

OMAN

FROMPAGE 1

SAI SUBMITS 2024 ANNUAL REPORT TO HIS MAJESTY

The findings were communicated to the relevant entities, which responded positively by taking corrective actions and implementing SAI’s recommendations. In addition, some irregularities that constituted criminal suspicions were referred to the Public Prosecution for appropriate legal action.

The report also included a statement outlining SAI’s efforts to promote integrity, presenting statistics on financial and administrative violations and the actions taken in response. It also covered following up on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, as well as SAI’s participation in the meetings, conferences, relevant agreements and committees associated with it. In addition, the report detailed SAI’s review of draft laws, regulations and systems prepared by the entities subject to the audit of SAI, providing comments regarding them. The report also showcased SAI’s efforts in carrying out a number of awareness activities and training programmes, and preparing related manuals aimed at protecting public fund and promoting integrity.

The Annual Report also included the review of various topics within government units, such as the audit of the State’s final account for the year 2024, review of tax collection and assessment, review of financial and administrative activities, and evaluation of the performance of certain directorates and departments within these units. With regard to matters related to the activities of authorities, investments and companies, the report covered several topics related to the sectors of energy, minerals, aviation, environment, electricity, water, food security, wastewater and other important matters that were reported to the relevant entities along with SAI’s observations and recommendations.

With regard to community partnership, based on the principle that protecting public fund is a joint responsibility, SAI dealt with 1,378 complaints and reports in 2024 concerning financial and administrative violations, the integrity of awarding some tenders, abuse of power, and other related issues. These were received through various communication channels, and approximately 90% of the complaints and reports have been examined and addressed. It is important to note that SAI’s complaints and reports window was selected as one of the best practices by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The report also featured an overview of the key media and awareness initiatives undertaken by SAI, aimed at fostering optimal awareness and adherence to ethical practices at both institutional and societal levels. A total of 187 media and awareness programmes, activities and events were carried out in 2024. — ONA

ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER BIDS FAREWELL TO TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Monday Azzedine el Tayse, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.

During the meeting, Gen Al Numani lauded the efforts exerted by the Ambassador in enhancing



existing relations and cooperation between the two countries, wishing him success in his future endeavours.

On his turn, the Ambassador expressed his heartfelt sentiments for the cooperation extended to him during his tenure. He also lauded the depth of bilateral relations between Oman and Tunisia. — ONA

Students explore AI in forward-thinking initiative

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 7

AL Khabourah Vocational College recently conducted an innovative summer programme as part of the “Our Summer: Entrepreneurship and Innovation” initiative organised by the Office of the Governor of Al Batinah North.

The programme targeted high school students (grades 10–12) and offered a dynamic and forward-thinking summer training experience. Its aim was to introduce youth to modern vocational fields and equip them with practical skills aligned with today’s job market. The training featured four specialised programmes: Marine Safety, Fundamentals of English Language, Applications of Artificial Intelligence and AutoCAD Design.

Each course was designed to provide students with foundational knowledge and hands-on exposure to career-focused disciplines offered at the college.

Maryam bint Humaid al Buraikiyah, the coordinator of the summer initiatives at the college, highlighted the importance of these programmes in shaping students’ understanding of vocational pathways. “This initiative is not just about summer learning; it’s about showing students what’s possible through technical education. The skills they gain here are essential in today’s world and support Oman Vision 2040,” she stated.

Students responded positively to the training experience. Fatma al Lawati, a participant in the AI programme, said, “The sessions were very useful, and the instructor delivered the content in a simple, clear way.



I hope the programme continues. I would love to join again next year.” Mohammed Al Qasmi, who took part in the Marine Safety programme, added: “I learned a lot about staying safe at sea and how to respond to emergencies or technical issues on a ship. It was a great experience that opened my eyes to the maritime field.” By focusing on high-demand areas such as artificial intelligence, digital design, marine safety and professional communication, vocational institutions are aligning their training with national development priorities and the needs of the modern workforce. These fields represent more than just technical know-how; they cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and collaboration, all of which are key competencies in the 21st-century economy.

For young students, early exposure to such disciplines allows them to explore potential

career paths, build confidence in their abilities, and make informed decisions about their future. As Oman continues its efforts to diversify the economy and empower youth through Oman Vision 2040, these specialised training initiatives are vital.

They not only enhance employability but also foster a culture of innovation, responsibility, and lifelong learning among young Omanis, preparing them to contribute meaningfully to national growth and sustainability.

By bridging the gap between secondary education and vocational opportunities, Al Khabourah Vocational College’s summer programme plays a key role in preparing young Omanis for future careers. The initiative reflects a broader national commitment to innovation in education and the development of a skilled, future-ready workforce.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD GIRL DIES IN CAR CRASH IN ADAM

KABEERYOUSUF
@kabiyousef

A four-year-old girl died after the vehicle in which her family was travelling met with an accident in Adam while returning from Salalah at 3.30 am on Monday.

The deceased is identified as Jaza Hayra, the youngest daughter of Nawaz, a native of Kanjirod, Kannur, and his wife Razia, who live in Nizwa.

It is learnt that the driver lost control of the vehicle due to the dusty climate. Jaza was thrown out of the

car in the impact of the crash, which proved to be fatal. The injuries of the others, Navaz, wife Razia and their elder daughter Zia Fathima, are moderate and are undergoing treatment at Adam Hospital.

The accident occurred when the family was about to return home the

next day. After completing further procedures, the body was taken home by Monday night.

The Royal Oman Police advises those who are visiting Dhofar during the khareef season to be cautious and avoid travel at night, especially when they experience fatigue.





Tender Announcement

Duty Free Market at Al Mazunah Free Zone

Tender No.	Project Name	Deadline for Document Purchase	Field Visit Date	Deadline for Proposal Submission	Document fee
02/2025	Duty Free Market at Al Mazunah Free Zone	24/07/2025	28/07/2025	11/08/2025	RO 500

Spanning over 15 million sqm, Al Mazunah Free Zone is managed and operated by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates “Madayn” in Dhofar Governorate close to the Oman-Yemen border. Located about 250 km from Salalah, Al Mazunah Free Zone is home to a diverse portfolio of industrial, logistics, commercial, and service projects, each contributing to the free zone’s economic vitality. Key projects include Al Mazunah Dry Port, Facility Building, warehouses, and various other projects.

To enquire about or apply for this tender, kindly contact through the following details:

Abu-baker.Alharizi@madayn.om

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TRA cracks down on illegal wireless networks

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, JULY 7

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has launched inspections to crack down on illegal wireless networks as part of the efforts to protect the security and stability of telecommunications networks and ensure the quality of services provided to users.

TRA, in cooperation with relevant authorities, launched field inspection campaigns to seize wireless networks that illegally redistribute Internet services.

This campaign comes after detecting unlicensed activities that threaten information security and network integrity, and cause technical interference, leading to a deterioration in the quality and speed of services for subscribers in

This campaign comes after detecting unlicensed activities that threaten information security and network integrity, and cause technical interference, leading to a deterioration in the quality and speed of services for subscribers in neighbouring areas, as well as exposing personal data to the risk of hacking and surveillance.



TRA is taking firm action, including removing violating devices and holding those responsible accountable.

neighbouring areas, as well as exposing personal data to the risk of hacking and surveillance.

TRA is taking firm action, including removing violating devices and holding those responsible accountable in cooperation with relevant authorities. It also called on individuals and institutions to abide by the laws and regulations governing the telecommunications sector and to avoid establishing or using illegal networks. TRA previously warned of several risks when creating wireless networks to share Internet services, which can cause technical glitches.

“There is a possibility of interference in wireless networks and the impact on the speed and quality of service for the rest of the subscribers in the same area,” TRA stated.

It warned that creating Internet services without a licence can make the user liable for legal liability, apart from the fact that all data is vulnerable to hacking and misuse of the service for fraud and hacking.

