

O M A N عُمَان D A I L Y

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PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 05:47 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:29 AM

DHUHR 12:13 PM

ASR 03:41 PM

MAGHRIB 06:35 PM

ISHA 07:48 PM

20 LOCAL FARMERS' GROWING LOVE AFFAIR WITH STRAWBERRIES

INBRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO MOLDOVA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Maia Sandu of the Republic of Moldova on her country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to Moldova for further prosperity and growth in all spheres. His Majesty also wished the bilateral cooperation and partnership further expansion in various fields in a manner that serves the interests of the two countries' peoples.

2.1% INCREASE IN KHAREEF VISITORS



The number of visitors to Khareef Dhofar Season from June 21 to August 15 stood at 827,115, a 2.1-per cent increase compared to the same period in 2024, when the number stood at 810,085. These figures are based on preliminary estimates of Khareef Dhofar Season 2025 visitors, released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The preliminary statistics show that the number of Omani visitors grew by 71.5 per cent, reaching 591,577. Visitors from GCC countries totalled 143,431, while visitors from other nationalities reached 92,107. A total of 639,962 visitors arrived in Dhofar Governorate via land by August 15. Meanwhile, 187,153 visitors arrived by air, comprising a 15.5-per cent increase.

25 COUNTRIES SUSPEND POSTAL SERVICES TO US

At least 25 countries have decided to suspend package deliveries to the United States, as concern grows over the impact of President Donald Trump's looming tariffs, a UN body said on Tuesday. The Trump administration said late last month that it would abolish a tax exemption on small packages entering the United States from August 29. The move has sparked a flurry of announcements from postal services in France, Britain, Germany, Italy, India, Australia and Japan that most US-bound packages would no longer be accepted.

Oman denounces Israel’s targeting of civilians, journalists

MUSCAT/DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman has voiced its strong condemnation and denunciation of the ongoing aggression launched by the Israeli occupation forces against the Gaza Strip, the latest of which was the deliberate targeting of medical, relief and media personnel at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis — in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday, the Sultanate of Oman reiterated its call on the international community — notably the Security Council — to undertake decisive action for ensuring the protection of civilians, halting these grave violations and upholding principles of the international law. The Sultanate of Oman affirmed that justice for the Palestinian people



can only be realised by terminating the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and enabling the Palestinian people to attain their legitimate rights. It pointed out that the most prominent of these rights is the establishment of a Palestinian state, with Al Quds A'Sharqiyah (East Jerusalem) as its capital, based on resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace

Initiative. Meanwhile, Qatar said that it was “still waiting” for Israel's response to a proposal for a truce and a deal on the release of captives in the Palestinian territory after Hamas agreed to the framework more than a week ago. Qatar and Egypt, along with the US, have been mediating indirect ceasefire negotiations throughout the Gaza war. **SEE ALSO P6**

HM leads farewell party for King of Bahrain

KING HAMAD BIN ISA AL KHALIFA of the Kingdom of Bahrain left Salalah on Tuesday, following a several-day private visit to the Governorate of Dhofar. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the farewell party for the King at the private airport in Salalah. The King was also seen off by some Royal Family members, ministers and senior officials. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, following the conclusion of the King's private visit to the Governorate of Dhofar. In his cable, the King expressed his appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for the warm welcome accorded to him and his accompanying delegation during the visit. King Hamad also prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant His Majesty continued good health and well-being. He also wished the Sultanate of Oman further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — ONA **SEE ALSO P3**



DIRECTORS REPORT

For the period ended 30th June 2025



Ashraf Hamed Al Mamari
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the audited results of OQ Exploration and Production SAOG (“OQEP” or the “Company”) for the period ended 30th June 2025.

Review of Market Conditions

The first half of 2025 was characterised by concern for the prospects of global economic growth caused by the U.S. government’s tariff policy. The expectation of varying levels of tariffs being imposed on imports into the US created uncertainty for both governments and companies around the world. In addition, unscheduled supply from OPEC+ entered the market. These factors resulted in drop in the oil price where the average Oman crude price was \$74.4 per barrel compared to the average of \$82.2 per barrel for the first half of 2024.

HSSE and Sustainability Highlights

In H1 2025, OQEP has maintained a strong safety record, and performed above key safety indicators including Total Recordable Injury Frequency (TRIF) and Motor Vehicles Incidents Frequency (MVIF) comparing to the same period in 2024. The OQEP first Sustainability Report was release during the Oman Sustainability Week, marking a significant step forward in our environmental, social and governance commitment.

Performance Highlights

Sales volumes of Crude Oil & Condensate and Gas for H1 2025 as compared to H1 2024, and average prices for the same period are as follows:

	January to June 2024	January to June 2025	Variation (%)
Crude Oil and Condensate Volume (mmbbl)	10.2	11.3	10.8%
Average realised sales price (US\$ per bbl)	82.2	74.4	-9.5%
Gas Volume (bcf)	60.3	59.8	-0.8%
Average realised sales price (US\$/mmcf)	3.48	3.44	-1.1%

Financial Highlights

	January to June 2024	January to June 2025	Variation (%)
Revenue (OMR '000')	427,892	428,074	0.0
Gross Profit (OMR '000')	165,971	164,438	-0.9%
Net Profit after tax (OMR '000')	186,770	166,638	-10.8%
Net Profit after tax (OMR '000) excluding Abraj	176,100	166,638	-5.4
Earnings Per Share (OMR)	0.023	0.021	-8.2%

During the first half of 2025, OQEP achieved a robust financial performance similar to the same period in 2024, even though oil prices were lower. This reflects the Company’s proven strategy and financial prudence. During H1 2025, OQEP increased its oil and condensate sales volumes compared to H1 2024 by 10.8%, enabling the Company to deliver a comparable revenue performance to H1 2024 when oil was priced at USD 82.2 per barrel, with H1 2025 revenue at OMR 428.1 million at oil price USD74.4 per barrel.

Growth

Gross Profit remained steady at OMR 164.4 million, while the Cost of Sales also held stable at OMR 263.6 million. Reported Net Profit declined by 10.8% to OMR 166.6 million, excluding OMR 10.7 million Net Profit contribution from the discontinued Abraj business, Net Profit decreased by 5.4%. This reduction was primarily attributable to finance costs the company start incurring in H1 2025 on the new loan facility taken during H1 2024.

During the first half of 2025, OQEP pursued several initiatives and struck several agreements to further develop and expand its portfolio of assets. Bisat C Expansion commissioning commenced in June 2025, ahead of schedule, and is set to deliver an additional oil processing capacity of 37,000 barrels of oil per day and 410,000 barrels of water per day.

OQEP and rest of Block-53 partners successfully managed to amend the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (“EPSA”) for Block 53 where the agreement was extended by 15 years to 2050 with improved fiscal terms. The EPSA partners envisage a potential additional 800 million gross oil barrels being produced, with the EPSA extension providing improved fiscal terms.

OQEP worked with its partners BP, PTTEP, and Petronas, to update the Asset Development Plan for Block 61 which anticipates developing up to 2 TCF additional recoverable gas resources for future growth projects.

The Marsa LNG plant groundbreaking ceremony took place in May 2025 where OQEP owns 20% and TotalEnergies owns the majority 80% of the project. This pioneering LNG bunkering facility integrates natural gas production from Block 10 and LNG in Sohar. The project is expected to be commissioned in 2028, which is considered one of the lowest GHG emission LNG plants in the world with a fully electric liquefaction plant using solar power.

Royal Decree was issued in May 2025 ratifying the EPSA of Block-54 which was signed in March 2025 between Ministry of Energy & Minerals (“MEM”), OQEP and its partner Genel Energy.

In April 2025, OQEP announced, together with its Block 47 partner, ENI Oman B.V. (“ENI”), that it had secured an agreement with MEM to extend Phase 1 of Block 47 by six months from 24 March 2025 to allow drilling of the exploration well.

OQEP, as part of its co-operation with MEM, together with the financial advisor, Scotiabank, assisted in marketing Blocks 18, 36, 43A and 66 to bring further new investment into Oman’s exploration and production sector. These blocks form part of the 15 blocks that MEM intends to market during the course of 2025 and 2026 with the continued support of OQEP.

OQEP and Turkish Petroleum Corporation (“TPAO”) entered into a Cooperation Agreement to explore new opportunities together. Subsequently the parties entered into an exclusive agreement with MEM to assess and evaluate certain blocks.

Outlook

OQEP’s management is strengthening its operations to remain resilient across a range of macroeconomic scenarios. Drawing on a proven track record of navigating challenging economic environments, the Board remains confident in OQEP’s ability to deliver long-term value to its shareholders.

In line with this commitment, the Company reaffirms its adherence to the dividend payout framework as outlined in the 2025 and 2026 dividend policy presented in the IPO prospectus. In June, shareholders approved an amendment in OQEP’s Articles of Associations, enabling the Company to repurchase its own shares. Subsequently, in July, the Company announced a share buyback program to further enhance shareholder returns.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our stakeholders and our dedicated employees for their continued support. On behalf of the Board of Directors, the management and all our employees, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik– May Allah protect and preserve him and may Almighty Allah endow Oman with continued prosperity. Under his wise leadership and guidance, Oman continues to be in the forefront path of prosperity, growth and development toward Oman vision 2040.

Thank you

On behalf of the Board of Directors of OQ Exploration and Production S.A.O.G.

OQ Exploration and Production SAOG and its Subsidiaries

Consolidated and separate statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

for the six months period ended 30 June 2025

Notes	Consolidated		Separate	
	30-June-25 RO'000 Audited	30-June-24 RO'000 Un-audited	30-June-25 RO'000 Audited	30-June-24 RO'000 Un-audited
Continuing operations				
Revenues	5 428,074	427,892	307,078	298,968
Cost of sales	6 (263,636)	(261,921)	(214,202)	(208,835)
Gross profit	164,438	165,971	92,876	90,133
Lease income	27 10,227	10,772	10,227	10,772
Other income	7.3 11,519	9,670	11,514	18,006
Administrative expenses	7.1 (15,314)	(14,858)	(14,193)	(14,713)
Operating profit	170,870	171,555	100,424	104,198
Finance income	7.2 4,649	8,982	4,858	8,969
Finance cost	8 (12,161)	(4,927)	(11,975)	(4,844)
Share of profit of joint venture	29 5,833	3,551	-	-
Profit before tax	169,191	179,161	93,307	108,323
Income tax expenses	10 (2,553)	(3,061)	(1,003)	(2,018)
Profit from continuing operations	166,638	176,100	92,304	106,305
Discontinued operations				
Profit from discontinued operations	35 -	10,670	-	-
Profit for the period	166,638	186,770	92,304	106,305
Other comprehensive income				
Items not to be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods				
Remeasurements of the defined benefit liability	23 -	(318)	-	(288)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	(318)	-	(288)
Total comprehensive income for the period	166,638	186,452	92,304	106,017
Profit for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	166,638	181,542	92,304	106,305
Non-controlling interest	-	5,228	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	166,638	181,224	92,304	106,017
Non-controlling interest	-	5,228	-	-
Earnings per share				
Basic and diluted earnings per share – RO	34 0.02083	0.02269	0.01154	0.01329
Earnings per share - continuing operations				
Basic and diluted earnings per share – RO	34 0.02083	0.02201	0.01154	0.01329

OQ Exploration and Production SAOG and its Subsidiaries

Consolidated and separate statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2025

Notes	Consolidated		Separate	
	30-June-25 RO'000	31-Dec-24 RO'000	30-June-25 RO'000	31-Dec-24 RO'000
Assets				
Non-current assets				
Oil and gas properties	12 850,641	866,172	385,644	385,219
Exploration and evaluation assets	13 11,859	8,362	5,486	2,820
Other property, plant and equipment	14 195	240	195	240
Right of use assets	26 14,055	22,267	14,055	22,267
Lease receivable	27 197,939	204,858	197,939	204,858
Deferred consideration	18 32,150	30,990	32,150	30,990
Interest in joint venture	29 16,480	10,647	-	-
Deferred tax assets	10 998	998	256	256
Intangible assets	15 -	-	-	-
Investments in subsidiaries	28 -	-	31,611	128,745
Total non-current assets	1,124,317	1,144,534	667,336	775,395
Current assets				
Inventories	16 71,497	76,665	62,397	67,814
Trade and other receivables	17 112,752	219,418	93,163	104,125
Advances and prepayments	19 1,546	5,365	1,525	350
Deferred consideration	18 7,690	7,690	7,690	7,690
Lease receivable	27 13,260	12,682	13,260	12,682
Due from related parties	33 32,452	32,452	74,710	114,421
Cash and cash equivalents	20 210,151	160,154	165,393	111,270
Total current assets	449,348	514,426	418,128	418,352
Total assets	1,573,665	1,658,960	1,085,464	1,193,747
Equity and liabilities				
Equity				
Share capital	21.1 80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
Statutory reserve	21.2 26,324	17,094	26,324	17,094
Other reserves	20,997	20,997	33,333	33,333
Capital reserves	21.3 102,880	102,880	102,880	102,880
Retained earnings	733,457	691,409	294,879	327,165
Total equity	963,658	912,380	537,416	560,472
Non-current liabilities				
Bank borrowings	22 383,160	382,806	383,160	382,806
Employees' end of service benefits	23 957	995	889	956
Provision for decommissioning	24 35,292	42,532	29,367	36,792
Lease liabilities	26 3,364	11,062	3,364	11,062
Provision for over-lifting	30 13,404	4,783	13,318	4,783
Total non-current liabilities	436,177	442,178	430,098	436,399
Current liabilities				
Lease liabilities	26 7,993	4,963	7,993	4,963
Accounts payables and accrued liabilities	25 161,828	288,028	107,591	186,296
Income tax payable	10 4,009	11,411	2,366	5,617
Total current liabilities	173,830	304,402	117,950	196,876
Total liabilities	610,007	746,580	548,048	633,275
Total equity and liabilities	1,573,665	1,658,960	1,085,464	1,193,747

Chairman	Board Member	Chief Financial Officer
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The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors and authorized for issue on _____

HM bids farewell to Bahrain King



SALALAH: King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain left Salalah on Tuesday, following a several-day private visit to the Governorate of Dhofar. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq led the farewell party for the King at the private airport in Salalah. The King was also seen off by some Royal Family members, ministers and senior officials. — **ONA**





Majan University College
Executive Forum

VOICES OF POWER

Majan University College to Host National Executive Forum: “Voice of Power”™ with “Majan University College launches ‘Voices of Power’ Executive Forum & Podcast - Oman’s platform for leadership, innovation, and youth inspiration.

MAJAN University College proudly announces the inaugural Voices of Power Executive Forum, a landmark gathering that will bring together Oman’s senior leaders, policymakers, and innovators alongside distinguished figures from across the GCC. The forum will take place on Monday, 8 September 2025, at Al Maha Auditorium, Majan University College, Muscat.

The forum is designed to accelerate the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 by shaping dialogue on leadership, innovation, and youth empowerment. Participants will include public figures, CEOs, leaders from public and private sectors, academics, and postgraduate students, ensuring a rich exchange of perspectives between generations and sectors.

◆ **Key Highlights:**

- Inspirational keynote addresses and panel discussions
- Participation from distinguished GCC and global speakers
- Alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and national transformation agendas
- Media coverage and live social media engagement
- VIP networking and youth inspiration sessions

◆ **Featured Speakers:**

- **Dr. Lama Al Sulaiman**, Vice Chair, Kingdom Holding Company, KSA
- **Ms. Areej Mohsin Haider Darwish**, Chairperson, MHD Group
- **Dr. Sonia Ben Jaafar**, CEO, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education
- **Iman Al Barwani**, CEO, Mohammed Al Barwani Foundation

As part of the initiative, MUC will also launch the **Voices of Power Podcast**, hosted by Dr. Ammar Al Balushi, the Head of Faculty of Business Management. This exclusive series will capture in-depth conversations with each speaker, ensuring that the insights shared in Muscat reach wider GCC and global audiences.

Dr. Maha Kobeil, Dean of Majan University College, commented: “The Voices of Power Forum is a commitment to Oman — uniting changemakers with the youth who will shape tomorrow, and preserving their wisdom through the Voices of Power Podcast.”

Established in 1995, Majan University College is Oman’s pioneering private higher education institution and the first to achieve institutional accreditation and reaccreditation by the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA). With strong industry partnerships and global affiliations, Majan continues to empower Omani youth to lead the future.

Industry engagement, Majan continues to empower students to become leaders in their fields.

For more information and the full programme, visit:
https://majancollege.edu.om/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=234
Media contact: marketing@majancollege.edu.om | ☎ +968 2473 0482

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The two sides discussed ways to enhance economic, commercial and investment relations.

OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA
DISCUSS BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITIES

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the Saudi Export Development Authority, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Tuesday organised bilateral meetings in Muscat between entrepreneurs operating Omani factories and their Saudi counterparts.

The meetings focused on key sectors, including construction, food security, packaging and healthcare.

