power ballads and pop earworms, all against anime-style backdrops of Seoul’s modern skyline and traditional bathhouses and thatched hanok homes.

Released in June, “KPop Demon Hunters” is already Netflix’s most-watched animated offering and sits second on the all-time chart for any original film. It is likely to take the top spot within the week.

“This movie is a triple threat. It’s got fantastic writing. It has got stunning animation. And the songs are bangers”, said Wendy Lee Szany, a Los Angeles-based movie critic and KPop devotee.

Indeed, songs by the movie’s fictional HUNTR/X and boy-band rivals Saja Boys occupy three of the Billboard top 10 — a feat no movie soundtrack has achieved since the 1990s.

While combining the global KPop craze with sexy supernatural monsters might sound like an obvious recipe for Netflix’s much-vaunted algorithm, nobody expected “Demon Hunters” to take off on this scale.

It was made by Hollywood studio Sony Pictures, intended for the big screen, but sold to Netflix during the pandemic when many theatres were shuttered. — AFP

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



FILM

US actor Austin Butler poses during the premiere of the “Caught Stealing” movie in Paris. — AFP



BOLLYWOOD

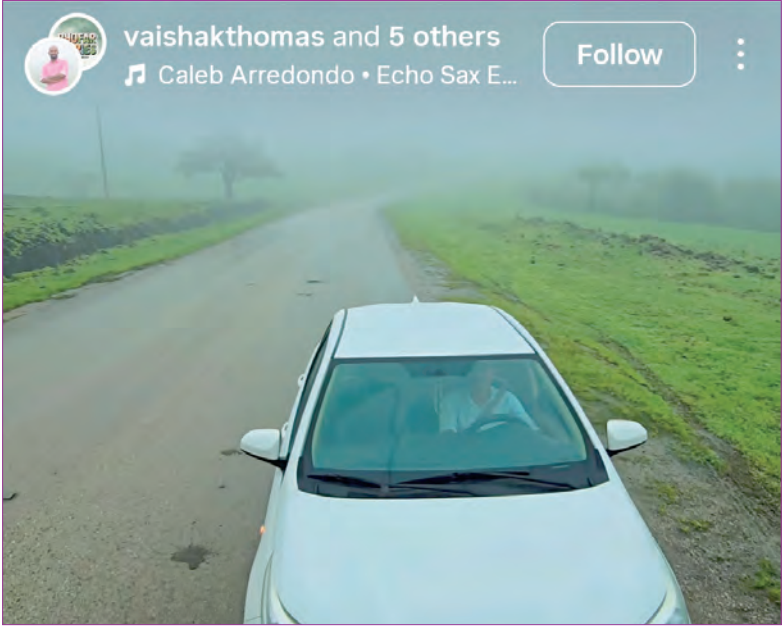
Superstar Salman Khan looks on during the premiere of the new season of the Indian reality show ‘Bigg Boss’ in Mumbai. — AFP



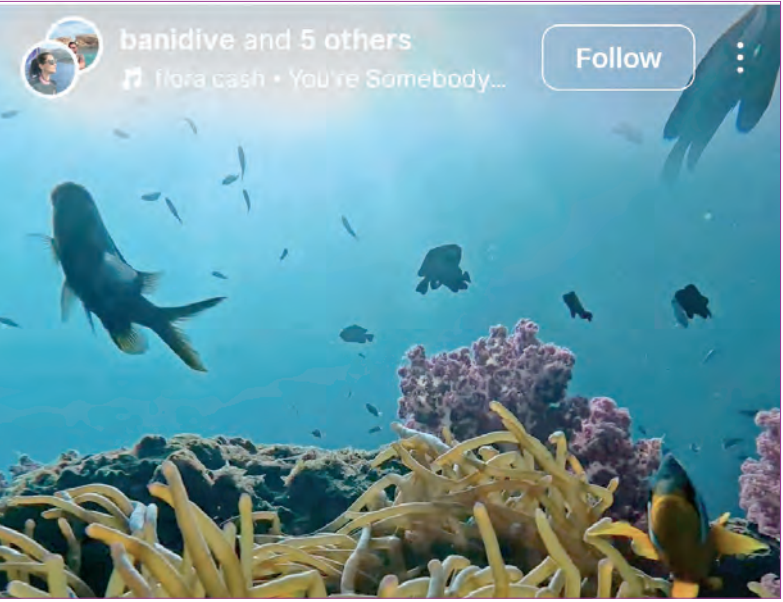
LIFESTYLE

People take part in the Colombo International Kite Festival in Colombo, Sri Lanka. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Enjoying the Green Fields



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London’s Notting Hill Carnival under way as revellers squirt paint



REVELLERS of all ages took to the streets of London for the annual Notting Hill Carnival early on Sunday with a traditional Caribbean celebration.

