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DHOVAR'S REAL
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ON THE PLATE



IN BRIEF

NEW ‘FREE’ 14-DAY TOURIST VISA

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) issued a decision on Sunday introducing a new type of tourist visa, which grants a free tourist entry for 14 days to nationals of countries determined by the competent authorities. The decision is part of the amendments to some provisions of the Executive Regulations of the Foreigners’ Residency Law, which comes into force the day following the date of its publication in the Official Gazette. The decision included the addition of a new category to tourist visas, which are granted for 14 days at the request of the beneficiary and in accordance with the controls determined by the competent authority, with the possibility of replacing them before their expiry with any other type of tourist visa stipulated in the regulations, in accordance with the prescribed procedures and fees.

POMEGRANATE HARVEST IN AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR



The harvesting of pomegranate trees began in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The cultivation runs through the month of August every year. Statistics issued by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar show that the number of pomegranate trees stands at more than 27,000 and that the marketing value of the crop during the last season (2024-2025) stood at about RO 1.3 million. Statistics also show that the percentage of healthy fruits in the wilayat stood at more than 90 per cent, while the average number of fruits per tree was about 60.

New proposals to modernise labour system

SALALAH: The Ministry of Labour has discussed the challenges facing the private sector, alongside presenting a package of proposals and ideas aimed at modernising the labour system and enhancing the quality of services provided to enterprises. This came during a meeting held on Sunday by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, with business owners and investors at the headquarters of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in Dhofar Governorate. The meeting featured a dialogue session entitled ‘Strategic Dialogues and Shared Visions with the Private Sector for a Sustainable Labour Market,’ which addressed a number of topics, including enhancing the efficiency of employment and training programmes to empower national cadres, as well as aligning outcomes with labour market requirements and rapid economic developments. The meeting is part of the ‘Labour Forum 2026’ activities, aimed at strengthening partnership with the private sector and opening direct channels of dialogue with business owners to discuss labour market-related issues. — ONA

Iran says efforts under way to revive June deal

TRUMP SAYS HE WILL HOLD OFF ON FRESH ATTACK IN HOPE OF QUICK DEAL

AN IRANIAN lawmaker said on Sunday that mediators were seeking to revive a deal that briefly halted the war between Iran and the United States in June. Hassan Ghashghavi, spokesman for parliament’s national security commission, said in a video interview that “there is an effort under way to revive the 14-point Islamabad agreement, particularly by the mediators”. “They know that the main issue and, in fact, the key to the matter right now is the issue of the Strait of Hormuz, so yes, there is an exchange of views,” he said. The agreement, known as the Islamabad memorandum of understanding, was reached with the involvement of Qatar and Pakistan, with negotiating sessions held in Islamabad. The deal included arrangements concerning the Strait of Hormuz and a resumption of diplomacy between Tehran and Washington for a broader deal. It also called for an end to the hostilities in Lebanon where Israel has been fighting the Hezbollah group. The agreement later collapsed after Iran and the United States accused each other of violating its provisions. US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that Washington and Israel had agreed to hold off on new strikes on Iran, provided a deal to end the months-long conflict was reached rapidly. In a post on his Truth Social website, Trump said he had agreed “to hold off any attack in



People walk past shops and stalls as they visit the Grand Bazaar in Tehran on Sunday. — AFP

that the perimeters of a deal has been agreed to”. Ghashghavi, a former diplomat, said there was “constant exchange of views and discussion over proposals”, without elaborating. Trump said late on Saturday on his Truth Social platform that Iran and other Middle Eastern countries had asked for time to complete a deal that would lead to “the Immediate, Complete and Total” reopening of the vital strait. “Based on this request, I have agreed, for the future benefit of the WORLD and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL,” Trump wrote. Trump’s apparent de-escalation after days of threats of new attacks from each side was the latest twist in the war the US and Israel launched five months ago. Attacks have spread across the Gulf to the Red Sea and even a Mediterranean facility in Egypt. Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for 20 per cent of the world’s oil and LNG before the war, causing energy prices to rise and stoking broader inflation. Iran’s acting defence minister, Brigadier General Majid Ebn Al Reza, said Tehran viewed recent US threats as “psychological and cognitive warfare” but was treating them seriously, adding that Iran would boost preparedness and deterrence rather than be caught off guard or remain passive, Press TV reported. **SEE ALSO P6**

Mountaineer Nadhira leaves a legacy beyond the summits

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 2

Nadhira al Harthy, Oman’s national icon for fortitude and adventure, who passed away in an avalanche in Pakistan on Thursday, was laid to rest at the burial ground in Al Mudhairib village, the Wilayat of Al Qabil, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. The mortal remains of Nadhira al Harthy arrived in Oman at around 6 am on Sunday and were taken to her family home in Al Khuwair, where some of the last rites were performed before it was transported to Al Mudhairib village for the

funeral prayer and burial. Fellow mountaineers from the Sultanate of Oman remembered Nadhira, their compatriot who made the nation proud by planting the national flag atop the Himalayas in 2019. Sulaiman bin Hamoud al Naabi, Omani adventurer and mountaineer, said that Nadhira was not merely a mountaineer, but an inspiring national icon, embodying the highest meanings of belonging, citizenship, passion, belief in one’s goal, and unwavering determination. “Nadhira carried the flag of the Sultanate of Oman to the highest



peaks, not seeking personal glory, but out of a belief that the nation’s flag deserves to be raised everywhere, and that true achievement is made through dedication, discipline, meticulous preparation, and tireless work,” said Sulaiman, who was awarded a medal of honour and national integrity for his accomplishments. For the fellow mountaineers, Nadhira’s passing was not only a loss for Oman, but a loss for all who know the meaning of passion, perseverance, and defying the impossible. Her message transcended geographical boundaries, becoming an

inspiration to mountain and adventure enthusiasts worldwide. She deservedly earned the title of ambassador for the Sultanate of Oman, proudly bearing her country’s name and embodying, through her character, humility, and achievements, the bright image of the Omani people on the international stage. Her presence was not only influential in her homeland, but she also garnered respect among the global climbing community, as she represented the values shared by mountain lovers. Courage, discipline, humility, and dedication to the path.

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SHORTTAKES



The condition is that those who resigned from a government entity or government-owned company are ineligible to register again.

MoL sets conditions for job-seekers in public sector

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has confirmed the introduction of a new criterion for job-seekers from the beginning of this year. The condition is that those who resigned from a government entity or government-owned company are ineligible to register again.

The main objective of this condition is to stabilise the national workforce in government entities, reduce job mobility between these entities, and also provide job-seekers waiting for their first job opening.

This decision is intended to ensure fairness for all job-seekers, said Ammar bin Salim al Saad, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Labor and official spokesperson for the Labour Affairs Sector.

The official at the ministry said that the main goal of this Omanisation is to increase the participation of national talent in jobs currently held by expatriates.

The announcement of new job vacancies on Saturday is part of the gradual implementation of Omanisation policies as per the targets at the beginning of each year, in coordination with relevant government agencies.

TEMPERATURES TO BE IN MID-40S

MUSCAT: Several Places in the Sultanate of Oman recorded high temperatures over the past 24 hours. Barka recorded 47.2°C, Fahud 46.8°C, Liwa 46.8°C, Bidbid 46.8°C, Al Buraimi 47°C, and Suhar 46.5°C during this period. Forecast for Sunday In Muscat Governorate, maximum temperatures are expected to be around 42°C in Muscat, 40°C in Al Seeb, uttrah 42.2°C, Amerat 45°C, and Bausher 42°C. In Salalah and the rest of the Dhofar Governorate, temperatures are expected to be between 27°C and 30°C. However, Al Mazyouna is expected to have temperatures around 45°C.

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, AUGUST 2

A new agri-tourism destination showcasing Dhofar's rich agricultural heritage is drawing visitors during Khareef Dhofar 2026, offering a unique blend of nature, culture and sustainability.

Located on Al Muntazah Street in the Wilayat of Salalah, Al Gharif spans 35,000 square metres and has been developed through a partnership of four companies led by Omani small and medium enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs. The project forms part of Dhofar Municipality's Khareef Dhofar 2026 programme and will host activities until early September.

Surrounded by banana

and coconut palms and the gentle flow of traditional sawaqi (irrigation channels), Al Gharif recreates the charm of a traditional Omani farm while providing visitors with a contemporary tourism experience rooted in Dhofar's agricultural identity.

The destination features family entertainment, cultural activities and competitions, alongside an exhibition highlighting products and innovations by productive families, university students and SMEs.

International franchise brands are also participating, while local entrepreneurs showcase perfumes, frankincense, handicrafts, clothing, accessories and other locally made products.

The name Al Gharif, derived from the Dhofari



Al Gharif is emerging as one of Dhofar's newest tourism attractions.

dialect, refers to farmland that turns green after rainfall, reflecting the deep connection between the people of Dhofar and their land.

The project has been designed to revive the traditional Omani farming landscape, allowing visitors

to stroll through palm-lined pathways, lush green spaces and a central saqiya that once played a vital role in irrigating agricultural fields.

Al Gharif comprises four main zones, including a café district with four cafés, a dining area featuring four

restaurants, a tropical fruit zone specialising in fresh fruits and juices, and a 3,000-square-metre events space that hosts seasonal and year-round activities.

Visitors can also explore a strawberry garden, with a fruit-picking experience scheduled to begin in November, complemented by a retail outlet offering strawberry-based products.

Additional attractions include greenhouses cultivating a variety of crops and a horse stable, further enriching the agri-tourism experience.

Sustainability is central to the project. While the farm currently uses a combination of traditional and modern irrigation methods, work is under way to fully transition to a modern irrigation

system that will reduce water consumption and conserve groundwater resources.

Mohammed bin Abdullah Batamira, Chief Executive Officer of Al Gharif, said the project aims to support Dhofar's tourism, agriculture and commercial sectors while offering visitors an authentic Omani experience.

"Al Gharif combines the beauty of nature, the authenticity of agricultural heritage and the principles of sustainability to create an integrated tourism destination that reflects Omani identity while meeting the expectations of today's visitors," he said.

Batamira added that the project also creates opportunities for SME owners in areas such as marketing and agricultural operations.

Al Alalan: 1,000-year-old tree facing modern threat

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 2

HIGH IN the rocky heights of Al Hajar Mountains, above 1,800 metres where the air is cooler and the landscape rugged, grows a tree that has witnessed more than a millennium of change.

The Al Alalan tree, a native Omani juniper belonging to the conifer family, can survive for more than 1,000 years. Growing at an exceptionally slow pace, its rings preserve centuries of climate history, while its presence reflects the stability and health of the mountain ecosystems where it thrives.

Mohammed al Bahrani, a content creator documenting Oman's natural heritage, describes the Al Alalan as a remarkable tree with a distinctive fragrance, natural insect-repelling qualities and deep roots in the landscapes of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Jabal Shams.

He believes many visitors do not fully recognise the historical and environmental value of these ancient trees when they encounter them in the mountains.

Haitham bin Said al Farqani, Head of Biodiversity and Vegetation Cover Development at the Environment Authority, said the tree's extremely slow growth is one of the reasons for its ecological importance.

Over its long lifespan, the Al Alalan stores carbon for extended periods, acting as a natural carbon sink. Its unique shape, fragrance and resilience have also made it a striking feature of Oman's mountain scenery, often appearing in photographs capturing star trails and night skies.



Over its long lifespan, the Al Alalan stores carbon for extended periods, acting as a natural carbon sink.

Beyond its environmental importance, the tree has economic and cultural value. Its aromatic properties have contributed to its use in products such as soaps, perfumes and shampoos.

Its durable wood, which contains natural compounds resistant to termites, has traditionally been used in construction, while parts of the tree have also been used in traditional remedies.

One example of the Al Alalan's connection with local heritage can be seen along the Darb Al Silsila mountain trail, a historic route linking Al Huwaib village in Wadi Al Sahtan, the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, with Bait Al Sharaf in the mountain heights of Misfat Al Abriyeen, the Wilayat of Al Hamra. The trail incorporates Al Alalan wood, reflecting the traditional relationship between local communities and their natural surroundings.

Despite surviving for centuries, the Al Alalan is now classified as an endangered species. Al Farqani said the Environment Authority has established monitoring programmes and field inspection units to survey populations inside and outside protected areas and identify violations affecting the trees.

Visitors to nature reserves are encouraged to protect the species by avoiding cutting, damaging or disturbing the trees. Awareness signs also warn against lighting fires near Al Alalan trees, as their resin-rich wood can ignite easily.

The Environment Authority is also promoting awareness among younger generations through school programmes and astronomy camps held in nature reserves. These activities encourage hikers, photographers and stargazers to appreciate Oman's mountain environments and the ancient species that form part of their natural heritage.

A tree that has stood for more than a thousand years represents more than a piece of vegetation — it is a living record of Oman's environmental history. Protecting the Al Alalan means preserving a legacy that took centuries to grow but could disappear within minutes.

SHORT TAKES



The recruitment process ranges between stages of approval endorsed by RAFO to final stage. — ONA

RAFO BEGINS RECRUITMENT OF OFFICER CADETS

MUSCAT: Acting in coordination with the Ministry of Labour (MoL), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) on Sunday began recruitment procedures for a number of citizens who wish to join the military service as officer cadets.

The recruitment process ranges between the stages of approval endorsed by the RAFO to the final stage of admission to join the RAFO.

The RAFO extends its expertise and capabilities to facilitate the citizens' joining the military service in a manner that enables them to perform the national duty and contribute to defending the homeland and preserving its gains.

These efforts are in pursuance of the approach undertaken by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) to provide employment for national youth in accordance with approved plans and programmes aimed to supply the Sultan's Armed Forces and other departments of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with qualified national competencies and contribute to the nation's prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander. — ONA

NEW BATCH OF CITIZENS JOINS ROP



The new recruits will receive training at the Police Recruits Institute and the Women's Police Institute at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences.

MUSCAT: A new batch of male and female citizens holding the General Education Diploma (GED) certificate has joined the Royal Oman Police (ROP) after passing the evaluation and acceptance tests in coordination with the Ministry of Labour.

The new recruits will receive training at the Police Recruits Institute and the Women's Police Institute at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences. The training programme includes fundamentals and skills of police which goes side by side with legal and academic knowledge and specialised courses in various security aspects.

ROP steps up safety drive for Khareef Dhofar 2026

LT MOHAMMED AL MADASARI
SALALAH, AUGUST 2

THE ROYAL OMAN POLICE (ROP) has intensified its security, traffic and coastal safety operations across Dhofar Governorate as part of a comprehensive plan to ensure the safety of residents and the growing number of visitors during Khareef Dhofar 2026.

The enhanced measures aim to strengthen operational readiness, provide efficient policing services and maintain smooth traffic flow throughout the tourism season.

Col Salem bin Mohammed al Kaf, Assistant Commander of Dhofar Governorate Police, said the strategic deployment of patrols and security checkpoints has strengthened the police presence across the governorate.

“The strategic deployment of patrols and checkpoints allows us to strengthen our operational presence across Dhofar Governorate. It also enables the force to respond effectively to a wide range of situations, ensuring a safe and secure environment during the khareef season,” he said.

The increased police presence forms part of an integrated operations plan designed to manage routine policing duties while responding quickly to emergencies and unexpected incidents.

Lt Col Suleiman bin Said al Hattali, Director of Operations at Dhofar Governorate Police Command, said security and traffic management



ROP urges the public to comply with traffic regulations and safety instructions.

The enhanced measures aim to strengthen operational readiness and maintain smooth traffic flow throughout the khareef season

plans have been developed to cover major roads, tourist attractions and event venues.

He added that the operations centre functions round the clock to respond to traffic accidents, emergency calls, requests for assistance and public inquiries.

To improve traffic movement and reduce congestion, the ROP has implemented a series of traffic management measures across key routes.

Lt Col Ahmed bin Said Ghawas, Assistant Director of Traffic, said signal timings at major intersections are adjusted dynamically to prioritise heavily congested routes by extending green-light durations where required. Beach safety also remains a key focus during the khareef season, when coastal areas

attract thousands of visitors.