The two sides discussed ways to enhance economic, commercial and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They elaborated on means of enhancing cooperation between the two countries' private sectors, notably by developing existing projects and engaging owners of Omani and Saudi factories and business enterprises.

The meetings stem from ongoing coordination between the two countries with the aim of exploring viable investment opportunities and outlining the factors that are needed to enhance bilateral trade in a manner that serves the common interests and supports economic growth in line with Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030. Both visions share common goals and ambitions to diversify the economy, activate innovation and promote investments in vital sectors. — ONA

ONE MORE
EASTERLY TROUGH
APPROACHES

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUG 26

Once again, the Sultanate of Oman is under the influence of another easterly trough coming from the Indian Peninsula and approaching the eastern part of the country.

According to the Oman Met Office, clouds have been forming over parts of Al Hajar Mountains with chances of scattered rains that may sometimes be thundery, possibly accompanied by active winds in the coming period.

The height of sea waves is expected to rise to average levels on parts of the coasts of the Sea of Oman and the coasts of Musandam starting from Wednesday, August 27, 2025. This is expected to continue for two days, with wave heights ranging from 1.5 to 2 metres, according to the weather forecaster.

On Tuesday, scattered rains were reported in Dhofar Governorate, accompanied by ongoing cumulonimbus cloud activity and rainfall of varying intensity.

There has been an influx of clouds over the coasts of the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea. The general weather forecast predicts clear skies for the rest of the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

ROYAL
HOSPITAL
INTRODUCES
NOVEL
TECHNOLOGY
FOR PROSTATE
CANCER
DIAGNOSIS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 26

The Royal Hospital has for the first time introduced the first molecular tomography technology using locally produced radioisotope 18F-PSMA, as part of its efforts to localise advanced medical imaging technologies.

Dr Khalsa al Nabhani, Head of the Nuclear Medicine Department and the Molecular Imaging Centre, said: “The production and evaluation of the quality, efficiency and safety of this isotope were carried out entirely by the work team at the centre’s nuclear accelerator facility, under Omani management, without the need for any external support or international expertise. It is used for the accurate detection of prostate



The new radiopharmaceutical has a larger production capacity, sufficient for more than 25 patients per production.

tumours and is an advanced alternative to gallium-68, produced from imported nuclear generators.”

“This breakthrough represents a qualitative leap in improving the efficiency of diagnostic services provided to patients relying on high-quality local production. This

ensures the continued availability of tests, reduces their costs and shortens waiting time for patients,” she added.

She pointed out that molecular tomography using the 18F-PSMA radiopharmaceutical enables rapid, early and accurate diagnosis of prostate cancer, one of the most common cancers among men worldwide and is on the rise.

The former technology had limited production, sufficient for only two patients per production. The new radiopharmaceutical, however, has a larger production capacity, sufficient for more than 25 patients per production. What distinguishes this product is its extended shelf life which facilitates its distribution to other nuclear medicine centres in the Sultanate of Oman.

Young innovators shine at
‘Falling Walls Lab’ finals

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUG 26

THE Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation organised the national finals of the Falling Walls Lab – Oman, under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation. The event, hosted at the Modern College of Business and Science, brought together some of the brightest young minds from across Oman to present their groundbreaking ideas.

Now in its 10th edition, the competition witnessed a record-breaking participation, with 158 contestants from Oman — the highest number among more than 80 participating countries worldwide. Out of these, 82 projects and ideas advanced to the initial evaluation round, before being shortlisted to 24 finalists who competed in the grand finale before a jury panel of five academic and research experts.

At the close of the competition, the jury announced three national winners: Taif al Qaidi – First Place, Baraah al Afi – Second Place, Al Haitham al Kalbani – Third Place. All the winners will go on to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the Falling Walls Lab Global Forum in Berlin later this year, where they will showcase their ideas on an international stage alongside innovators, scientists and entrepreneurs from around the world.

The Falling Walls Lab is a renowned global forum designed to highlight innovative



All the winners will go on to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the Falling Walls Lab Global Forum in Berlin later this year.

The competition is open to a broad spectrum of participants, including university and college students, academics, researchers, entrepreneurs, government and private sector employees, as well as job-seekers from across Oman

ideas, scientific research and entrepreneurial projects across diverse fields. Inspired by the symbolism of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the competition embodies the transformative power of science and knowledge in breaking down barriers between nations and moving ideas out of laboratories into society.

The competition is open to a broad spectrum of participants, including university and college students, academics, researchers, entrepreneurs, government and private sector employees, as well as job-seekers from across Oman.

On the occasion, Dr Al Haddabi praised the exceptional participation this year, noting that Oman’s youth continue to demonstrate creativity, ambition, and a strong capacity to contribute to global innovation. “This platform is more than a competition — it is an opportunity to inspire a new generation of thinkers and innovators who will play a vital role in shaping the future,” he said.

The winners also shared their reflections. Taif, who secured first place, expressed pride in representing Oman at the global forum in Berlin: “It is an honour to carry forward an Omani idea to the world stage. The experience has motivated me to further develop my project and to build networks with other innovators internationally.”

Similarly, Baraah described the competition as a life-changing opportunity: “In three minutes, I was able to present years of work and passion. The exposure and feedback are invaluable, and I am excited to represent Oman at such a prestigious global event.” With this milestone, Oman continues to reinforce its position as an emerging hub for innovation and scientific excellence. By achieving the highest number of participants among all competing countries this year, Oman has not only demonstrated the strength of its innovation ecosystem, but also highlighted the enthusiasm and determination of its youth to engage globally.

MoHT strengthens archaeological research through global partnerships

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, AUG 26

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has intensified its archaeological efforts in Al Batinah North, combining national expertise with leading international research teams to preserve Oman’s heritage and reinforce its cultural identity.

Over the recent years, these collaborations have led to major discoveries, advanced documentation methods and a stronger global role for Oman in the study of ancient civilisations.

Among the highlights, excavations at the Dhawi archaeological site revealed extraordinary finds, including the oldest copper musical



Through the integrated efforts, the ministry continues to safeguard Oman’s heritage while reinforcing cultural identity.

instrument (Sanaj) and the oldest clay incense burner, both dating back nearly 5,000 years. The

cymbals, discovered at Dhawi 7, are now displayed at the Department of Archaeology Museum at Sultan

Qaboos University.

“Such discoveries demonstrate the depth of our history and the importance of safeguarding it for future generations,” said Hassan bin Suleiman al Jabri, Director of Heritage and Tourism in Al Batinah North.

The ministry has also carried out large-scale rescue excavations to protect burial grounds affected by development. From 2020 to 2024, specialists conducted four phases of rescue work in the Sohar Free Zone, while current excavations in 2025, linked to the railway project connecting Abu Dhabi with Suhar, are being conducted with an Italian mission.

International cooperation has become a cornerstone of this

work. Joint missions with Leiden University in Wadi Al Zahimi (Liwa) and with the University of Chicago around Sohar Fort, alongside Sultan Qaboos University, have produced significant results that highlight Al Batinah North’s role as a hub of trade and culture in antiquity.

“These partnerships allow us to benefit from international expertise and modern technologies, while positioning Oman as an essential centre for studying early civilisations,” Al Jabri noted.

Through these integrated efforts, the ministry continues to safeguard Oman’s heritage while reinforcing cultural identity, ensuring that the legacy of past civilisations remains a source of pride and knowledge for generations to come.

QUALIFIERS
FOR QURAN
COMPETITION
BEGIN

AL MUDHAIBI: The preliminary qualifiers for the 33rd edition of the Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition commenced in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi. This marks the second stage of the competition's tour covering Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, which will continue until August 28.

Dr Said bin Hameed al Dhoyani, Deputy Head of the Competition's



Qualifying Committee, stated that 53 participants competed at Al Mudhaibi centre across seven categories, namely level 1 (full memorisation of the Holy Quran), level 2 (memorisation of 24 consecutive parts), level 3 (memorisation of 18 consecutive parts), level 4 (memorisation of 12 consecutive parts), level 5 (memorisation of 6 consecutive parts), level 6 (memorisation

of 4 consecutive parts) and level 7 (memorisation of 2 consecutive parts). He noted that Al Sharqiyah North Governorate hosted three centres this year. The first centre, in Ibra, concluded its qualifiers last week with 234 participants. The second centre, in Al Mudhaibi, will conduct evaluations over two days, followed by the final centre in Sinaw on August 27-28. — ONA

A chance to feast on
Thai culture & food

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THE annual 'Thai Festival Oman' will be held from August 28 to 30 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), showcasing a slice of Thai cultural extravaganza and gastronomic varieties. Visitors will have the opportunity to experience the charm of the nation's identity and immerse themselves in the authentic atmosphere.

Organised by the Royal Thai Embassy in Muscat, along with the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Trade Office, Thai businesses and the Thai community in Oman, the festival will also feature a number of Thai films for attendees to enjoy.

"It is an opportunity to immerse oneself with family and friends in the true Thai experience with Thai films, cultural performances, food and drinks, as well as traditional Thai handicrafts and products," said the



Some of the movies shown at the festival include 'The Gift', 'Under the Wings of Dream' and 'Letter from the Sun'.

head of the Thai cultural department at the embassy.

Some of the movies shown at the festival include 'The Gift', 'Under the

Wings of Dream' and 'Letter from the Sun'. Thai cultural performances by 'Praneat Thai' imported from Thailand will present 9 shows such as "The Sound of Lanna", 'Bangkok Joyful', 'Southern Breeze', 'Amazing Thailand', 'Candlelight of Chiang Mai', 'E-SAN Flavours', 'The Pink Lotus', 'Loy Krathong Sukhothai' and 'Songkran Water Festival', starting on Thursday, August 28, from 3:30 pm to 10 pm, and continuing on Friday, August 29, and Saturday, August 30, from 2 pm to 10 pm.

In addition to a wide range of authentic Thai foods on display, including 'Pad Thai', 'Tom Yum Koong' and 'Som Tam', Thai-designed jewellery, interior design, herbal products, spa, skincare and cosmetics, and textiles will also be available at the festival. Furthermore, a DIY workshop on 'Bo Sang umbrella painting' (Bo Sang's renowned umbrella-making tradition) and other activities for children will make the festival a fun experience for the whole family.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS ROBOTIC JOINT REPLACEMENT AND SPINE SURGERY



MUSCAT: The International Medical Conference on Robotic Joint Replacement, Shoulder Arthroscopy and Complex Spine Surgeries was held recently. The conference focuses on CT-based Mako Smart Robotic Surgeries for knee and hip replacements, as well as clinical decision-making, advanced surgical planning and long-term patient rehabilitation in spine care. This is in addition to discussion on recent advances in treatment, their benefits, other therapeutic modalities and future possibilities.

OCA's CME session focuses on thyroid cancer

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 26

The Oman Cancer Association (OCA), in collaboration with Apollo Proton Cancer Centre (APCC) in Chennai, India, and Global Treatment Services (GTS), successfully organised a Continuing Medical Education (CME) session at Intercity Hotel in Muscat.

The theme of the session was "Thyroid Cancer and Leveraging Technology and Biology in the Treatment of Challenging Solid Tumours", aiming to enhance local medical expertise and encourage discussions about the latest advancements in oncology.

The session was moderated by Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Lamki, Senior Consultant in Endocrinology, who led an engaging discussion focusing on the challenges and opportunities in cancer treatment in Oman.

The keynote presentation was delivered by Dr Srinivas Chilukuri, Senior Consultant in Radiation Oncology and Lead Consultant at APCC. His presentation highlighted the evolution of cancer treatment



The initiative is a part of the OCA's ongoing commitment to advancing cancer care.

through Proton Therapy, showcasing advanced technologies and real-world case studies that demonstrated its effectiveness in managing complex cancers.

The CME session sparked meaningful discussions on patient awareness, accessibility to modern treatment options and the future of cancer care in Oman.

Both OCA and GTS expressed

their gratitude to Apollo Proton Cancer Centre for their dedication to professional education and international collaboration.

The initiative is a part of the Oman Cancer Association's ongoing commitment to advancing cancer care through medical education, cross-border partnerships and capacity building among healthcare professionals in the region.

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 – Salaiah	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)

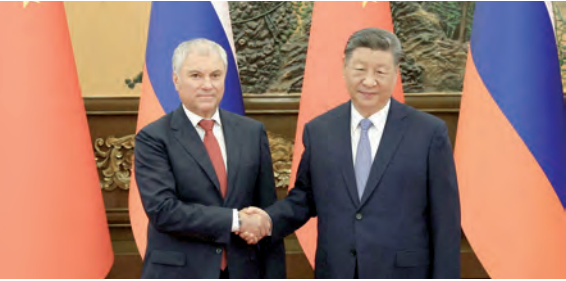
- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- 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



Russian Vyacheslav Volodin shakes hands with President Xi Jinping, in Beijing. — Reuters

XI STRESSES RUSSIA TIES ‘MOST STABLE’ IN TURBULENT WORLD

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday that China’s ties with Russia are the “most stable, mature and strategically significant” among major world powers, state media reported. During a meeting with Vyacheslav Volodin, chairman of Russia’s Duma, or lower house of parliament, Xi hailed the countries’ relationship as being a “stable source of world peace”, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said. “The two sides should... work together to safeguard the security and development interests of both countries, unite the Global South, uphold true multilateralism, and promote the international order towards greater fairness and justice,” Xi told Volodin in Beijing’s opulent Great Hall of the People.

China, for its part, insists it is a neutral party, regularly calling for an end to the fighting while also accusing Western countries of prolonging the conflict by arming Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to visit China from this weekend. He will attend a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in the northern city of Tianjin from August 31 to September 1, as well as celebrations to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. — AFP

SRI LANKA’S JAILED EX-PRESIDENT GRANTED BAIL



Supporters of former president shout slogans during a protest, in Colombo. — AFP

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka’s former president Ranil Wickremesinghe was granted bail on Tuesday, four days after his arrest on the charge of misusing state funds for an overseas visit. The ex-leader, 76, was arrested on Friday, accused of spending \$55,000 in government funds on a 2023 stopover in Britain while returning from attending the G77 summit in Havana and the UN General Assembly in New York.

The Colombo Fort Magistrate Nilupuli Lankapura ordered Wickremesinghe’s release on a five-million-rupee (\$16,600) bond after a lengthy hearing held under tight security, including elite troops. A few hundred protesters had gathered outside the court earlier in the day in support of Wickremesinghe, and were met by riot police who held back the crowd.

After being remanded in custody on Friday, the former leader was rushed to a prison hospital and then the country’s main state-run hospital, suffering from dehydration, but hospital officials said his condition was stable. Wickremesinghe joined Tuesday’s bail hearing via video link from his bed at the National Hospital of Colombo, where he is being treated under armed guard. — AFP

SEVERE WEATHER

Typhoon death toll rises in Vietnam



The death toll from Typhoon Kajiki rose to three in Vietnam, as rescue workers battled uprooted trees and downed power lines, and widespread flooding brought chaos to the streets of the capital Hanoi. Three people had been killed and 13 injured, and authorities warned of possible flash floods in eight provinces as Kajiki’s torrential rains continue to wreak havoc. Journalists saw rescue workers using cutting equipment to clear dozens of trees. — AFP

IRAN KEEPS NEGOTIATING TO PREVENT SANCTIONS SNAPBACK

TEHRAN: Iran said on Tuesday that it was making every effort to prevent a sanctions snapback, which European powers have threatened to impose under the moribund 2015 nuclear deal. “Our focus is on preventing actions or incidents that may be costly for the country,” said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei during a weekly press conference. He added that Tehran was “negotiating with all our might” ahead of planned talks with Britain, France and

Germany on Tuesday in Geneva. It will be the second round of talks between Iranian and European diplomats since the 12-day war between Iran and Israel that broke out in mid-June. The war, triggered by an unprecedented Israeli surprise attack, derailed Tehran’s nuclear negotiations with the United States and prompted Iran to suspend cooperation with the UN’s nuclear watchdog.

The European trio have threatened to trigger the accord’s

“snapback mechanism” by the end of August. The move would reimpose sweeping UN sanctions lifted under the agreement unless Iran agreed to curb its uranium enrichment and restore cooperation with International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors.

Iran insists the European powers “do not have the legal and moral” grounds to trigger a snapback. “We will not allow this issue to become a tool of psychological warfare against... our citizens,” . — AFP

‘Still waiting’ for Israeli response on Gaza truce

GAZA mediator Qatar said on Tuesday that it was “still waiting” for Israel’s response to a proposal for a truce and hostage release deal in the Palestinian territory after Hamas agreed to the framework more than a week ago. Qatar and Egypt, along with the United States, have been mediating indirect ceasefire negotiations throughout the Gaza war, but despite sealing two temporary truces, the successive rounds of talks have repeatedly failed to bring a lasting end to the conflict.