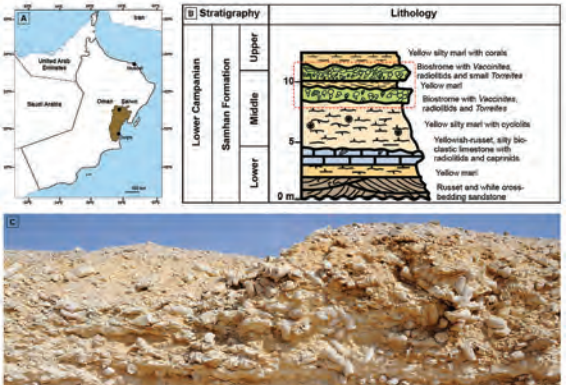
SHORT TAKES



SAYYID BADR RECEIVES TWO LETTERS FROM IRAN 'S FOREIGN MINISTER

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received two letters from Dr Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Foreign Minister, regarding bilateral relations between the two countries. The letters were delivered by Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman, during a meeting with Sayyid Badr on Monday. — ONA

OMANI TAKES PART IN INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC STUDY



MUSCAT: An Omani researcher has participated in a peer-reviewed international study published on the European Geosciences Union (EGU) platform, in collaboration with three leading European universities: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Utrecht University and Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. This achievement reflects Oman's commitment to advancing research and development.

Engineer and researcher Najat al Fadhli from the Industrial Innovation Academy contributed to the scientific study, which examined the response of ancient marine organisms — dating back over 60 million years — to environmental changes in Oman's geologically significant "Saiwan" site.

The study enhances understanding of climate change impacts on fragile marine ecosystems while contributing to a knowledge-based economy by empowering national competencies in earth and climate sciences. — ONA

NEW OMANI PATRON FOR OMAN-SWISS FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

The Oman-Switzerland Friendship Association is delighted to announce the appointment of Shaikh Saif bin Hashil al Maskery as their new Omani Patron.

Shaikh Saif brings with him an illustrious career spanning over five decades in public service and diplomacy. His distinguished roles have included Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and various international organisations, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the Gulf Cooperation Council, and



SHAIKH SAIF BIN HASHIL AL MASKERY

Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Importantly, Shaikh Saif is a founding member and former chairman of the Oman-Switzerland Friendship Association, underscoring his long-standing commitment to fostering closer ties between the two nations. His depth of experience, diplomatic acumen and unwavering

support for the Oman-Switzerland cooperation make him exceptionally well suited to assume this important role. Speaking on his appointment, Shaikh Saif said, "It is an honour to become the Oman Patron and continue strengthening the enduring ties between Oman and Switzerland, fostering collaboration built on mutual respect, shared values and a spirit of friendship. I am delighted to take on this role and look forward to supporting new initiatives that bring our two nations even closer — whether in culture, business, education, or innovation."

Panel empowers children to express their opinions

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 7

THE Ministry of Social Development organised a two-day discussion panel on building a framework to empower and develop children's capacities for dialogue, discussion and expressing opinions. The panel included several government institutions, the private sector and civil society organisations involved in the child sector.

The aim was to raise awareness of the importance of children's right to participate and express opinions within an official framework. This was achieved by examining the current status of children's participation in various institutions using a fact-finding methodology and evaluating the level of participation compared to regional and international practices.

The panel also framed Omani experiences in light of legislation, technical and training capabilities, seeking to build a shared understanding of best practices and chart sustainable institutional paths that guarantee children's right to participate at both the central and decentralised levels. This would enhance the integration of children's voices into national policies and programmes.

The ministry stated that the panel discussed a number of topics highlighting pioneering experiences in the field of child empowerment and enhancing their community participation. The sessions began with a discussion panel for students, during which they reviewed the experience



The aim was to raise awareness of the importance of children's right to participate and express opinions.

of the Leadership Development Programme and the experiences of members of the Arab Children's Parliament. They also discussed Oman's debates from a child's perspective and the "Knights of Al Bayan" experience in community and summer centres.

Several academic papers were presented. In the first paper, the Ministry of Education discussed the role of student councils, which are vital platforms within educational institutions enabling students to express their opinions and actively participate in developing their academic and social environment. The second paper, presented by the State Council, addressed its role in implementing Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates that "States Parties shall ensure to the child the right to express his or her views freely on all matters affecting him or her, his or her views being given due weight in accordance

with his or her age and maturity."

Furthermore, the session featured a range of projects and experiences in the child sector. The Ministry of Social Development presented the "Child Ambassadors" project, implemented by the Department of Social Development in Al Buraimi Governorate.

The project aims to empower a select group of children to become informed representatives of their peers, able to express their issues and convey their voices in influential ways within their school and community environments, while fully adhering to the principles derived from the Omani Child Law and relevant international agreements. The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation also reviewed the experience of student advisory councils, while the Oman Debate Centre presented the experience of children's debates in the Sultanate of Oman.

Municipality's Bausher project design contest winners to be awarded today

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The announcement of the best design blueprint for the Bausher multi-use project by Muscat Municipality will take place on Tuesday. The event will be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, along with other representatives from various ministries and public and private firms, will attend the ceremony at the Mandarin Muscat.

Speaking to the Observer, a representative from the municipality said that the design competition is focused on enhancing the appearance of the capital and the surrounding area and that three finalists in the competition will be



On Monday, all the companies presented their designs before the judging panel and clarification was given on each project.

announced, first, second and third respectively and the first will be awarded with the project.

"The competition, participated by five international design companies, aims at creating innovative, sustainable and state-of-the-art solutions for the area. The designs should beautify the surroundings, manage water flow and incorporate urban elements while maintaining existing infrastructure in Bausher area," he said.

On Monday, all the companies presented their designs before the judging panel and clarification was

given on each project.

Five architectural design, engineering and implementation companies from Belgium, the UK, Germany and North Macedonia are competing for the prestigious project next to the Mall of Oman, adjacent to the Muscat Expressway in Bausher.

The companies in contention are Belgian XDGA, British POV, German KSP Engel, North Macedonian BMA, and Belgian Samyn and Partners. These firms will play a crucial role in the iconic project.

Dubbed the 'Muscat Municipality Design

Competition 2025', this international competition aims to establish new standards in urban development by enhancing Muscat's urban landscape, preserving cultural heritage and elevating the city's global reputation.

Siham al Harthy, Chairperson for Al Aufoq Real Estate Development and Investment, emphasised the importance of selecting the best design blueprint for Muscat. She believes that this step will shape a more sustainable, inclusive and livable capital city.

Muscat Municipality Design Competition serves as a platform for visionary ideas, with five leading international architectural design firms competing for the award. Each firm will present a concept for a multi-use civic building that blends Omani identity with contemporary global urban design and sustainable technologies.

Tender

مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaʿyn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
4/2025/ PEIE/ HQ-4	Construction of Entrepreneurship Industrial Complex in Mahas Industrial City	21-07-2025	17-08-2025	Construction	First and above	300

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om and +968 24402200

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Madaʿyn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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SHORTTAKES



SHABAB OMAN II PARTICIPATES IN LE HAVRE FESTIVAL

LE HAVRE: The Royal Navy of Oman’s vessel *Shabab Oman II* concluded its participation in the *Le Havre Sailing Festival*, held from July 4-7, 2025 at the port of Le Havre, France.

The vessel will now commence its involvement in the *Tall Ships Race*, spanning four legs, as part of its seventh international voyage to Europe — titled “*Glories of the Seas*” for 2025.

During the festival, *Shabab Oman II* was awarded “*Best Crew Parade Ship*” at a ceremony organised by the festival management on its second day. The event featured numerous activities, and the vessel opened its doors to visitors, fulfilling its mission of fostering friendship and cultural exchange between Oman and nations worldwide by showcasing Oman’s rich maritime heritage and traditions.

The crew also participated in the parade of ships’ teams through the French city and engaged in various coastal and marine sports activities.

This seventh international voyage will include 30 stops across 24 ports in 15 countries over six months. The *Tall Ships Race 2025* will begin at Le Havre, followed by three additional legs: *Dunkirk* (France), *Aberdeen* (Scotland), and *Kristiansand* (Norway), concluding at the fourth and final leg in *Esbjerg*, Denmark.