Lt Col Alawi bin Hafeez al Haddad, Commander of the Police Coast Guard Unit, said the safety of beachgoers remains a top priority, particularly during periods of rough sea conditions caused by high waves and strong rip currents.

He noted that the Police Coast Guard has been equipped with specialised assets, including all-terrain vehicles and jet skis, to respond rapidly to drowning incidents and other emergencies.

The ROP has urged the public to comply with traffic regulations and safety instructions to protect lives and property. Motorists are advised to take regular breaks during long journeys and avoid dangerous practices such as speeding, reckless overtaking and driving on green spaces.

350 guides, senior guides at summer camp in Dhofar

SALALAH: The 25th summer camp for guides and senior guides was launched on Sunday at the permanent scout camp in the Ashor Mountain plain in Dhofar Governorate.

Organised by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Scouts, Guides and Student Activities, the camp is held under the slogan ‘Our Future Lies in Our Values’ and will continue until August 7.

More than 350 guides and senior guides from various governorates of Oman are participating in the camp, which features a diverse programme comprising training workshops, scientific and sightseeing visits, and sporting and cultural activities, including competitions and team games,



The camp features training workshops, scientific and sightseeing visits, and sporting and cultural activities.

alongside an event titled ‘National Day: My Heritage is My Identity.’

The camp offers participants a hands-on experience to explore the natural assets that distinguish Dhofar Governorate, in a manner that contributes to the promotion of domestic tourism and reinforces concepts of environmental sustainability through direct engagement with the governorate's nature and terrain, via an integrated package of specialised programmes and activities.

The camp aims to refine the personal and physical skills of the guides, develop their leadership abilities, stimulate innovation and teamwork, foster a spirit of adventure and challenge, and prepare them for active participation in community service. — ONA

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar festival attracts over 100,000 visitors

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2026 has attracted more than 100,000 visitors since the launch of its activities through the end of July, continuing its role in revitalising tourism and economic activity in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

The festival features a diverse programme spanning 45 days, combining entertainment, cultural and sporting events with tourism experiences, alongside providing direct marketing platforms for products of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), family-run businesses and farmers.

The festival is organised by the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority



The festival features a diverse programme spanning 45 days. — ONA



“Riyada,” and with the strategic partnership of OQ Gas Networks. It features the participation of 95 entities representing SMEs, family businesses, farmers, restaurants and cafés, and local retailers. This provides direct channels for marketing national products and opens

new opportunities for project owners to capitalise on the tourism traffic the wilayat experiences during the summer season.

The festival contributes to supporting the local economy by boosting demand for products and services, increasing commercial

activity and creating an interactive environment that brings together visitors and entrepreneurs in a single venue, reflecting the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah's commitment to leveraging natural and tourism assets in support of local content.

The festival features a

range of experiences and activities tailored to various age groups, including daily performances on the main stage, a roaming carnival, the Family Oasis, the Youth Square, the Children's World, the Cinema Dome, interactive aerial games and the Neon Oasis, alongside the “Floating

Pantry” experience using 3D hologram technology—presented for the first time in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah—enriching the visitor experience and extending their duration of stay at the festival site.

Throughout the current month of August, the festival continues to offer a package of signature events, most notably hosting the Drive More One sports car team, a tourist procession through the villages of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the sports caravan, the Traditional Games League, a running race, alongside the Gulf Horsemen Forum and the Fig and Olive Forum, which showcases Al Jabal Al Akhdhar's agricultural and cultural assets, broadening the scope of activities and appealing to diverse segments of visitors and enthusiasts. — ONA

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Dhofar's cloud forests vital reservoirs

QASIM ALMAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 2

THE cloud forests on the seaward slopes of the Dhofar Mountains do more than create the lush landscape associated with khareef. Research shows that these forests enhance groundwater recharge across the mountain range by about 20 per cent compared with estimates based only on rainfall.

As moisture-laden clouds move in from the Arabian Sea, fine droplets settle on leaves, branches and tree trunks before dripping through the canopy or flowing down bark to the soil. Known as fog interception, this process allows forests to capture water that arrives horizontally rather than through rainfall.

The phenomenon is particularly significant because the Dhofar Mountains serve as the main recharge zone for the groundwater resources supporting the Salalah coastal plain,

home to much of the governorate's population, agriculture and industry.

The 20 per cent estimate comes from a 2018 study published in the *Journal of Hydrology: Regional Studies* by researchers from Germany's Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research. The study recorded recharge-to-precipitation ratios of up to 24 per cent beneath heavily forested areas, a notable figure for a semi-arid region.

Not all intercepted moisture reaches underground reserves, as some is absorbed by vegetation, retained in soil or lost through evaporation. However, the forest canopy plays a crucial role in increasing the amount of water reaching the ground and influencing how it moves through the landscape.

Eng Ali bin Mohammed Rafeet, a member of the nature conservation initiative in Dhofar Governorate, said the forests should be viewed as essential natural infrastructure rather than merely seasonal



The discussion on natural-capital accounting highlights need to recognise value of ecosystem services.

attractions.

“The value of these forests cannot be measured only by counting trees or assessing the beauty of the landscape. Their services include moisture collection, soil protection, biodiversity, grazing and support for the tourism economy,” he said.

Studies using satellite imagery have presented varying assessments of forest conditions. A 2020 analysis of three decades of Landsat data

found no significant decline across most of the mountain range, while earlier research covering 1988 to 2013 reported degradation in some areas, with grazing identified as a possible factor.

According to Rafeet, the greater long-term concern may be the inability of young trees and seedlings to regenerate.

"The greater danger may not be the immediate disappearance of mature trees, but the failure of the next generation to survive," he said.

Research from Jabal Al Qamar in western Dhofar has linked intensive grazing by camels, cattle and goats to reduced plant density and biodiversity, with young vegetation particularly vulnerable.

Rafeet stressed that the solution is not a complete ban on grazing but better management based on the ecological sensitivity and carrying capacity of individual areas.

Other pressures include vehicles damaging wet terrain, infrastructure

development, fires, invasive species and concentrated visitor activity. He said conservation should focus on controlled access and designated routes rather than restricting public enjoyment of the mountains.

The growing discussion around natural-capital accounting highlights the need to recognise the economic value of ecosystem services, including water security, erosion control, biodiversity conservation, carbon storage and tourism.

“Protecting the cloud forest is not only an environmental responsibility. It is an investment in water security, tourism, livestock resources and the long-term resilience of Dhofar’s economy,” Rafeet said.

For decades, khareef has been measured through visitor numbers, rainfall and tourism indicators. The next important measure may be understanding how much water these forests capture from the clouds – and the cost of replacing a service nature currently provides for free.

AL BATINAH NORTH IMPROVES ITS PLACE IN FOOD PRODUCTION



Vegetable production reached nearly 860,000 tonnes, fruit production exceeded 87,000 tonnes, in addition to more than 225,000 tonnes of fodder crops. — **ONA**

SUHAR: Performance indicators for 2025 confirm continuous growth across various productive sectors in Al Batinah North Governorate, supported by a package of strategic projects, investment opportunities, infrastructure, and logistical services that contribute to raising production efficiency, developing food industries and increasing exports.

Eng Nasser bin Ali al Marshoodi, Director General of the Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North Governorate, said that the governorate possesses a broad agricultural production base, as the cultivated area by the end of 2025 reached approximately 99,676 feddans, compared to 94,242 feddans in the previous year, achieving a growth of 4.35 per cent, alongside 61 agricultural nurseries and two agricultural research stations.

He added that vegetable production reached nearly 860,000 tonnes, fruit production exceeded 87,000 tonnes, in addition to more than 225,000 tonnes of fodder crops.

He explained that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) continued to implement agricultural support programmes that contributed to raising productivity and improving crop quality through expanding the cultivation of improved Omani wheat varieties and establishing model fields for mango, lemon, guava, fig, and sidr crops, among others. This was alongside implementing intensive preventive programmes that contributed to reducing red palm weevil infestations by 36.71 per cent, and executing aerial spraying programmes to combat Dubas bugs for the autumn and spring generations, covering 48 villages over an area exceeding 818 feddans.

He pointed out that the livestock sector

represents a key pillar in the governorate's production system, as the total number of livestock reached approximately 680,000 head, with an annual production reaching 500,000 litres of milk and 4 million poultry, supported by an integrated network of veterinary services including government and private clinics, laboratories, and veterinary pharmacies, in addition to grazing sites and a mobile clinic.

He indicated that vaccinating more than 841,000 animals during 2025 contributed to lowering disease rates, explaining that the governorate includes 13,218 fishermen, 5,431 fishing boats, 6 ports, and 8 fish markets, alongside 214 fish marketing outlets and 31 investment projects, enhancing the value chain for the fisheries sector.

He affirmed that agricultural development in the governorate relies on an advanced water infrastructure that includes 5 recharge and protection dams, in addition to 17 community partnership dams, cloud seeding stations, a wide network of hydrometric monitoring stations, groundwater monitoring wells, as well as 993 aflaj (traditional irrigation channels), while implementation of new water resource projects continues. — **ONA**

PUBLIC NOTICE



Notice is hereby given that **Mr. Vijay Ragavan** (Indian Passport No: B9793155 / Oman Resident Card No: 78038171) is no longer associated with **M/S Sharikat Fanniya Omaniya LLC** effective 06-08-2026.

He is not authorized to represent, act, or enter into any transactions on behalf of the company. Any person having pending matters involving Mr. Ragavan must notify the company within three (3) days of this notice.

M/S Sharikat Fanniya Omaniya LLC shall not be liable for any dealings or transactions conducted with him after the effective date, and such actions shall be the sole responsibility of the concerned party.

Management
Sharikat Fanniya Omaniya LLC

SHORT TAKES



30 Omani SMEs have displayed a variety of products at the exhibition.

OMANI-BAHRAINI PRODUCTS EXPO OPENS IN SALALAH

SALALAH: The ninth edition of the Omani-Bahraini Products Exhibition opened in Salalah on Saturday.

Organised by the Omani-Bahraini Friendship Association in collaboration with the embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the Sultanate of Oman, the eight-day event features the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from both countries.

The exhibition aims to support SMEs in the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain by providing a platform to showcase their products and services, fostering trade and investment partnerships, and opening direct marketing channels between producers and consumers, thereby contributing to the growth of trade between the two nations.

The exhibition also seeks to enable business owners to exchange expertise and knowledge in the fields of production, marketing, and business management, learn from successful experiences and enhance access to new markets, thus supporting the growth of the SME sector.

The exhibition includes about 30 Omani small and medium enterprises displaying a variety of products including fashion, perfumes, incense, Omani frankincense, Omani halwa, accessories, heritage and handicraft products and household items. — **ONA**

NAMA WATER MOOTS PRODUCTION OF BIOFUEL



The project embodies Nama company's approach to transform recycled water. — **ONA**

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services is implementing a pilot project to cultivate the camelina plant, one of the most prominent sustainable crops used in the production of biofuel.

The project will be carried out in partnership with Hema Energy company as part of Nama Water Services' commitment towards the consolidation of environmental sustainability and the realization of green economy targets.

The project embodies Nama Water Services company's approach to transforming recycled water into a strategic resource that consolidates sustainable development.

It envisages the use of recycled water in an innovative manner to enhance water and food security, diminish carbon emissions and support clean energy transition.

The project seeks to establish an integrated technical system to measure the potential of camelina in carbon sequestration, in addition to the plant's economic and commercial feasibility.

Under the partnership, Nama Water Services will supply recycled water, while Hema Energy will undertake the project's technical management, operation and data analysis.

The project receives the attention of various national entities, including Sultan Qaboos University (which will provide research and technical verification), the Environment Authority (which will oversee the project's environmental aspects) and Oman Net Zero Centre (which will ensure that the project aligns with the Sultanate of Oman's objectives to achieve net zero). — **ONA**

Study highlights tech to reduce post-harvest losses

A RECENT study by Dr Pankaj Pathare from the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University has identified six innovative engineering technologies that could significantly reduce post-harvest losses of fruits and vegetables in the Gulf region, helping to strengthen food security, improve supply chain efficiency and reduce waste of natural resources.

Post-harvest losses of fruits and vegetables remain one of the most pressing challenges facing food systems across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Estimates suggest that between 30 and 50 per cent of fresh produce is lost between harvest and consumption, resulting in substantial economic losses, unnecessary waste of water and energy resources, and added pressure on food security in a region that relies heavily on food imports.

Against the backdrop of the Arabian Peninsula's challenging climate, characterised by high temperatures and elevated humidity in coastal areas, Dr Pathare conducted a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the causes of post-harvest losses across the GCC.

The study examined vulnerabilities during harvesting, handling, storage and transportation while proposing innovative engineering solutions to minimise these losses.



The study examined vulnerabilities during harvesting, handling, storage and transportation.

30 and 50 per cent of fresh produce is lost between harvest and consumption, resulting in substantial economic losses

The research reviewed six key technological approaches developed to address these challenges through advanced and sustainable solutions. The first focused on the use of computer vision systems to assess mechanical damage in apples.

The technology proved effective in detecting bruising at an early stage and linking it to subsequent quality deterioration and weight loss during storage.

The study also examined the application of cold plasma technology as a non-thermal preservation method for dates. Results demonstrated significant improvements in fruit quality, reductions in microbial load and an extended storage life under refrigerated conditions.

In the field of sustainable food processing, the research team developed a hybrid dryer combining hot air and infrared heating for drying courgette slices.

The system achieved high levels of time and energy efficiency while maintaining the physical properties and overall quality of the final product.

The study further investigated the susceptibility of bananas to mechanical damage using pendulum impact testing, an engineering method that simulates the impacts fruit may experience during handling.

By linking impact intensity and storage temperature with accelerated ripening and quality deterioration, the research established a scientific basis for defining safer handling limits.

In transport and packaging, vibration studies revealed that package design plays a more critical role than packaging thickness in reducing damage during transportation, highlighting the importance of optimising packaging engineering rather than simply increasing material use.

The sixth area of research explored the drying of small fish using enhanced solar drying technology, demonstrating its ability to reduce moisture content and water activity while improving microbiological quality and sensory characteristics compared with conventional drying methods.