The latest proposal put forward by mediators involves an initial 60-day truce and staggered exchanges of hostages for Palestinian prisoners, but Israel has appeared reluctant to budge from its demand that all the hostages being held at Gaza be freed at once. “We are still waiting for an answer” from Israel, Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al Ansari told a regular news conference on Tuesday, adding: “The statements that we are hearing right now do not fill us with confidence.”

Last week, Hamas said it had accepted the new ceasefire proposal following a round of talks in Cairo. The proposal followed the contours of a deal first proposed by US envoy Steve Witkoff, with Qatar saying it hewed closely to a version previously approved by Israel.

However, as mediators were awaiting Israel’s response to the new proposal last week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced he had given instructions for new negotiations seeking “the release of



A girl holds a child next to belongings, as displaced Palestinians flee amid an Israeli military operation. — Reuters

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all our hostages and the end of the war under conditions acceptable to Israel”. In the same remarks, Netanyahu doubled down on plans for the Israeli army to launch a new offensive to capture Gaza City.

Ansari on Tuesday said mediators did not “take seriously” any announcements outside the negotiation process itself. “The responsibility now lies on the Israeli side to respond to an offer that is on the table. Anything else is political posturing by the Israeli side,” he said. Referring to the Gaza City offensive, he added that Qatar did not see a “positive trajectory coming out of this escalation on the ground”.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army raided the West Bank city of Ramallah on Tuesday, leaving 14 people wounded as troops fanned out across the city centre, the

Palestinian Red Crescent said. Tensions have remained high in the occupied West Bank since the October 2023 attack on Israel which sparked the Gaza war, with repeated raids by the Israeli army on Palestinian population centres, particularly in the north.

The Red Crescent said at least 14 people were wounded in the latest raid. Seven were hit by live rounds, while the rest were injured by rubber bullets or tear-gas inhalation. It added that Israeli forces were “preventing our teams from reaching the injured in a besieged area”. A journalist saw soldiers on the ground around Al Manara Square in the city centre and on balconies overlooking it.

The Israeli army confirmed it had launched an operation but did not provide more details. — AFP



PAKISTAN EVACUATES 150,000 PEOPLE IN WARNS OF FLOODS

LAHORE: Pakistan evacuated at least 150,000 people in areas along three rivers in its agricultural heartland to escape flooding, as neighbouring India warned it plans to release excess water from a dam, officials said on Tuesday. The two countries have been ravaged by intense rain and flooding in recent weeks. The release of excess water in addition to heavy rains threatens to further flood parts of Pakistan’s Punjab province, which serves as the country’s breadbasket and accounts for a large part of its food supply.

Pakistani officials said they received a second warning from India on Monday that it intends to release water from the rapidly filling Madhopur Dam, on its side of Punjab province. The forced evacuations started ahead of the Indian warning and have continued to date, said a spokesperson at Pakistan’s National Disaster Management Authority. India routinely releases water from its dams when they get too full, with the excess flowing into Pakistan. — Reuters

AWAITING PEACE

DR Congo, M23 talks resume in Doha



The Democratic Republic of Congo and the M23 group have restarted peace talks in Doha following reports of violence in the DRC’s conflict-torn east. “We’ve received the two parties here in Doha from the DRC and the M23” to discuss the implementation of a previous agreement, Qatari spokesman Majed al Ansari said. The ceasefire agreement aimed to bring about a permanent end to the fighting that has devastated the DRC. — AFP

LONG-WAITED ELECTION

Kosovo picks speaker, breaking deadlock



It took dozens of failed votes, six months and two court orders, but Kosovo’s parliament finally elected its speaker on Tuesday. Since February’s elections, lawmakers have been bitterly divided over their potential speaker, but they settled on Dimal Basha, a candidate of the leading Vetevendosje party. The vote now clears the way for the choice of ministers, a role previous prime minister Albin Kurti has been holding as caretaker for months. — AFP

DEADLY SHOOTINGS



Police stand at the scene of a shooting in Porepunkah, Victoria, Australia. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA HUNTS GUNMAN AFTER OFFICERS KILLED

SYDNEY: A gunman killed two police officers in a “horrific” shooting at a rural Australian property on Tuesday before fleeing into the bush, police said. Officers hunted for the man into the night and told residents to stay indoors after the deadly confrontation in the small town of Porepunkah in the northeast of Victoria state. “The suspect for this horrific event is still at large,” Victoria police chief commissioner Mike Bush said. “We know that the person is heavily armed. We know that they are dangerous,” he told a news conference.

Bush said the incident occurred “over minutes” at a property with a house and a bus, resulting in the deaths of a 59-year-old detective and a 35-year-old senior constable. “They were met by the offender and they were murdered in cold blood,” he said. Another detective was wounded in the lower body and taken to hospital for surgery, but his life was not considered to be in danger.

Australian media, including The Age newspaper, said the suspect was 56-year-old Dezi Freeman, describing him as a radicalised conspiracy theorist who had expressed hatred for the police. Freeman was a self-professed “sovereign citizen”, the paper said, referring to a movement that falsely believes it is not subject to laws passed by the government. Bush did not identify the suspect but said he was known to police.

Ten police had gone to the property in the morning to execute a search warrant when the gunfire broke out, the police chief said. He was unable to say whether police discharged their weapons. The suspect escaped into the bush, he said. “I do understand that he was pursued but he was able to get away on foot,” Bush said. The gunman apparently fled by himself without his partner and two children, who had yet to be located. “Our priority is to arrest him to ensure that he’s held to account for the actions, but also very much to bring safety and security to this community,” Bush said.

Deadly shootings are relatively rare in Australia, with police fatalities even rarer. A ban on automatic and semi-automatic weapons has been in place since a 1996 mass shooting in Port Arthur, Tasmania, in which a lone gunman killed 35 people.

Alpine Shire Mayor Sarah Nicholas said it had been a day of “deep sorrow and shock” for the community.

“We are grieving together, and we will continue to support one another with compassion and care,” she said in a video message on social media, her voice breaking with emotion. — AFP

LITHUANIA PARLIAMENT CONFIRMS RUGINIENE AS PRIME MINISTER

VILNIUS: Lithuania’s parliament on Tuesday confirmed Inga Ruginiene as prime minister following the collapse of the previous government in July over a corruption scandal. Ruginiene, who was social security minister in the old government, has vowed to continue supporting Ukraine and invest in the country’s defence while seeking to reduce inequalities.

But several thousand people staged a demonstration against the new government, with organisers

accusing it of including politicians who oppose sanctions against Russia and Belarus as well as anti-vaccine campaigners. Ruginiene, a 44-year-old former trade union leader who is from the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party LSDP, the biggest in the ruling coalition, now has 15 days to put her cabinet and government programme to a vote. “My biggest dream is to stand in front of you again at the end of my mandate and to say that we have been able to accomplished very

important work,” Ruginiene, who was only elected as a lawmaker last year, told parliament.

Former Social Democrat prime minister Gintautas Paluckas resigned on August 1 amid an investigation into several companies he was linked with. The current coalition, led by the LSDP, includes the populist Nemunas Dawn party, the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union, the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania-Christian Families, and independent lawmakers. — AFP

France faces political crisis over Bayrou’s vote

FRANCE lurched into a political crisis after Prime Minister Francois Bayrou risked a confidence vote, with little hope of any quick solution to fix its ailing public finances, whether a new government or a snap parliamentary election comes next. French markets tumbled after Bayrou jolted the political establishment out of its summer slumber with his unexpected move to seek a September 8 confidence vote on his debt-cutting plan. The main opposition parties were quick to make it clear that they would be voting against him and his minority government, meaning it is all but certain to fall, barring a deal the opposition said was not going to happen.

Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who leads the conservative Republicans, said it would be “irresponsible” and “against France’s interests” to vote for the government to fall. Others disagreed. The far-right National Rally said Bayrou had de facto announced the end of his government. Marine Le Pen’s party now wants President Emmanuel Macron to call a snap parliamentary election.

“I don’t see what new prime minister wouldn’t be immediately censured,” a source close to Le Pen said.

The Socialists, whose vote will be crucial, also said they would vote against Bayrou. “We need a different prime minister and, above all, a different policy,” lead Socialist lawmaker Boris Vallaud wrote on X. The confidence vote will be held two days before protests called by various groups on social media and backed by leftist parties and some unions, recalling the Yellow Vest unrest that erupted in 2018 over fuel price hikes and the cost of living.

Those “gilets jaunes” protests spiralled into a broader movement against Macron and his efforts at economic reform. “Unless Francois Bayrou is confirmed in office - which is a hypothesis today that appears unlikely - we will enter a new phase which will be a phase of destabilisation,” said pollster Jean-Daniel Levy, predicting negative consequences for the economy and France’s image abroad.



France’s PM Francois Bayrou delivers a speech at the Bierville estate in Boissy-la-Riviere. — AFP

A source close to Bayrou said his government was open to negotiation on the details of his budget proposals, though they were adamant that a budget squeeze is necessary. Bayrou knew a no-confidence vote would eventually be tabled over the budget and decided to get ahead of the opposition, the source said. If the government does indeed fall, Macron could name a new prime minister immediately or ask Bayrou to stay on as head of a caretaker government, or he could call another snap election.

A source in a key ministry said they expected Macron to opt for a new prime minister.

Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin told France 2 TV that while the government was still working on trying to find a compromise agreement, he “could not rule out” the scenario of another costly dissolution of parliament. Macron, the only person who can dissolve parliament and launch fresh legislative elections, has yet to comment. But he has recently said he did not favour new snap elections. He lost his last prime minister, Michel Barnier, to a no-confidence vote over the budget in late 2024, after just three months in office following a snap

election in July that year.

When he called a snap election in June last year, Macron said it would bring “clarity” - the very same words used by Bayrou on Monday to explain why he was holding a confidence vote. But the 2024 snap election only resulted in a more fragmented parliament, bringing no clarity at all.

In case of a snap election, opinion polls show the new parliament would probably remain divided without an outright majority for any political camp. “The French prime minister’s decision to call an early vote of confidence is most likely to trigger his replacement with yet another prime minister or (less likely) fresh legislative elections,” Capital Economics analysts wrote in a note. “Either way, France’s budget deficit will remain well above the level needed to stabilise the debt ratio.”

France’s blue chip CAC40 index was down nearly 2% in early trade on Tuesday, having fallen 1.6% late on Monday. Banking giants BNP Paribas and Societe Generale slid more than 6% each. Meanwhile, 10-year French government bond yields briefly rose to 3.53%, the highest since March, before steadying at 3.50%. When a bond’s yield rises, its price falls. — Reuters

Trump says spoke to Putin since meeting with Europeans

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said that he had talked to Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin since meeting in Washington last week with Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelensky and European leaders. Trump was last known to have spoken to Putin on August 18, when he interrupted his talks with Zelensky and the Europeans at the White House to call the Russian leader.

“Yes, I have,” Trump told reporters when asked if he had talked to Putin since then.

Asked how the latest talks went, Trump replied: “Every conversation I have with him is a good conversation. And then, unfortunately, a bomb is loaded up into Kyiv or someplace, and I get very angry about it.” Trump also held a landmark summit with Putin in Alaska on August 15 in a bid to seal a deal to end Russia’s attack of Ukraine.

After their previous call on August 18, Trump said Putin had agreed to hold a bilateral meeting with Zelensky, but Moscow has since said there are no plans for such talks. “Because he doesn’t like him,” Trump said when asked why Putin appeared reluctant to meet face-to-face with Zelensky.

Trump said however that he still believed a deal to end Russia’s war on Ukraine was in sight. “I think we’re going to get the war done,” he said.

Following the talks with Zelensky and the Europeans, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio agreed to keep up discussions among allies toward a future settlement.

The State Department said that Rubio spoke on Monday in a joint call with Ukraine’s foreign minister as well as their counterparts from Britain, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland and the European Union. The ministers agreed to



Bystanders take a knee to pay their respects to a fallen Ukrainian soldier. — Reuters

“continue cooperation in diplomatic efforts to bring the Russia-Ukraine war to an end through a lasting negotiated settlement,” State Department spokesman Tommy

Pigott said.

Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani of Italy, whose right-wing government has worked to unite the United States and fellow

Europeans, called again for guarantees to Ukraine inspired by Nato’s promise of collective defense. Tajani “highlighted the importance of concrete and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, notably in strengthening the Ukrainian armed forces and its defense industry,” he said, according to a foreign ministry statement. He said Italy was ready to participate in demining operations on land and sea.

Trump last week told Zelensky vaguely of forward movement on security guarantees, but has repeatedly sided with Russia in ruling out Ukraine’s membership in Nato.

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. — AFP

OPINION

Israel’s Gaza campaign is making it a pariah state



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

The author is reporter, and NYT columnist

It will leave it to historians to debate whether Israel is committing genocide in the Gaza Strip. But what is absolutely clear to me right now is that this Israeli government is committing suicide, homicide and fratricide.

It is destroying Israel’s standing in the world, it is killing civilians in Gaza with seemingly no regard for innocent human life, and it is tearing apart Israeli society and world Jewry, between those Jews who want to still stand with Israel no matter what and those who can no longer tolerate, explain or justify where this Israeli government is taking the Jewish state and now want to distance themselves from it.

I was struck by this paragraph in The New York Times’ story from Israel on Monday about the Israeli strikes on a hospital in southern Gaza, killing at least 20 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry — including five journalists who worked for international media outlets, plus medics and several others: “The Israeli military said it had carried out a strike in the area of Nasser Hospital, without saying what the target was. The statement said the military regretted ‘any harm to uninvolved individuals,’ adding that its chief of staff had ordered an immediate inquiry.”

Obviously sensing that many around the world were appalled by this explanation — I

mean, how many times have we heard this? — The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a rare statement of contrition, saying that “Israel deeply regrets the tragic mishap.”

The truth is, though, what Netanyahu called a “tragic mishap” is the inevitable byproduct of his policy of stringing out the war in Gaza in order to stay in power, to avoid his criminal trials and to avoid any Israeli inquiry commission into his profound complicity in the failure to prevent the surprise attack by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023.

It is one thing for a country at war to justify collateral damage when going after the enemy’s top leaders. It is something entirely more sinister when you are killing and wounding dozens of civilians to try to kill, say, the deputy to the deputy commander.

It is also devious and sinister when you use your military to move hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians from one part of Gaza to the other — under the guise of evacuating them from fighting zones — and then deliberately bulldoze the homes they left behind for no real military reason but with the clear ulterior motive of making life so miserable for them that they will leave the area entirely. And it is shameful when you stop and start humanitarian aid, with the hope that people will get hungry enough to leave.

Palestinian civilians are being killed by the dozen almost daily as the inevitable spillover not from a just war for Israeli survival and an attempt to produce a better Palestinian partner in Gaza but rather from an effort to ensure that Israel has no Palestinian partner in Gaza

But as I said, this is not just homicide pure and simple; it is also suicide and fratricide. Israel is now well on its way to making itself a pariah state — to the point that Israelis will think twice about speaking Hebrew when travelling abroad.

Unfair, says the Israeli government. The world seems to have forgotten, it argues, that Hamas murdered some 1,200 people; kidnapped some 250, including women, children and elderly; and is still holding some alive in inhumane conditions in tunnels and elsewhere in Gaza.

So why is the world ganging up only on Israel now? Because it holds Israel to a higher standard than Hamas, because Israel has always held itself to a higher standard.

But because Netanyahu has now made it crystal clear that he refuses to let Gaza be ruled by either Hamas or the PA, the war increasingly looks like what it now is: a war to extend Israel’s occupation from the West Bank to Gaza.

So it appears to many around the world that Palestinian civilians are being killed by the dozen almost daily as the inevitable spillover not from a just war for Israeli survival and an attempt to produce a better Palestinian partner in Gaza but rather from an effort to ensure that Israel has no Palestinian partner in Gaza.

— The New York Times

STUDENTS, DID YOU UNDERSTAND?

ALZAHRAA AL AMRANI

The question in the title of this article is always asked at the end of classes, both at schools and universities; but did you really understand? Students typically respond to this question with ‘yes’, even though they may not have fully understood the content or may have even misunderstood it.

However, this is not the case with instruction-checking questions (ICQs) and concept-checking questions (CCQs), in which teachers use precise questions that help them check the students’ understanding. For example, teachers may ask the following questions to make sure that the students have grasped the instructions of a speaking task properly: “Are you going to talk about yourself or your partner? (My partner)”, and “how many present simple sentences should you form? (5 sentences).” These ICQs can sometimes be dispensed with if teachers provide simple and clear instructions that students can easily understand. This, however, does not work without close monitoring of the students during a task, so that teachers can address any confusion by repeating the instructions or asking ICQs, and correct any mistakes. The feedback stage, especially the discussion component, is designed based on the students’ performance during a task. If they perform well, there is no need to address each question separately. However, if there are some difficult questions that the students struggle to answer, the discussion stage is essential. Teachers can go through these questions, eliciting the correct answers from the students.