The carnival, Europe’s biggest street party and an annual extravaganza over Britain’s summer bank holiday weekend, helps celebrate Caribbean culture and history.

The festival began early on Sunday with the J’ouvert celebration, where people covered each other in paint, coloured powder and chocolate.

Children’s day is scheduled to take place on Sunday and is followed by the main event on Monday.

The streets are set to be flooded with colour, costumes, dancing and music.

About 1 million people are expected to be on the streets of

west London for the event, the Metropolitan Police (Met) said previously.

Around 7,000 police officers will be on duty across the capital on both Sunday and Monday.

The Met said live facial recognition (LFR) technology — which captures people’s faces in real-time CCTV cameras — will be used on the approach to and from the carnival, as well as outside the boundaries of the event.

Alongside the use of LFR technology, the Met also stated it planned to install screening arches at some of the busiest entry points to the carnival, where stop-and-search powers will be utilised in a bid to keep weapons out.

The annual celebration has been running for more than 50 years. — PA Media/dpa



Hollywood’s biggest AI debut? Las Vegas Sphere’s ‘Wizard of Oz’



WHEN “The Wizard of Oz at Sphere” opens off the Las Vegas Strip on August 28, audiences will experience the 1939 film classic in a way its creators probably never thought possible.

People will find themselves in the eye of the swirling tornado that rips Dorothy’s Kansas farmhouse off its moorings and hurtles it onto Munchkin land. The film has been enhanced to fill a 160,000-square-foot wall of LED panels that spans three football fields, encircling the audience and reaching 22 stories high, as 750-horsepower fans kick up wind and debris to simulate the twister.

The \$104 or more per seat spectacle is more than meets the eye. “The Wizard of Oz” marks one of the most significant partnerships between a studio and technology company to use artificial intelligence to forge a new media experience.

Reuters spoke with nine people, including principals directly involved in the project and senior entertainment industry experts, who told the story behind a project that some industry veterans see as a potential watershed moment in Hollywood’s use of AI tools.

“It definitely represents a really meaningful milestone in AI-human

creative collaboration”, said Thao Nguyen, immersive arts and emerging technologies agent at CAA. “I think it will set a precedent on how we reimagine culturally significant media”.

Bringing Dorothy and the Wicked Witch to the massive Sphere, a globe-shaped entertainment venue featuring advanced technology, took two years and brought together its creative team, Warner Bros Discovery executives, Google’s Deep Mind researchers, academics, visual effects artists — more than 2,000 people, in all.

The development occurred during intense apprehension over AI’s impact on jobs in Hollywood and the desire to preserve human creativity. Some visual effects companies initially contacted to work on the project declined because they were not permitted to work with AI at the time.

‘YOU’RE TOAST!’

Getting here took the blessing of Warner Bros Discovery CEO David Zaslav, his studio chiefs and lawyers who established guidelines for using AI. “Wizard of Oz at Sphere” drew upon archival materials from the film — including set blueprints, shot lists, publicity stills and film artefacts — as well as some 60

research papers to help deliver the movie in resolution representing a ten-fold improvement over previous work.

“We had to reimagine the cinematography, we had to reimagine the editing and we had to do all of this without changing the experience”, said Ben Grossmann, who oversaw the project’s visual effects. “Because if you touch anything about this sacred piece of cinema, you’re toast!”

Rather than exploiting AI to cut jobs, they sought to use it to breathe fresh life into a classic story and create new experiences with existing intellectual property.

“Hollywood embraces new technology and everyone can’t wait to be the second one to use it”, said Buzz Hays, a veteran film producer who leads Google Cloud’s entertainment industry solutions group. “What ‘The Wizard of Oz’ is doing for us is giving that first opportunity where people go, ‘Oh my god, this is not at all what I thought AI was going to be’”.

The project began in 2023 with Sphere executives discussing which project would push the technological boundaries of the venue that had already hosted U2 and Darren Aronofsky’s “Postcard from Earth”.

— Reuters

FEATURES



BY YERU EBUE

AS THE 19TH International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia opens its doors, all eyes are on Oman's remarkable debut. At the heart of this historic moment is Majeda al Hinai — a trailblazing architect, artist and cultural thinker whose profound understanding of space, tradition and innovation has positioned her as one of the most compelling curators in contemporary architecture.