Shabab Oman II will also take part in sailing festivals in *Bremerhaven*, Germany and *Amsterdam*, Netherlands. — *ONA*

National Museum launches culture-rich programme

THE National Museum has launched its summer programme, “Our Summer is Heritage & Identity,” organised by the museum’s Learning Center with support from BP Oman. The initiative aims to enhance participants’ awareness of national identity and reinforce the values of Oman’s cultural heritage.

The summer programme targets three age groups, namely children (6–11 years), school students (12–16 years), and college/university students. Throughout July, it will feature a series of artistic and interactive workshops inspired by the National Museum’s collections, designed to develop participants’ skills and stimulate their creativity.

Amina bint Abdullah al Abriyah, Head of the National Museum’s Learning Center, explained that “Our Summer is Heritage & Identity” programme is one of the centre’s annual initiatives to instil national identity values and strengthen youth connections to their cultural heritage through creative and experiential methods that blend art with heritage.

She noted that the National Museum is also participating in the “Our Summer is Leadership & Creativity” programme in Al Batinah North Governorate, in collaboration with the Governor’s Office, during July 6-10, 2025. The engagement includes artistic workshops organised by the Learning Center as part of its community awareness programme and children’s literature reading series, covering



“Our Summer is Heritage & Identity” programme is one of the centre’s annual initiatives to instil national identity values and strengthen youth connections to their cultural heritage through creative and experiential methods that blend art with heritage.

AMINA BINT ABDULLAH AL ABRIYAH

diverse themes such as colouring, traditional architecture and Oman’s maritime history.

She added that the programme seeks to solidify national identity among the younger generation through educational and artistic approaches that combine enjoyment with knowledge. These efforts align with the National Museum’s mission to extend its cultural reach beyond its physical spaces and promote the values of heritage and national identity.

In Al Batinah North, the summer programme will be held across several wilayats — Sohar, Liwa, Shinas, Saham, Al Khabourah, and Al Suwaiq— benefiting 240 participants. Meanwhile, the Learning Center will host the first programme at the National Museum for children aged 6–11 during July 6-10. The second and third programmes, targeting school students (12–16 years) and university students, will take place at the Learning Center’s corner in Muscat Grand Mall during July 13-17 and July 20-24, respectively, with 260 beneficiaries.

The National Museum’s Learning Center is the first of its kind in Oman, equipped to international standards and offering diverse educational programmes to raise public awareness of Omani heritage. These include school visits, college/university programmes, family programmes, community outreach, continuous education, programmes for people with disabilities and children’s literature reading sessions — all fostering deeper engagement with Oman’s rich history among visitors of all ages.



20 YEARS OF SEA, SUN & SERENITY

Shangri-La Muscat celebrates a milestone with unmissable new stay offers



Celebrating Two Decades of Meaningful Moments

Since its grand opening in 2005, Shangri-La Muscat has stood as a beacon of Omani warmth and world-class hospitality, gracefully set where majestic mountains meet the Arabian Sea. Over the years, it has been the cherished setting for countless engagements, family reunions, milestone birthdays, and tranquil couple escapes, each memory adding a new chapter to the resort’s vibrant story. Guests who once arrived as first-time visitors have returned again and again, drawn not only by the pristine private beaches and immersive experiences



— from snorkelling with turtles to discovering the rich culinary tapestry of Oman — but also by a deep sense of belonging. In many ways, they have become part of the Shangri-La family, shaping the resort’s legacy as much as the resort has shaped their own stories.

Why Now is the Perfect Time

As Shangri-La Muscat steps proudly into its next decade, there is no better moment to experience its blend of sun-drenched relaxation, adventure on the water, and authentic cultural discovery. Whether guests are seeking the lively embrace of Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, where children’s laughter fills the pools and

every day offers a new family-friendly adventure, or the serene exclusivity of Shangri-La Al Husn, an adult-only sanctuary perched on dramatic cliffs with sweeping sea views, the resort promises a stay that transcends the ordinary.

And now, with these extraordinary anniversary offers that redefine value and indulgence, a visit becomes more than just a getaway — it becomes part of a living celebration of 20 beautiful years.

For reservations, detailed terms, and to be part of this milestone season, visit <https://www.shangri-la.com/landing/summer-stay-in-muscat/> or call +968 2477 6262.

AS Shangri-La Muscat marks an extraordinary milestone this year — 20 years of Sea, Sun & Serenity — the iconic resort invites guests to be part of this celebration with two remarkable new experiences designed to make every stay even more memorable, especially this summer.

New Stay Offers

Reflecting on two decades of heartfelt hospitality, where countless moments have unfolded along the shores of Barr Al Jissah, Shangri-La Muscat unveils its most compelling offers yet. This summer, guests can indulge in an all-new **All-Inclusive Stay at Al Waha**, the vibrant family oasis at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah. Here, days begin with breakfast overlooking the Gulf of Oman, drift into leisurely lunches by the pool or fresh seafood feasts, lavish buffet at dinner time, and wind down with unlimited

beverages across a wide array of restaurants and bars. Thoughtfully crafted to allow families and friends to focus on making memories together, this special offer, from OMR 110++ per night for a family of three come with every culinary craving satisfied, every refreshment included, and every moment effortlessly covered under one exclusive stay.

In tandem, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah and the luxurious cliffside retreat Shangri-La Al Husn introduce the enticing **Stay & Get 100% Back in Resort Credit**, from dining, spa to experiences. It’s an invitation to tailor each holiday exactly as the heart desires, with the freedom to turn every moment into something truly special. Guest can avail a room for free with a minimum spend of OMR 100++ per night at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah or OMR 150++ for couples at Shangri-La Al Husn.

SHORT TAKES



The initiative is part of a broader series of community-centred programmes.

UTAS ‘Summer of the Future’ programme gets wide participation

AL MUSANNAH: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Al Musannah continues to deliver its “Summer of the Future” programme, drawing wide participation from various community groups.

The programme reflects the university’s deep commitment to its societal mission and its pivotal role in human development.

The initiative is part of a broader series of community-centred programmes launched by the university to enhance life skills, cultivate innovation and foster entrepreneurship among youth, aligned with a clear vision that sees education to empower a capable generation contributing effectively to national development.

Dr Nasser bin Salem al Baimani, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of UTAS–Al Musannah, emphasised that the university plays a vital role in supporting comprehensive development through educational and training programmes that respond to community needs. “The Summer of the Future programme is a practical embodiment of the university’s societal responsibility,” he said.

Qalhat to get a visitor centre worth RO 3 million

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has signed an agreement with the Development Foundation of the Oman LNG Company to finance the establishment of a visitor centre for the archaeological city of Qalhat, valued at RO 3 million.

The ancient city of Qalhat bears unique archaeological testimony to the trade links between the east coast of Arabia, East Africa, India, China and South-East Asia. It is located on the eastern coast of the Sultanate of Oman, approximately 20 kilometres north of the city of Sur.

The city was an important port on the Sea of Oman and hence functioned as a trade centre between India and, through it, East and South-East Asia and the Arabian Peninsula. Qalhat flourished in the 11th to 16th century. Following Portuguese attacks, the ancient city of Qalhat was abandoned in the 16th century and has since been preserved as an archaeological site. The remains and monuments on site comprehensively represent a port city of the Kingdom of Hormuz and reflect its legacy, architecture and urban design.

Qalhat exhibits the cultural and commercial interchange of values within the trading range of the Kingdom of Hormuz, which extended to India and as far as China and South-East Asia. The archaeological site of Qalhat provides physical evidence of these interchanges, documenting the architectural features



The archaeological site of Qalhat provides physical evidence of interchanges, documenting the architectural features.

which indicate its produce, dates, Arabian horses as well as spices and pearls. The ancient city also includes several highly representative buildings, which were referenced in narratives authored by historic travellers.