Unlike ICQs, CCQs are indispensable, as they help teachers to evaluate students’ understanding of the content by asking short-answer questions that test their comprehension and highlight the main points that could be confusing to them. For instance, if a teacher covers the ‘used to’ rule, she can ask the following questions like, “Is it happening now? (no)”, “Did it happen in the past? (yes)”, and “did it happen once or many times? (many times).” Overall, this small change in teaching methodology, that is, asking ICQs and CCQs, could lead to a significant improvement in students’ comprehension of the covered material. Moreover, asking these questions could have a positive impact on the students’ attitudes and engagement during classes, which might affect their performance and grades in the long term. Also, this strategy has the potential of helping teachers to make the most of every minute of class, as ICQs will save them from repeating instructions multiple times, and CCQs will help them identify areas that need improvement.

From AI wars to AI progress

In recent months, a troubling trend has become increasingly visible across digital platforms. Many users in the Sultanate of Oman, the rest of the Arab and Islamic world, and across the Global South have noticed targeted posts and content designed to question Islam and undermine Arab identity. A closer look shows that a large portion of these posts originates from self-identified Christian Zionist accounts or Israeli Occupation-linked agents. This is not just random online noise; it represents a new phase of what can only be called algorithmic warfare.

Understanding Algorithmic Campaigns

Algorithms are the invisible codes that determine what content we see online. They are designed by big tech companies to prioritise what we are most likely to click on, shaping our attention, emotions, and even opinions. In late August 2025, the Israeli Occupation reportedly launched organised “algorithmic campaigns” in cooperation with certain social media platforms. These campaigns go beyond traditional propaganda. They use advanced data tools to target specific audiences with customised messages, effectively controlling narratives and perceptions in real time. This strategy represents the evolution of fifth-generation warfare, a term used by military analysts to describe conflicts that move beyond physical battlefields into psychological, digital and cultural spaces. Instead of tanks or missiles, these battles use information, algorithms and digital platforms to weaken societies from within.

Why This Matters for Society

For ordinary people, these campaigns are not abstract. They directly influence the way communities see themselves, their religion and their future. For youth, who make up more than 60 per cent of the Arab population, the impact is especially profound. A teenager



KHALID ALSAFI AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

The best practice is to harness algorithms not for manipulation, but for empowerment, designing digital systems that expand knowledge, celebrate cultural diversity and foster scientific collaboration.

scrolling through their feed might unknowingly absorb distorted narratives about their identity, faith, or history. Over time, this can create confusion, self-doubt, and even division within families and societies. According to a 2024 Pew Research study, nearly 70 per cent of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 get their news primarily from social media. That means algorithms, rather than teachers, journalists, or elders, are increasingly setting the agenda for what they know about the world. For policymakers, the implications are equally serious. Disinformation campaigns can weaken national cohesion, undermine trust in institutions, and manipulate public opinion on sensitive issues such as religion, regional politics and cultural values. This is why understanding algorithmic campaigns is not just a tech issue — it’s a national security and societal resilience issue.

Lessons from Recent History

History offers lessons about what happens when powerful actors manipulate narratives for their own gain. The current genocide in Palestine secretly uses AI software such as Lavender, Go Daddy and other software developed by Big tech, such as Palantir, dividing the Middle East between colonial powers, dividing, conquering and shaping identities in ways felt everyday. What we are witnessing today is the digital version of these tactics, faster, sharper and more invasive, thanks to algorithms and Artificial Intelligence.

Building Resilience Through Awareness

For young people, awareness is the first line of defence. Understanding how algorithms work means recognising that not everything on your feed is organic or authentic. Some of it is engineered to provoke emotional reactions or plant seeds of doubt. Schools, universities and civil society organisations must step up digital literacy programmes

that equip youth to question sources, verify facts and detect manipulation. At the community level, families can encourage open conversations about online content. Rather than treating young people’s digital lives as private and separate, intergenerational dialogue can build critical thinking and collective resilience. Governments, too, must advocate for fairer and more transparent practices by global tech companies. This includes demanding algorithmic accountability — rules to ensure that platforms are not complicit in campaigns that target and divide communities.

Towards Constructive Use of Algorithms

Yet, it would be short-sighted to view algorithms only as weapons. Just as they can be used to divide, they can also be leveraged to unite and uplift. Around the world, communities are using algorithm-driven tools to advance science, art and culture. Recommendation systems are helping researchers discover cross-disciplinary insights; AI-powered platforms are enabling musicians and film-makers from the Global South to reach global audiences; cultural heritage institutions are digitising and preserving history with the help of machine learning. The challenge before us is to shift from algorithmic warfare to algorithmic progress. The best practice is to harness algorithms not for manipulation, but for empowerment, designing digital systems that expand knowledge, celebrate cultural diversity and foster scientific collaboration. If humanity can redirect the power of algorithms towards building shared understanding and creativity, then the same tools that today fuel division can tomorrow drive progress. The real “AI wars” should not be battles of destruction, but competitions to see who can better use technology to advance human dignity, justice and cultural flourishing.

A man-made disaster in Gaza Strip



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

HER hands are excruciatingly slender, and the bones on her body are jutting out from beneath her skin. The picture of this emaciated 10-year-old, as reported by a news agency, is one of many children who are “going to bed hungry and waking up with hunger” in various refugee camps in Gaza. In a newspaper report, a teen expressed her wish to die because “heaven has enough food.” Distressing images display the remains of undernourished infants who have succumbed to starvation. Also, heart-wrenching accounts from physicians in the field show how they are compelled to watch helplessly as children succumb to injuries that could not be treated due to insufficient equipment and resources. It’s not just hunger that is causing deaths, but also the frantic quest for food. Families are compelled to jeopardise their safety for a small amount of food, frequently in perilous and tumultuous situations. After weeks of the world seeing images of starving children, with distended stomachs and protruding bones, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the primary global hunger monitor collaborating with the UN and various aid organisations, has finally declared famine for the first time in certain areas of Gaza. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the famine a “man-made disaster, a moral indictment, and a failure of humanity itself”. Under international

law, Israel had “unequivocal obligations” to ensure that food and medical supplies entered Gaza, as it is the occupying power, he said. The UN food monitor projects that without a ceasefire and immediate, unrestricted assistance, at least 132,000 children under five could die from acute malnutrition by June of next year. The agency cautioned that the number might reach 614,000 as famine is anticipated to extend into the Deir Al Balah and Khan Younis by the end of September. Classifying famine indicates that the most severe category is activated when three essential thresholds – severe food scarcity, acute malnutrition, and deaths related to starvation – have been exceeded. The most recent analysis now verifies, based on credible evidence, that these conditions have been satisfied. The IPC data given is crucial in averting future food emergencies and stopping famine. It can also mobilise the global community to act promptly to prevent famine from occurring or to resolve a famine once it has begun. The UN and other agencies state that although Israel has eased certain constraints on food entering the Gaza Strip, it continues to impose considerable barriers and challenges to the collection and distribution of aid. The organisations state that 600 trucks daily are required to deliver goods into Gaza for people to fulfil their essential

It’s not just hunger that is causing deaths, but also the frantic quest for food. Families are compelled to jeopardise their safety for a small amount of food, frequently in perilous and tumultuous situations

needs – at present, only about half of that is permitted. They emphasised that famine must be halted at any price. An urgent ceasefire and resolution of the conflict are essential to enable an unhindered, extensive humanitarian effort that can preserve lives. The groups are deeply worried about the potential for an escalated military assault in Gaza City and any increase in the conflict, as it would lead to more devastating effects for civilians, where famine conditions are already present. Numerous individuals – particularly ill and undernourished children, elderly individuals, and those with disabilities – might find it impossible to evacuate. According to Palestine Health Ministry, at least 62,122 people have been killed in Gaza since the break-out of the war. Most of Gaza’s population has also been displaced multiple times; more than 90 per cent of homes are estimated to be damaged or destroyed; and the healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene systems have collapsed. The UN agencies emphasised the importance of an immediate and sustained ceasefire to stop the killing, allow for the safe release of hostages and permit unimpeded access for a mass influx of assistance to reach people across Gaza. They stressed the urgent need for greater amounts of food aid, along with dramatically improved delivery, distribution and accessibility, as well as shelter, fuel, cooking gas and food production inputs.

TRUMP’S MIGRANT CRACKDOWN TAKING A TOLL ON OFFICERS

TED HESSON AND TIM REID

Under President Donald Trump, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency has become the driving force of his sweeping crackdown on migrants, bolstered by record funding and new latitude to conduct raids, but staff are contending with long hours and growing public outrage over the arrests. Those internal pressures are taking a toll. Two current and nine former ICE officials said the agency is grappling with burnout and frustration among personnel as agents struggle to keep pace with the administration’s aggressive enforcement agenda. The agency has launched a recruitment drive to relieve the stress by hiring thousands of new officers as quickly as possible, but that process will likely take months or years to play out. All of those interviewed by Reuters backed immigration enforcement in principle. But they criticised the Trump administration’s push for high daily arrest quotas that have led to the detention of thousands of individuals with no criminal record, as well as long-term green card holders, others with legal visas, and even some US citizens. Most of the current and former ICE officials requested anonymity due to concerns about retaliation against themselves or former colleagues. Americans have been inundated with images on social media of often masked agents in tactical gear handcuffing people on neighbourhood streets, at worksites, outside schools, churches and courthouses, and in their driveways. Videos of some arrests have gone viral, fuelling public anger over the tactics. Under Trump, average daily arrests by the 21,000-strong agency have soared, up over 250 per cent in June compared to a year earlier, although daily arrest rates dropped in July. Trump has said he wants to deport “the worst of the worst,” but ICE figures show a rise in non-criminals being picked up. ICE arrests of people with no other charges or convictions beyond immigration violations during Trump’s first six months in office rose to 221 people per day, from 80 people per day during the same period under former President Joe Biden last year, according to agency data obtained by the Deportation Data Project at University of California, Berkeley, School of Law. Some 69 per cent of immigration arrests under Trump were of people with a criminal conviction or pending charge, the figures show. Some ICE investigators are frustrated that hundreds of specialised ICE investigative agents, who normally focus on serious crimes such as human trafficking and transnational gangs, have been reassigned to routine immigration enforcement, two current and two former officials said. — Reuters

African militaries eye lighter, cheaper drones

AERIAL warfare in Africa is trending lighter and nimbler - and increasingly single-use. Hulking, fixed-wing military drones were prominently on display at a continent-wide military conference underway in Nigeria this week. But at a half-dozen expo booths, vendors were also keen to show off their smaller, plastic cousins - almost identical to drones used by backyard hobbyists, minus the ordnance. The adaptation of commercial drones for combat - including in “suicide” missions - has been closely followed by observers of the Russia-Ukraine war. More recently, it has been documented in West Africa’s Sahel region among militant groups known to rig their own DIY devices. The Nigerian military is also in on the trend, as it augments its traditional surveillance and attack drones with cheaper, even disposable, tech. “They have this in their backpacks, they go for missions and they’re able to strike where necessary,” said Muhammad Umar, chief technology officer at Nigerian firm EIB Group, which manufactures drones locally and has contracts with the military. Economically, Umar said, it can make much more sense to send out a small drone that may or may not come back than risk “a half-million-dollar asset” every time. Türkiye’s Bayraktar TB2, with a 12-metre wingspan, has become the most popular traditional model among African militaries. Experts have said that a system of three typically retails for about \$6 million - a steal compared to fighter jets or helicopters. But Nigerian firm Epsilon sells suicide drones for as low as 1.5 million naira, or just under \$1,000, before the cost of explosives. “You need speed, you need agility,” said Oluwagbenga Karimu, a systems autonomy specialist at the company, which also had a booth



Drones are increasingly a low-cost means of waging war in Africa.



NICHOLAS ROLL

The writer is Abuja-based reporter for Agence France-Presse

set up at the African defence chiefs conference in Abuja, which hosted officers from Libya to Malawi to Ethiopia. Drones are increasingly a low-cost means of waging war in Africa but have so far often given mixed military results and devastating consequences for civilian populations, according to an in-depth AFP investigation published in July. Sudan recorded the highest number of strikes last year, followed by Burkina Faso, Mali and Ethiopia, according to data collected by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a monitor. Handheld “quadcopter” and suicide drones supplied by China and Russia in Sudan have further upended fighting in the north African country since it broke into civil war in 2023, according to the US-based Africa Center for Strategic Studies, affiliated with the Defence

Department. Addressing the opening of the conference, Nigerian Vice President Kashim Shettima called on African countries to invest in “indigenous military innovation”. A Nigerian air force official, who declined to share his name, touted the benefits of the handheld drones on display at one of the military’s own booths: they don’t require a runway and don’t produce the tell-tale buzz of higher-powered drones. The newer drones have proliferated over the past two years, he said, though the air force is still mostly reliant on foreign parts. The scramble for new drones has also sparked new defensive needs, he added. As militants increasingly use drones themselves, often commercial models modified to drop bombs or grenades, the Nigerian military is now seeking out jamming systems.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Jonathan brings with him extensive international coaching and player development expertise.

OGA APPOINTS JONATHAN BARTLETT AS HEAD COACH

MUSCAT: The Oman Golf Association (OGA) has announced the appointment of Jonathan Bartlett as the new head coach and programme director of the OGA and the national teams.

The announcement was made in the presence of Vice-Chairman Faiz Raiz, Board Member Nikhil Sampat, and Secretary-General Ahmed al Jhedhami, marking an important milestone in OGA's ongoing commitment to strengthening the future of golf in the Sultanate of Oman.

Jonathan brings with him extensive international coaching and player development expertise, with a proven record of nurturing young talent and preparing athletes for high-level competition. In his dual role, he will oversee the development of Oman's junior and senior national teams, while also designing and implementing long-term training programmes aimed at raising performance standards, building sustainable pathways, and ensuring Omani golfers achieve recognition on regional and international stages.

Speaking on his appointment, Jonathan expressed both gratitude and enthusiasm: "I am honoured to take on this role with the Oman Golf Association. I would like to thank Faiz Raiz, Nikhil Sampat and Ahmed al Jhedhami for the trust they have placed in me. Together, we will build a strong foundation for golf in Oman, developing our players, inspiring the next generation, and competing with pride on the global stage."

This appointment highlights the OGA's vision to foster excellence in golf, from grassroots initiatives to elite performance, while creating clear pathways for Omani golfers to achieve international success.

OMAN WIN THREE BRONZE AT WEST ASIA KARATE



Idrees al Batrani and Said al Shuaibi pose with their medals in Amman.

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH

MUSCAT, AUG 26

Oman earned three bronze medals after two days of the West Asia Karate Championship in Amman, Jordan, on August 24 and 25. On the opening day, Idrees al Batrani claimed third place in the under 60kg category and Said al Shuaibi won another bronze for Oman in the under 67kg category.

On the second day, Mohammed bin Ali al Shabibi added the third bronze for Oman in the above 76kg category.

The Oman karate national team is participating in the West Asia Karate Championship 2025, held in the Jordanian capital Amman under the leadership of Shaikh Salem bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, Chairman of the Omani Karate Committee.

The delegation includes administrator Faris al Busaidy, national coach Ali al Shabibi, and players Said al Shabibi, Idris al Batrani, Khalid al Jabri, Alawi Ba'amer, Al Mukhtar al Amri and Mohammed al Shabibi.

A group of elite Omani international and Asian referees also participated in managing the competition, including Yousef al Siyabi, Suleiman al Hinai, Hilal al Abdali, Mohammed al Hinai, Tarik al Raisi, Khalifa al Rasbi, Adel al Hinai, Zulfa al Kanadi and Al Munther al Alawi.

Red Warriors in extensive training for Cafa tourney

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 26

THE OMAN national football team is undergoing an external training camp in Türkiye as part of preparations for the upcoming Central Asian Football Association (Cafa) Championship in Uzbekistan and decisive stage of AFC Asian qualifiers – Road to 26. The camp, held at one of Türkiye's most advanced training facilities, has been progressing smoothly under the direct supervision of head coach Carlos Queiroz and his technical staff.

Hussain al Zadjali, a member of the team's administrative staff, praised the progress of the camp, as he said: "The camp is going smoothly and according to the set plan by the technical coaching staff. The Fenerbahce Lefter Kucukandonyadis Sports Complex is one of the best centers in Türkiye and is equipped with all necessary facilities. The team will travel to Uzbekistan on Thursday for the Central Asian event. This stage is very critical and we are looking for support from everyone."

LOOKS AHEAD

The squad welcomed the arrival of striker Al Mundher al Alawi, who joined the camp on Monday after completing his club commitments with Jordan's Al Wahdat FC. His inclusion added further depth to the squad as the team looks ahead to the decisive fixtures. On the other hand, the joining of other professional four players including: Essam al Subhi, Khalid al Buraiki, Mohsin al Ghassani and Abdulrahman al Mushaifri was not possible in the current camp due to their commitment with their clubs. They will join the team by beginning of September as it will match with Fifa days.