Al Hinai's selection to curate the Oman Pavilion with her groundbreaking project, *Traces*, signals more than just national representation; it signifies a renaissance in how Oman's rich cultural tapestry is woven into global architectural discourse. Her credentials extend far beyond her Omani roots, establishing her as a thought leader whose work embodies a rare synthesis of cultural specificity, spatial intelligence and forward-looking design.

A nuanced architect and artist, Al Hinai's journey has been marked by a persistent pursuit of connecting disciplines — art, sculpture, installations and architecture — that challenge conventional boundaries. Co-founder of Brash Collective, a pioneering experimental platform, she has cultivated an understanding that architecture is more than form; it's

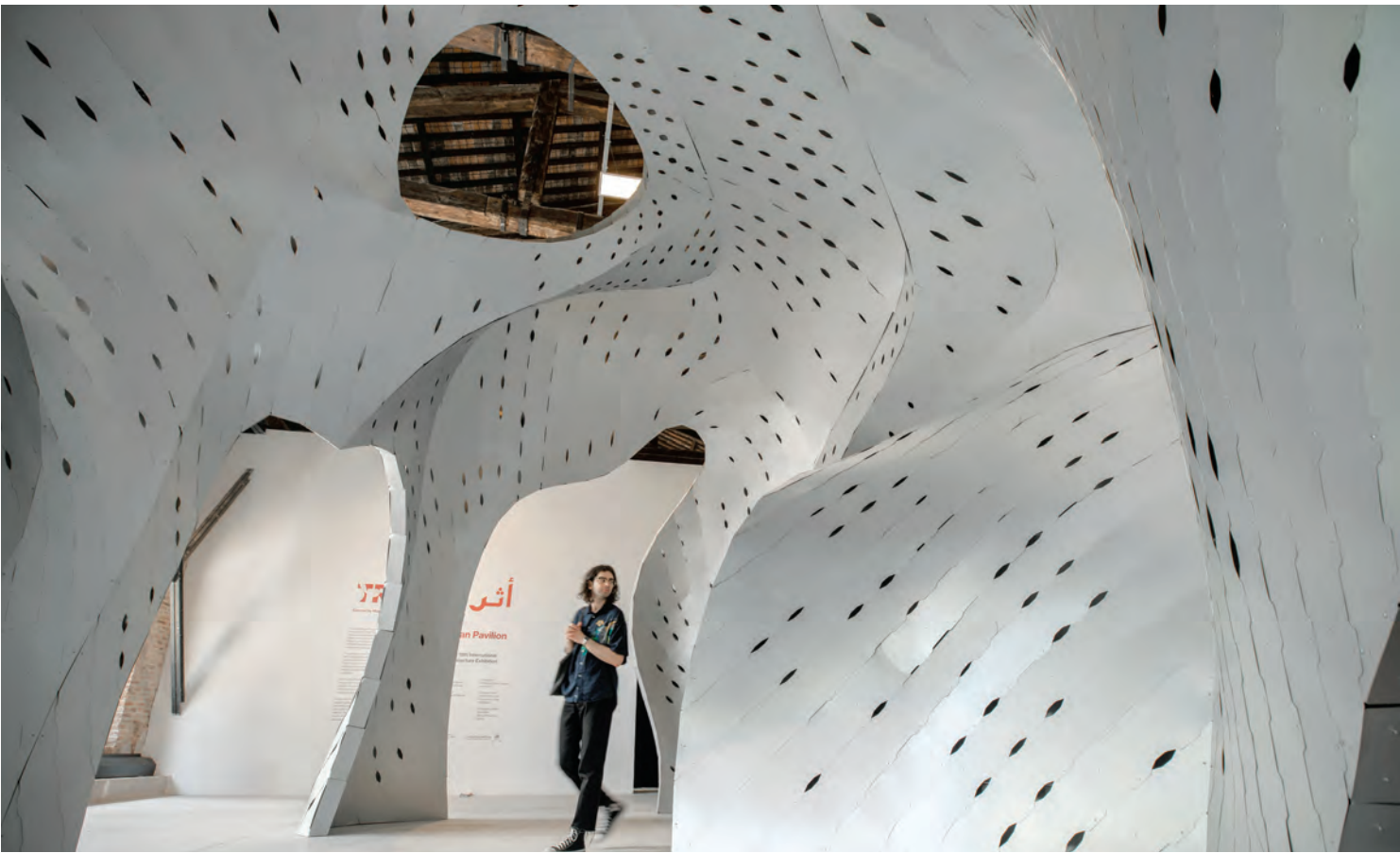
becomes an opportunity to test how local wisdom and lived memory can inform new ways of making and inhabiting space.