صهارية طاقة SOHAR POWER P.O. Box: 147, Jawharat A' Shatti, PC 134, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 24698496, E-mail: admin@soharpower.com, Website: www.soharpower.com																																																																																																																																																																														
Unaudited condensed financial statement for the period 30 June 2026																																																																																																																																																																														
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT		Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026																																																																																																																																																																												
Dear Shareholders, On behalf of the Board of Directors of Sohar Power Company SAOG ("Sohar Power" or the "Company"), I am pleased to present the Directors' Report of the Company for the period ended 30 June 2026. On 10 March 2026, the shareholders of Sohar Power Company held their Annual Ordinary General Meeting ("AOGM"). Health & Safety The Company maintained an excellent health and safety record during the period. As at the end of Q2 2026, Plant Operations recorded 4,900 LTA-free days on a cumulative basis since the expiry of the PWPA. The dismantling project for the MSF units, undertaken by the MSF Buyer, recorded 217,628 man-hours project to date with no Lost Time Accidents ("LTA"). The health and safety of employees, contractors, and visitors remain a top priority for the Company. The Company remains committed to maintaining the highest safety standards and ensuring that activities are completed without any LTAs. Operations During the period, the Plant generated 463,240 MWh of electricity. The three gas turbine units were cycled, as is typical for an open-cycle plant, and recorded an aggregate of 231 starts during the period. Annual maintenance works were completed during the winter period. On 29 March 2026, the Company conducted the Annual Performance Test to demonstrate the Plant's capacity for the forthcoming Contract Year commencing on 1st April 2026. The Company demonstrated power capacity in excess of the guaranteed figures on both Natural Gas and Fuel Oil. Financial Performance The Company ended the period with a net profit of ﷵ 1.0 million, compared with a net profit of ﷵ 19.9 million for the corresponding period in 2025. The variance is mainly attributable to other income arising from a debt write-off in 2025.		<table><tr><th></th><th>30 June 2026 ﷵ'000</th><th>31 Dec 2025 ﷵ'000</th><th>30 June 2026 USD'000</th><th>31 Dec 2025 USD'000</th></tr><tr><td>ASSETS</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Non-current assets</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Property, plant and equipment</td><td>18,076</td><td>19,192</td><td>46,951</td><td>49,849</td></tr><tr><td>Right-of-use asset</td><td>1,076</td><td>1,142</td><td>2,794</td><td>2,965</td></tr><tr><td></td><td><u>19,152</u></td><td><u>20,334</u></td><td><u>49,745</u></td><td><u>52,814</u></td></tr><tr><td>Current assets</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Inventories</td><td>764</td><td>834</td><td>1,984</td><td>2,167</td></tr><tr><td>Trade and other receivable</td><td>6,162</td><td>2,075</td><td>16,005</td><td>5,381</td></tr><tr><td>Bank 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WAR

Iran denied President Donald Trump’s claim that the Islamic republic asked the United States to refrain from conducting new strikes

President Donald Trump said that the US and Israel had agreed to hold off on new strikes on Iran — provided that a deal is reached rapidly

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and US President Donald Trump held a call aimed at reducing regional tensions



OPEC+ agreed to boost oil production by 188,000 barrels a day from September, against a backdrop of disruption caused by war

Tehran’s defence ministry views every threat from its adversaries as “real and credible” even if made as part of psychological warfare

Iran warned against any “adventurous action” and said it would retaliate decisively if Americans follow through on threats of fresh attacks



Ansar Allah activists stand on a platform against a banner depicting missiles in Sanaa. — Reuters

ANSAR ALLAH DENIES WANTING TO CHARGE BAB EL-MANDEB TOLLS

SANAA: Yemen’s Iran-backed Ansar Allah group denied seeking to charge ships for passage of the vital Bab al-Mandeb strait. It came after a minister in Yemen’s internationally recognised government claimed they were doing so. The Ansar Allah-aligned Saba news agency published a statement from the group’s HOCC agency which denied the accuracy of the reports. “The HOCC further emphasises that transit through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is free of charge,” the Ansar Allah-backed administrative agency said. On Wednesday, Yemen’s information minister Moammar al-Eryani accused the group of trying to imitate Iran’s efforts to impose tolls on the Strait of Hormuz, on the other side of the Arabian Peninsula. With Iran’s closure of Hormuz, the Bab al-Mandeb has gained increased importance as a transit route for Saudi oil. — AFP

US HOLDS OFF ON FRESH IRAN ATTACK

De-escalation comes after widening Mideast war

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has said the US will hold off on a fresh attack on Iran as long as a deal can be reached quickly to halt Iran’s nuclear ambitions and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Trump said late on Saturday on his Truth Social platform that Iran and other Middle Eastern countries had asked for time to complete a deal that would lead to “the Immediate, Complete and Total” reopening of the vital strait and “an end to Iran’s nuclear threat”. He did not name the countries in the post, which followed a call with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, a US ally. “Based on this request, I have agreed, for the future benefit of the WORLD and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL,” Trump wrote. Israel “joins me in this commitment”, he said.

Trump’s apparent de-escalation after days of threats of new attacks from each side was the latest twist in the war the US and Israel launched five months ago. Attacks have spread across the Gulf to the Red Sea and even a Mediterranean facility in Egypt. Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for 20% of the world’s oil and LNG before the war, causing energy prices to rise and stoking broader inflation. Eli Cohen, Israel’s energy minister and a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s security cabinet, said there was close security and intelligence coordination between Israel and the U.S. on everything happening in the region. But he added: “With or without an agreement,



People walk past a mural depicting the late leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and Iran’s late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on a street in Tehran. — Reuters

Attacks have spread across the Gulf to the Red Sea and even a Mediterranean facility in Egypt. Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for 20% of the world’s oil and LNG before the war, causing energy prices to rise and stoking broader inflation.

and regardless of any external commitments, if Iran attempts to renew its nuclear programme or advance its ballistic missile industries, we will be there. We will take action, and we will strike.” Trump and Netanyahu met on Tuesday in Washington, with an Israeli official saying they had explored all possible paths to curb Iran’s nuclear programme, including diplomacy, economic pressure and force. Tehran denies seeking a nuclear weapon. Iran’s acting defence minister, Brigadier General Majid Ebn Al-Reza, said Tehran viewed recent U.S. threats as “psychological and cognitive warfare” but was treating them seriously, adding that Iran would boost preparedness and

deterrence rather than be caught off guard or remain passive, Press TV reported. In his call with Trump, the Saudi crown prince stressed the “necessity of prioritising dialogue to de-escalate tensions” in the Middle East, according to Saudi Arabia’s state news agency. A White House official said that the two had spoken but did not provide details. At a cabinet meeting on Friday, Trump said he believed US negotiators, including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, could reach a deal with Iran. As an April ceasefire in the war unravelled last month, benchmark Brent crude futures jumped 24%, and analysts expect prices to rise further this year. — Reuters

Israeli strikes kill 13 in Gaza, minister says no deal to halt attacks

GAZA: Israeli air strikes hit Gaza for a second straight day on Sunday, killing at least 13 Palestinians, medics said, despite US President Donald Trump’s announcement of a breakthrough in efforts to implement last year’s Gaza ceasefire agreement. From dawn, Israeli warplanes hit Gaza City in the north, the central city of Deir al-Balah and the southern area of Khan Yunis, causing the biggest daily death toll in weeks, according to Palestinian health officials. Trump’s assertion on Thursday that Palestinian Hamas militants and other armed groups had agreed to disarm had raised hopes of a turning point in

Strikes on Deir al-Balah killed at least four people, Palestinian health officials said, and a separate attack wounded five people and set some tents ablaze in Mawasi near Khan Yunis. A couple and their 9-year-old son were also killed in a strike on a house in Mawasi



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a vehicle in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. — Reuters

the conflict. On Sunday, Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen - a member of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s security cabinet - told Israel’s Army Radio the government would give Hamas the opportunity to disarm but said he was “very sceptical” that would happen. Cohen added that there had been no deal to halt attacks on Gaza and that he saw a need for Israel - which already controls 70% of the enclave - to take full control of it if Hamas did not disarm. “In the deal we signed with the United States, our stance is that Hamas must be dismantled. This is the first thing that must

happen,” he added. Strikes on Deir al-Balah killed at least four people, Palestinian health officials said, and a separate attack wounded five people and set some tents ablaze in Mawasi near Khan Yunis, according to the civil emergency service. A couple and their 9-year-old son were also killed in a strike on a house in Mawasi, Palestinian officials said. Another couple was killed with their child in a strike on an apartment in Gaza City, where two more people died in a strike on a tent near the office of the Egyptian representative mission, medics said. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Law enforcement officers stand guard at the site of an explosion at a restaurant in Moscow. — Reuters

Bomber kills at least three, injures 21 near Moscow restaurant

MOSCOW: A homemade bomb carried by a woman killed at least three people and injured 21 near an upscale restaurant in central Moscow on Saturday evening, authorities said, amid unconfirmed speculation on social media that the attack may have been linked to the war in Ukraine.

The explosion occurred just before 8 pm close to an Italian restaurant located in one of Moscow’s seven Stalin-era skyscrapers at Kudrinskaya Square, the police said. Russia’s National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) said an unidentified woman carrying an improvised explosive device had tried to get into the restaurant but had been stopped by a security guard.

NAK said the woman, the guard and a customer at the Balzi Rossi Italian restaurant had been killed instantly in the blast that followed. REN TV cited a source on Sunday as saying that two people who had been taken to hospital had later died of their wounds, bringing the death toll to five, though there was no official confirmation. REN TV said six people remained in a serious condition. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin on Sunday offered his condolences to the families of those killed and said those responsible would be punished. — **Reuters**

South Korea records its highest-ever temperature of 42.5C



A boy plays in a fountain to cool off in Seoul. — AFP

SEOUL: South Korea registered its highest temperature since records began more than a century ago on Sunday, as authorities warned people to “immediately” stop all outdoor activities in affected areas. The southeastern city of Yangsan saw the temperature reach 42.5°C at 1:26 pm, the Korea Meteorological Administration said on its website.

Yangsan has been the epicentre of the ongoing heatwave, where temperatures exceeded 40°C for a fifth consecutive day on Sunday, while many other cities including Daegu and Busan are seeing temperatures climb into the high 30s. People flocked to air-conditioned shopping malls or cafes to escape the blistering temperatures, a reporter saw.

More than 20 localities were under emergency heatwave alerts on Sunday — a new warning category introduced this year to better address rising temperatures. An emergency alert is issued when areas experiencing a heatwave are forecast to hit perceived temperatures of 38°C or an actual temperature of 39°C for the day. Issuing a heat warning, the weather agency urged people to “immediately stop all outdoor activities”, adding that “indoor spaces without air conditioning are dangerous”. — **AFP**

INFLUX FATALITIES

At least 72 died in Ceuta migrant rush



At least 72 people died during the mass influx in recent days of migrants into Spain’s Ceuta enclave, when tens of thousands of people mostly swam around the border post from Morocco. “The latest figure that we have is 72,” the government’s delegate to Ceuta, Miguel Angel Perez Triano, told reporters, when asked about the number of fatalities. Spanish police and troops patrolled the streets of Ceuta on Sunday as the enclave largely returned to normal. — **AFP**

UK PM BURNHAM SIGNALS SUPPORT FOR WRITTEN CONSTITUTION

LONDON: Britain’s new Prime Minister Andy Burnham has signalled his support for a written constitution for the UK, which unlike most countries, does not have one authoritative document. Since entering office just two weeks ago, the former mayor of Greater Manchester has made devolution of power to regional authorities a focus of his administration.

“In the end, I think it does start to point towards a new constitutional settlement,” Burnham said of his devolution plans on the weekend. Calling for a “new clear set of

principles about how this country should be run”, Burnham said there was a need for a written constitution — something he has called for before he was prime minister. “It’s wrong that people are left arguing for things that are just fundamental... and the lack of a constitution disempowers places in that situation,” said Burnham.

A parliamentary committee considered options for codifying the constitution in a five-year review, which concluded in 2015 that there was no clear consensus. Any serious attempt to codify the constitution

by Burnham would be a years-long process likely requiring a major public inquiry and consultations. Burnham on Friday announced plans to allow regional mayors in England to keep a share of taxes collected in their area, part of his drive to transfer power out of the highly centralised nation’s capital. The UK — comprising England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — saw significant constitutional reforms in the late 1990s that created devolved parliaments in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. — **AFP**

Greece battles wildfires, as Europe faces tense heat

GREEK FIREFIGHTERS battled on Sunday to control a huge wildfire that has destroyed over 100 homes northwest of Athens, while a fresh blaze forced evacuations on the popular tourist island of Kefalonia. Europe has been ravaged by wildfires this summer after a period of record-breaking heatwaves and little rain - conditions that scientists say have been exacerbated by climate change.

Destructive blazes in France and Spain showed signs of easing over the weekend, but several wildfires have broken out in Greece after a period of relative calm there. Gale-force winds that fuelled the fire around Porto Germeno on the Gulf of Corinth 60 km northwest of Athens have subsided, but flames crossed a mountain to the south and reached the settlement of Veniza and a military firing range, activating unexploded ordnance.

Nearly 500 Greek firefighters equipped with vehicles, heavy machinery and firefighting aircraft have been deployed, reinforced by France and Romania.



Volunteers and Greek firefighters work to extinguish a wildfire near Porto Germeno, northwest of Athens. — AFP

In the village of Agios Konstantinos, residents were doing their best to halt the spread of the blaze. “The fire has been burning since last night, it is certain that they cannot have forces everywhere. We as residents are doing everything we can,” said Tasos Tzempelikos, 61, who along with his son was pouring water on the fire.

Greek daily Protothema reported that a major effort was under way to prevent the fire from Veniza from reaching the nearby coastal town of Megara. It said more than 10,000 hectares of land had likely been destroyed

by the fire so far. Overnight, several settlements on the Ionian island of Kefalonia were evacuated after a fire broke out in the Pastra area in the south.

In France, wildfires in the Gironde and Var departments showed signs of easing. Authorities reported only minor flare-ups in the southwestern Gironde area and said the blaze in the southeastern Var department had not spread overnight.

In central Spain, wildfires that ripped through tens of thousands of hectares over the past week were mostly under control, though firefighters were dealing

with re-ignitions in some areas. In the western province of Caceres, a forest blaze erupted on Saturday, prompting the evacuation of around 800 people. Those residents were allowed to return on Sunday but remain confined to their homes as the fire remain active.

Other European countries are struggling with drought and receding water levels in major rivers, including the Rhine and the Danube, which recorded its lowest-ever water levels in Hungary, Serbia and Romania. Hungary faces a critical five days, Prime Minister Peter Magyar said on Sunday, as the drying out of the Danube forced the country’s sole nuclear power plant to shut for the first time in over four decades, with a new heatwave looming.

Falls in water levels amid a lack of rain have also disrupted shipping and tourism in Hungary and triggered water-use restrictions in more than 100 cities and villages. Danube levels in Serbia fell to their lowest since 1985, cutting the daily output of the country’s biggest hydropower plant to only 20 per cent, the country’s energy minister said on Sunday. — **Reuters**



FIVE DEAD, 41 MISSING IN INDONESIA FERRY FIRE

JAKARTA: An Indonesian ferry caught fire at sea on Sunday, killing five people and leaving another 41 missing after some jumped overboard, search and rescue officials said. A total of 225 people on the vessel were rescued, said the regional Surabaya Search and Rescue Agency, which provided the latest figures in an afternoon update. Some passengers jumped into the sea and were picked up by a nearby ship, according to Basarnas, Indonesia’s National Search and Rescue Agency.

Four other vessels were on standby near the ferry but could not approach because of the risk posed by flammable material on the ferry, it said. The captain had called the ferry company to report the fire as the vessel sailed from Surabaya in East Java to Makassar in South Sulawesi, Basarnas said. The captain had not been in contact since then, it said.

A larger rescue operation was heading to the site from Surabaya, a six-hour journey from the site of the disaster, Basarnas said. “Based on preliminary reports from the field, passengers are waiting to be evacuated by the vessels in the vicinity of the incident site,” said Muhammad Masyhud, a senior official at the Ministry of Transportation. “The safety of passengers and crew is our top priority. We are continuously coordinating with all relevant parties to ensure that the evacuation process can proceed quickly, safely, and effectively,” he said in a statement. — **AFP**

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

13 killed in tourist plane crash in Peru



A small plane carrying foreign tourists to view Peru’s famed Nazca Lines archaeological site crashed, killing all 13 people on board, police said. Seven Italians, two Germans and two Spaniards were killed, along with two crew members, and that the victims were aged shortly after 1:00 pm after the Cessna 208 Caravan aircraft took off from the airport in Pisco, located about 240 kilometres south of the capital Lima. — **AFP**

CONTROLLING UNREST

Sri Lanka deploys troops after prison riot



Sri Lanka deployed hundreds of troops and elite commandos to contain riots at an overcrowded prison in which one inmate was killed and six others wounded. Deputy police inspector-general Sanjeeva Medawatte said the situation was under control inside Mahara Prison. “We got reinforcements from the armed forces and the Special Task Force commandos to restore order and send the inmates back to their cells,” Medawatte said. — **AFP**

OPINION

Innovation, adaptability key to universities’ future



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

AS WE head into another academic year, the headlines in many social media platforms and mainstream journals are getting predictable: universities in Europe, North America and Asia are downsizing, mainly targeting the colleges which offer courses in the Humanities. The most recent controversy surrounded the University of Essex in the UK, which is closing its Modern Languages department, even closing its entire Southend-on-Sea campus, which has led to 400 faculty job losses. Nor is this the only case of mass layoffs in higher education. Across the world, universities are grappling with a shortage of funding due to lower student enrolment in public universities, increasing scepticism about university degrees and their contribution to employment. There is also the spiralling cost of university education which leaves students with life-long student loans, even when the very jobs they studied for are disappearing. Such a situation gives fodder for those who declare that universities as we know them today are outliving their usefulness. But such cynics don’t provide any alternatives or ways forward. Data around the decline of university enrolment is self-evident. North America has seen more than a 30 per cent drop in year-on-year enrolment and Europe is not far behind, with a 26 per cent drop. The factors are many, but most importantly, it is because public universities still depend on traditional courses, methodology and

pedagogy, with no clear commitment to changing student needs. According to the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025, approximately 39 per cent of workers’ core skills are expected to change by 2030. The implications are clear: universities need an urgent overhaul to equip graduates with competencies that are future-ready. Otherwise, they risk becoming outmoded venues of rote learning. Continuing innovation and adaptation are at their core. Universities have been traditionally known to be spaces for innovative ideas and cutting-edge technology. Today, they are expected to not only generate new knowledge, but also translate research into practical solutions through collaboration with industry, governments and the community. The Times Higher Education states that “University leaders must nurture a creative environment in which new ideas can flourish if they are to future-proof higher education institutions”. This can be done by actively moving away from traditional, teacher-centric models and encouraging innovation, risk-taking and community engagement. While research is closely linked to university missions, pedagogy is an equally important component of tertiary education. In this aspect, universities will benefit from actively engaging with learner needs and styles to create an environment that encourages creativity and reflects contemporary needs. Sustainable education consists of sharing,

Universities will benefit from actively engaging with learner needs and styles to create an environment that encourages creativity and reflects contemporary needs

not just content and facts, but also affective skills like critical thinking, as well as ethical values of environmental protection. To this end, universities need to be nimble-footed and adapt to a swiftly changing environment. With growing competition from online learning platforms, often freely available, as well as competitive private education providers, it will be more difficult to get young students to enrol in a four-year programme with few measurable outcomes. Solutions include diversification of programmes offered, strengthening of industry partnerships and introducing sustainable financial models. From learner’s perspective, universities can be viewed, not only as institutions that provide professional futures, but also as offering opportunities for networking, personal growth and intellectual exploration. Universities contribute to students’ sense of identity and sense of belonging. Campus life provides opportunities to explore various interests while developing confidence, independence and emotional maturity. These experiences shape graduates who are not merely skilled employees but informed, ethical and engaged members of society. Rather than decry the value of university education, stakeholders would benefit from ensuring that higher education is meaningful in all its dimensions. For that to happen, universities themselves need to be ready to innovate and continually reimagine themselves.