The Central Asian Championship, hosted in Uzbekistan, will be staged across several top venues including the prestigious Pakhtakor Stadium and the Central Stadium in Tashkent, which are well known for hosting international competitions. Oman will face regional rivals including the hosts Uzbekistan on



Essam al Subhi, Khalid al Buraiki, Mohsin al Ghassani and Abdulrahman al Mueshefiri are still to join the camp after their club commitments.

Saturday, Kyrgyzstan on September 2 and will conclude group matches against Turkmenistan on September 5. These matches are expected to provide tough tests and valuable experience for the Red Warriors as they will continue their journey towards the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to the 2026 Fifa World Cup in coming

October with two deceive clashes against Qatar and UAE in Doha. With the ongoing camp in Turkey and the upcoming challenge in Uzbekistan, Red Warriors on the right track and fully focused on their mission to raise the level of performance and snatch the historic spot to qualify to the 2026 Fifa World Cup.

Oman to compete in six events at Asian Youth Games

MUSCAT: The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) has announced details of its participation in the third edition of the Asian Youth Games, which will be hosted by Bahrain from October 22 to 31. This was revealed during a meeting held on Tuesday at the OOC headquarters, chaired by Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalaif, OOC Secretary-General.

Oman will compete in six sports: athletics, golf, e-sports, aquatics, taekwondo and equestrian. The selection of these sports comes after a series of preparations and continuous follow-ups carried out by the OOC in coordination with federations and sports committees. Over the past period, the assigned working team assessed the readiness of the national teams from both technical and administrative perspectives and reviewed their performance in previous international events, in cooperation with specialised technical staff.

The OOC stressed that the criteria adopted for selecting the participating sports focused on ensuring a



The criteria adopted for selecting the participating sports focused on ensuring a competitive presence.

competitive presence for the national teams, while also providing opportunities for promising athletes who are expected to have bright futures in the long term, supported by comprehensive development and training programmes that enhance their technical and physical capabilities.

The meeting also discussed the administrative and logistical details related to Oman's participation in the Games, including reviewing the competition schedule and venues, the technical and organisational requirements for each sport, as well as the

key guidelines and regulations to be applied during the event. The OOC emphasised its commitment to coordinating all administrative and technical aspects to ensure a smooth and well-organised participation for the Omani delegation and to boost the teams' readiness at both technical and physical levels, aiming to achieve positive results across all participating sports. The third edition of the Asian Youth Games is considered one of the most prominent continental events organised under the supervision of the Olympic

Council of Asia. The event targets athletes aged between 14 and 18 and brings together elite young athletes from across the continent. The upcoming edition will feature competitions in 24 sports across 31 sporting events, with a total of 253 competitions including male, female and mixed categories. These will take place at several modern sports facilities, most notably Isa Sports City, Khalifa Sports City, Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Centre, the Endurance Village and the Sama Bay area.

SHORTTAKES



DORTMUND SIGN CHUKWUEMEKA FROM CHELSEA UNTIL 2030

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund’s summer Premier League recruitment drive continued on Tuesday with the signing of midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka from Chelsea until 2030.

England under-21 representative Chukwuemeka, 21, joins for a reported fee of 25 million euros (\$29 million).

He spent the second half of last season at Dortmund on loan, staying on as the club made the quarter-finals at the Club World Cup.

Chukwuemeka played 17 times for Dortmund in all competitions, scoring once and impressed despite struggling with injury.

In a statement, Chukwuemeka said he was “happy Borussia Dortmund is now my footballing home. I will give everything to make sure we achieve our goals as a team”.

Born in Austria, Chukwuemeka moved to England at a young age and came through Aston Villa’s youth academy before signing with Chelsea in 2022. — AFP

VETERANS PEREZ, BOTTAS TO DRIVE FOR CADILLAC IN DEBUT F1 SEASON



PARIS: Former Red Bull driver Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas will drive for Cadillac next season, the new Formula One team announced on Tuesday. The pair will be making a return to the grid in 2026, after being dropped this year, for the American outfit, who become F1’s 11th team on the grid.

Perez, the winner of six grands prix, was sacked by Red Bull as Max Verstappen’s teammate at the end of last season despite two years of his contract still to run.

Bottas won 10 races at his time with Mercedes alongside Lewis Hamilton. The Finn raced for Sauber in 2024 and this term has acted as Mercedes’ reserve driver.

Cadillac are looking to the two experienced drivers — both are 35 years old — to help them make a flying start to life in the fast lane.

Mark Reuss, the president of Cadillac’s parent company GM, said the decision was based on the drivers’ experience of wins and podiums in F1.

He described Cadillac’s driver pairing as “a really good winning combination”.

Dan Towriss, chief executive officer of GM’s partner TWG Global, said: “Their experience, leadership and technical acumen are what we need. “We’re humbled by their belief in us and this project. “There is a young pool of drivers who are exciting and very talented so it was a tough decision. But it was the leadership of these two drivers that stood out.”

Perez said it was an “honour” to help Cadillac take their first steps in the sport. — AFP



Newcastle United’s Dan Burn in action with Liverpool’s Virgil van Dijk. — Reuters

Liverpool edge Newcastle in Premier League thriller

LIVERPOOL NEEDED a 100th minute winner from 16-year old Rio Ngumoha to beat Newcastle 3-2, after blowing a two-goal lead against 10 men, in a Premier League thriller on Monday.

Ryan Gravenberch and long-time Newcastle target Hugo Ekitike struck for the English champions, either side of Anthony Gordon’s red card for a wild lunge on Virgil van Dijk.

But amid a frenzied atmosphere at St. James’ Park, the Magpies battled back through Bruno Guimaraes and William Osula only to be denied by teenage sensation Ngumoha, who became the youngest goalscorer in Liverpool’s history.

“This is also what makes the Premier League special,” said Liverpool manager Arne Slot.

“Maybe it wasn’t the best game in terms of tactics or in terms of playing football, but I think every fan everywhere around the world enjoyed watching this game of football.”

Victory takes Liverpool level on maximum points from two games with Tottenham and title rivals Arsenal, who travel to Anfield on Sunday.

Newcastle remain without a win as they miss their wantaway talisman Alexander Isak.

The Swedish striker scored the winner when the sides last met in the League Cup final in March as Newcastle lifted their first domestic trophy for 70 years. But Isak yet to feature for Eddie Howe’s men this season as he seeks an exit from Tyneside.

Liverpool are the likely destination if Isak does leave before the transfer window closes in a week’s time.

The Reds have reportedly had one bid of £110 million (\$149 million) rejected as Newcastle want a British transfer record £150 million.

Adding to the Magpies’ frustration is the fact the Premier League champions also won the race to sign Ekitike, who Newcastle had lined up as a potential Isak replacement.

After failing to land a number of striker targets in the transfer market, Newcastle’s lack of a clinical number nine was exposed as they failed to break down 10-man Aston Villa in a 0-0 draw to begin their season last weekend.

And it cost them again during a dominant opening 30 minutes.

Roared on by a ferocious capacity crowd of over 50,000, Newcastle penned Liverpool inside their own half without finding the final finish. Instead it was the visitors who took the lead completely against the run of play on 35 minutes.

Gravenberch took aim from well outside the area and powered an inch-perfect shot off the inside of the post.

GUIMARAES LEADS NEWCASTLE CHARGE

It got even worse for Newcastle before the break as Gordon took out his frustration

by charging late into Van Dijk and was dismissed after a VAR review showed his studs had raked down the Dutch defender’s Achilles.

Slot had not even taken his seat for the second half by the time his side doubled their lead 20 seconds in.

Ekitike made it two goals in as many Premier League games with a composed side-footed finish from Cody Gakpo’s pass.

Newcastle’s sense of injustice only increased when Ibrahima Konate escaped a second yellow card moments later for a push on Harvey Barnes.

But this time the home players and crowd channelled their anger more positively.

Minutes after being booked for taking his protests too far, a fired up Guimaraes outmuscled Milos Kerkez to head in at the back post.

Liverpool struggled to make their man advantage count for the entirety of the second half and were made to pay.

Despite his lack of forward options, Howe has been reluctant to field Osula, but the young Dane netted just his second Premier League goal when he bundled the ball beyond Alisson Becker from a Dan Burn flick on. Newcastle continued to charge forward in search of a memorable winner, only to be picked out by Liverpool’s attacking quality. Mohamed Salah’s pass was brilliantly dummied by Dominik Szoboszlai to leave Ngumoha unmarked to curl calmly into the far corner just days before his 17th birthday. — AFP

Gaudu wins Vuelta stage 3, Vingegaard leads

CERES, ITALY: David Gaudu took revenge on Jonas Vingegaard on Monday surging to victory in the third stage of the Vuelta Espana in Ceres, in Italy, a day after being edged by the Dane. “That was hard,” said Gaudu at the finish.

“I finished in the top three yesterday, I won today. I would have signed up for that scenario with both hands.”

After the bonuses were totted up, the two men were tied at the top of the overall standings but Vingegaard retained the red jersey. The day before, Vingegaard powered away from his rivals in an uphill sprint to take the overall lead. Frenchman Gaudu finished that stage third.

On Monday, at the end of a hilly 134.6 kilometre run from San



David Gaudu celebrates on the podium after stage 3. — Reuters

Maurizio Canavese, Vingegaard was again well positioned as the pack came out of a final hairpin for a rising run to the line. But Gaudu handled the corner better and when the Frenchman, who

rides for Groupama, and Mads Pedersen, a Dane with Lidl Trek, accelerated in the home stretch, Vingegaard eased up, unable to match them. “I got into the right wheel in the last two kilometres,” Gaudu told Eurosport. “Then Mads didn’t close the door and I took advantage of it. I probably had a little more speed.”

Vingegaard collected a four-second bonus for finishing third but Gaudu gained 10 seconds and moved level on time with the Dane. Gaudu had not won at World Tour level since 2023.

DIFFICULT DAY

The finish completed a tough day for Vingegaard’s Visma Lease a Bike team. They announced in the morning that 18 of their bikes

had been stolen overnight from a parked truck and also that one of Vingegaard’s lieutenants Axel Zingle had been forced to drop out. The Gazzetta Dello Sport reported that Visma lost bikes worth a total of 250,000 euros (\$292,378), while Movistar and Lidl-Trek, who were staying in the same hotel near Turin, did not lose any equipment.

Zingle dislocated a shoulder the day before when he was taken down by Vingegaard as a group of riders crashed at the foot of the final climb on a rainy day.

“It was a difficult day, but in the end, I can be satisfied. Third place is good. On a finish like this, I knew I was inferior to a guy like Pedersen,” said Vingegaard. — AFP



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates during his first round match against USA's Reilly Opelka on day two of the US Open tournament in New York. — AFP

STREAMLINED ALCARAZ SAILS THROUGH

VENUS BOWS OUT, ZARAZUA OUSTS KEYS AT US OPEN

NEW YORK: Venus Williams battled bravely before bowing out of the US Open on her return to Grand Slam tennis on Monday as Spanish ace Carlos Alcaraz stormed into the second round with a dominant opening win.

The second full day of action in New York saw all eyes turn to the Arthur Ashe Stadium's night session, where the 45-year-old Williams lost in three sets to 11th seed Karolina Muchova.

Williams only returned to competitive tennis in July following a 16-month absence from the sport and had been granted a wild card into the main draw at Flushing Meadows.

But hopes of a fairytale run — 28 years after her debut in the tournament — ended in a 6-3, 2-6, 6-1 loss to Muchova, who was not even born when Williams turned professional in 1994.

"I didn't win today but I'm very proud of the way I played," Williams, the US Open champion in 2000 and 2001, said.

"I don't think I've ever had a crowd on my side like that. I knew people around the world and around the United States were really rooting for me, and that felt great."

With the American exiting, 2022 men's champion Alcaraz took centre-stage in the late game in his first round tie against unseeded American Reilly Opelka.

The Spaniard arrived for the game sporting a striking new hairstyle — a severe crew cut — and he duly chopped down the 6ft 11in Opelka with a blistering 6-4, 7-5, 6-4 victory in 2hr 5min.



USA's Venus Williams reacts as she plays against Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova during their first round match on day two of the US Open. — AFP

"Today was a really difficult one," Alcaraz said. "Reilly is a great, tough player. I couldn't get the rhythm that I wanted to get but I'm just really happy with what I did today. I did a great performance today."

Alcaraz is chasing a second US Open title following his maiden Grand Slam victory at the tournament three years ago.

Australian Open winner Madison Keys became the highest-ranked player to exit so far, the sixth seed losing to Mexico's Renata Zarazua 6-7 (10/12), 7-6 (7/3), 7-5.

"Today was the first time in a while where my nerves really got the better of me and it kind of became a little bit paralyzing," home hope Keys said.

"I was just slow, I wasn't seeing things the way that I wanted to, which I feel like resulted in a lot of bad decisions and lazy footwork."

KVITOVA FAREWELL
Czech Republic's Barbora Krejckikova bundled out

rising Canadian star Victoria Mboko, defeating the teenager 6-3, 6-2.

Belgian 19th seed Elise Mertens ousted wild card Alyssa Ahn 6-1, 6-0 while Ukrainian 30th seed Dayana Yastremska exited in a 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 loss to Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova brought the curtain down on her career after a 6-1, 6-0 defeat to France's Diane Parry.

The 35-year-old Czech had already announced her intention to retire after the US Open, but was nonetheless overcome with emotion as she said farewell to the sport, breaking down in tears as she addressed fans afterwards.

"I hoped I would put on a better show today," Kvitova said. "It was tough to know it could be my last match, and emotionally it was very tough as well."

Qualifier Coleman Wong became the first man from Hong Kong to record a victory in a Grand Slam singles event in the Open era with a 6-4, 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) defeat of US player Aleksandar Kovacevic.

British fifth seed Jack Draper needed four sets to get past Argentina's Federico Gomez, 6-4, 7-5, 6-7 (7/9), 6-2.

Other seeds to advance included Norway's Casper Ruud, the 12th seed, who downed Austria's Sebastian Ofner 6-1, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

US 17th seed Frances Tiafoe beat Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 7-6 (8/6), 6-3.

— AFP

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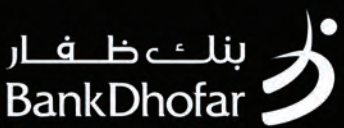


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SHORTTAKES

MSX BREAKS 5,000-POINT MARK ON RISING LIQUIDITY

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 26

In a development reflecting the strength of Oman’s capital market and growing investor confidence in the national economy, the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has crossed the 5,000-point threshold for the first time in nearly eight years. The milestone was driven by a notable improvement in market liquidity. Since the start of 2025, total trading value has exceeded RO 1.834 billion, up 143 per cent compared with the same period in 2024. Daily average trading has surpassed RO 11 million, signalling robust market activity. These dynamics lifted MSX’s market capitalisation above RO 29 billion, an 8 per cent increase since January, underscoring the exchange’s appeal to both local and international investors.

Analysts view the strong performance as a gateway to a new phase of growth and stability for Oman’s securities market, supported by ongoing economic reforms and government policies aimed at strengthening the investment climate. The achievement reflects several positive factors, including reforms under Oman Vision 2040, stronger macroeconomic indicators, and official efforts to position the capital market as a key financing platform for projects while encouraging more companies to list. Oman’s economic diversification drive and transformation across strategic sectors have further boosted investor trust, making the exchange more attractive regionally and globally.

Commenting on the occasion, Mohammed bin Mahfoudh al Ardhi, Chairman of the MSX, said: “Crossing the 5,000-point mark represents a defining moment for the Muscat Stock Exchange. It reflects growing confidence in Oman’s economic reforms, deeper market liquidity, and stronger investment appeal both locally and regionally. These indicators strengthen Oman’s positive economic transformation and pave the way for wider international integration. This milestone is not a coincidence but the result of persistent work, structural reforms in the capital market, and close cooperation with regulators, listed companies, and domestic and foreign investors.”

Al Ardhi further added: “Today, the Muscat Stock Exchange is becoming a deeper and more transparent investment platform, supported by new listings and a broader investor base. The results highlight our commitment to enhancing the market’s role as an effective financing tool for companies and a magnet for high-quality investments that support the national economy and open wider growth prospects.

Oman real estate market holds steady: Report

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 26

THE Sultanate of Oman’s real estate market demonstrated resilience in the first half of 2025, sustaining momentum across key segments despite global economic uncertainty, according to the Hamptons H1 2025 Market Report.

The market’s stability was underpinned by ongoing infrastructure investment, Oman Vision 2040 — driven reforms and growing alignment with sustainability goals.

In an analysis of sectoral trends, the report highlighted Muscat, Al Duqm, Suhar and Salalah as the country’s leading real estate hubs, each driven by distinct economic strengths. Muscat retained its position as the most active market, buoyed by government-backed urban development and rising demand for high-end residential and office properties.

Al Duqm continued to consolidate its role as a magnet for industrial and logistics investment, while Suhar maintained strong demand for warehousing. Salalah, on the other hand, benefitted from a steady revival in tourism-linked real estate.