The ancient city of Qalhat, since its abandonment in the 16th century, is an archaeological site. Its architectural and urban fabric and form remain authentic, almost untouched, as does its setting. The abandonment of the ancient city of Qalhat plays a positive role in the conservation of its authenticity.

The site has not been occupied since the 16th century and, therefore, it preserves all characteristics of organisation, function and architectural techniques corresponding to the Islamic Period in general and the period of the Hormuz Kingdom in particular. Conservation, visitor management and site presentation plans aim at preserving this state to the largest extent possible. Likewise, archaeological excavations have been well-planned, thorough and minimal, an approach that should be commended and continued.

Students hopeful as HEAC trial admission results out

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 7

THOUSANDS of students and their families across Oman were on Monday eagerly awaiting for the Higher Education Admission Center (HEAC) results of the trial admission allocation for the 2025/2026 academic year — a critical step in the higher education admission process. According to HEAC, which operates under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, all registered applicants will receive SMS notifications informing them of the release. These messages will prompt them to log in to the HEAC system to view their trial results and see which academic programmes they have been tentatively allocated to.

The trial allocation carries significant weight as it offers a snapshot of how a student’s preferences align with their academic performance and the competitive environment.

HEAC explained that the trial allocation allows students to assess whether their academic preferences align with their competitive standing. It also helps them identify any mistakes or adjustments needed before the final allocation. This process reduces uncertainty and gives students a chance to rethink their choices based on a realistic outcome.

Rubaa al Zadjali, a recent high school graduate, stated: “I’m excited to see my trial



The trial allocation carries significant weight as it offers a snapshot of how a student’s preferences align with their academic performance and the competitive environment.

results. I hope to get into Civil Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University. I selected my preferences carefully, and this step gives us a realistic preview.”

Anas al Maawali, another applicant, commended the system’s fairness but stressed the importance of better guidance earlier in the school year: “We needed more workshops on how to prioritise academic choices strategically. Many students were confused about how to do this effectively.”

Many parents are equally involved, supporting their children through what can be a stressful yet exciting transition. Fatma al Shukaili, mother of a student, remarked: “The trial results allow us to sit down as a

family and talk about academic options. We want our children to follow their passions, but we also encourage them to choose programmes with strong career prospects.”

Salim al Rawahi, father of a student applying to medical school, added: “We appreciate the clarity and fairness of the process. Still, more public awareness and simplified communication would help families navigate the steps more confidently.”

To improve engagement and transparency, HEAC has launched an official WhatsApp channel where students can receive real-time updates. A QR code published across platforms links directly to the latest news.

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
296/2025	Engineering consulting services (design + supervision) for the project to establish a juvenile reform and guidance center	Companies specialized in the field of consulting offices and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first or second degree	Saturday 26-7-2025 02:00 PM	Friday 15-8-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
297/2025	Lining works for speech rooms at Al Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities at Nizwa	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the fourth degree	Wednesday 16-07-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 24-07-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Tuesday 8/7/2025**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry ”

www.mosd.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Vehicles of Somali security officers are parked in Mogadishu. — Reuters

AL SHABAAB, SOMALI ARMY CLASH OVER STRATEGIC TOWN

MOGADISHU: Fighting was ongoing between Somalia's armed forces and the Al Shabaab group over a strategic town in the country's central region, a local group commander and elder said on Monday. Al Shabaab militants attacked Moqokori, roughly 300 kilometres north of the capital Mogadishu, with "vehicles loaded with explosives and hundreds of fighters", commander Abdulahi Adan said. The town's group had "tactically retreated", he said, but added that "there is still ongoing sporadic fighting in the area, so that this is not a complete takeover".

Moqokori is strategically located as a gateway to several other major towns in the central Hiraaan region. The town has long been contested, with Al Shabaab seizing it in 2016, and last holding it briefly in 2018. The official Somali news agency Sonna said the attack had been prevented, and claimed "several militants were killed during the fighting". There were no further details. It comes only months after Al Shabaab took the town of Adan Yabaal, also in the Hiraaan region, and which was used as a base by Somali military commanders. — AFP

UN AIRDROPS FOOD AID IN S SUDAN CONFLICT AREAS



Women queue to receive food rations at transit centre in Renk. — Reuters file photo

NAIROBI: The World Food Programme said on Monday it had airdropped food aid to help tens of thousands of people in remote parts of South Sudan where surging conflict has pushed some communities "to the brink of famine". "These distributions mark WFP's first access in over four months to deliver life-saving food and nutrition assistance to more than 40,000 people... in the most remote parts of Nasir and Ulang counties, areas only accessible by air," the United Nations agency said in a statement.

More than one million people across Upper Nile state face acute hunger, including over 32,000 people already experiencing "catastrophic" levels of hunger, the WFP warned, adding the figure had tripled since conflict flared, triggering mass displacement.

Fighting has blocked main river routes, which are the most cost-effective way to reach large swathes of Upper Nile and northern Jonglei state to deliver assistance, the UN agency added. Across South Sudan, 7.7 million people, or 57 per cent of the population, face "crisis, emergency or catastrophic" levels of hunger, it said. — AFP

TROOPS GAS INCIDENT

12 soldiers die of methane exposure in Iraq



Türkiye said on Monday that 12 soldiers had died after being exposed to methane gas during a search operation in caves in northern Iraq. The deaths occurred when the Turkish troops were searching for the remains of a soldier who was shot dead in the area in May 2022 and whose body was never recovered. "Four other of our heroic comrades in arms, affected by methane gas, have died... bringing the total number of victims to 12," a statement said. — AFP

TYPHOON DAMAGE

Danas lashes Taiwan with record winds



Typhoon Danas lashed southern Taiwan with record winds and strong rain, killing two people and injuring more than 630. Over 700 trees were felled across western cities and towns and road signs were ripped off and strewn across the streets. More than 650 electric poles and three major electric towers were knocked down, in what Taiwan Power Company described as damage "unseen for decades" to its power grid. — Reuters

AVIATION DISRUPTION

Bali flights nixed after volcano eruption



Dozens of flights to and from Indonesia's Bali island were cancelled on Monday after a volcano belched a colossal ash tower 18 kilometres into the sky. The aviation disruption came just weeks after the same rumbling volcano caused dozens of flight cancellations to and from the popular resort island. "An eruption of Lewotobi Laki-Laki Volcano occurred... with the observed ash column height reaching approximately 18,000 m above the summit." — AFP

Israel kills 12 in Gaza amid renewed truce talks

GAZA'S civil defence agency said Israeli forces killed at least 12 people on Monday, including six in a clinic housing Palestinians displaced after 21 months of war. Israel has recently expanded its military operations in the Gaza Strip, where the war has created dire humanitarian conditions for the Palestinian territory's population of more than two million. Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that six people were killed and 15 injured in an Israeli air strike that hit the Al-Rimal clinic, "which houses hundreds of displaced people, in the Al-Rimal neighbourhood west of Gaza City."

Footage showed Palestinians, including groups of young children, combing through the bombed-out interior of the clinic, where mattresses lay alongside wood, metal and concrete broken apart in the blast. "We were surprised by missiles and explosions inside the building," eyewitness Salman Qudum said. "We did not know where to go because of the dust and destruction." In the south of the territory, Bassal said two people were killed and 20 others injured by Israeli forces' gunfire while waiting for aid near a distribution site run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). A US- and Israel-backed group, the GHF took the lead in food distribution in the territory in late May, but its operations have had a chaotic rollout with repeated reports of aid seekers killed near its facilities. In Khan Yunis in the south, Bassal reported two people killed in an air strike on a house and another killed by Israeli gunfire. An air strike on a house in Gaza City killed one and injured several others, he added. Meanwhile, Hamas and



A Palestinian woman mourns a relative outside the Al Shifa hospital in Gaza City. — AFP

Footage showed Palestinians, including groups of young children, combing through the bombed-out interior of the clinic, where mattresses lay alongside wood, metal and concrete broken apart in the blast.