MIGRANTS FLEE CEUTA AMID HUNGER, HOSTILITY

AHMED EL JECHTIMI & CORINA PONS

Migrants who swam or jumped over fences to rush into Spain’s African enclave of Ceuta were returning home, with many saying hunger, exhaustion and hostility from locals had crushed their hopes of a new life in Europe. Those heading back said they had initially been drawn by viral social-media videos and messages from friends suggesting that the heavily guarded border could be breached. But after reaching Ceuta, many said they found no way to continue onwards to mainland Spain. “We came to make progress, not to be fooled,” said Brahim, a bakery worker from Fez who left his job and crossed the border after watching clips of thousands doing the same. “I thought I’d build a better future there. But I was surprised in Ceuta.” Brahim said he survived for three days on water alone and could not afford the high food prices on the Spanish side. “How come a tuna sandwich was being sold for 100 dirhams?” In Fnideq, the Moroccan city opposite Ceuta, Reuters saw nearly empty streets leading to the border crossing, a stark contrast to the thousands who had gathered there. Young men walked away from the frontier along the highway or waited for taxis to leave Fnideq, where shops have also been closed for days. The returnees’ accounts included repeated complaints of shuttered supermarkets and shops, leaving them searching for food and water while their soaked clothes dried on the streets. “Ceuta was like a prison - nothing to do there. Everything was closed,” said a worker at Morocco’s Tanger Med port, who declined to give his name because he was due back at work. Some migrants also accused residents of El Principe, a predominantly Moroccan neighbourhood in Ceuta, of attacking or driving them out. Moroccan waiter Yassine Ichou described being hit and chased away from El Principe. “They imposed a siege to force us to leave Ceuta by ourselves ... They succeeded in their plan,” he added, referring to the widespread shop closures. Spain’s Interior Ministry said two people sustained minor injuries from knife attacks in two separate incidents and police had arrested one of the assailants. — Reuters

Bahla: Where folklore and the mind converge

SOME PLACES behave as if they have opinions. You arrive expecting walls, paths and a bit of history and suddenly you become more careful with your steps, listen more closely and act as if the place might be paying attention. Nothing happens. Absolutely nothing. Yet your brain decides this is not the moment for confidence or loud jokes. Many people then give that feeling a name, using whatever language their culture offers first. One person says “ghost.” Another says “jinn.” A third says, “No, thank you,” and heads back to the car. Before anyone treats that feeling as proof of anything supernatural, it helps to remember how the brain works. The mind guesses, fills gaps and tries to keep people safe. In low light, under stress or when someone is tired, the brain can misread shapes and sounds and turn them into something that feels present and close. Sleep paralysis offers a clear example. People wake up mentally while the body remains briefly unable to move and many report a strong sense that someone else is nearby, often with shadowy forms and fear. The experience feels real, even though it comes from known brain processes. Buildings add their own contribution. Materials expand and contract. Air moves through narrow spaces. Sound travels in ways that feel deliberate even when it is not. Some studies have suggested that very low-frequency sound can trigger unease, feeding the sense that something unseen is nearby. Expectation then does the rest.



The stories linked to Bahla do not sound like claims that need proof.



DR KHALFAN BIN HAMED AL HARRASI

The writer is an academic and researcher

It is an uncomfortable reminder that some ghost stories have ended not with discovery, but with a faulty heater and a working alarm that saved lives

When someone is told a place has a reputation, the mind starts scanning for confirmation. Ordinary noises gain meaning. Normal shadows feel intentional. There is also a far less mysterious explanation that appears in discussions of hauntings, namely carbon monoxide exposure. Low levels can cause confusion, fear and experiences that feel unreal. It is an uncomfortable reminder that some ghost stories have ended not with discovery, but with a faulty heater and a working alarm that saved lives. It is the least exciting explanation, which may explain why it often gets ignored. Bahla, a town in Oman, enters conversations about jinn and ghosts. Nobody introduces it properly. Someone mentions the fort, another person pauses for half a second too long, someone throws in a story about people turning into goats and ending up in the market and then everyone suddenly remembers something else they were supposed

to be talking about. The stories linked to Bahla do not sound like claims that need proof. They sound like habits people never bothered to break. Repetition does most of the work. Over time, belief becomes optional. The story stays anyway. In Oman, these stories do not follow the ghost scripts people see in films. The conversation turns to jinn and the mood changes because this is inside belief and scripture. That is the point where enthusiasm quietly leaves the room. Jinn are not there for entertainment or bravery tests. If a place feels uncomfortable, nobody pulls out a camera or decides to investigate. People pray, keep a respectful distance and continue with life. From a cultural point of view, that response makes sense. From a psychological one, it does too. Fear shortens curiosity very quickly. Bahla Fort carries much of this atmosphere simply by existing. A structure that old, restored, protected and recognised for its heritage value does not invite simple explanations. People look at it and feel that effort alone does not tell the whole story, so another layer appears. Work completed faster than logic would prefer. The details change, but the idea stays steady. Thick walls make footsteps sound more serious than they are. Narrow paths stretch shadows in unhelpful ways. Sometimes a place changes how people behave for no clear reason. Sometimes the mind responds by attaching a story. And sometimes, leaving that story unfinished feels wiser than forcing an answer. Welcome to Bahla.

A question changes shape every time you answer it



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHANI

The writer is author, translator and communications professional

SUCCESS is one of those words that sounds simple until you try to define it. Ask ten people what it means, and you are likely to receive ten different answers. Each response is shaped by personal experience, culture, ambition, and even pain. In a world that often measures achievement through numbers and titles, the meaning of success remains far more complex.

What becomes clear is that success is not a fixed idea. It shifts as people grow, face challenges, and reassess what truly matters to them. The goals of youth often differ from the reflections of later life, when time itself becomes a teacher of priorities.

Perhaps the most important realisation is that success does not look the same for everyone, and it was never meant to. The danger lies not in failing to meet a universal standard, but in uncritically adopting someone else's definition as your own.

Interestingly, failure plays a central role in shaping how many people understand success. Some view failure as its opposite, a sign of inadequacy or loss. Others see it as part of the journey. From this perspective, failure is not the end of success but its foundation. Each setback becomes a lesson,

each mistake a step forward.

In fact, success itself behaves strangely as a concept. It never stays still long enough to be measured with certainty. It changes shape depending on who is observing it like light passing through different windows, never falling the same way twice.

For a child, success might be reaching the top of a slide without fear. For a student, it could be passing an exam after nights of doubt and struggle. For someone older, it might be a morning without regret, a conversation that heals rather than hurts, or a life that finally feels like it belongs to them. Yet somewhere along the way, the world often attempts to standardise it.

Success is frequently dressed in loud symbols: titles, salaries, certificates, and applause. It is displayed like a trophy to be won and polished for others to admire. In this version of the story, success becomes competitive; a race with invisible runners and constantly shifting finish lines. But not everyone chooses to run that race.

There are people who define success in silence. Among them is the shopkeeper who keeps the doors open for another year, the teacher who notices the student on the edge of giving up, the parent who comes home tired yet still listens, and the young person

What becomes clear is that success is not a fixed idea. It shifts as people grow, face challenges, and reassess what truly matters to them. The goals of youth often differ from the reflections of later life, when time itself becomes a teacher of priorities

who chooses to begin again after everything has fallen apart. No headlines are written about these moments, yet they carry a different kind of weight.

Perhaps success is not a peak at all, but a direction. It can look like persistence rather than arrival. It is found in the decision to continue when quitting would be easier. In this sense, failure is not the opposite of success but part of its journey. Every mistake becomes a sentence in a longer story that is still being written.

Some people come to understand this only after failure reshapes them — when plans collapse and expectations break. From that experience, a different awareness emerges that falling short of one definition does not remove the possibility of another.

Success, then, begins to lose its firm form. It starts to include peace that is earned rather than inherited, courage that is quiet but consistent, and growth that no one else may notice but you have lived through.

In the end, the question “What does success mean to you?” is less about finding a perfect answer and more about understanding oneself. And perhaps that is the real success that the courage to define your own path in a world that is constantly trying to define it for you.

When rogue AI launches a cyberattack, who is legally responsible?

THOMAS URBAIN

Recent cyberattacks carried out autonomously by two rogue OpenAI artificial intelligence models raise an untested legal question: who is responsible when AI acts on its own?

On Friday, Clement Delangue, head of the Hugging Face platform targeted by the intrusions, said there should be a way to “keep the companies that are doing some mistakes leading to (cyberattacks) accountable,” while saying his company would not be pursuing legal action at this time.

In mid-July, two OpenAI models undergoing testing left their confined environment — a scenario the developers had not anticipated — and ventured onto the Internet, where they attacked Hugging Face, an AI model-hosting platform.

Delangue also mentioned Anthropic, which revealed last Thursday that three of its models had broken into three different websites, also during testing. Under US civil and criminal law, unauthorised access to a computer system is an offence. “If a human OpenAI employee had broken into Hugging Face’s systems... OpenAI would be liable for the employee’s wrongful conduct,” University of Houston law professor Gabriel Weil wrote in an opinion piece for a newsletter.

“When an AI agent does it, the law treats it very differently, at least for now,” he added.

Matthew Tokson, a University of Utah law professor who focuses on new technologies, had a similar view, saying “we haven’t had to grapple with that being formed in anything that’s not human, and I don’t think courts are likely to be there yet.”

The question remains open, however, when it comes to the company that created the model.

“Does ‘we didn’t tell the AI to do that’ end the liability question?” asked Rob T Lee, head of research at the SANS cybersecurity training institute, in a post on X. University of Washington law professor Ryan Calo does not believe a criminal case would be likely to succeed.

“The company or individual would have to be at least reckless,” he said, explaining they would “be substantially certain the crime would occur and build or prompt the system anyway.”

Experts see greater potential for a civil — rather than criminal — case, where the burden of proof is lower.

“Some people think that AI companies should be strictly liable if an AI agent that they deploy totally breaks out, causes damages,” Tokson explained.

“Others would prefer to do like a negligence assessment and see if they were actually negligent or if this was just sort of an unavoidable accident or something that couldn’t possibly have been foreseen,” he added.

In such cases, there is a standard of care in product design that judges or juries can use to make a ruling, Tokson continued. “It’s all a bit unwritten because we’ve never had an AI agent break out of its sandbox and hack other people on the Internet before,” he said. — AFP

The past is denser than the history we tell

THE PAST is not history, though history is about the past. The past is everything that happened and is now beyond our reach. History is what we construct from the traces left behind: documents, testimony, physical remains and inherited accounts.

We never encounter the past exactly as it was. We approach something absent through what happened to survive it. Yet this limitation makes the attempt more important, not less. Our present is the outcome of a path that might have taken another course. Unless we understand how it came into being, we cannot distinguish what is necessary from what is accidental, or what we have chosen from what we merely inherited.

Consider a familiar historical statement: in AD 711, Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed from North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula.

The sentence appears complete. Yet it barely touches the surface of the event. The crossing required men to be assembled, ships prepared, provisions secured and knowledge of the passage and coastline obtained. It required political authority, material resources and conditions on the opposite shore that made a landing possible.

To say “Tariq crossed” is useful shorthand. But it assigns to one celebrated man an achievement that depended on many people whose names the record did not preserve.

Nor is it enough to say that the crossing occurred because Tariq wanted it to. Intention explains purpose, not capacity. A person may desire something and be unable to achieve it. He may possess the means but lack the opportunity. Intention and capacity may both exist, only to meet an obstacle no one anticipated.

Historical outcomes usually emerge from a meeting of motives, conditions, opportunities, impediments and accidents. To identify one cause is not necessarily to explain an event.

Who assembled Tariq’s force and prepared its ships? Why was that particular landing point chosen? How much did the men know about the country they were approaching? We do not possess conclusive answers to every such question.



HAMED S
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Some surviving accounts are late or contradictory. We must therefore distinguish what is established from what is probable, and both from what is merely possible.

Questions do not lose their value when the evidence cannot settle them. They reveal how much a concise account leaves unsaid. A fact may be correct without being complete.

Even a testimony from Tariq himself would not have explained the entire event. An actor may know some of his purposes without understanding everything that shaped his conduct. Nor can we understand an action only by identifying its causes. We must also ask what it meant in the language and moral world of those who performed it.

We regard the crossing as a major military operation. Some participants may have understood it as obedience to an order, an opportunity for wealth or the fulfilment of a religious duty. We cannot assert any of these motives without evidence. But the question matters, because two actions that look alike may belong to very different worlds of meaning.

The route Tariq took also reminds us of routes he did not take. Before an event occurs, it is surrounded by possibilities. Afterwards, one possibility hardens into fact while the others fade from view.

Yet an alternative that appears possible on a modern map may have been impossible without ships, supplies or local knowledge. It may be visible to us but unknown to those living at the time. Imagining an alternative does not prove that it was available. Possibility helps us ask better questions; evidence determines what we may claim.

Success creates another illusion. Because Tariq crossed, we may assume the passage was easy. But arrival does not prove the absence of obstacles. It may indicate good preparation, weak resistance, outside assistance or circumstances that no surviving source recorded. Silence in the record is not always silence in the event. Our knowledge of what followed also changes the meaning of the crossing. We see it as the beginning of a Muslim presence in Iberia that lasted for centuries. Those

who boarded the ships could not know that future. The endurance of al-Andalus was not an accomplished fact at the moment of landing, nor were subsequent events contained in the crossing as an inescapable destiny.

The past, when it was present, opened on to an unknown future. We view it from the other end. Once we know the conclusion, we rearrange what came before as though every step had led towards it. When a state rises, we search its past for signs of its inevitable ascent. When it falls, every earlier crisis becomes a warning that supposedly foretold its collapse. This is hindsight masquerading as explanation.

Even the beginning of an event is not self-evident. When did Tariq’s crossing begin: when the decision was taken, when the force was assembled, or when the ships moved? A historian does not discover the first cause simply by choosing a starting point. He selects the point most relevant to his question and evidence. The past does not divide itself into ready-made chapters.

The difference between readers of the past therefore lies not only in how many facts they know, but in the questions they ask. One reader says: Tariq crossed the sea. Another asks what made the crossing possible, whose labour disappeared behind the commander’s name, what alternatives existed, what the action meant to its participants, and what the surviving evidence genuinely permits us to conclude.