ECONOMIC BACKDROP
Oman’s economy expanded by 2.3% in H1 2025, supported by growth in logistics, manufacturing and tourism. Non-oil GDP now accounts for over 35% of output, underscoring the country’s progress in diversification. Inflation remained contained at 1.8%, while employment indicators improved with increased private-sector activity in emerging industries.

Brent crude averaged \$62 per barrel during the period, providing fiscal stability. However, market analysts noted that



Government initiatives, continued infrastructure investment and growing investor confidence are set to support Oman’s steady growth trajectory through the remainder of the year: Hamptons

The residential market is forecast to grow at a compound annual rate of 9.19%, expanding from \$4.75 billion in 2024 to \$6.6 billion by 2029.

Oman’s cautious pivot away from hydrocarbon reliance is central to sustaining investor confidence.

OFFICE MARKET
Muscat’s office segment remained tenant-friendly, but demand for Grade A space grew, with absorption up 7% year-on-year. Premium destinations such as Al Mouj and Madinat Al Irfan commanded rents of RO 12 and RO 7 per sqm per month, respectively, compared to RO 5 in secondary districts like Al Khuwair and Al Ghubra. The report also pointed to growing momentum for ESG-certified office buildings, particularly from multinational and financial tenants seeking sustainable and smart office solutions.

RETAIL SECTOR
Retail performance stabilised in H1 2025, particularly in destination centres such as the Mall of Oman and The Avenues Mall, which maintained high occupancy. The sector witnessed a shift towards food and beverage outlets and experiential retail, with landlords increasingly adopting hybrid leasing models, including turnover-based rent structures.

RESIDENTIAL MARKET
The residential segment showed stable demand for mid-income apartments and villas, with rents in premium Muscat districts such

as Al Mouj and Al Qurum edging higher. Professionally managed gated communities commanded 10–15% rental premiums over standalone homes.

Affordable housing initiatives aligned with Oman Vision 2040 gained traction, while smart residential buildings with enhanced facilities also lifted demand.

INDUSTRIAL AND LOGISTICS
One of the strongest performing sectors was logistics and warehousing, with robust demand in Suhar, Al Duqm and Al Rusayl. SOHAR Port and Freezone remained the most active hub, attracting tenants in light manufacturing and food processing.

Al Duqm saw increased interest from Chinese and Indian logistics firms, reflecting GCC–Asia supply chain realignments.

The report also noted the rising investor appetite for green warehouses and ESG-compliant industrial assets.

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM
Hotel occupancy in Muscat averaged 59% in H1 2025, fuelled by recovering business travel and regional tourism. Boutique hotels and eco-resorts in Dhofar and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar recorded strong occupancy, aligning with Oman’s push for sustainable tourism.

Guest arrivals increased by 2.3% year-on-year in Q1, accompanied by a 10.6% rise in hotel revenues. Average daily rates in the four- and five-star segment grew 7%, with stronger performance expected during the Khareef Dhofar Season in H2 2025.

OUTLOOK
Looking ahead, Hamptons projects that Oman’s real estate sector will maintain steady growth in the second half of 2025, supported by industrial demand, affordable housing initiatives, digital infrastructure and ESG integration.

Hafeet Rail receives first shipment of railway tracks in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 26

In a step that reflects the accelerated construction of the Oman–UAE Railway Network, Hafeet Rail — the developer and operator of the project — received the first shipment of railway tracks through the General Cargo Terminal at SOHAR Port and Freezone, which is operated by C Steinweg Oman LLC.

This milestone represents a significant moment in the execution of the project, which links the Sultanate of Oman with the United Arab Emirates and paves the way for the next phase of on-ground construction. The shipment comprises more than



Railway tracks being unloaded from a ship at SOHAR Port and Freezone’s C Steinweg Terminal

3,800 pieces of (E260) railway tracks, each measuring 25 metres in length, with a total weight of

5,700 metric tonnes. Manufactured in accordance with the highest international standards for rail transport at ArcelorMittal’s facility in Gijón, Spain, this delivery forms part of a total planned supply of 33,100 metric tonnes.

The railway tracks are engineered to withstand heavy freight and passenger loads of up to 32.4 tonnes per axle, ensuring high performance and long-term reliability tailored to the geographical and environmental conditions of the project.

Each rail has undergone rigorous precision manufacturing to guarantee structural integrity and is reinforced with advanced fastening systems using high-strength clips and bolts, providing

stability and durability under the demanding operational conditions of both freight and passenger trains. The arrival of this shipment paves the way for the next phase of the project, which includes track-laying works along the route, in parallel with preparations to receive additional shipments in the coming months.

These efforts will support advanced stages of construction and reinforce steady progress in line with the planned timeline of the project. This milestone marks a significant step in the implementation of the Oman–UAE Railway Network, which extends 238 kilometres to connect the SOHAR Port and Freezone with the UAE’s national railway

network. The project will enhance supply chain integration, improve the efficiency of the transport ecosystem and support economic cooperation and sustainable development between the two nations.

Developed and operated by Hafeet Rail, the project is the outcome of a strategic partnership between Asyad Group, Etihad Rail and Mubadala.

It represents a cornerstone in strengthening regional economic integration, advancing a sustainable transport infrastructure and providing advanced logistics capabilities that facilitate cross-border trade and stimulate local markets in both countries.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The initiative underscored ahlibank’s belief that the role of financial institutions extends well beyond transaction

AHLIBANK HOSTS EVENT TO PROMOTE CHILDREN’S FINANCIAL LITERACY

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to financial literacy and employee engagement, ahlibank hosted the ‘Little ahlibanker’ event on August 18, 2025 at its Head Office. The one-day initiative welcomed nearly 100 children of employees, offering them a first-hand look into the world of banking while highlighting the bank’s dedication to nurturing a strong workplace culture and family inclusion.

Commenting on the initiative, Jumana al Hashmi, AGM — Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at ahlibank, said: “As a people-centric institution, we believe our strength is defined not only by the services we provide to customers but also by the culture we foster for our employees and their families.

The ‘Little ahlibanker’ event exemplifies this commitment, connecting the next generation with the principles of banking in an engaging and meaningful way, while instilling lessons in responsibility, teamwork and innovation. In doing so, we reaffirm the role financial institutions play in advancing financial literacy and cultivating an environment where professional purpose and personal fulfilment thrive”.

The event allowed participants to step into the role of a banker for a day through guided tours of ahlibank’s core operations. Children explored different branch formats — corporate, Islamic and conventional — while observing essential services such as account opening. They also gained insights into alternative service points, including ATMs, MFKs and POS stations, which highlighted the breadth of the bank’s retail network.

Additionally, the young visitors were introduced to ahliconnect and given an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the bank’s advanced data centre, which underpins its technology infrastructure. At the Innovation Lab, they experienced cutting-edge solutions such as avatars and virtual reality, broadening their perspective on the future of banking.

Interactive learning activities and workshops further enhanced the experience, combining practical exposure with lessons on sustainable practices and financial responsibility. Guided by ahlibank employees, the children engaged in hands-on activities that deepened their understanding of modern banking while sparking curiosity about innovation and financial literacy.

Beyond its educational purpose, the initiative strengthened employee-family bonds by giving staff an opportunity to share their professional world with their children.

This not only fostered pride and belonging among employees but also underscored ahlibank’s commitment to building a workplace culture that values both personal and professional growth.

Ignite futuristic experiences with BYD

AS the world shifts towards sustainable mobility, electric vehicles are rapidly becoming the preferred choice for modern transportation. With its global leadership in green mobility, BYD continues to set benchmarks, bringing innovation and efficiency to every journey.

The BYD Song Plus DM-i delivers an impressive blend of performance and sustainability. Powered by a robust 1.5L engine with plug-in hybrid capability, the SUV achieves a remarkable combined range of 765 km and delivers 319 HP. Its ultra-low fuel consumption of just 4.5 L per 100 km offers drivers the perfect balance of power, efficiency and eco-conscious design.

Accelerating from 0–100 km/h in just 5.9 seconds, the Song Plus provides an exhilarating yet responsible driving experience.

Safety remains a top priority, with advanced driver-assist features designed to ensure a secure and confident journey.

These include Lane Keep Assist (LKA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Emergency Lane Keep Assist (ELKA), Lane Departure Warning (LDW) and Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), alongside a host of additional safety systems that promote stress-free driving. Inside, the Song Plus DM-i showcases a refined, futuristic cabin.

Highlights include a 12.8” rotating multimedia screen, 12.3” driver display, head-up display, ambient lighting, Dirac 9-speaker audio system, 360° camera, panoramic sunroof, wireless smartphone charging, Android Auto/Apple CarPlay, dual-zone AC and keyless



Balancing power and performance, the SUV accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in just 5.9 seconds.

The BYD Song Plus DM-i delivers an impressive blend of performance and sustainability.

entry. With multiple driving modes, front and rear airbags; and enhanced comfort features, the SUV is designed to deliver a seamless blend of luxury and practicality.

Customers are invited to experience the Song Plus DM-i at BYD’s flagship showroom in Al Wattayah and at experience centres in Mall of Oman and Al Mouj.

Visitors can explore the full range

of features, receive expert guidance and schedule test drives.

In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business LLC. For more information, to check availability, or to book a test drive, call 72225925 or visit www.bydoman.com.

Stay connected via YouTube, Facebook and Instagram for the latest updates.

NBO EXPANDS PREMIUM BANKING OFFERING

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has reaffirmed its commitment to delivering premium banking experiences through its Privilege Banking offering. Designed to provide customers with tailored financial solutions, exclusive benefits and dedicated advisory services, Privilege Banking reflects NBO’s focus on building long-term relationships while creating value through both financial and lifestyle advantages.

Eligibility for Privilege Banking is extended to customers earning a monthly salary between RO 1,000 and RO 2,999, maintaining deposits from RO 10,000 to RO 29,999, or



Privilege Banking reflects NBO’s focus on building long-term relationships while creating value through both financial and lifestyle advantages.

investing a minimum of RO 300 monthly through a Systematic Investment Plan (SIP), or RO

5,000 in lump sum investments.

These criteria ensure that customers seeking a higher standard of banking services can access solutions aligned with their personal financial goals.

Privilege Banking provides a wide range of features, including exclusive interest rates on deposits, preferential financing terms, enhanced debit card limits of up to RO 4,000 per day and complimentary first-year credit cards.

Customers also gain priority access to wealth management solutions across multiple currencies, offering global investment opportunities supported by certified advisers.

In addition to financial benefits, Privilege Banking enhances the overall customer experience through dedicated relationship managers, priority service at branches and call centres, complimentary airport lounge access, welcome rewards and special discounts on dining and entertainment.

These added lifestyle privileges highlight the value of Privilege Banking as a holistic offering that goes beyond traditional banking.

For more information on Privilege Banking, customers can visit www.nbo.om, contact the NBO Call Centre at 24770000, or access services conveniently through the NBO Mobile App.

Sohar International hosts strategic VIP dinner in Dhofar

MUSCAT: Sohar International recently hosted a VIP dinner in Dhofar Governorate, bringing together distinguished clients from the public and private sectors to celebrate partnerships and shared progress.

Held under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, the event welcomed key dignitaries, including Dr Ahmed Mohsin al Ghassani, Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality and Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Members of Sohar International’s Board, CEO Abdulwahid bin



At the event, 25 winners were honoured across various categories for their contributions, reflecting the Bank’s commitment to empowering SMEs.

Mohammed al Murshidi and senior executives were also present.

Speaking at the event, Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi said: “This gathering reflects our appreciation for our clients’ trust and reaffirms our commitment to initiatives that contribute to the sustainable growth of Dhofar.

It is an opportunity to strengthen partnerships, celebrate milestones and explore new collaborations aligned with Oman Vision 2040”.

The evening included a keynote address from the CEO, highlighting the importance of public-private collaboration as a driver of growth. In line with this vision,

Sohar International handed over four electric vehicles to Dhofar Municipality, demonstrating its focus on sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Sohar International also highlighted its support for entrepreneurship through its partnership with the Oman Chamber of Commerce at the “Tamkeen w Somou” exhibition for SMEs, where 25 winners were recognised for their contributions.

Additionally, in support of the Al Noor Association for the Blind (Dhofar Branch), the Bank will help raise awareness, equip parents and empower individuals with visual impairments to navigate daily life.

SHORTTAKES

DUQM SERIES
FINALE SHOWS HOW
CULTURE DRIVES
PERFORMANCE

BUSINESS REPORTER
AL DUQM, AUG 26

The Duqm Summer Series, a four-part programme covering AI and automation, workforce development, global trade and supply chains; and corporate culture and wellbeing concluded on Tuesday with a session led by Dr Aziza al Sawafi, Assistant Professor of Mental Health Nursing and Head of the Department of Mental Health at Sultan Qaboos University’s College of Nursing. Her message was clear: wellbeing is not a perk, it is the way effective organisations run.



DR AZIZA
AL SAWAFI

Assistant
Professor of Mental
Health Nursing
and Head of the
Department of
Mental Health
at Sultan Qaboos
University’s College
of Nursing

Dr Al Sawafi set out a practical loop that turns wellbeing into performance. It starts with short pulse surveys to test workload, role clarity and inclusion. The findings are shared so people know what will change. Managers closest to the work are coached to remove friction, teams are rebalanced where pressure spikes and progress is tracked against measures leaders already watch — retention, productivity and safety. “Wellbeing isn’t an add-on”, she said. “Measure what matters, fix the frictions and performance follows”.

Failing to take mental wellbeing seriously carries a direct financial penalty. The World Health Organization and International Labour Organization estimate that depression and anxiety account for around 12 billion working days lost each year — much of it through absenteeism and presenteeism — at a global cost of roughly \$1 trillion in reduced productivity. In short, neglecting mental health erodes performance and the bottom line. Global evidence also points to the upside of getting this right. Scaling effective mental-health support delivers a strong return — around \$4 in improved health and work ability for every \$1 invested, while Gallup links highly engaged teams with 23% higher profitability alongside fewer absences and errors. In practice, that translates into steadier service, safer sites and projects that move on time.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 26

CHINESE clean energy enterprise Central New Energy Holding Group has announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with international power infrastructure company EGN Ltd for joint cooperation in the investment and development of solar energy projects and potentially even local photovoltaic module production in the Sultanate of Oman.

The move adds to a flurry of predominantly China-based investments in Oman’s burgeoning clean energy manufacturing sector, which currently encompasses the production of solar panels and modules, wind turbines, electrolyzers and related equipment. The announcement was made in a filing by publicly-traded Central New Energy Holding Group to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange earlier this week.

Central New Energy is described as a diversified enterprise mainly engaged in green building photovoltaic integration, new energy and engineering, property management services, smart logistics and other activities. EGN Ltd, a clean energy-focused power infrastructure company incorporated in the Cayman Islands, is principally engaged in the operation of large-scale data centres worldwide, notably across the US, Latin America and Asia. The company also has a presence in Oman, which is home to an expanding cluster of traditional data centres and data mining centres. Under the terms of the MoU, EGN will “take the lead in developing an integrated ‘generation-grid-load-storage’ project in Oman, based on green energy and incorporating data centres”.

Central New Energy Holding, for its part, will “provide investment, construction and operation of photovoltaic power plants, as well



Crypto mining farm in Salalah (Picture for illustration only).

In accordance with the principles of equality and mutual benefit, industrial synergy and coordinated development, the parties will jointly invest in and develop photovoltaic power plant projects, establish production capacity for photovoltaic modules and pioneer a new model integrating green energy and the digital economy.

as integrated energy management services”. Significantly, the two parties will also support technology research and development and promote industrial localisation. With the goal of localising the value chain, Central New Energy Holding — together with its upstream and downstream partners — “will invest in establishing green energy component production bases in Oman to realise localised production. This will also include training local talent and contributing to the development of industrial technical standards in Oman”, the MoU stated. Additionally, the parties may explore further project opportunities in Oman, including the potential establishment of joint ventures and other models of deeper cooperation, to build regional demonstration projects and promote project implementation. Furthermore, they will jointly seek diversified financing channels,

including medium- to long-term policy-based funding in Oman, international funds, green bonds and joint investment funds. “Together, the parties will build a collaborative industrial ecosystem and promote the development of upstream and downstream industry clusters”, the MoU added. Commenting on the MoU signing, CHG EnSOL Renewable Technology Co Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central New Energy Holding Group, stated in a post: “In accordance with the principles of equality and mutual benefit, industrial synergy and coordinated development, the parties will jointly invest in and develop photovoltaic power plant projects, establish production capacity for photovoltaic modules and pioneer a new model integrating green energy and the digital economy. This initiative aims to achieve mutual development and win-win outcomes”.