Israel were resuming talks in Qatar on Monday, a Palestinian official said, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travelled to Washington to meet President Donald Trump, who has pushed for a "deal this week" between the foes. The latest round of negotiations on the war in Gaza began on Sunday in Doha, aiming to broker a ceasefire and reach an agreement on the release of hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. "Indirect negotiations are scheduled to take place before noon today in Doha between the Hamas and Israeli delegations to continue discussions" on the proposal, a Palestinian official familiar with the negotiations said.

Ahead of Netanyahu's third visit since Trump's return to office this year, the US president said there was a "good chance" of reaching an agreement. "We've gotten a lot of the hostages out, but pertaining to the remaining hostages, quite a few of them will be coming out," he told journalists. Netanyahu, speaking before heading to Washington,

said his meeting with Trump could "definitely help advance this" deal. The US president is pushing for a truce in the Gaza Strip, plunged into a humanitarian crisis after nearly two years of war. Netanyahu said he dispatched the team to Doha with "clear instructions" to reach an agreement "under the conditions that we have agreed to". He previously said Hamas's response to a draft US-backed ceasefire proposal, conveyed through Qatari and Egyptian mediators, contained "unacceptable" demands.

The war has created dire humanitarian conditions for the more than two million people in the Gaza Strip. A US- and Israel-backed group, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), took the lead in food distribution in the territory in late May, when Israel partially lifted a more than two-month blockade on aid deliveries. But its operations have had a chaotic rollout, with repeated reports of aid seekers killed near its facilities while awaiting rations. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian attends a press conference in Tehran. — Reuters

ISRAEL ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE HIM, SAYS IRAN PRESIDENT

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in an interview released on Monday that Israel, which last month fought a 12-day war with Iran, had attempted to assassinate him. The remarks came less than a month after Israel launched its unprecedented June 13 bombing campaign against Iran, killing top military commanders and nuclear scientists.

“They did try, yes. They acted accordingly, but they failed,” Pezeshkian told US media figure Tucker Carlson in response to a question on whether he believed Israel had tried to kill him. “It was not the United States that was behind the attempt on my life. It was Israel. I was in a meeting... they tried to bombard the area in which we were holding that meeting,” he said, in apparent reference to an alleged assassination attempt during the recent war.

During the interview with Carlson, Pezeshkian accused Netanyahu of pursuing his “own agenda” of “forever wars” in the Middle East, and urged the United States not to be dragged into it. “The US administration should refrain from getting involved in a war that is not America’s war, it is Netanyahu’s war,” he said. — AFP

ASYLUM-SEEKERS FOUND NEAR CRETE



Migrants rescued at sea off the Greek island of Crete wait in the port of Agia Galini to be transferred. Greece’s coastguard on Monday said it had rescued around 230 asylum seekers near the island of Crete, after hundreds more landed over the weekend. An EU border agency Frontex vessel initially spotted the migrants inside two inflatable boats off Gavdos, a small island southwest of Crete that has seen increased migrant traffic in recent months. On Sunday, the Greek coastguard rescued over 600 asylum-seekers in various operations. — AFP

UN SEEKS BREAKTHROUGH IN CYPRUS PEACE TALKS

NICOSIA: The United Nations is pushing for a breakthrough when Cyprus’s rival leaders meet in New York next week for a renewed attempt to revive stalled peace talks, an UN envoy said on Monday. Maria Angela Holguin held separate meetings with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar, crossing the island’s UN-patrolled ceasefire line in a day of shuttle diplomacy. “All this effort the UN is doing is for the prosperity of the island, so

that the people have a better life,” Holguin, who was appointed the UN envoy to Cyprus earlier this year, told reporters after meeting Tatar. “And we continue to work, the commitment of the UN is totally for that, so we hope the leaders can think about that, and we have results next week.” The meetings are part of preparations for talks in New York on July 16-17, where UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is due to meet both leaders. They follow

a meeting in Geneva in March, which marked the first meaningful progress in years. Both sides agreed on a set of confidence-building measures, including opening more crossing points across the divide, cooperating on solar energy, and removing landmines — steps Guterres described as reflecting a “new atmosphere” and renewed urgency. “I hope we are going to have many advances on the measures they decided in March”. — AFP

Children’s camp confirms 27 dead in Texas floods

RESCUERS in the US state of Texas on Monday searched for bodies swept away by flash floods that killed more than 80 people, including 27 girls and counselors at a summer camp. The nation was shocked at the disaster over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, and forecasters warned that thunderstorms threatened more flooding over saturated ground. “Camp Mystic is grieving the loss of 27 campers and counselors following the catastrophic flooding,” the camp said in a statement. “Our hearts are broken alongside our families that are enduring this unimaginable tragedy.”

US President Donald Trump said he may visit Texas later this week, but brushed off concerns his cuts to weather forecasting and related federal agencies had weakened warning systems. Instead, he described the floods in the early hours of Friday as a “100-year catastrophe” that “nobody expected.” At least 40 adults and 28 children were killed in the worst-hit Kerr County in central Texas, Sheriff Larry Leitha said on Sunday, while at least 13 more people were killed by flooding in nearby areas. The death toll is expected to rise.



A volunteer looks for missing people, following severe flash flooding, in Hunt. — AFP

Trump, who previously said disaster relief should be handled at the state level, signed a major disaster declaration, activating fresh funds and freeing up resources. About 20 helicopters were taking part in the search for missing people in an area popular with campers that also hosted several summer camps for children. Camp Mystic, one of the worst-hit, was an all-girl Christian camp where about 750 people had been staying with the floodwaters struck.

In a terrifying display of nature’s power, the rain-swollen waters of the Guadalupe River reached treetops and the roofs of cabins as girls at the camp slept. Blankets, teddy bears and other belongings were caked in mud. Windows in the cabins were shattered, apparently by the force of the water. Texas Governor Greg Abbott warned that more heavy rainfall could bring further flooding in Kerrville and surrounding areas, as officials cautioned people against going near still-raging rivers.

Months’ worth of rain fell in a matter of hours on Thursday night into Friday, and rain has continued in bouts since then. The Guadalupe surged around eight meters — more than a two-story building — in just 45 minutes. Flash floods, which occur when the ground is unable to absorb torrential rainfall, are not unusual in this region of south and central Texas, known colloquially as “Flash Flood Alley.”

Human-driven climate change has made extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and heat waves more frequent and more intense in recent years. “There’s debris all over the place that makes roads impassable, that makes reconstruction projects unachievable,” Abbott said. People from elsewhere in the state converged on Kerr County to help look for the missing. Some residents also flew personal drones to help look, but officials urged them to stop,

citing a danger to rescue aircraft. Texans also started flying personal drones to help look but local officials urged them to stop, citing a danger for rescue aircraft. One of the searches focused on four young women who were staying in a house that was washed away by the river. Adam Durda and his wife Amber, both 45, drove three hours to help. “There was a group of 20-year-olds that were in a house that had gotten washed away,” Durda said. “That’s who the family requested help for, but of course, we’re looking for anybody.”

Justin Morales, 36, was part of a search team that found three bodies, including that of a Camp Mystic girl caught up in a tree. “We’re happy to give a family closure and hopefully we can keep looking and find some of the... you know, whoever,” he said. “Help give some of those families closure. That’s why we’re out here.” — AFP

Russian forces claim first foothold in new Ukraine region

KYIV: Russia said on Monday it captured its first village in Ukraine’s central Dnipropetrovsk region after grinding towards the border for months, dealing a psychological blow for Kyiv as its worries mount. Moscow launched a fresh large-scale drone and missile barrage before the announcement, including on Ukraine’s army recruitment centres, as part of an escalating series of attacks that come as ceasefire talks led by the United States stall.