AS THE CURATOR FOR THE OMAN PAVILION, WHAT IS THE CORE MESSAGE YOU WANT VISITORS TO TAKE AWAY?

The core message of the Oman Pavilion is that heritage is not a fixed image but a living framework for civic life. With *Traces*, we wanted to move away from the idea of heritage as something to be merely displayed and instead treat it as an active system that shapes how people gather, converse and build community. That is why we turned to the Sablah, not as a nostalgic symbol, but as a spatial and cultural practice that continues to evolve. Presenting this in Venice meant resisting the temptation to “show” Omani culture in static terms and instead creating a space that performs it: open, inclusive and adaptable.

WHAT GROUNDBREAKING OR INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS CAN VISITORS EXPECT FROM THE OMAN PAVILION THAT SET IT APART FROM PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS?

What makes the Oman Pavilion distinctive is not spectacle, but the quiet innovation of its approach... The innovation lies in its nuance. Instead of a singular, monumental statement, the pavilion gathers multiple voices (those of architects, designers, engineers, local



a conversation, a collective memory and a civic act. Her practice exemplifies a deep engagement with cultural dialogue, informed by her experience of navigating diverse geographies and traditions.

Her work's distinctiveness lies in a commitment to cultural continuity fused with innovative resilience. With *Traces*, Al Hinai has designed a pavilion that draws from Oman's Sablah — a traditional communal space — not as a nostalgic idyll but as a dynamic framework for contemporary civic life. Constructed entirely from precision-crafted aluminium, each perforated panel embodies patterns rooted in Omani culture: palm frond weaving, carved wooden doors and the branching geometry of the Falaj irrigation system. Yet, these references serve as architectural instructions, shaping light, space and social interaction — anchoring her project firmly within the global conversations surrounding sustainability, reuse and architectural responsibility.

Al Hinai's approach exemplifies a global vision that remains rooted in local wisdom. Her design philosophy is characterised by porous, open surfaces that invite visitors to pass through, linger and gather — a spatial embodiment of hospitality and collective dialogue. This reimagining of heritage as a living, adaptive system underscores her belief that architecture must be flexible, inclusive and rooted in the social fabric.

Her appointment as curator is further distinguished by her capacity to fuse cultural depth with technical precision. She discusses her journey, emphasising her belief that impactful architecture and curation stem from curiosity, resilience and collaboration.

Below is an excerpt from an exclusive email interview with Majeda:

HOW DO YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND INFLUENCE YOUR ARTISTIC AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES?

My work is deeply informed by the experience of moving between cultures and geographies, where architecture is never just a backdrop but a system of values and relationships. These encounters revealed early on how spaces embody generosity, adaptability and collective belonging; and how architecture becomes a vessel for memory and exchange. Ultimately, my background has instilled a belief that architecture must remain porous: open to cultural specificity yet expansive enough to engage with urgent planetary questions. Every project

craftsmen and storytellers) into a collective expression. It treats heritage as something alive and adaptive, while using advanced design processes to push material and spatial possibilities. *Traces* was also conceived for permanence; every component has been designed for disassembly and reassembly in Oman, where it will continue to function as a civic space. This makes the project as much about legacy as about exhibition, merging cultural sustainability with architectural responsibility.

HOW DO YOU SEE ARCHITECTURAL AND ARTISTIC COLLABORATIONS AT EVENTS LIKE THESE INFLUENCING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF OMAN?

Events such as the Venice Biennale provide Oman with a platform to be recognised not only as a nation of heritage but also as an active participant in global architectural and artistic discourse. In this context, architecture and art become tools for shifting international perceptions; from viewing Oman solely through the lens of cultural tourism to recognising it as a country engaged in shaping future-focused cultural narratives. This aligns with Oman's presence in other prominent global forums. In the same year, Oman participated in three major events: Expo in Osaka, the Venice Biennale and the London Design Biennale. These platforms reach diverse audiences worldwide, positioning design as a universal language through which nations can articulate identity, innovation and resilience. Collectively, they situate Oman within an ecosystem of cultural exchange where architecture, art and design are not isolated practices but shared tools for imagining new possibilities.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG ARTISTS AND ARCHITECTS ASPIRING TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT IN THEIR FIELDS?

I would encourage young artists and architects to resist the pressure to follow predetermined paths or trends. What matters most is finding a direction that genuinely sparks your curiosity and pursuing it with persistence. Authenticity isn't about rejecting influence but about filtering what you absorb through your own lens until it becomes something distinct. Depth comes from practice. It's not just about acquiring skills, but about learning how to apply them to questions that truly matter to you. The most compelling voices are those that lean into their obsessions and refine them until they reveal something enduring.