Omani entrepreneur’s ‘one-stop’ model accelerates property services

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 26

Young entrepreneur Issa al Mashikhi, who founded his company in 2023, is introducing a one-stop model that speeds up and organises property transactions in Dhofar Governorate’s Wilayat of Taqah, covering sales contracts, mortgage releases and hiba transfers while handling formalities with the relevant authorities from start to finish. He says the idea grew from watching residents shuttle between multiple entities with fragmented steps and unclear timelines; the goal, he adds, is to shift the procedural burden from the



The ‘Taqah model’ fits neatly with Oman’s national push to digitise services at governorate and wilayat levels, cutting travel time for citizens and improving the quality of submissions to public bodies

Issa al Mashikhi

citizen to a professional team that delivers faster turnarounds, complete files and full transparency. The firm consolidates the full chain of work into a single managed track that begins with document review and appointment booking and continues through legal and administrative follow-up, with any gaps flagged before official submission to reduce errors and resubmissions. Clients can monitor progress through electronic status updates, which has helped build trust in a market that is highly sensitive to paperwork accuracy. Al Mashikhi acknowledges that earning confidence was the biggest early

challenge, alongside variations in requirements from case to case, but says the team addressed this by documenting clear processes, offering defined service agreements that set scope, timelines and fees; and maintaining stable lines of communication with the competent authorities. The approach fits neatly with Oman’s national push to digitise services and raise performance at governorate and wilayat levels, cutting travel time for citizens and improving the quality of submissions to public bodies. It also advances good governance by publishing fees, recording workflows and providing live status

updates, which protect parties’ rights and reduce disputes. In economic terms, smoother procedures stimulate buying and selling, lower time and compliance costs; and support local liquidity while creating direct jobs for young professionals across real-estate services and legal support. What distinguishes the Taqah experience is the shift from fragmentation to integration through a single professional pathway, from reactive corrections to preventive checks by identifying mortgage constraints and document gaps before filing and from opacity to clarity via realistic timelines, disclosed fees and

continuous tracking. Building on this base, Al Mashikhi plans to launch a client portal for digital status monitoring and document uploads, introduce training programmes to upskill local staff in property procedures and compliance; and expand advisory services such as land subdivision and pre-sale legal readiness. “Leadership in this field is a duty of service”, he says. “Our success metric is simple: a complete file, less time, a correct document — and a reassured citizen”. The Taqah model shows how a locally led, professionally managed service can accelerate transactions.

FDI

South Korea secures US investment deal



South Korea and the US agreed on a non-binding framework to manage \$350 billion in investments under a July trade deal, covering strategic sectors such as chips, batteries, AI, pharmaceuticals and shipbuilding, while officials assess implementation and risk measures. — Reuters

FOSSIL BUSINESS

Apple Watch not CO₂-neutral



Apple can no longer market its Apple Watch as a “CO₂-neutral product” in Germany after a court sided with environmentalists, ruling the US tech firm misled consumers. The decision noted that Paraguay carbon offset projects lack secure long-term contracts. — Reuters

TARIFF EXEMPTIONS

US exempts Indonesian commodities



The US has agreed in principle to exempt Indonesian exports of palm oil, cocoa and rubber from a 19% tariff, pending a final deal. Officials said the exemption covers products not produced in the US., while investment and trade commitments are assessed for risk and implementation measures. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s digital dawn: poised for greatness in the AI age



SUDHIR APSINGI

The writer is a digital transformation leader with over 25 years of experience across AI, data strategy and enterprise modernisation

AS Oman accelerates towards the ambitious aspirations of Oman Vision 2040, the country finds itself at a historic inflection point — one where digital innovation, national policy and youthful energy are aligning to shape a resilient, technology-driven future.

Having spent over two decades at the intersection of enterprise transformation, advanced analytics and AI-led delivery, I believe Oman today is better poised than ever to translate digital potential into national prosperity.

Over the last few years, I’ve witnessed first-hand how digital transformation has evolved from being a strategic concept to a business and government reality. Across sectors — be it oil & gas, logistics, finance, or public services — there is a growing urgency to modernise platforms, integrate data and embed intelligence into operations.

The adoption of AI, Machine Learning and now Agentic technologies is no longer aspirational; it is increasingly becoming foundational. What’s heartening is that Oman is not just catching up — it is beginning to lead selectively in domains where its needs and capabilities align.

This progress is underpinned by one of Oman’s greatest assets: its youth. The next generation of Omanis are not just digitally

native — they are mission-driven, bold and intellectually curious. They are asking the right questions and seeking purpose-driven careers. In my mentoring engagements with students across the Sultanate of Oman, I’ve encountered young minds brimming with ideas — from using AI for environmental sustainability to designing data-driven citizen services.

Their hunger for impact is what gives Oman’s digital narrative its soul.

The Omanisation initiative, long viewed through the lens of workforce policy, is now emerging as a force multiplier for digital capability.

By systematically investing in the upskilling and placement of Omani talent within IT and data-driven domains, the nation is not only achieving employment goals but also building self-reliance in critical digital infrastructure. It’s a strategic move — ensuring that those who understand the local context most intimately are the ones designing and maintaining the digital systems that shape it.

However, this is not a moment for complacency. Oman’s digital ambition requires continued investment in agile policy, industry-academia partnerships and innovation ecosystems. Subtle shifts — like embedding AI and cloud computing into

What’s heartening is that Oman is not just catching up — it is beginning to lead selectively in domains where its needs and capabilities align. This progress is underpinned by one of Oman’s greatest assets: its youth.

higher education curricula, simplifying procurement pathways for tech startups, or incentivising enterprise AI adoption — can yield exponential returns.

We must also champion a cultural shift: where failure in experimentation is not feared but seen as a sign of progress.

As someone who has helped organisations across geographies navigate digital complexity, I can say with confidence that Oman’s greatest advantage is its clarity of purpose. Oman Vision 2040 articulates a future that is diversified, sustainable and innovation-led.

Technology is the glue that binds these aspirations. But even more importantly, it is the people — skilled, empowered and forward-thinking — who will bring it to life.

AI, ML and Agentic platforms are tools. It is our vision, leadership and local talent that will shape how those tools are used. Oman’s digital journey isn’t just about upgrading systems — it’s about uplifting society. It’s about enabling our youth not just to consume technology, but to create it, improve it and eventually export it to the world.

We are not just witnessing a digital shift — we are co-authoring it. And if we continue to mentor, invest and believe in the potential of our people, Oman will not just embrace the future — it will define it.

UK INFLATION PRESSURES BANK OF ENGLAND

WILLIAM SCHOMBERG & DAVID MILLIKEN

UK inflation looks set to reach 4% next month, double the Bank of England’s target, raising concerns that price growth could remain stubbornly high.

Consumer prices rose 3.8% in July, the fastest annual increase among G7 economies and are approaching the BoE’s forecast of a 4% peak in September. By comparison, inflation in the US was 2.7% in July, while the euro zone is expected to stay near 2%. British inflation has exceeded the BoE’s 2% target almost continuously since May 2021.

The central bank has indicated that its already gradual path of interest rate reductions may slow, even as the jobs market weakens.

This could complicate efforts by Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Finance Minister Rachel Reeves to accelerate the UK’s slow economic recovery. The BoE’s quarter-point rate cut on August 7 was opposed by nearly half of its policymakers.

Research suggests that a 4% inflation level significantly increases public attention to rising prices. Catherine Mann, a BoE policymaker, highlighted US studies showing that heightened consumer awareness at this threshold can amplify inflationary pressures and make them more persistent.

Thomas Pugh, chief economist at RSM UK, said a 4% rate is unlikely to cause automatic long-term damage but could influence spending and business decisions. He noted that September data will affect rail fares, student loan repayments and some pension schemes.

Many businesses are already facing rising costs. Steve Hardeman of Clevedon Fasteners reported multiple price increases since 2022 due to higher electricity and labour costs. Nimisha Raja of food manufacturer Nim’s described pushing back on opportunistic supplier price hikes to protect customers.

The BoE is closely monitoring the risk of inflation remaining high but is relying on a gradual deceleration in wage growth. Annual pay growth has slowed to around 5%, down from almost 8% two years ago, though still above the 3% level consistent with the BoE’s target.

Some employers, including supermarket chains Lidl and Aldi, continue to offer above-average pay increases, while private-sector settlements held at 3% in the three months to July.

Inflation reaching 4% in September is unlikely to influence pay settlements for early 2026, but sustained high inflation could affect wage decisions in the spring. Unite union leader Sharon Graham called for immediate pay rises, emphasising worker concerns.

The BoE projects inflation to slow to 3.6% by December, averaging 2.5% in 2026, and returning to 2% only in the second quarter of 2027. However, risks of higher-than-expected inflation have increased. — Reuters

Oman advances towards circular H2 economy

HYDROGEN fuel has significant potential to meet the demand for sustainable energy sources. The hydrogen produced from waste has the potential to reduce landfill waste and decrease the reliance on costly treatments. The global focus is on the efficient production of sustainable hydrogen to satisfy energy demands and promote the development of a circular economy.

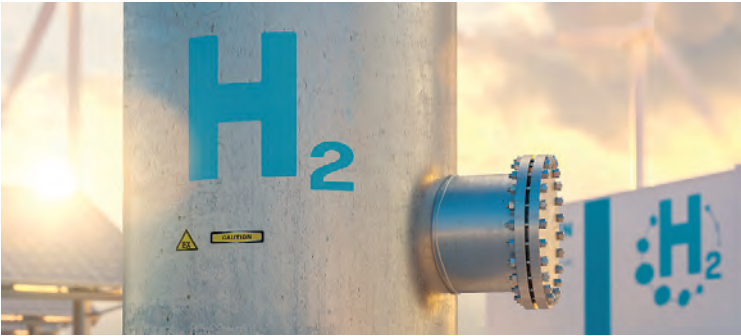
The biohydrogen generation from waste is gaining momentum as nations adopt thermochemical and biochemical technologies to decarbonise energy systems and reduce landfill burdens.

Waste-to-biohydrogen conversion can follow thermochemical routes, including gasification, pyrolysis and supercritical water gasification, which produce hydrogen-rich syngas upgraded via water-gas shift and purification steps. The biochemical methods for hydrogen generation involve dark fermentation (DF), photo-fermentation (PF) and microbial electrolysis cells. Hybrid schemes, such as DF-PF integration or thermo-bio combinations, enhance overall efficiency.

Countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East are investing in pilot and commercial plants, integrating waste valorisation into national hydrogen strategies. Advances in catalysts, process integration and hybrid thermal-biological schemes are improving yields and scalability.

These trends reflect a global shift towards circular economies, where waste becomes a key feedstock for clean fuel. Oman’s move into waste-to-hydrogen aligns with this momentum, positioning it to benefit from both technological maturity and market growth.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has highlighted Oman’s strategic potential as a future hydrogen exporter. National targets aim for 1 million tonnes per year by 2030, rising to 3.7 million tonnes by 2040 and 8.5 million tonnes by 2050 — figures that could surpass Europe’s current hydrogen demand. Integrating waste-based hydrogen into this portfolio offers flexibility,



The global focus is on the efficient production of sustainable hydrogen to satisfy energy demands and promote the development of a circular economy.



MARYAM AHMED YOUSEF AL NOFLI

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

particularly for urban areas and coastal industrial zones.

Oman generates between 1.9 and 2.6 million tonnes of municipal waste each year — with more than 1.2 kilogrammes produced daily per person. Under Oman Vision 2040, Oman aims to reduce this to under 1 kilogramme per day and divert 60% of all waste from landfills by 2030.

The country’s waste-to-hydrogen initiatives directly supports the national goals by reducing landfills and the emission of methane which is one of the potential greenhouse gases. Oman is breaking new ground by transforming municipal solid waste into green hydrogen a bold step towards a circular economy that addresses both waste management and clean energy production.

In partnership with the national waste management company Be’ah, a Muscat-based startup called Manah Hydrogen has launched two pilot facilities — one in the Wilayat of Manah (Al Dakhiliyah Governorate) and another in Muscat — designed to convert local waste streams into carbon-negative hydrogen fuel.

Each compact plant, built inside a standard shipping container, processes about one tonne of mixed municipal solid waste daily, including organic material and plastics. From that waste, the units can produce between 110 and 140 kilogrammes of hydrogen each day, a promising alternative to fossil fuels with zero emissions at the point of use. These small-scale plants are helping pave the way for Oman’s national goal of producing more than 1 million tonnes per year

of green hydrogen by 2030. While large-scale solar and wind farms like HyPort Duqm and Green Energy Oman are under development, these waste-to-hydrogen pilots demonstrate the potential for localised and scalable clean energy solutions that make use of existing waste. In a major development, a 1.4 billion US dollar agreement has been signed between German-based H2 Industries and Oman’s Madayn (Public Establishment for Industrial Estates) to construct the country’s first industrial-scale waste-to-hydrogen facility. Located on a 200,000-square-metre coastal site, the plant will eventually process up to four million tonnes of municipal waste per year.

It is expected to produce around 67,000 tonnes of green hydrogen annually while capturing up to one million tonnes of carbon dioxide — with an estimated export value of over \$268 million. The underlying technology — known as thermochemical conversion — enables hydrogen production from unsorted, mixed waste without the need for extensive recycling infrastructure. Companies like Ways2H, whose technology Manah Hydrogen may be leveraging, use high-temperature processes that break down waste into hydrogen-rich gas while simultaneously capturing carbon, making the process carbon-negative.

The environmental and economic benefits are far-reaching. Beyond clean hydrogen, the captured carbon dioxide can be converted into synthetic fuels such as e-diesel or sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). Manah Hydrogen is already exploring the use of hydrogen to power Be’ah’s vehicle fleet and for supply to green tourism hubs like Al Mouj Muscat.

By combining local waste conversion with solar-powered hydrogen production, Oman is building a more resilient and diversified energy future — one that supports both sustainability and economic development. Programmes like Be’ah’s Eco-Innovate accelerator are encouraging local entrepreneurship in circular economy solutions and clean technology.

BUSINESS

LONDON: Oil prices slipped over 1% on Tuesday after surging nearly 2% the previous session, as traders monitored developments in Ukraine and potential disruptions to Russian fuel supplies.

Brent crude fell \$1.08, or 1.57%, to \$67.72 a barrel by 1040 GMT, after hitting its highest level since early August.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) dropped \$1.13, or 1.74%, to \$63.67.

“The modest setback today is due to risk aversion, with equity markets trading lower,” said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

He added that geopolitical factors remain critical, particularly potential US-Russia developments.

Monday’s rally was driven by supply risks following Ukrainian strikes on Russian energy infrastructure and the

OIL FALLS FROM THREE-WEEK HIGH ON RUSSIAN SUPPLY RISKS



US and Russian officials reportedly discussed energy deals during recent peace negotiations.

possibility of further US sanctions on Russian oil.

Attacks on Ukrainian gas and power facilities have disrupted Moscow’s oil processing and exports, causing gasoline shortages in parts of Russia.

US President Donald Trump renewed his threat to impose sanctions on Russia if there is no

progress toward a peace deal within two weeks.

Meanwhile, US and Russian officials reportedly discussed energy deals during recent peace negotiations.

“Given the uncertainties from the Ukraine conflict and tariff issues, investors are hesitant to commit to a direction for the long term,” said PVM Oil Associates analyst Tamas Varga.

He noted that Brent prices may remain within a \$65–\$74 trading range in the medium term.

Looming US tariffs on India for its continued Russian oil purchases also weigh on the market.

India is the third-largest buyer of Russian crude, and potential duties could reach up to 50%, among the highest imposed by Washington.