The Russian defence ministry said its forces captured the village of Dachne in the Dnipropetrovsk region, an important industrial mining territory that has also come under mounting Russian air attacks. Russian forces appear to have made crossing the border a key strategic objective over recent months, and deeper advances into the region could pose logistics and economic problems for Kyiv. Kyiv has so far denied any Russian foothold in

Dnipropetrovsk. Moscow first said last month its forces had crossed the border, more than three years since launching its attack and pushing through the neighbouring Donetsk region. Earlier on Monday, Ukraine’s army said its forces “repelled” attacks in Dnipropetrovsk, including “in the vicinity” of Dachne. Dnipropetrovsk is not one of the five Ukrainian regions — Donetsk, Kherson, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea — that Moscow has publicly claimed as Russian territory.

Russia used its main city of Dnipro as a testing ground for its “experimental” Oreshnik missile in late 2024, claiming to have struck an aeronautics production facility. A reporter in the eastern city of Kharkiv saw civilians with their belongings being evacuated from a residential building damaged during Russia’s overnight attacks, and others sheltering with pets in a



Ukrainian law enforcement officers work next to a crater following a drone attack in Kharkiv. — AFP

basement. At least four people were killed and dozens wounded across Ukraine, mostly in the Kharkiv region bordering Russia and in a late-morning attack on the industrial city of Zaphorizhzhia. “Air defence remains the top priority for protecting lives,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media after the attacks, as fears mount over the continuing deliveries of US military aid.

Zelensky said Ukraine was “strongly counting on our partners to fully deliver on what we have

agreed”. The air force said Moscow had launched 101 drones across the country and four missiles. Seventy-five of the drones were downed, it added.

Attacks on Monday targeted two recruitment centres in separate cities wounding four people, the Ukrainian army said, in what appears to be a new trend following similar strikes over the weekend and last week. “These strikes are part of a comprehensive enemy operation aimed at disrupting mobilisation in Ukraine,” Ukraine’s Centre for Strategic Communications, a government-funded body, wrote on social media. It added that Russia had attacked recruitment centres last week in the cities of Kremenchuk, Kryvyi Rig, and Poltava. In Russia, the defence ministry said that it had shot down 91 Ukrainian drones overnight, including eight in the Moscow region. — AFP

OPINION

Khareef Dhofar Season: A strategic tourism opportunity



FOR Dhofar the khareef season is a crucial period for both tourism and economic growth. The authorities have confirmed their readiness for this important season, which draws a significant number of local and international visitors. The khareef season, which begins on June 21 each year, is a strategic platform to showcase Dhofar's economic potential.

The khareef season transforms Salalah into a lush green paradise, offering a refreshing escape from the summer heat. Visitors can enjoy a variety of activities, including exploring Wadi Darbat, visiting Al Mughsail Beach, and shopping at Al Haffa Souq. The Salalah Khareef Festival, running from July 15 to August 31 is a major highlight, featuring cultural performances, local cuisine and adventure sports.

The government is implementing a detailed plan to strengthen commercial oversight, boost investor confidence and safeguard consumer interests. Inspections are being conducted across markets, hotels, restaurants, and other service providers to ensure they meet legal and professional standards. Additionally, awareness workshops are also being held for business owners to improve service quality and raise awareness about consumer rights.

The khareef season is a crucial period for Oman's tourism sector, offering a unique opportunity to attract visitors and boost

economic growth. The hotel sector is also gearing up for the season, with over 8,000 rooms available across 100 licensed hotels in Dhofar. Many hotels are offering competitive rates, hospitality packages and customised tourism programmes to introduce visitors to Dhofar's rich cultural, natural and heritage attractions.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is actively promoting the khareef season in the GCC region through promotional campaigns and workshops. These campaigns highlight the diverse tourism experiences and activities available, including recreational events, nature exploration trips and visits to heritage sites. Direct flight options to Salalah are also being promoted to enhance accessibility.

Promotional activities have been launched in key shopping malls across GCC cities, with the campaign theme 'Your Summer is Green'. The ministry participated in the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai in April 2025, and organised workshops in Riyadh and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to promote the season. Direct flights to Salalah Airport will be operated daily during the khareef season.

The khareef season, which typically lasts from June to September, transforms the previously arid landscape into a green haven, attracting tourists worldwide, especially from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This seasonal influx significantly boosts the local economy, increasing business for hotels,

Dhofar's tourism sector is experiencing remarkable growth, driven by its natural beauty, cultural richness, and strategic investments in infrastructure and services.

restaurants and other service industries.

In 2024, Dhofar attracted over 1 million visitors during the khareef season, a 10-per cent increase compared to previous years. The season has become an important fixture in Oman's tourism calendar, drawing both domestic tourists and international travellers who wish to experience the governorate's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Dhofar offers numerous tourist attractions beyond the Khareef season, providing unforgettable experiences. The governorate is known for its rich cultural heritage, embodied in festivals, traditional dance and music.

Despite the positive outlook, the governorate faces challenges such as managing the increased tourist influx and preserving the natural environment. However, with a strategic approach and sustainable development plans, Dhofar has the potential to become a world-class tourist destination.

Dhofar's tourism sector is experiencing remarkable growth, driven by its natural beauty, cultural richness and strategic investments in infrastructure and services. The governorate is poised to become a leading destination for both domestic and international travellers, contributing significantly to Oman's economic diversification and sustainable tourism goals.

Sahel’s roads of fear: Ambushes, mines, kidnappings

Abidjan: In the Sahel, a region plagued by extremist violence, there are roads people steer clear of and others they travel on with their heart in their mouth.

Such was the case for Moussa, when in March he had to take his mother's body to another village for burial, forcing him onto National route 15 in central Mali.

While on it, he witnessed a terrifying scene — extremists on motorcycles, armed with military-grade weapons, their heads wrapped in turbans, kidnapping passengers from a bus.

"They stopped us, but seeing my mother's body, they told us to continue," he said.

Africa's turbulent Sahel region, sometimes referred to as the global epicentre of terrorism, has been plagued by violence from groups linked to Al Qaeda or the IS for more than a decade.

According to a recent OECD report, "70 per cent of violent events and 65 per cent of fatalities in North and West Africa occur within just one km of a road". In the central Sahel — as well as the Lake Chad basin and western Cameroon — some roads "have become epicentres of violence", the 145-page report said, disrupting financial trade and governance. "Transport routes have become a prime target for attacks against government forces, particularly military convoys, and a means to pressure rural communities," said Olivier Walther, a co-author of the study, adding that extremists regularly set up roadblocks around towns.

South of the Malian border, in Burkina Faso, "all roads leading to Djibo" are dangerous "due to blockades imposed on the town" by the Al Qaeda-affiliated group, Walther said. A few months later, Abdoul Fhatave Tientore, editor-in-chief of the Burkinabe radio station Omega, wrote about his experience of travelling that section of road. He described feeling "sadness, anxiety, fear and stress" after witnessing "truly horrific things".

Niger has two high-risk highways, both in the southwest and both leading to Burkina Faso.

Since 2022, it has been nearly impossible to travel from the capital Niamey to Burkina's Ouagadougou by road due to the threat posed by terrorists along the 600-kilometre border between the two countries.

The National Association of Wood Operators in Niger said in May that it had lost 24 of its drivers and apprentices since 2015 and that 52 of its trucks had been burnt on roads in the southwest of the country. — AFP

Why being a nationalist means buying local

EVERY time I choose to spend my money in Oman — whether at a high-end boutique, a modest stall in Muttrah Souq, or a local grocery store — I am met with astonishment. Friends and acquaintances often express surprise, even disbelief, that I don't prefer to shop during my frequent travels to Europe or the US (and to some Dubai), where goods are often cheaper, trendier, or more varied.

But to me, choosing to buy in Oman is not simply about convenience or cost; it is a conscious act of national pride and economic support. It is about being a nationalist in the most practical sense of the word.

We live in a time where consumerism has gone global. Social media floods us with influencers flaunting foreign brands, encouraging us to chase products from abroad.

In this atmosphere, buying local can be dismissed as backward or unnecessarily expensive. Omanis frequently complain that the local buying power is low, that the choices are few, or that the products are outdated. But I see this as a classic catch-22.