A serious reader is distinguished not by the abundance of his interpretations, but by his ability to discipline them: to separate established fact from probable inference, plausible supposition and the unknowable. The past is dense; the account is thin.

We cannot recover the past in full. We can, however, approach it by asking better questions and matching the strength of our conclusions to the strength of our evidence. If we applied such scrutiny to our own past, we would reconsider many apparently complete national stories. We might reassess the heroes to whom whole events are attributed, recover the agency of those whose names disappeared and distinguish what the evidence supports from what memory later supplied.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Action from Oman Club's 4-1 victory over Bahla in the Jindal Youth League.

OMAN CLUB, SAMAYIL, SAHAM AND IBRI MAKE WINNING STARTS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 2

Oman Club, Samayil, Saham and Ibri opened their Jindal Youth League campaigns with victories as the inaugural competition kicked off with six matches across its two groups.

In Group One, Oman Club recorded the biggest victory of the opening round, defeating Bahla 4-1 at Al Seeb Club's Al Baha's ground. The result placed Oman Club at the top of the group on goal difference.

Samayil also collected three points following a 2-1 victory over Dhofar, moving into second place behind Oman Club. Sur and Al Nasr shared the points after their encounter ended in a 2-2 draw.

Oman Club and Samayil lead Group One with three points each, followed by Sur and Al Nasr on one point apiece. Al Seeb, who received a bye in the opening round, are yet to begin their campaign, while Dhofar and Bahla remain without a point.

In Group Two, Saham secured a strong opening victory after defeating hosts Al Rustaq 3-1 at Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Ibri matched Saham's result with a 3-1 win over Al Nahda, leaving both teams level on three points and a goal difference of plus two. Saham occupy top spot, followed by Ibri.

The North Al Batinah derby between Al Khabourah and Sohar ended in a 1-1 draw, giving both clubs their first point of the competition. Al Shabab sat out the opening round.

The second round will be played today, Monday, with another six matches scheduled across the two venues.

Group One action begins at 6 pm as Dhofar take on Al Nasr, while Sur face Bahla. Oman Club will then meet Al Seeb at 7:20 pm, with Samayil receiving a bye.

In Group Two, Ibri face Sohar at 6 pm, while Al Khabourah meet leaders Saham. The round concludes at 7:20 pm when Al Rustaq take on Al Shabab, who will be making their first appearance in the competition. Al Nahda will sit out the second round.

The league's opening stage is being contested in a single round-robin format, with the top two clubs from each group advancing to the knockout semifinals.



Action from Oman Club's 4-1 victory over Bahla in the Jindal Youth League.



Action from the Junior Hockey5s League final between Al Amerat and Qurayat 'A'.

Al Amerat lift Junior Hockey5s League title



Individual award winners with officials during the closing ceremony of the Junior Hockey5s League.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 2

AL AMERAT were crowned champions of the 2026 Junior Hockey5s League after defeating Qurayat 'A' 3-1 in the final at the Hockey Oman Stadium in Al Amerat.

The tournament, organised by the Oman Hockey Association (OHA) from July 31 to August 1, brought together 80 young players representing eight teams and produced an impressive total of 135 goals.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Khalid bin Khamis al Jaradi, Director of the Wadi Al Maawil Municipality Department, in the presence of officials, representatives of the participating clubs and members of the hockey community.

The eight teams were divided into two groups. Group One comprised Al Amerat, Qurayat 'B', Oman Club and Al Bashayer,



Al Amerat captain receives the championship trophy after the team's 3-1 final victory.

while Group Two featured Al Seeb, Qurayat 'A', Fanja and Nizwa.

Al Amerat delivered a dominant performance throughout the competition. They opened their campaign with a convincing 12-0 victory over Oman Club before defeating Al Bashayer 8-0. They completed the group stage with a 4-0 win over Qurayat 'B' to finish top of Group One and secure their place in the final.

Qurayat 'A' emerged as the leading team in Group Two following strong victories over Al Seeb and Nizwa. They defeated Al Seeb 8-3 before recording a 9-1 win over Nizwa to book a meeting with Al Amerat in the title decider.

The final witnessed a competitive display from both sides, but Al Amerat maintained their composure and converted their chances to register a 3-1 victory, securing the championship title, while Qurayat 'A' finished as runners-up. Other results on the opening day saw

Qurayat 'B' defeat Al Bashayer 4-1, Al Seeb overcome Nizwa 4-1 and Qurayat 'A' beat Al Seeb 8-3.

On the second day, Qurayat 'B' recorded an 11-0 victory over Oman Club, Nizwa defeated Fanja 4-1, Al Bashayer beat Oman Club 5-2 and Al Seeb secured an 11-0 win against Fanja. Al Amerat then defeated Qurayat 'B' 4-0, while Qurayat 'A' overcame Nizwa 9-1.

Qurayat's Saad bin Salim al Fazari claimed the tournament's top-scorer award after netting 13 goals. Al Amerat goalkeeper Yousuf bin Mohammed al Ghammari was named Best Goalkeeper, while his team-mate Hazaa bin Ibrahim al Fawri received the Best Player award.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the chief guest presented medals and individual awards before handing the championship trophy to Al Amerat captain amid celebrations by the players and coaching staff.

TOPRANKING



Photo of the sailor competing in the Euro Cup Series.

OMAN SAIL’S HIGH PERFORMANCE 29ER TEAM SET FOR ACTION AT EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS IN CZECHIA

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 2

Oman Sail’s high-performance 29er squad is preparing to take to the water at the 2026 29er European Championships, held on the scenic waters of Lake Lipno, Czech Republic, from August 1-8, 2026. Organised by Jachetní klub Černá v Pošumaví in conjunction with the International 29er Class Association, the championship will host up to 18 high-octane races as elite youth skiff sailors from across the continent gather to compete for honours. Representing the nation over the course of the week-long event will be the talented pairs of Tamim al Balushi & Firas al Nabhani and Saud al Shaqsi & Saleh al Balushi. The delegation will be led by Team Leader Zakariya al Wahabi and French coach Fabrice Jaunet, both focused on guiding the young sailors through a demanding schedule of up to four races per day per fleet. The team arrives with strong momentum from recent international fixtures across Europe. At Kieler Woche 2026 in Germany 24–29 June, Tamim Al Balushi and Firas Al Nabhani delivered an impressive performance by finishing 36th overall in the Gold Fleet. This follows their solid outings at the Euro Cup Series in Lake Garda, Italy, in May, where Tamim al Balushi & Saleh al Balushi secured a top 10 finish in the Silver Fleet.

Meanwhile, the pairing of Saud al Shaqsi & Firas al Nabhani also showed exceptional pace in Garda’s Silver Fleet, placing 21st overall and claiming a memorable victory in the ninth race of the ten-race series.

Zakariya al Wahabi, Team Leader, said, “Our high performance 29er team has made significant strides in racing maturity and both tactical and technical development over the summer.

Following strong performances in Italy and Germany against world-class fleets, the European Championship on Lake Lipnom provides another vital platform to test our sailors and support their ongoing growth as high performance athletes. The entire team is focused, motivated, and eager to represent the nation with pride on the international stage.” Fabrice Jaunet, 29er Team Coach, added, “Lake Lipno offers a dynamic freshwater racing environment that will test the fleet’s adaptability and technical discipline. The team has shown great speed and resilience throughout our European tour, particularly with standout fleet finishes and race wins against top competition. We have been fine-tuning our racing, especially the starts and strategic positioning to maximise our results across all 18 races and aim for another solid outing at the 29er European Championships.”

Racing kicks off with the Qualifying Series from August 3-5, before the fleet splits into the Final Series from August 6-8, culminating in the prize-giving ceremony on the evening of August 8. The 2026 29er European Championships represent a critical benchmark in Oman Sail’s summer high-performance pipeline. Following the regatta, the squad will immediately transition into intensive training ahead of their primary objective of the season: competing at the 20th Asian Games in Gamagori, Japan, in September 2026.

Oman Sail’s commitment to developing the youth of Oman extends beyond sailing by providing opportunities for life-long learning and leadership development where the skills learned on the water and in a high-performance environment can be applied to a multitude of situations.



The delegation includes 12 promising players representing different age groups.

Oman junior golf teams gear up with Kazakhstan



The OGA continues to prioritise youth development through overseas training camps, international competition and strategic partnerships.



The camp will conclude with an international friendly tournament involving the participating teams.

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 2

OMAN’S JUNIOR national golf teams are continuing their preparations for upcoming regional and continental competitions through a joint international training camp in Almaty, Kazakhstan, running from July 31 to August 7. The camp forms part of the Oman Golf Association’s long-term development programme aimed at enhancing the technical, physical and competitive readiness of its young players.

The initiative reflects the growing partnership between the Oman Golf Association (OGA) and the Kazakhstan Golf Federation, which has expanded in recent years through technical cooperation, knowledge exchange and joint development programmes designed to strengthen the sport in both countries.

The training camp features intensive daily practice sessions under the supervision of the national coaching staff, alongside competitive rounds that simulate tournament conditions. The programme is designed to sharpen technical skills, improve physical preparation and expose players to different coaching methods and playing styles, providing valuable international experience ahead of future championships. The camp will conclude with an international friendly tournament involving the participating teams.

In addition to Oman and Kazakhstan, the Kazakhstan Golf Federation has invited Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to compete, giving Omani golfers the opportunity to test themselves against a variety of Asian opponents while assessing the progress achieved during the training programme.

The Omani delegation is headed by Faiz Mohammed Riyadh, Vice-Chairman of the

Oman Golf Association. The technical team is led by coach Jonathan, assisted by Fahad al Kitani, while Nickel Sampt and Ahmed al Jahdhami oversee the administrative responsibilities.

The delegation includes 12 promising players representing different age groups: Moheeb al Kathiri, Mohammed al Junaidi, Mohammed al Nabhani, Taimur al Busaidy, Yousef al Rumhi, Waleed al Sharji, Ibrahim Riyadh, Ahmed al Harthy, Anas al Kathiri, Mirairi Sambat, Heba al Nabhani, and Yasmeen al Kathiri.

Speaking about the camp, Vice-Chairman Faiz Mohammed Riyadh described it as an important milestone in the association’s player development strategy and a continuation of the successful partnership established between the Omani and Kazakh golf federations. He noted that the collaboration began with official meetings in Muscat and has since developed into joint youth programmes, including

previous exchange visits and friendly competitions.

Riyadh said the inclusion of additional Asian teams in the closing tournament would provide Omani golfers with high-level competitive exposure and valuable international experience. He also praised the players’ commitment, discipline and determination throughout the camp, highlighting that several Under-13 golfers are taking part in their first overseas training experience — an opportunity that will help build confidence and prepare them for future international competition.

The Oman Golf Association (OGA) continues to prioritise youth development through overseas training camps, international competition and strategic partnerships, reinforcing its vision of producing a new generation of golfers capable of representing Oman with distinction on the regional, Asian and international stage.

SPORTS



Jodar embraces lessons from French Open breakthrough amid youth surge.

Fritz meets Jodar in Washington final

AMERICAN THIRD seed Taylor Fritz overcame a second-set wobble to beat compatriot Brandon Nakashima 6-3 3-6 6-2 on Saturday and reach the Washington Open final.

The world number 10 advanced to the 23rd ATP final of his career after striking 13 aces and 24 winners while committing 16 unforced errors, compared with Nakashima's 27.

Fritz took control of a tight opening set when he moved 4-3 ahead before earning the decisive break. The 28-year-old then served out the set in 34 minutes.

Nakashima, seeking his first ATP 500 final, responded strongly in the second set. He broke Fritz to go 3-1 up, held to love for a 5-2 lead and closed out the set two games later to force a decider.

Fritz regained control from the outset in the third set, breaking in the second game before holding to love for a 3-0 advantage. He maintained the pressure to seal victory and book his place in the final, where he will face Spain's Rafael Jodar.



Taylor Fritz (USA) serves against Zizou Bergs (GER) (not pictured) on day one of the Mubadala DC Open 2026 at Rock Creek Park Tennis Center. — **Imagn Images**

“Grabbing that break in the third set made the difference,” Fritz said. “It was really a narrow margin the whole time. Not a lot of chances either way.”

“First set I took my chance, in the second set he did. I played a really good break point in the third set, and I dug very deep to just keep holding.”

Later on Saturday, Jodar

fought back from a set down to clinch a 6-7(6) 6-4 6-4 victory over Chile's Alejandro Tabilo.

“I knew I was playing well, having opportunities,” Jodar said.

“Accepting all the moments that I didn't break in the first set and the beginning of the second set, accepting those moments helped me get the break in the second set.”

“From then, I started playing with more rhythm with my serve, so mentally I was very good today.”

The win was a reminder of Jodar's remarkable rise over the past few months, with Tabilo having won the last meeting between the pair 6-1 6-2 in March at Indian Wells. At the time, Jodar sat outside the top 100, but an impressive run during the clay season, which included his first ATP title at the Grand Prix Hassan II in Morocco, has catapulted him up the rankings.

Courtesy of his performance in Washington, the 19-year-old will break into the top 20 when the latest world rankings are released on Monday. — **Reuters**

Eala stuns Osaka to book Washington final against Pegula

WASHINGTON: Alexandra Eala stunned former world number one Naomi Osaka 6-4, 6-2 on Saturday to reach the women's final of the WTA and ATP Washington Open, where she will face third-ranked Jessica Pegula.

The 21-year-old Philippines left-hander delivered an impressive victory over the four-time Grand Slam winner from Japan to reach her second WTA final, having lost her first last year at Eastbourne.

“I'm super proud of my performance,” Eala said.

“I played really well and I had a great mentality and I stayed locked in until the end,” Eala, set to jump to a career-best 24th in the world rankings, had previously ousted second seed Elina Svitolina for her sixth top-10 victory of the year after dethroning 2025 Washington champion Leylah Fernandez.

It was the first meeting of the Asian stars, Eala facing one of the idols of her youth.

“She definitely has an aura and she definitely has power,” Eala said of Osaka.

“I remember watching her finals in the Australian Open and US Open, so really a great experience to share the court with her.”

“I'm really happy I was able to produce that level against her.”

Osaka, ranked 13th, was thwarted in her bid for an eighth WTA title and first since taking the 2021 Australian Open.

“I hit a lot of unforced errors, so that was probably one of the main reasons (for losing),” Osaka said.

Pegula, seeking her 12th WTA title and third of the year, eliminated Russia's Diana Shnaider 7-5, 6-4 in the



Pegula sets up Washington Open final against Eala.

other semifinal. “It's going to be a battle,” Pegula said of the final. “Alex, I'm a big fan of hers. She's the future of the tour and she's already here.”

Pegula, who won her first WTA title in 2019 at Washington, fell behind 5-2 against Schnaider, but the 32-year-old American top seed battled back to reach her fourth final of the year.

A semifinalist at this year's Australian Open, Pegula has lifted trophies at Dubai and Charleston this season.

‘MORE WELL ROUNDED’

Pegula beat Eala in a 2025 Miami semifinal in their only career meeting.

“I'm more well rounded. I'm physically a little bit better. I've improved on a couple of my strokes. Serve has also improved quite a bit,” Eala said of her game then and now.

The men's final will pit

American Taylor Fritz, ranked 10th, against 19-year-old Spaniard Rafael Jodar.

Fritz fired 13 aces in ousting 33rd-ranked countryman Brandon Nakashima 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

“I dug very deep just to keep holding,” said Fritz, who seeks an 11th career ATP title and first since last year at Eastbourne.

Jodar, assured of cracking the top 20 in the rankings next week, beat Chile's Alejandro Tabilo 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 6-4.

Jodar kept his composure despite dropping the tight first set and seized the momentum with a break for a 4-3 lead in the second.

He broke Tabilo to open the third set and marched to the win, giving himself a shot at a second ATP title after capturing his first in Morocco in April. — **AFP**



Renault strengthens presence in Oman with appointment of Al Hashar Automotive as official Importer and Distributor

Renault strengthens presence in Oman with appointment of Al Hashar Automotive as official Importer and Distributor.