— Reuters

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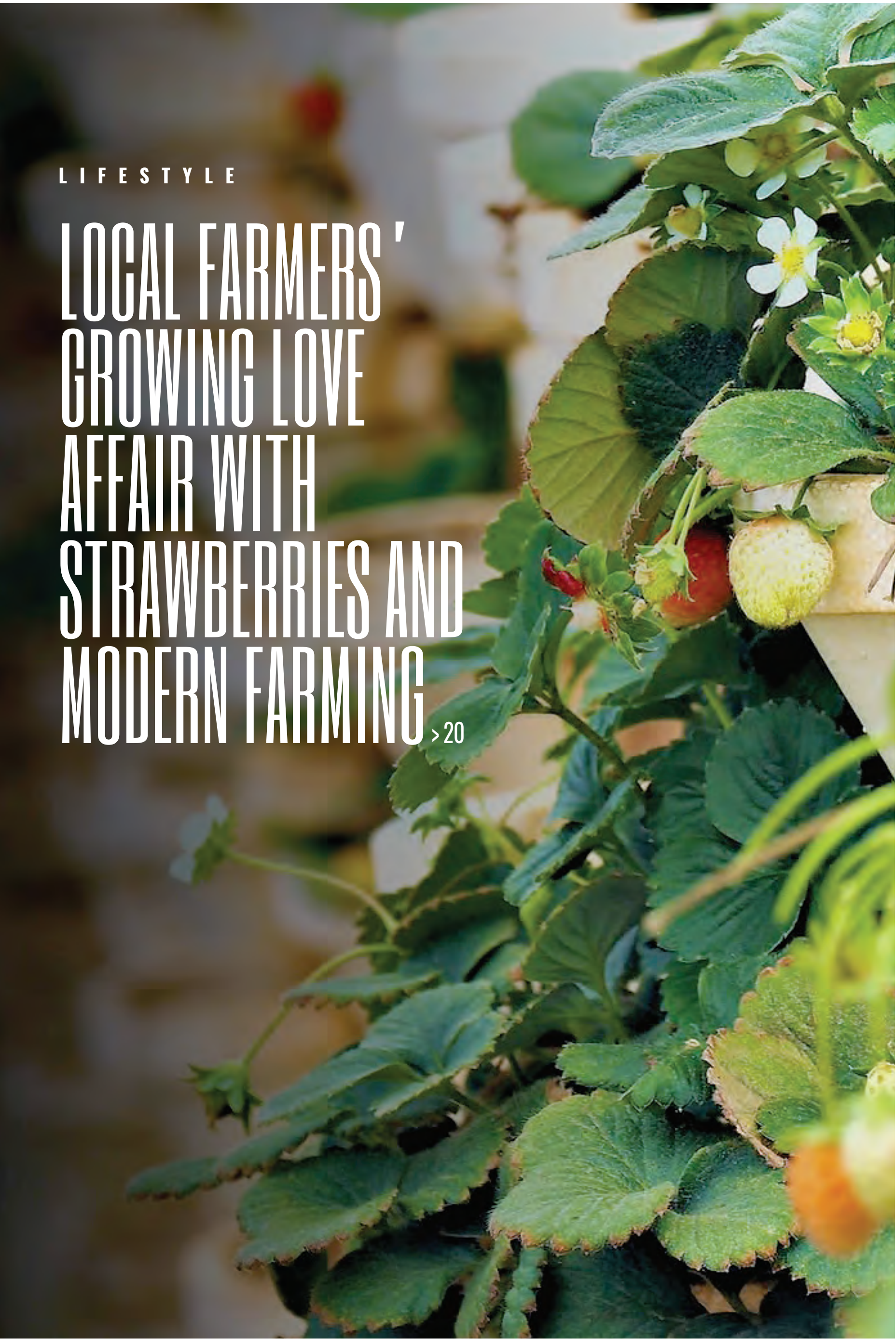
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ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

LOCAL FARMERS' GROWING LOVE AFFAIR WITH STRAWBERRIES AND MODERN FARMING > 20

DISCOVERY

Unpublished Dickens sketches go on display for first time in London



UNPUBLISHED sketches that bring Charles Dickens' "world and character to life" have gone on display for the first time.

A one-off set of pen, ink and watercolour sketches of the English playwright can be seen at the Charles Dickens Museum in London from Sunday until 21 September.

The sketches show Dickens and his theatre company in the midst of rehearsals for stage productions including Dickens' "Mr Nightingale's Diary" and "The Frozen Deep". They also depict his friend, the former editor of Punch magazine, Mark Lemon, his eldest daughter Mamie Dickens and Victorian playwright and novelist Wilkie Collins, who is best known for writing "The Woman In White" and for collaborating with Dickens to write the play "The Frozen Deep".

The informal sketches, newly acquired by the museum, were made in 1855 and 1857 by Nathaniel Powell, Dickens' next-door neighbour in Tavistock Square in Bloomsbury, London.

Powell recalled the time he was invited next door to make the sketches and wrote: "We were invited by Mr and Mrs Dickens to attend theatrical performances at their house. They were intensely interesting on account of the cast, the staging and the audiences.

"The most important piece was The Frozen Deep in which Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Mark Lemon took parts. You will find rough sketches of the characters in my 1857 sketchbook".

One sketch will join the museum's current exhibition Showtime!, which runs until January 2026 and the remaining sketches will be on display in the study where Dickens wrote Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby and The Pickwick Papers.

Frankie Kubicki, director of the Charles Dickens Museum, said: "Far removed from the many polished images of Dickens in performance, these are the only known immediate 'snapshots' of Dickens in rehearsal, capturing moments of staging, costuming and performing unrecorded elsewhere.

"This is a window on to one of the enduring passions of Charles Dickens's life — performing".

These vivid sketches give us an enticing and intimate glimpse of the productions staged by Dickens and the friends and family within his theatre group. — PA Media/dpa

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



ENTERTAINMENT

People enjoy the amusement rides during the 'pasar malam' night fair in Banda Aceh. — AFP



FILM

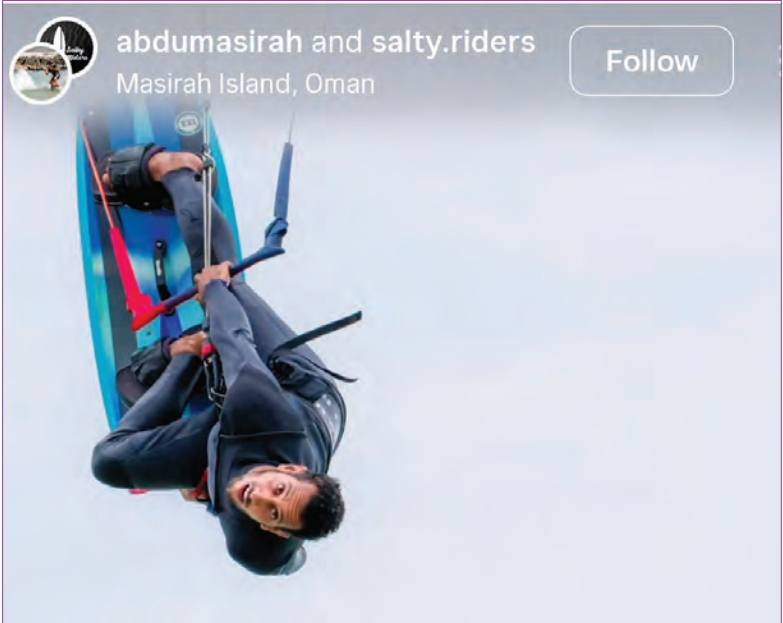
Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan hosts a preview of his son Aryan Khan's directorial debut, Netflix's series 'The Ba***ds of Bollywood', in Mumbai. — AFP



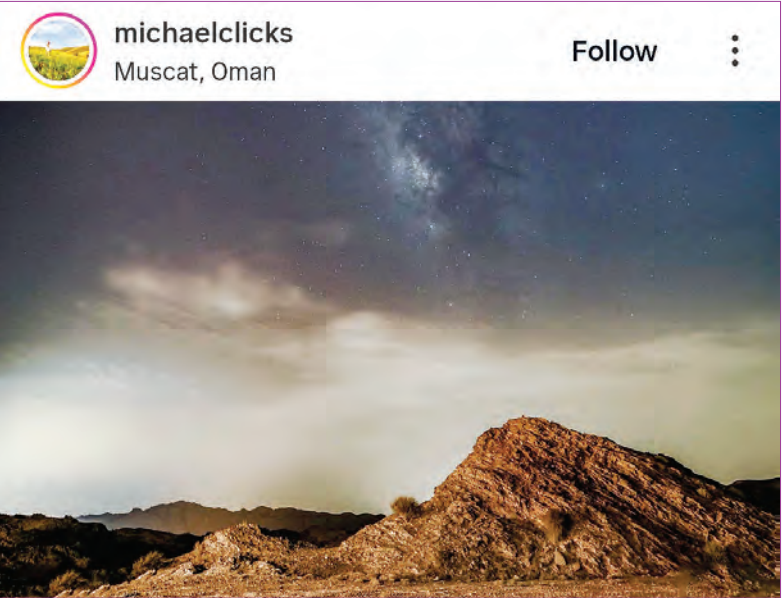
TV TRENDS

Actors Lily Collins and Eugenio Franceschini smile from a gondola during the production of Season 5 of Netflix's "Emily in Paris", in Venice. — Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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New dino species discovered with ‘eye-catching sail’ along its back



SCIENTISTS have uncovered a new species of dinosaur on the Isle of Wight, notable for its striking sail-like structure along its back and tail, which may have played a role in attracting mates. The discovery was made by Jeremy Lockwood, a PhD student at the University of Portsmouth and the Natural History Museum, who analysed fossils dating back 125 million years. The new dinosaur, named *Istiorachis macaruthurae*, combines Greek and Latin roots — “sail spine” and honouring Dame Ellen MacArthur, a renowned sailor from the island known for her record-breaking solo voyage around the world in 2005. The fossils initially were thought to belong to an existing iguanodontian species native to the Isle of Wight, but Lockwood’s careful examination revealed distinctive long neural spines. In his study published in *Papers in Palaeontology*, Lockwood suggests that the prominent sail likely served as a visual display,

probably a trait used for intimate signalling or intimidation — similar to modern reptiles where such features are more prominent in males. He explained that these exaggerated spines are indicative of intimate selection, a process where physical traits evolve to impress mates or ward off rivals. Comparing the fossils to other dinosaur backbones, researchers confirmed that *Istiorachis*’s spines were more exaggerated than those of related dinosaurs, reinforcing the idea of a display trait. Professor Susannah Maidment from the Natural History Museum highlighted that Lockwood’s work emphasises the importance of museum collections, which continue to reveal new insights into the prehistoric ecosystems of the UK. This discovery significantly expands understanding of early Cretaceous fauna on the island, demonstrating that much remains to be learned about these ancient creatures. — PA Media/dpa



A rare smell on the brink of extinction



THE SCENE had some of the enchantment of a spell-casting ritual: In a shoebox-size gallery with hot pink walls in lower Manhattan, a hushed crowd had assembled around a woman as she was methodically opening an obelisk-shaped box. Those who hadn’t managed to squeeze inside the room were spilling out onto the street into the evening humidity. They watched in fixation as the woman pulled from the box a tall glass flacon containing what looked like a saffron-coloured potion. One that, you could say, promised to conjure Elizabeth Taylor. The potion was a re-creation of an obscure perfume once worn by Taylor. It was concocted by Marissa Zappas, 38, an accomplished perfumer and the woman who unboxed the fragrance last Thursday evening at an opening event for “Her Scent of Mystery”, a new exhibition at the Olfactory Art Keller gallery in Chinatown. The show, on through September 20, takes its name from “Scent of Mystery”, a 1960 film briefly featuring Taylor, who makes an uncredited cameo in its final shot. Mercilessly panned — including in The New York Times — the movie famously incorporated a then-futuristic technology called Smell-O-Vision, which involved a clanking metal box with a bronchiole-like network of pipes being installed in a theatre. As “Scent of Mystery” played, the machinery would hiss odors in accordance with its scenes. When the villain smoked a pipe, for instance, gusts of tobacco-scented air hit the audience.

Another aroma associated with the movie and the centrepiece of the new exhibition, is the sharp, spicy fragrance made for Sally Kennedy, the character played by Taylor. Developed by perfumer Raoul Pantaleoni, promotional bottles were given to press and guests at the “Scent of Mystery” premiere in Chicago. There were talks of Schiaparelli mass producing and selling it. But the film flopped and the Schiaparelli partnership never materialised. In recent years, only one bottle of the promotional “Scent of Mystery” perfume was known to exist. It belonged to Susan Todd, whose father, Mike Todd Jr, was a producer of the film. Enter Zappas. She was tapped to re-create the perfume after Todd gave her bottle, along with her support, to the creators of the “Her Scent of Mystery” exhibition: Jas Brooks, 31, a professor whose work includes studying the relationship between human sensory abilities and scientific engineering; and Tammy Burnstock, 64, a producer and filmmaker whose credits include “In Glorious Smell-O-Vision!”, a documentary about the technology. The two met at a screening of the documentary, released in 2019 and bonded over what they described as their incredibly niche obsession with olfactory cinema. “The reality is, people mostly say, ‘Smell-O-Vision? What a joke!’” Burnstock said. “And we’re just like, no that’s our mission. It isn’t a joke”. Zappas gravitated to the project partly because of her own obsession with Taylor. She has written about how, as a 7-year-old who struggled to communicate, she learned how

to speak by watching the actress in “National Velvet”. As a child, Zappas would write fan mail to Taylor — her “spiritual maternal figure”, as she put it in an interview — and she now has tattoos of Taylor’s eyes on her forearms. “I think I was really inspired by her rapturousness”, Zappas said of her olfactory muse. “She’s always been so good at owning her desires and going forth with them”. To remake the “Scent of Mystery” perfume, which had a formula incorporating 60 raw materials, Zappas conducted a form of chemical analysis known as gas chromatography-mass spectrometry, which is also used to detect drugs and diseases. Her version is a near replica of the original, but has both fewer ingredients and some careful additions, like bergamot (to enhance the perfume’s citrusy opening) and a deft touch of powdery talc. Small vials of the remake are being sold for \$54 by the “Her Scent of Mystery” exhibition organisers. They are also selling — for \$1,400 — a larger, one-of-a-kind glass flacon that contains not only Zappas’ perfume but also a small amount of the original that inspired it. Those interested in a whiff of either can freely indulge at the exhibition. Next to iPads displaying information about “Scent of Mystery” are hockey-puck-like instruments with powder-puff underbellies that are doused with carefully rationed drops of the original perfume. Laid beside them at the opening event were dishes of fluffy marshmallows. “Wait”, said a woman after taking a bite of one. “This tastes just like the perfume!”. — NYT

FEATURES



in urban centres like Muscat, are experimenting with strawberries, a crop that requires precise environmental conditions to thrive.

Fahad al Hajri, an agripreneur based in Bidiyah, exemplifies this shift. Using greenhouses on his three-acre farm, he successfully cultivated his first crop last year. His strawberries, grown in neatly arranged rows with modern irrigation systems, garnered enthusiastic local sales.

Fahad’s venture is not just about growing fruit; it’s about redefining what is possible for Oman’s agricultural sector.

“Growing strawberries here was unthinkable a



few years ago”, Fahad explains. “But with modern techniques, even farmland once left fallow can produce high-quality produce. People like me see the potential and are willing to invest in new methods”. In Barka, a local farmer employs vertical farming techniques in Halban, achieving impressive yields of strawberries despite the arid environment. Similarly, in Yiti, Muscat, the Yeti Farm Project blends traditional irrigation with high-tech greenhouses, creating a space where visitors can pick strawberries themselves during seasonal festivals, making agriculture a family-friendly activity and boosting agritourism.

One striking initiative is Alila Al Jabal Al Akhdhar’s hydroponics programme. Located at a high altitude, the resort has successfully incorporated strawberry cultivation into its zero-waste, green-focused efforts. The farm’s modest but consistent harvests are part of a broader push to promote self-reliance and green tourism. Hotels and restaurants are keen to showcase “Made in Oman” strawberries, turning them into a selling point for local cuisine.

In Balad Sayt, the Balad Sayt Strawberry farm has been mesmerising visitors with their beautiful plantation where people can visit and handpick

themselves from rows and rows of well-outlined strawberry plants. The family-owned farm, during the harvest season, has been well appreciated for offering a unique experience.

The trend extends beyond commercial farms. In Ibri, a home gardener has succeeded in growing strawberries among over 60 types of crops, demonstrating that with proper techniques, even small-scale farmers can contribute to the market. The government’s Ministry of Agriculture is also supporting this wave of innovation, encouraging home gardening and presenting modern agriculture as a vital pathway to food security.

Perhaps most intriguing is the successful cultivation



of Russian yellow strawberries by Ahmed al Ghafri from Ibri. Introduced in 2020, this unique variety has baffled and delighted food enthusiasts, winning praise for its distinct taste reminiscent of chewing gum. Despite its smaller size, the yellow strawberries are gaining popularity for their novelty and decorative appeal — destined to feature in cakes and desserts.

The growing fascination with strawberries in Oman reflects a broader desire among farmers to diversify their crops beyond traditional staples. “We’re turning fallow land into productive farmland”, says Fahad. “It’s about resilience, innovation and connecting with consumers who value fresh, local produce”. This movement also tackles challenges like water scarcity, with modern greenhouses and hydroponics providing controlled environments that optimise water and nutrient use.

As Oman’s farmers continue to harness these techniques, the strawberry once seen as an outsider crop is now becoming a symbol of modern, entrepreneurial agriculture. Whether for healthy eating, tourism, or simply as a novel addition to Oman’s diverse farming portfolio, strawberries are undeniably making their mark on the country’s agricultural scene — proof that innovation can bloom even in the most unexpected places.

LOCAL FARMERS ' GROWING LOVE AFFAIR WITH STRAWBERRIES AND MODERN FARMING

YERU EBUEEN

IN RECENT months, strawberries have emerged as an unexpected agricultural sensation in Oman, captivating the interest of both farmers and consumers alike. Once a novelty in the region, this juicy berry is now at the forefront of a burgeoning local produce movement driven by innovative farming practices, entrepreneurial spirit and a growing preference for organic, locally-grown food.

Traditionally, Oman’s agriculture has centred around date palms, citrus and other hardy crops suitable to the desert climate. However, recent advances in greenhouse technology, vertical farming and hydroponics are transforming this landscape.

Farmers across the country, from Barka to Bidiyah and even