If we all refrain from purchasing locally, then of course local markets will stagnate. The merchandise will sit on shelves, unsold, until it becomes irrelevant. Businesses will not take the risk to import better goods, nor will local manufacturers innovate, simply because the demand is not there.

To me, every Omani rial spent locally is a vote for the future of our economy. When I choose to buy from a local shop instead of flying to Dubai for a cheaper version, I am



Buying Omani products carries a sense of place and belonging that imported goods simply cannot replicate.



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, SQU

signalling to that business owner — and the larger economic ecosystem — that there is value in staying, growing and evolving in Oman. I am contributing to the circulation of money within the country, rather than letting it disappear into foreign economies that have already reached maturity.

This is why I rarely haggle in places like Muttrah Souq, even when bargaining is expected. Many view this as foolish or naive, but I see it as an investment.

That small vendor I pay a few rials more to may be supporting a family or trying to keep a centuries-old trade alive. My extra rial might be insignificant to me, but to them, it could mean the ability to restock,

repair, or reinvest. This is also why I don't object too strongly to buying from larger, monopolised companies — so long as they operate within Oman, employ Omanis, and contribute to our national development.

Even in these big companies, every job created matters, every tax paid supports public infrastructure and every success story adds to our national pride.

There is also an emotional dimension to buying local. Supporting Omani products helps preserve our culture, our craftsmanship and our stories. Whether it's an abaya stitched in Muscat, dates harvested from an interior farm, a piece of silver jewellery from Nizwa, or perfume mixed in a small workshop, these goods carry a sense of place and belonging that imported goods simply cannot replicate. When I wear or use them, I feel rooted. I feel that I am participating in the collective narrative of what it means to be Omani.

Nationalism is not only about waving a flag on National Day or sharing patriotic messages on social media. It is also about the quieter, everyday choices we make — where we eat, what we wear, how we shop. If we all took pride in investing in our local economy, Oman's markets would evolve.

Products would improve. Innovation would follow. Opportunities for Omanis would increase.

The economy would diversify. And our national identity would be strengthened from within.

So no, I don't travel to buy what I can find here. I pay a little more, and I do so gladly. Because in every rial I spend, I am choosing Oman.

Global identity: Prospects and dangers



DR OMAR
OSMAN JABAK

The author is with
UTAS Rustaq

THE idea of a “global identity” has recently emerged with the forces of globalisation, technological interconnectedness and mass migration propelling it. This concept suggests that beyond local, regional or national identities, individuals may begin to perceive themselves as part of a wider human community. While a global identity promises solidarity and collective action, it also raises dangers of cultural erasure, alienation and political backlash.

At the individual level, adopting a global identity can expand one’s perspectives. Exposure to diverse cultures, languages, and worldviews through travel, education, and digital interaction cultivates empathy and openness. For instance, a student collaborating with international peers on climate research develops a sense of shared responsibility transcending national borders. This cosmopolitan outlook enhances creativity, cross-cultural competence, and employability in global careers. Yet, it can simultaneously dilute the strength of local roots. Individuals may experience identity confusion as they feel alienated from their cultural heritage or excluded from their host communities if they are perceived as ‘foreign.’ Psychologically, the tension between local belonging and global aspirations can lead to what sociologists term “rootlessness” or “placelessness” which erodes a secure sense of self.

At the community or cultural level, global identity fosters inclusivity and pluralism.

Multicultural cities are living examples of how diverse communities coexist, exchange practices and create hybrid identities. This process can rejuvenate traditional cultures by integrating new ideas while preserving core values.

For example, many indigenous activists use global platforms to amplify local environmental struggles to gain solidarity from international allies. However, the danger here lies in cultural homogenisation. Global media, commerce, and fashion often privilege Western or dominant narratives, while marginalising minority languages, indigenous knowledge systems and traditional art forms. The global market’s preference for certain aesthetics and norms can lead to cultural erosion, where local traditions are commodified or lost entirely in the name of ‘modernisation’ and economic growth.

At the national or political level, embracing a global identity facilitates international cooperation. Transnational challenges such as climate change, pandemics and cybersecurity threats require nations to prioritise shared interests over narrow nationalism.

Global institutions like the UN or WHO thrive on the notion that humanity forms a single moral community with mutual obligations. The Covid-19 pandemic, for example, highlighted the need for global solidarity in vaccine distribution and research. Yet, the rise of global identity also triggers political dangers. Nationalist

Cultivating a balanced global identity requires critical awareness as it demands intercultural humility that respects local wisdom while recognising our interconnected fates.

movements worldwide argue that globalism undermines sovereignty, economic security and cultural integrity. They even exploit these fears to frame global identity as a threat to national values. This backlash can result in xenophobia, protectionism and even violent conflict, as seen in anti-immigrant movements across Europe and the United States.

At the civilisational or planetary level, the ideal of global identity offers humanity a chance to avert existential risks. For example, climate change mitigation requires humans to identify not merely as citizens of states, but as stewards of Earth. However, defining a singular global identity risks imposing monolithic moral or ideological frameworks. It may ignore power asymmetries, especially between developed and developing nations. This might lead to neocolonial governance structures where dominant powers dictate the terms of ‘global’ priorities.

In fact, global identity is neither purely utopian nor dystopian. Its prospects lie in fostering peace, understanding and sustainable development by encouraging humans to see beyond artificial divides. On the other hand, its dangers lie in erasing differences, suppressing dissenting voices and exacerbating inequalities under the banner of ‘unity.’

Therefore, cultivating a balanced global identity requires critical awareness as it demands intercultural humility that respects local wisdom while recognising our interconnected fates.

Confidence vote spells scrutiny, if little danger, for EU chief

ADRIEN DE CALAN

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen faces a grilling from lawmakers on Monday ahead of a confidence vote she is all but certain to survive — but which casts renewed scrutiny on her leadership of the bloc.

The rare challenge pushed by a faction on the far-right has virtually no chance of unseating the conservative European Commission president when it goes to a vote on Thursday in Strasbourg.

But Monday’s debate will give von der Leyen’s opponents from across the spectrum a chance to flex their muscles in the bloc’s assembly, one year after EU-wide elections.

The confidence vote was initiated by a Romanian far-right lawmaker, Gheorghe Piperea, who accuses von der Leyen of a lack of transparency over text messages she sent to the head of Pfizer while negotiating Covid vaccines. The commission’s failure to release the messages — the focus of multiple court cases, including by The New York Times — has given weight to critics who accuse its boss of centralised and opaque decision-making. That is a growing refrain from von der Leyen’s traditional allies on the left and centre, who also have bones to pick over the new status quo in parliament — where her centre-right camp has increasingly teamed up with the far-right to further its agenda.

Romania’s Piperea also accuses the European Commission of interfering in his country’s recent presidential election, which saw the EU critic and nationalist George Simion lose to pro-European Nicusor Dan. The vote came after Romania’s constitutional court scrapped an initial ballot over allegations of Russian interference and massive social media promotion of the far-right frontrunner.

Piperea’s challenge to von der Leyen has support from part of the far-right — including the Patriots for Europe group that includes both France’s National Rally and the party of Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban. The vote was set last week after the motion gathered the minimum 72 signatures — one-tenth of the 720-seat legislature, where von der Leyen was re-elected with 401 votes last July.

Parliament’s biggest force, von der Leyen’s European People’s Party (EPP) flatly rejects the challenge to the commission chief — with group boss Manfred Weber branding it the work of pro-Russian, anti-European forces in the assembly. But both camps want to push von der Leyen to clarify her allegiances — accusing her of cosyng up to the far-right to push through contested measures, and most notably to roll back environmental rules. A successful vote of no-confidence would trigger the resignation of von der Leyen’s 27-member European Commission in what would be a historical first. — AFP

Competing security visions of the US, China

IT is indisputable at this point that the US is disengaging from global leadership. While America’s retreat has so far been largely a choice – spearheaded by President Donald Trump’s “America First” administration – it may well become irreversible. And if the Communist Party of China (CPC) has its way, the People’s Republic will emerge as the new global hegemon.