Renault has officially announced the appointment of Al Hashar Automotive, part of the Al Hashar Group, as its official importer and distributor in the Sultanate of Oman. This strategic partnership reinforces Renault's commitment to expanding its presence in the Middle East and delivering innovative mobility solutions tailored to the evolving needs of customers in Oman.

Established in 1972, Al Hashar Group is one of Oman's leading diversified business groups with interests spanning automotive, engineering, and consumer services. With decades of automotive experience, the Group brings deep market knowledge, robust infrastructure, and a customer-centric approach that aligns seamlessly with Renault's global vision.

“We are delighted to welcome Al Hashar Automotive as our trusted partner in Oman,” said Mr. Marwan Haidamous, VP Renault Global Importers. “Their proven expertise and strong legacy in the automotive sector make them the ideal partner to represent Renault in the



Marwan Haidamous,
VP, Renault Global Importers



Sheikh Al Muhannad Al Hashar,
Chairman, Al Hashar Group

Sultanate of Oman. Together, we aim to deliver a best-in-class experience to our valued customers.”

Through this partnership, Al Hashar Automotive will oversee the distribution of Renault's full range of passenger and commercial vehicles, supported by comprehensive after-sales services, spare parts availability, and customer care programs. The collaboration will also focus on introducing new models that embody Renault's “voitures à vivre” spirit - designed to be loved, powered by people-first tech, electrified by passion and offering crafted space.

“We are proud to be appointed as Renault's official importer and distributor in Oman,” said Sheikh Al Muhannad Al Hashar, Chairman of Al Hashar Group. “This partnership represents a significant milestone in bringing Renault's

world-class vehicles to customers in Oman, supported by our commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction. We look forward to building a strong and successful journey together.”

This appointment forms part of Renault's broader strategy to reinforce its presence in the Middle East, a region of increasing importance for the brand. By combining Renault's global expertise with Al Hashar Group's local strength, the partnership is poised to deliver sustainable growth and enhance mobility solutions for the Sultanate of Oman.

About Renault

Renault is the world's leading French car brand. Building on over a century of innovation, it develops “voitures à vivre” featuring desirable design, useful, people-first technologies and electrified powertrains

that make no compromises on driving pleasure. Designed as living spaces, Renault vehicles are made for everyday living.

Having initiated an in-depth transformation with the Renault plan, the brand is now beginning a new strategic cycle with futuREady, a plan to boost competitive edge and deliver long-term performance, both in Europe and internationally. This ambition is based on desirable products and increased international momentum, as well as on a pragmatic approach to electrification with two pillars - 100 % hybrid and 100 % electric - in order to provide support for the energy transition, at any pace of progress.

About Al Hashar Group

Al Hashar Group has a strong presence across the automotive, engineering, construction equipment, mobility, hospitality, and consumer sectors. Its automotive portfolio includes the sales and servicing of premium, mainstream, and commercial vehicle brands, as well as tyres, lubricants, vehicle rental, and leasing solutions. The Group also operates in construction equipment, electronics and appliances, general contracting, and engineering consultancy services.

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,295.451

BUSINESS

OCCI strengthens digital economy cooperation with Mauritania

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE participation of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in the official delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania underscores the Chamber's vital role in supporting the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to build a competitive digital economy and enhance the private sector's presence in regional and African markets.

The Chamber was represented on the visit by Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Hosni, Board Member and Chairman of the Chamber's Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee.

Meetings focused on exploring opportunities for cooperation in the fields of digital economy, digital transformation and artificial intelligence.

Al Hosni emphasised that the visit reflected the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to strengthening cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in the digital economy. He noted that the meetings, which brought together representatives from



The cooperation with Mauritania represents a significant step towards building strategic partnerships and opening new horizons for Omani companies to expand into regional markets

ENG IBRAHIM
BIN ABDULLAH
AL HOSNI



Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Hosni, Board Member and Chairman of the Chamber's Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee, addressing the Mauritanian-Omani Digitalisation Forum

both the public and private sectors and included presentations of Omani digital experiences and technological solutions, represent a significant step towards building strategic partnerships and opening new horizons for Omani companies to expand into regional markets.

The importance of this partnership lies in empowering Omani private

sector institutions to export digital solutions and technical services, attract new investment opportunities and enhance cooperation in implementing joint projects in the fields of smart cities, the Internet of Things, cybersecurity and digital transformation.

This contributes to increasing the competitiveness of Omani companies and expanding their operations in promising markets, particularly in West Africa.

These partnerships also contribute to strengthening the digital economy's contribution to the national economy by expanding exports of technical services, attracting investments, developing national talent and stimulating innovation.

These factors support increasing the added value of the ICT sector and enhancing its contribution to GDP, thus solidifying the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional hub for modern technologies and the digital economy.

This also strengthens the competitiveness of the private sector in regional and international markets.

The Mauritanian-Omani Digitalisation Forum, held under the theme “Promising partnerships

towards a sustainable digital economy”, served as an effective platform for strengthening communication between the public and private sectors in both countries.

It resulted in the signing of five Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Omani and Mauritanian companies and various other institutions.

These covers areas such as smart technologies, digital transformation, capacity building, training and knowledge transfer.

This will also foster an environment of innovation and create new investment opportunities for Omani companies.

Oman Vision 2040 affirms that digital transformation is a key tool for increasing the contribution of non-oil sectors to the GDP by supporting innovation, stimulating entrepreneurship, developing technology industries and providing quality job opportunities for national talent.

In this context, international partnerships are gaining increasing economic importance, boosting private sector growth and enhancing the added value of the national economy.

Marafiq to invest in new industrial desalination plant in Al Duqm

CONRAD PRABHU

Marafiq — the Centralised Utilities Company (CUC) serving the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) — is set to invest in a new industrial water desalination plant to meet the water requirements of Singapore-based Meranti Green Steel's planned green iron project in Al Duqm.

The investment follows the signing of a Heads of Terms agreement between the two companies earlier this week under which Marafiq will provide a continuous, high-quality supply of industrial water for Meranti's upcoming direct reduced iron (DRI) and hot briquetted iron (HBI) plant.

Under the agreement, Marafiq will develop and finance a new desalination facility in the Duqm Industrial Zone, own and operate the associated water infrastructure, and manage the pipeline, pumping and metering systems delivering water directly to the Meranti site.

“Under this agreement, Marafiq will develop and finance a brand-new desalination plant in the Duqm Industrial Zone, own and operate the critical water infrastructure network and manage the pipeline, pumping and metering systems directly to the Meranti site”, said Bassem Shabaka, Manager, Water & Wastewater Engineering, Marafiq, in a post.

A subsidiary of OQ Group, Marafiq is Oman's integrated utilities provider for SEZAD,



The plant will produce industrial water to support Meranti's upcoming direct reduced iron (DRI) and hot briquetted iron (HBI) plant at Al Duqm

operating under a 25-year Centralised Utilities Services Agreement with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). The agreement grants the company the exclusive mandate to generate, transmit and distribute a comprehensive range of utility services across the economic zone.

The company provides a centralised utility platform that enables industrial investors to source essential services from a single provider rather than investing in standalone infrastructure. Its capabilities include electricity generation and transmission, potable and industrial water production and distribution, desalination, steam supply, wastewater management, industrial gases and waste management. Among its flagship assets are the 326 MW Duqm Integrated Power and Water Plant (DIPWP), an 80-km 132-

kV transmission network serving Ras Markaz and the potable water distribution network for SEZAD.

Meranti Green Steel is developing a low-carbon DRI/HBI facility with an initial production capacity of 2.5 million tonnes per annum, expandable to 5 million tonnes in a second phase. The project has progressed through front-end engineering and design (FEED), secured conditional natural gas allocation and long-term offtake agreements for its first production module, with commissioning targeted for mid-2029.

Green iron projects are among the most utility-intensive industrial developments, requiring large volumes of desalinated water, reliable supplies of natural gas and, over time, green hydrogen, together with abundant renewable electricity, industrial gases and extensive utility infrastructure.

NBO Global Equity Fund

Investment Manager Report
For the period ending 30th June 2026

Global markets rallied in the first half of 2026, supported by a solid economic outlook, a supportive policy backdrop, and AI adoption. All three major U.S. indices reached fresh record highs during June 2026. Notwithstanding the earlier impact of Middle East-related tensions on oil prices and inflation, all three indices remained positive for H1 2026, supported by robust corporate earnings growth. A U.S.-Iran agreement announced in June to end the conflict and reopen the Strait of Hormuz drove oil prices down to approximately USD 80 per barrel, a marked decline from May's levels near USD 100 per barrel, easing the inflation concerns that had weighed on markets earlier in the year. UK and European equities remained positive during H1 2026. The underlying fundamentals improved, with eurozone inflation expectations easing to a three-month low and composite PMI data reaching its highest level since March, supported by moderate earnings growth and the continued normalization of energy prices following the U.S.-Iran agreement. Asian markets demonstrated remarkable strength in H1 2026 supported by Japanese equities buoyed by corporate reforms, a structural export boom in North Asian semiconductors, and a liquidity-driven recovery across Chinese indexes. Despite the anticipated growth slowdown, the central banks of major economies maintained a cautious, "wait-and-see" stance, refusing to commit to near-term easing, except for ECB and the Bank of Japan.

The MSCI's Global and Developed indices increased by 10.94% and 9.44% respectively while the Emerging Market index increased by 22.80% during the year. Among Developed Markets (DM), the S&P 500 Index (USA) increased by 10.24%, while Nasdaq Composite (USA) increased by 14.30%, and the UK Index increased by 4.09%. The Euro Stoxx 50 Index (Eurozone) and Japan increased by 6.94% and 33.86% respectively. Among Emerging Markets (EM), the Taiwanese, Korean and Chinese markets increased by 53.69%, 75.17% and 6.28% respectively, while the Indian markets decreased by -11.37% (USD returns considered for all indices).

The US dollar increased by 2.91% during the period, despite falling to its lowest level in three years in January 2026. The Dollar Index (DXY) stood at 101.187, compared with its peak of 109.96 in early January 2025. In the bond markets, the US 10-year yields ended at 7.16% in period ended 30th June 2026. The Global Aggregate Bond Index ended the period down by -0.21%.

The fund has outperformed relative to the broader global equity index during Q2 2026. This performance was driven by strategic positioning throughout the previous quarter, designed to capture gains from a robust corporate earnings cycle.

Looking ahead for 2026, further rate reduction will likely depend on the core inflation trajectory, jobs data, deescalation of conflicts that may prove inflationary in the future, and the likely trend of fiscal policy and US trade & tariff policies. However, we maintain a cautious stance in light of ongoing macroeconomic volatility.

Our fund's strategy continues to focus on maintaining fund quality, and diversifying sources of fund returns, in order to preserve value during any possible downturns and also to grow the fund over the long-term, in line with the respective global indices.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026			
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
	30 June 2026	30 June 2025	31 Dec 2025
ASSETS			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,452,035	3,730,766	4,035,627
Cash and cash equivalents	388,618	52,492	23,284
Dividend receivable	1,682	2,528	1,175
Total assets	4,842,335	3,793,786	4,060,086
LIABILITIES			
Accruals and other payables	127,913	13,232	13,841
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	4,714,422	3,780,554	4,046,245
Net asset value per unit	1.215	1.060	1.055
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	30 June 2026	30 June 2025	31 Dec 2025
INCOME			
Net realized gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	264,151	1,932	36,593
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	399,438	209,845	429,876
Dividend income	26,401	20,692	40,856
Foreign exchange gain	196	175	35
Other income	-	137	-
	690,186	232,781	507,360
Expenses			
Brokerage commission	12,326	14,681	23,243
Management fees	22,263	18,830	39,340
Fund Management Body fees	14,000	21,002	35,000
Investment advisor fees	8,327	7,767	13,958
Administration and custodian service fees	5,074	5,557	10,589
Foreign exchange loss	-	-	732
General and administration	12,821	18,239	40,114
	74,811	86,076	162,976
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period	615,375	146,705	344,384
Net profit per unit	0.160	0.041	0.096

Investment Manager

البنك الوطني العماني

NBO

Note: The complete account in Arabic or English, as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholders within 7 days of written request addressed to the Administrator, Gulf Custody Company.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



DHOFAR ISLAMIC
OPENS NEW BRANCH
IN FALAJ AL SHAM

BankDhofar’s Islamic banking window, Dhofar Islamic, has announced the opening of a new branch in Falaj Al Sham in the Wilayat of Bausher, reinforcing its expansion strategy aimed at strengthening market presence and catering to the evolving banking needs of all segments of society.

The newly inaugurated branch is positioned to serve individuals as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in one of Muscat Governorate’s rapidly developing residential and commercial hubs, reflecting the growing demand for Sharia-compliant banking services in areas witnessing sustained urban expansion and population growth.

The expansion underscores Dhofar Islamic’s commitment to enhancing customer accessibility and delivering banking services in line with the highest standards of quality, convenience and operational efficiency. The branch offers a comprehensive portfolio of Islamic banking solutions, including current and savings accounts, personal finance products and specialised financing solutions tailored for SMEs — a sector regarded as a key driver of economic growth and diversification in the Sultanate of Oman.

In line with ongoing digital transformation trends within the banking industry, the branch also provides advanced digital banking services designed to enhance customer experience, streamline transactions and improve service efficiency.

The move further reflects Dhofar Islamic’s broader commitment to advancing financial inclusion in Oman by enabling individuals, entrepreneurs and businesses to access secure, convenient and innovative banking solutions that support financial stability and stimulate economic activity across multiple sectors.

The branch opening is also aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in supporting economic diversification and strengthening the contribution of the financial sector to sustainable national development.

In addition to providing flexible financing facilities, the Falaj Al Sham branch will offer specialised financial advisory services aimed at supporting SMEs in their growth and expansion plans, thereby contributing to private sector development and job creation within the national economy.

Dhofar Islamic noted that the new branch has been designed to provide a modern banking environment centred on customer convenience, offering an integrated banking experience that combines innovation with operational excellence.

With the addition of the Falaj Al Sham branch, Dhofar Islamic’s network now exceeds 30 branches across various governorates of Oman, enabling the bank to deliver a broad spectrum of banking products and services to diverse customer segments, including children, youth, women, entrepreneurs and premium banking clients.

YÙ & MÌ
CELEBRATES
CHINESE NEW
YEAR

This Chinese New Year, Yù & Mì invites guests into the cinematic world of 1960s Hong Kong to commemorate the arrival of the Year of the Horse. Running from February 8 to March 8, the limited-edition dining experience is shaped by ritual, symbolism and the spirit of togetherness that defines the Chinese New Year, honouring time-held traditions while embracing momentum, movement and renewal for the year ahead.
In Chinese culture, the Horse



symbolises energy, ambition and progress — a powerful expression of forward motion and optimism. At Yù & Mì, this meaning unfolds

through a specially curated five-course Chinese New Year Celebration set menu experience, priced at AED 398 per person, available throughout the month.
The experience begins with a refined selection of shared appetisers, including Sichuan Glazed Beef Short Ribs, Spinach Salad with sesame dressing and Honey Soy Eggplant, followed by a warming Seafood Hot & Sour Soup that anchors the meal in fire and flavour.

Experience the digital luxury of
Lincoln Nautilus this summer

THE Lincoln Nautilus stands out as a clear definition of midsize luxury in the Sultanate of Oman, inviting drivers to experience a seamless blend of modern design, serene comfort and effortless power. Visually, the premium SUV makes a striking statement on the road with its contemporary silhouette, signature grille and elegant full-width rear light bar. A newly designed rear spoiler masterfully blends clean aesthetics with aerodynamic efficiency, while the high-tier Reserve trim further distinguishes itself with commanding 22-inch bright machined aluminium wheels.

On the move, the Nautilus is engineered to deliver a smooth, gliding sensation perfectly suited for long summer journeys across Oman. Drivers can choose between a refined 2.0-litre turbocharged engine producing 287 horsepower and 400 Nm of torque, or an advanced, highly efficient hybrid powertrain. Mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission, intelligent all-wheel drive and adaptive suspension, the vehicle ensures a poised, quiet and exceptionally responsive journey regardless of the changing terrain outside.

The interior of the Nautilus unfolds as an immersive digital sanctuary tailored for a new generation of clients who value aesthetic beauty and seamless connectivity.



The premium cabin is centred around a massive 48-inch panoramic display — the largest in its segment — paired with an 11.1-inch central touchscreen to form an incredibly intuitive user interface. To restore the senses after a busy day, the innovative Lincoln Rejuvenate system acts as a personal recharge station by harmonizing ambient lighting, striking visuals and calming digital scents. This tranquil environment is completed by acoustic side glass that seals out road noise, a Wollsdorf leather steering

wheel, available 24-way Perfect Position seats with massage functionality and an available 28-speaker Revel Ultima 3D audio system.
Uncompromising safety underpins every journey through the intelligent technologies of the Lincoln Co-Pilot 360 Drive 2.0 suite. This proactive driver-assist network employs a 360-degree camera, Pre-Collision Assist with Pedestrian Detection and a Blind Spot Information System to constantly monitor the surroundings and protect passengers.

National Finance delivers strong H1 2026 results

MUSCAT: National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, has reported a resilient financial performance for the six-month period ended June 30, reinforcing the strength of its business model and long-term strategic direction. The results reflect the company’s continued agility in navigating an increasingly dynamic global environment while harnessing opportunities emerging from the nation’s stable economic outlook, ongoing diversification efforts and the implementation of Oman Vision 2040.
For the period ended June



30, 2026, National Finance reported an operating profit (profit before provision and tax) of RO 15 million, compared to RO 12.18 million during the corresponding period in 2025, representing an increase of 23.19%. Profit after tax reached RO 8.08 million, up from RO 7.02 million in June 2025,

reflecting a growth of 15.18%. The company’s Net Investment in Lease increased to RO 686.15 million, marking a growth of 5.12% compared to December 2025.
Reflecting on the company’s achievements, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, said, “Our performance during the first half of 2026 reflects the resilience of our business, the enduring trust of our customers and stakeholders; and the strength of the disciplined strategy we have consistently executed. These achievements would not

have been possible without the dedication of our employees, whose hard work and shared pursuit of excellence continue to drive our success. As the Sultanate of Oman advances its economic transformation, we remain focused on innovation, stronger customer relationships and empowering individuals, entrepreneurs and businesses nationwide. With a strong foundation and sound governance, we are well positioned to seize new opportunities and deliver lasting value for shareholders, customers and the wider economy”.

Sohar International rolls out its rebranded card portfolio

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to continuous innovation and customer-centric banking, Sohar International has unveiled its newly reimagined card portfolio, introducing a modern visual identity that reflects the bank’s evolution as a progressive financial institution.
More than a design refresh, the new portfolio embodies the bank’s forward-looking vision by delivering a seamless, contemporary banking experience across one of the bank’s most prominent customer touchpoints. The refreshed portfolio offers a comprehensive range of cards designed to meet the evolving needs of individuals and businesses, combining a distinctive new look with a wide array of



features and benefits, including financial flexibility, cashback rewards, travel privileges, lifestyle benefits, enhanced security and digital convenience for customers, alongside greater control, spending visibility and operational efficiency for businesses.
Commenting on the launch, Abdul Qadir al Sumali, Chief Retail & Wealth Management Officer at Sohar International, said, “Our refreshed card portfolio reflects the next chapter in Sohar International’s journey as a progressive and future-focused financial institution. The new design is a visual representation of how our brand continues to evolve, but more importantly, it reinforces our commitment to delivering meaningful value

to our customers. Beyond their contemporary look, these cards provide a comprehensive suite of features and benefits tailored to the evolving needs of individuals and businesses, from greater financial flexibility, rewards and travel privileges to enhanced security, digital convenience and smarter payment experiences.
This launch demonstrates our continued focus on combining innovation with practical solutions that enrich our customers’ everyday banking experience while reflecting the standards and ambitions of the bank we are today”. As Sohar International continues to advance its brand transformation, the card portfolio represents one element of its ongoing institutional journey.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Oman's local liquidity rises 12.7% to RO 28.6 billion, reflecting growth in deposits, financing and monetary indicators.

LOCAL LIQUIDITY EXCEEDS RO 28.6 BILLION BY END OF MAY 2026

MUSCAT: Total local liquidity (M2) in the Sultanate of Oman recorded an increase of 12.7% to reach RO 28.6012 billion by the end of May 2026, compared with RO 25.3760 billion during the corresponding period in 2025, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that the narrow money supply (M1) increased by 26.9% to RO 9.0730 billion at the end of May 2026, compared with RO 7.1483 billion during the same period last year.

Total currency issued rose by 8.9% to RO 1.7579 billion by the end of May 2026, compared with RO 1.6142 billion at the end of May 2025.

Foreign assets increased by 2.5%, equal to RO 7.5936 billion, compared with RO 7.4101 billion during the corresponding period of 2025.

Private sector deposits with commercial banks and Islamic windows grew by 10.5% to RO 24.2188 billion by the end of May 2026, compared with RO 21.9112 billion during the same period of the previous year.

Total loans and financing extended by commercial banks and Islamic windows increased by 11.5% to RO 37.4224 billion by the end of May 2026, compared with RO 33.5629 billion during the corresponding period in 2025.

Meanwhile, the average interest rate on total loans declined by 4.0% to 5.327% at the end of May 2026, compared with 5.551% during the same period last year

The Omani Rial nominal effective exchange rate index also declined by 2.8%, falling from 117.6 points at the end of May 2025 to 114.3 points by the end of May 2026. — ONA

Al Wusta commercial registrations reach 7,000

OMAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Wusta Governorate seeks to stimulate economic, investment and commercial activity through a set of programmes and initiatives supporting business owners and investors, as well as working to facilitate the investment climate in the governorate.

Active commercial registrations in the governorate are witnessing rapid growth amidst strong demand from business owners, small and medium enterprise (SME) owners and entrepreneurs to establish promising investment projects.

Abdulrahim bin Zayed al Junaibi, Director of the OCCI branch in Al Wusta Governorate, explained to ONA that the number of commercial registrations up to the beginning of the current year reached nearly 7,000 commercial registrations, amidst high demand from investors and those wishing to establish promising commercial projects.

He noted that this reflects continuous growth in economic activity in the governorate and confirms the growing confidence of investors and business owners in the promising investment opportunities provided by the governorate across various sectors.

Al Junaibi said that the OCCI branch in Al Wusta Governorate is keen on empowering the private sector and enhancing the business environment by implementing several qualitative initiatives and programmes.

Most notable among these is organising the Duqm Forum, which is dedicated in each edition to a different economic sector, such as smart cities and the blue economy, with the participation of experts and specialists from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad, aiming to transfer knowledge and open new horizons for business owners.



This confirms the growing confidence of investors and business owners in the promising investment opportunities provided by the governorate across various sectors

ABDULRAHIM BIN ZAYED AL JUNAIBI

He pointed out that the branch organised the Entrepreneurship Forum, which has reached its third edition and addressed modern topics such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and innovation, while providing an opportunity for entrepreneurs and innovators to showcase their projects and innovations and connecting them with supporting entities.

The branch also organised the Investment Opportunities Forum in Al Wusta Governorate in cooperation with government entities, alongside holding periodic meetings with business owners to identify the challenges facing them and follow up on them with competent authorities to find appropriate solutions.

In addition, the branch executed numerous workshops and training programmes in the fields of marketing, tourism and industrial entrepreneurship and supporting student companies, contributing to developing entrepreneurs' capabilities and stimulating a culture of innovation.

Regarding the delegations and visits organised by the branch, Abdulrahim al Junaibi stressed that the branch pays great attention to strengthening economic relations and opening new markets for

business owners.

It organised visits for a number of trade delegations, the most recent of which was to the Republic of Tanzania, aiming to examine economic experiences in the logistics, industrial and agricultural sectors; and promote the investment opportunities offered by the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The branch also organised numerous visits to government institutions and companies operating in the governorate to discuss the needs of the private sector and enhance cooperation opportunities.

During the coming period, it intends to undertake visits to Dhofar and Al Batinah North Governorates to learn about industrial and logistical experiences and visit factories and ports, as well as introduce the investment opportunities enjoyed by Al Wusta Governorate.

Regarding localised projects in the governorate, Al Junaibi pointed out that Al Wusta Governorate is witnessing growing growth in localised projects, benefitting from the economic capabilities it possesses — foremost among which is the Special Economic Zone at Duqm — alongside projects in the logistics, industrial, fisheries, tourism and agricultural sectors. — ONA

OPEC+ boosts September production by 188,000 barrels/day

LONDON: Saudi Arabia, Russia and five other key members of OPEC+ agreed in an online meeting on Sunday to boost oil production by 188,000 barrels a day from September, against a backdrop of disruption caused by the Mideast war.

“The seven participating countries decided to implement a production adjustment of 188 thousand barrels per day”, they said in a joint statement.

The increase, decided by the key countries in the enlarged Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, was widely expected by analysts.

“OPEC+ has finished unwinding its voluntary cuts. The next challenge is managing the surplus that could emerge as export flows normalise”, said Jorge Leon,

analyst at Rystad Energy.

He warned, however, that “today’s decision changes little in the near term because (the Strait of) Hormuz remains constrained. The real market impact will come when normal export flows resume”.

The Gulf countries have struggled to increase exports due to the near-paralysis of the Strait of Hormuz orchestrated by Iran during the war in the Middle East — despite a brief upswing in shipping traffic after a US-Iran memorandum of understanding was signed in June.

Many OPEC+ members cannot produce as much oil as their official targets allow due to a “decline in production capacity”, so increasing targets has become less meaningful, said Giovanni



Staunovo, an analyst at UBS.

The September increase, agreed by OPEC+ countries Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman, completes the unwinding of the second of the three production-cut packages introduced by organisation.

“Having completed the restoration campaign, OPEC+ has little incentive to rush into further supply changes.

Our base case is a fourth-quarter pause while the group prepares for the 2027 quota negotiations”, said Rystad Energy’s Leon.

“For now, geopolitics is masking the scale of the supply increase. That will become much clearer once export flows normalise”, he said.

It remains unclear when the group will actually be able to increase its oil volumes. Some member countries, such as Iraq, have expressed a desire to significantly boost production.

Russia, though, is confronted with repeated Ukrainian drone attacks on its oil infrastructure that have crimped production, currently hovering around nine million barrels per day — compared with a target of 9.8 million barrels per day.

OPEC+ “faces potentially difficult

talks over new production quotas” starting next year following the September increase, according to analysts at DNB Carnegie.

Between late 2022 and 2023, OPEC+ became concerned that oil prices were falling and agreed to cut oil production in three separate rounds, reducing total output by nearly six million barrels per day.

But Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Oman and the UAE — before the latter’s exit from the group on May 1 — then changed their strategy by gradually upping production starting in 2025.

“I don’t think cohesion is at risk at this very moment”, said Leon, warning, however, that the UAE’s withdrawal from the group in May has highlighted a weakness in this area. — AFP

TALKS FAIL

WestJet flight attendants go on strike



WestJet flight attendants went on strike on Sunday after their union and the airline failed to reach a deal. The job action is likely to result in a cascade of flight cancellations on one of the year’s busiest travel weekends. The airline says passengers should check the status of their flight before leaving for the airport. A total of 4,287 WestJet flight attendants walked off the job after their union and airline were unable to reach a new contract deal. — Reuters

TECH MARKETS

SpaceX investors eye more than space



SpaceX opens new tab first earnings call as a public company may be expected to focus on AI spending and profits from its Starlink satellite communications network, but many retail investors have other things on their minds. Taking a page from Elon Musk’s other big company, Tesla, newly public rocket maker SpaceX has opened an online venue for investors to ask questions ahead of a call about results that is expected to feature Musk. — Reuters

CURRENCY BOOST

China Central Bank adjusts policy tools



China’s central bank pledged to adjust monetary policy tools in a timely manner and facilitate panda bond issuance, a statement showed on Sunday.

The People’s Bank of China (PBOC) will continue to implement an appropriately loose monetary policy and maintain ample liquidity, according to the readout of a work meeting on Saturday to map out the second half of the year. — Reuters

OPINION

AI-driven change without immediate human replacement



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

FOR quite some time now, the corporate rush to adopt artificial intelligence has been quickly associated with job loss or replacement concerns. Globally, AI is increasingly cited as one of the major reasons for layoffs. Despite this widespread perception, the impact of AI on jobs remains highly concentrated in certain sectors, especially tech.

Many companies are allocating resources differently in response to AI and announcing job cuts in certain areas, but continue to hire in other areas. As many workers worry about sluggish hiring, another observation is that the open jobs are not replacing the jobs that were lost. Goldman Sachs estimates that AI could disrupt up to 300 million jobs globally over the coming years.

The AI story is not only about Silicon Valley; it is impacting service work and white-collar roles across regions. Typically, the non-tech areas getting impacted are customer support, management consultancy, finance, administrative work and manufacturing.

Against this backdrop, IKEA, the Swedish retailer, offers a counterpoint to widespread concerns that AI adoption will primarily lead to job losses.

Reported by Reuters in 2023, the IKEA case has since become a reference point in

debates about AI, reskilling and the future of work.

The story of IKEA's AI strategy highlights how automation can reshape roles instead of eliminating them.

In a widely discussed case, IKEA introduced a chatbot called Billie to manage first-level customer interactions, track orders, handle product queries and support general operations. The system effectively handles roughly 47 per cent of customer conversations without any human intervention.

This move has significantly reduced the operational load on support teams. This reflects a broader industry trend in which companies are using AI to automate high-volume and repetitive tasks.

Upon further analysis, IKEA recognised that many unresolved queries required human input, as many were advisory rather than transactional.

This insight led to a new business model. Instead of downsising, IKEA soon recognised the gap and began reskilling a section of its customer service workforce to transition employees to providing specialised, value-added consultancy services.

IKEA reskilled 8500 employees into advisor roles for interior design, styling, home planning support and, most importantly, unlocked an impressive €1.4 billion in new revenue.

IKEA introduced a chatbot called Billie to manage first-level customer interactions, track orders, handle product queries and support general operation

IKEA not only generated additional revenue but also leveraged automation for scale and speed; and created an entirely new service line that utilised human intelligence for judgement-intensive tasks.

Instead of making employee roles redundant, IKEA applied forward thinking and identified potential in its workforce. IKEA has demonstrated that AI and human intelligence can coexist and thrive together. This shows that technology need not always replace humans, but can enable people to make valuable contributions that drive company growth.

Another critical takeaway is that reskilling must align with organisational strategic goals. The roadmap for businesses is to navigate AI challenges and design specialised, target-focused reskilling initiatives for new demand.

Though layoffs will be an inevitable aspect of companies, the real test of leadership is ensuring that they are done only after every effort has been made to reskill and redeploy people transparently and consciously.

Today we have businesses that employ AI for expansion and businesses that use it primarily for cost-cutting, establishing a two-track labour market.

The IKEA instance highlights the significance of considering both 'what can AI replace' and 'what work humans can do better once routine work is automated'.

POWER RETURNS AFTER CUBA BLACKOUT

RIGOBERTO DIAZ

Power returned to Havana and other parts of western Cuba after the latest in a string of widespread grid failures was fixed by the state-run electric company.

Five of 15 provinces spent most of the night without electricity due to a "partial collapse" of the electricity grid, but the power was being restored, Cuba's UNE said on X.

Cuba is reeling from its worst economic crisis in decades — one made worse by a fuel blockade imposed by US President Donald Trump since January.

UNE says the fuel shortages have made the national grid more susceptible to outages and rendered the use of emergency generators — which typically run on diesel fuel — all but impossible.

In recent weeks, blackouts have lasted more than 30 hours in Havana and for several days in other parts of the island, which is believed to have a population of over nine million people.

Since the start of 2026, Cuba has experienced five nationwide blackouts, three of them in July within a period of 10 days.

Since late 2024, there have been 10 such total power outages.

Cubans are not shy about admitting that they are weary of the constant disruptions to daily life.

"We live practically like fireflies here — in the dark all the time. You never know when you'll have power. It's our sad reality", Julian Gonzalez, a 72-year-old carpenter, said.

Like many Havana residents who live near the Malecon, a coastal esplanade and seawall in the capital, Gonzalez was out trying to catch a bit of fresh air.

"It's better than sitting at home feeling bitter", he said.

Havana blames Washington's punitive measures for the dire state of its electricity grid, while the US says the fault lies with Cuba's government and mismanagement of the economy.

The seven thermal power plants that form the national grid's backbone have all been in operation for more than 40 years and are in various states of disrepair.

Relations between Washington and Havana have been tense since the start of the year, especially since US forces snatched Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro from Caracas in early January and took him to the US to face federal charges.

Maduro had long been a staunch ally of Cuba, providing cut-rate fuel.

Washington has authorised the arrival of only one Russian tanker — carrying 100,000 tonnes of crude — which came in March. Those reserves have since been exhausted.

In addition to its oil blockade, the Trump administration has ramped up sanctions against Cuban state-owned businesses, prompting many foreign businesses to suspend operations in the country. — AFP

Medical tourism fuels economic growth

MEDICAL and health tourism has become one of the promising sectors receiving increasing global attention, not only as a healthcare service, but as an integrated economic ecosystem connected with investment, tourism, transportation, insurance, education and professional training.

It contributes to economic diversification and enhances the competitiveness of nations.

Recognising the strategic importance of this sector, the Health Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry has started preparing a framework of key themes and topics that will form the foundation for developing the infrastructure of medical and health tourism in the Sultanate of Oman, in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and with the aim of connecting the healthcare sector with various economic sectors.

Developing medical tourism requires a comprehensive vision that goes beyond establishing healthcare facilities alone.

It requires building an integrated system capable of attracting patients and investors from the region and around the world through the development of specialised hospitals and medical centres, encouraging local and foreign investments and strengthening public-private partnerships.

The success of this project depends on cooperation and integration among several sectors, including aviation, transportation, hospitality, tourism, insurance, logistics and medical education. This will create a complete patient journey, beginning with arrival in Oman, continuing through medical treatment and rehabilitation services; and extending to accommodation and wellness experiences.

Oman possesses many advantages that qualify it to become a regional hub for medical and health tourism.

These include its strategic geographical location, security and stability, distinguished international



MURTADHA M J IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI

The writer is Deputy Chairman, OCCI, Muscat



reputation in trade and cultural relations, as well as its diverse natural environment, which provides significant opportunities in wellness, rehabilitation and health-related tourism.

Furthermore, the historic relationship between Oman and the Republic of India, together with India's advanced expertise in healthcare and medical services, opens wide opportunities for strategic cooperation in specialised treatments, establishing joint medical centres, exchanging expertise and developing national healthcare capabilities.

An essential component of this sector is the role of health insurance, as it represents a key element for the sustainability of medical tourism.

This can be achieved through developing specialised insurance products, establishing partnerships with international healthcare institutions; and facilitating access to medical services according to clear standards and procedures.

The project also requires a comprehensive regulatory and marketing framework that defines quality standards, accreditation

requirements and mechanisms for attracting international patients, while promoting Oman as a trusted destination for healthcare services.

Investment in education, training and development of national professionals will ensure the long-term sustainability of this sector.

Medical and health tourism is not merely a healthcare project; it is an economic and developmental initiative that connects people, investment and knowledge.

Through effective cooperation between government entities and the private sector, Oman can establish a distinctive model that combines high-quality healthcare, tourism attractiveness and economic opportunities, strengthening its regional and international position.

The initiative undertaken by the Health Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry to develop the main pillars of this project represents an important step towards creating a comprehensive national vision that transforms the healthcare sector into one of the drivers of economic growth and sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.

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ART/LIFE



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> 20

FILM NEWS

CANAL+ SAYS ‘PADDINGTON 4’ IS IN WORKS



A fourth live-action Paddington film is in development, Canal+ Chief Executive Maxime Saada said on Tuesday, adding fresh momentum to one of StudioCanal’s most successful international franchises.

Saada said the upcoming film would feature A-list talent, although Canal+ and StudioCanal did not disclose the cast, release date or distribution plans.

The announcement comes as Canal+ strengthens its position in the French film market through a renewed agreement with French cinema organisations, securing early access to new theatrical releases. Under the agreement, which was renewed on Monday and runs until 2032, Canal+ will invest about €1 billion (\$1.2 billion) in French and European cinema over five years beginning in 2028.

In return, the pay-TV group will receive privileged access to new films following their theatrical release, both for productions it acquires and its own films.

The agreement is particularly significant as traditional television and cinema companies compete with global streaming platforms for audiences and subscribers.

Canal+ will be the first platform to bring Paddington 4 to television screens in France, just six months after its theatrical release. The group did not say when the film would reach cinemas.

“When we buy and we have deals with Universal, Warner, Paramount... all of these movies are available on the Canal+ platform in France six months after release”, Saada said.

“When Netflix has a deal with Universal, they have to wait until 15 months to broadcast the movie in France”, he added.

The investment represents part of Canal+’s broader spending on content. The group spent €2.25 billion on content during the first half of 2026 alone, covering films, television and sports across its international markets.

France remains Canal+’s largest individual market, generating €1.77 billion in revenue during the first half of the year.

The Paddington franchise, based on the beloved character created by British author Michael Bond, has become one of StudioCanal’s most recognisable global properties.

The first two live-action films, released in 2014 and 2017, were widely praised for combining family-friendly humour with a warm, nostalgic tone. Paddington in Peru, the third film, continued the character’s adventures and further expanded the franchise internationally.

With a fourth film now in development, the announcement signals that the marmalade-loving bear’s cinematic journey is set to continue, while Canal+ seeks to reinforce its role as a major investor and distributor in European cinema. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



TOURISM

A Barn owl is photographed at the “Espace Rambouillet”, a forest and wildlife park in Rambouillet.

— AFP



HISTORY

Participants wear Roman costumes during a Roman history re-enactment festival featuring gladiator battles in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

— Reuters



FESTIVAL

Hot air balloons fly during the 7th International Cappadocia Balloon Festival in Goreme, Nevsehir province, Türkiye.

— Reuters

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SUFI RHYTHMS UNITE CULTURES IN MUSCAT



KABEER YOUSUF

Sufi music brought a sense of calm to Muscat on July 20 as audiences gathered for *Ishq-e-Sufi 2026*, an evening celebrating culture and international friendship. Organised by Muscat Sky Events, the event welcomed diplomats, government representatives, business leaders and members of diverse communities, highlighting art's role in promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Sufi music is a devotional art rooted in Islamic mysticism, with traditions including Qawwali, Sema — music associated with whirling dervishes — and Kafi, inspired by poets such as Rumi and Amir Khusrow. The programme featured Omani singer Haitham Rafi and Bangladesh's Musafir Sufiyana Band. Their fusion of Sufi styles captivated the audience and earned standing ovations. "Performing in front of such an elite audience is worth the

time and effort. The melancholic beauty of Sufi ghazal was truly a bliss for musicians like us as well as the audience, which was really inspiring", said one of the musicians. The performances blended Qawwali, Sema and folk Sufism, reflecting Oman's multicultural identity and peaceful coexistence. "Ishq-e-Sufi is more than a concert; it is a platform where cultures meet, friendships grow and music unites people beyond borders. We are deeply honoured by the overwhelming support and appreciation received from the diplomatic community, government officials, corporate leaders and the Bangladeshi community. Our commitment is to continue presenting world-class cultural experiences that contribute to Oman's vibrant multicultural landscape and strengthen international friendship", said Sayfullah Jewel of Muscat Sky Events. The evening served as a platform for cultural diplomacy, reinforcing tolerance, inclusion and cooperation through music.



Lucas Museum to display unseen 'Star Wars' pieces, curator says

THE Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, founded by legendary Star Wars creator George Lucas and his wife, business executive Mellody Hobson, will unveil previously unseen Star Wars artefacts when it opens on September 22. The museum's curator, Ryan Linkof, said visitors will experience a special exhibition featuring rare Lucasfilm production materials from the Lucas Archives, including pieces that have never before been displayed publicly. More than 1,300 objects will be showcased across 33 galleries spanning over 9,200 square metres in the museum's futuristic building. The collection reflects decades of Lucas' personal collecting and celebrates narrative art in many forms. Highlights include illustrations by Norman Rockwell, Jessie Willcox Smith and N C Wyeth, alongside works by Frida Kahlo, Jacob Lawrence, Charles White and Robert Colescott. Visitors will also find creations by celebrated cartoonists such as Winsor McCay, Jack Kirby and Frank Frazetta. Linkof said the museum provides a rare institutional home for narrative art, a genre often overlooked by traditional museums despite its cultural influence. He described the museum as an "incredibly ambitious project" that Lucas has worked on for decades, overcoming delays including those caused by the pandemic. Hobson has described it as Lucas' "second song", following the global success of Star Wars and an enduring gift to future generations. Lucas, 82, remains actively involved in the project and is pleased with its progress, Linkof said. Speaking at San Diego Comic-Con, DC Comics President Jim Lee said



the museum will encourage visitors to view familiar art from comics, films and advertising in a new light, inspiring a deeper appreciation for the storytelling that surrounds everyday life. — AFP

FEATURES

DHOFAR 'S REAL ATTRACTION IS ON THE PLATE

THE COCONUT THAT SHOULDN'T EXIST

For many first-time visitors, the biggest surprise isn't the waterfalls or the rolling green hills. It's the sight of coconut palms swaying in the middle of Arabia. The seasonal rains transform Salalah into one of the few places in the region where coconuts, bananas, papayas and sugar cane flourish. Salalah's coconuts are refreshing, naturally sweet and remarkably unpretentious. There are no elaborate presentations or expensive menus, just a reminder that sometimes the best introduction to a destination comes from stopping at the smallest roadside stall rather than the biggest attraction.

THE CHICKEN EVERYONE STOPS TO PHOTOGRAPH

Long before travellers know where they're having dinner, many have already photographed it. Drive along Ittin Road during Khareef and it's almost impossible to miss the restaurants displaying rows of chickens slowly rotating on giant vertical wheels above glowing charcoal. The towering rotisseries have become landmarks in their own right, drawing curious motorists who often pull over simply to watch the hypnotic rhythm of dozens of birds turning in unison. Slow roasting over charcoal allows the meat to remain tender while the skin develops a deep, smoky crispness. Seasoned with a blend of spices that reflects Dhofar's long-standing culinary influences, the chicken is usually served alongside fragrant rice, fresh bread and garlic sauce.

THE DESSERT INSPIRED BY THE RESIN THAT BUILT AN EMPIRE

For centuries, frankincense transformed Dhofar into one of the world's most important trading centres. Caravans crossed deserts carrying the precious resin to temples, palaces and kingdoms across Europe, Asia and Africa. Eating it, however, is a relatively modern idea. Today, innovative chefs across Dhofar have begun incorporating the aromatic resin into desserts, chocolates, teas and perhaps most intriguingly, ice cream. The result is unexpectedly delicate. Rather than overwhelming sweetness, frankincense lends subtle citrus, pine and floral notes that linger gently on the palate.

BREAD THAT STILL FOLLOWS ANCIENT RHYTHMS

In many parts of Dhofar, bread isn't simply bought. It's made much as it has been for generations. From paper-thin Regag to the soft, fermented Lahoo and the crisp rings of Kak, traditional breads continue to emerge from clay ovens and hot griddles using recipes handed down through families rather than written in cookbooks. The process is often as rewarding to watch as it is to taste. Dough is stretched, folded and baked with movements perfected through years of repetition, filling neighbourhoods with the unmistakable aroma of fresh bread. Served alongside grilled meats, seafood or simply with honey and tea, these breads quietly underpin much of Dhofar's cuisine. They may never become the stars of social media, but they remain among the region's most authentic flavours.

BY YERU EBUEN

There's a mistake I used to make every time I travelled to Dhofar during Khareef. Like many visitors, I'd plan my days around waterfalls, mountain viewpoints and winding roads draped in mist. Every stop was carefully marked on the map, every attraction squeezed into the itinerary. By the time I returned home, I had seen Dhofar—but I hadn't really experienced it. It took several visits to realise that the biggest mistake wasn't travelling too little. It was travelling too fast. As Khareef returns and the mountains once again turn green, much will be written about the places to visit, the scenic drives to take and the hidden viewpoints worth discovering. Social media will be filled with waterfalls, fog-covered roads and panoramic drone shots. Yet somewhere between chasing the next destination and beating the traffic, many travellers overlook one of Dhofar's greatest attractions.

It's on the plate. Perhaps that's because Dhofar's cuisine has always been quietly overshadowed by its landscapes. People remember Wadi Darbat, Jabal Samhan and Mughsail Beach, but rarely the stone-cooked meat prepared using centuries-old Bedouin methods, the coconuts sold by the roadside, seafood landed fresh in Mirbat, or desserts scented with frankincense—the very resin that once made this corner of Arabia one of the world's most important trading hubs. The more time I spent in Dhofar, the more I realised that its food isn't simply something to eat between attractions. It's another way of understanding the region. Every dish tells a story about geography, trade, survival and the people who have called these mountains, coastlines and deserts home for generations. You can certainly see Dhofar in a weekend. But it takes much longer to taste it. And if you're heading south this Khareef, here are the flavours that deserve a place on your itinerary just as much as any waterfall or mountain viewpoint.

COOKING MEAT ON STONES OLDER THAN THE RECIPE

Few dishes tell the story of Dhofar's mountains quite like Madhbi. Long before modern kitchens reached remote settlements, Bedouin communities perfected a cooking method that relied on little more than fire, hot stones and patience. Large rocks are heated over an open flame before seasoned meat typically lamb or camel is placed directly on the scorching surface. As the stones release their heat, the meat cooks gently, sealing in its juices while developing a beautifully smoky crust. The technique was born from practicality rather than culinary experimentation. In landscapes where resources were limited, hot stones became the cooking vessel. Today, that necessity has evolved into one of the region's most distinctive dining experiences.

THE SKEWERS THAT CARRY THE SCENT OF THE SPICE ROUTE

At first glance, Mishkak looks familiar. Skewers of meat sizzling over charcoal can be found across the Middle East. The difference lies in the seasoning. Dhofar's location along ancient maritime trade routes exposed it to spices arriving from India, East Africa and beyond. Cloves, cardamom, cinnamon and black pepper gradually found their way into local kitchens, shaping a flavour profile that distinguishes Dhofari Mishkak from versions found elsewhere in Oman. It's casual street food, yet it quietly tells the story of centuries of trade, migration and cultural exchange that passed through the ports of southern Oman.

THE LUXURY HIDDEN BENEATH MIRBAT'S WAVES

If Dhofar has a culinary treasure, it is found beneath the sea. The waters off Mirbat are home to wild abalone, a prized shellfish that has been harvested by local divers for generations. Unlike farmed varieties found elsewhere, Omani abalone is gathered seasonally under carefully managed regulations designed to protect one of the region's most valuable marine resources. Its delicate flavour and rarity have made it highly sought after in international markets, but travellers don't need to leave Dhofar to experience it at its finest.

THE ORIGINAL ENERGY DRINK

Long before protein shakes and sports drinks, there was camel milk. For Bedouin communities, it was an everyday source of nourishment, valued for its ability to sustain travellers across long desert journeys. Rich in nutrients and naturally lower in fat than many expect, fresh camel milk remains an important part of Oman's culinary identity. Visitors are often surprised by its flavour. Slightly salty with a gentle earthiness, it bears little resemblance to cow's milk. That difference is precisely what makes it memorable.

TEA ABOVE THE CLOUDS

If there is one experience that captures the spirit of Khareef, it doesn't involve a famous landmark. It begins with pulling over on a mountain road. As mist rolls across the hills and clouds drift through the valleys below, families unfold picnic mats while kettles are placed over portable burners. Tea brews slowly. Conversations unfold even more slowly. In Dhofar, tea is rarely rushed. It marks the end of a drive, the beginning of a gathering or simply an excuse to pause and appreciate the landscape. Perhaps that's the greatest lesson the region has to offer. Dhofar has never been a destination best measured by the number of attractions you manage to visit in a day. Like a carefully prepared meal, it rewards those willing to slow down. You can see Dhofar in a weekend. But tasting it is a journey that keeps bringing you back.