China’s recently published white paper on national security, its first ever, offers a glimpse into the CPC’s plans. Reflecting President Xi Jinping’s “holistic national security concept,” the document articulates an expansive, integrated approach, encompassing political, economic, military, technological, cultural, and societal domains. Unlike previous defence-focused white papers, it establishes political security – specifically, the CPC’s leadership – as the foundation of national stability, essential to enable China to act as a stabilising force in a turbulent world.

That turbulence, China asserts, can be blamed largely on Western powers – especially the US – which have fostered disorder through containment and interference. China has a point here: even America’s current withdrawal from global leadership has been conflicted and chaotic.

That chaos begins with the Trump administration’s embrace of economic nationalism and continues through Trump’s rejection of decades of US foreign-policy principles.

To be sure, in the Trump administration’s view, the US operation in Iran was a bold, one-off manoeuvre aimed squarely at ending the Iranian nuclear threat and advancing peace in the Middle East. It was thus perfectly aligned with the administration’s commitment not to become embroiled in new “forever wars.” But not only is the operation unlikely to have achieved its objectives; it undermines US soft power by inviting accusations of arrogance and hypocrisy.

This appears to matter little to the



ANA
PALACIO

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

For the US, the objective had been to quash or deter threats to a rules-based order. But as Trump abandons that approach and alienates more of the world, China looks at building alternative frameworks for global engagement

Trump administration, which seems convinced that national security depends not on global outreach but on military deterrence, advances in cybersecurity, and economic protectionism, exemplified by high tariffs, efforts to secure critical-mineral supply chains, and limits on the export of advanced technology to China. In fact, the Trump administration has scaled back cultural diplomacy and slashed development aid – hallmarks of America’s post-Cold War influence.

This has provided a critical opening for China to position itself as a stable and certain actor in regional and global affairs, a champion of multilateralism, an investor in and defender of the Global South, and a just peacemaker. Within Asia, this vision has materialised in “treaties of neighbourliness and friendly cooperation” between China and nine countries, and in China’s promotion of greater regional security cooperation, including with the ASEAN countries.

More broadly, China is touting Xi’s Global Security Initiative (GSI), which was launched in 2022 as an alternative to Western-led security frameworks that can support broad-based, “win-win” cooperation on “complex and intertwined security challenges.”

China is further nurturing its soft power through cultural outreach – from its network of Confucius Institutes to its recent dialogues with the African Union – and economic engagement, including trade, lending, and investment. In May, the country introduced a \$9 billion credit line for Latin America and the Caribbean. More broadly, China has been allocating huge amounts of funding for infrastructure and energy projects across the Global South, including through its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The GSI, the BRI, and other projects form the pillars of what China calls a “global community of shared future.” But, like the US, China’s claim to the moral high ground is not always aligned with

reality. Its message is clear: China, with the CPC at its helm, is the just, stable, non-hegemonic power the world – especially the Global South – needs. But its rhetoric of justice and multilateralism is belied by its coercive domestic policies and aggressive regional manoeuvres, such as the militarisation of the South China Sea. In fact, while China presents its security posture as entirely defensive – aimed only at ensuring its own sovereignty – it has been pursuing various territorial claims with increasing assertiveness. Regarding Taiwan, the CPC makes “no promise to renounce the use of force” and “reserves the option of taking all necessary measures” to “reunite” China.

Following through on these threats would be far less justifiable than the US operation in Iran, which was at least aimed at neutralising a perceived threat. Taiwan poses no threat whatsoever to China or its neighbours. But for many countries in the Global South, America’s history of double standards, including its inconsistent human-rights advocacy, has so decimated its moral authority that its interventions stand out as uniquely problematic, especially as it turns its back on soft power.

The US and China have very different ideas of what it means to underwrite global stability. For the US, the objective – at least before Trump’s presidency – had been to quash or deter threats to a rules-based order, including through selective interventions.

But as Trump’s America abandons that approach and alienates more of the world, China’s vision, focused on fortifying CPC control and building alternative frameworks for global engagement, has gained greater appeal. If the US wants to remain a decisive player in the emerging multipolar world order, it will need to reaffirm the postwar foreign-policy principles that underpinned the rules-based order that it helped build but now threatens.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The top athletes will be selected for further training camps

ORSC MARKS ‘WORLD BADMINTON DAY’

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 7

As part of spreading the racket sports in the Sultanate of Oman, the Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) recently marked World Badminton Day with a vibrant celebration titled “Badminton Carnival”. As many as 60 participants, aged between 8–12 years, took part in the event representing across the Sultanate of Oman governorates namely: Muscat, Al Sharqiyah North, and Al Batinah South, and engaged in a fun-filled programme designed to introduce them to the exciting world of badminton. The Carnival took place at Smash Hall in Dolphin Centre, Al Seeb.

The carnival comprised from entertaining and educational activities under the committee’s “Shuttle Time” programme, beside skill-building games, and friendly competitions to enhance young participants’ exposure to the sport. The event was supported by a dedicated team of coaches, referees, administrators, and volunteers led by coach Wasim al Khateeb, the national badminton coach.

SPORT’S GROWTH

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Abdulrahim al Droushi, Chairman of ORSC, affirmed the importance of hosting such annual events in alignment with global celebrations of World Badminton Day. “Oman’s participation in this international day reflects the steady growth of badminton in the country, supported by international, continental, and regional federations,” he added

“We are pleased with the significant participation from families and children. These recreational programs help bring children closer to sports and align with our strategic efforts to promote badminton as a key racket sport in Oman,” he ended

Adnan al Awaidi, a father of participating children, thanked the committee’s efforts and commitment to delivering the second edition of this international celebration. “It is clear this initiative plays a key role in introducing the sport to the wider community. The event’s timing during the summer break also helps students make productive use of their vacation. The dedication of the coaches and technical team, and the committee’s broader mission to popularise badminton among youth,” he concluded.

The committee confirmed that this celebration is part of a wider Summer 2025 programme that includes badminton and squash activities, ranging from sports days and summer programs to continued training at dedicated centers across the Sultanate of Oman. On the other hand, the ORSC coaching staff are busy in obtaining the potential candidates for badminton as the summer training camps are underway under supervision of the head coach Wasim al Khateeb. The second phase of the programme will target Muscat Governorate students. The targeted group is between 9 to 13. The top athletes will be selected for further training camps.



Oman hold Egypt, crush Croatia in hockey tourney

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 7

OMAN’S national hockey team will face Croatia on Tuesday in their third match of the ongoing Tri-Nation International Friendly Tournament, hosted by Egypt from July 4 to 10. The team will meet the host, Egypt, in the final round of the home-and-away stage on Wednesday. Both matches are scheduled to take place at the Suez Canal Authority’s hockey stadium.

DRAW AGAINST EGYPT

In their second match, Oman earned a 1-1 draw against Egypt in a balanced contest that saw equal performance and chances from both sides. Egypt opened the scoring in the third minute through Hossam Ragheb. Despite several attempts, Oman couldn’t equalise in the first quarter, which ended 1-0 in favor of Egypt.

The second quarter witnessed back-and-forth opportunities but no goals were scored, keeping Egypt ahead 1-0.

Oman came into the third quarter determined to equalise, but faced an organised Egyptian defense that prevented any breakthrough, and the quarter ended with the same 1-0 scoreline.

In the fourth and final quarter, our national team intensified its offensive pressure, and player Fahad al Lawati managed to equalise the score in the 47th minute, following a smart pass inside the penalty area.

TRIUMPH OVER CROATIA

Oman kicked off their tournament campaign with a commanding 5-2 victory over Croatia. The team entered the match with strong determination, and Fahad al Lawati opened the scoring in the 2nd minute following an intense offensive push that unsettled the Croatian defence. Oman maintained their dominance in the first quarter, which ended 1-0, despite Croatia’s attempts to respond.

In the second quarter, both teams exchanged chances, but the score



In the 2nd match, Oman earned a 1-1 draw against Egypt

remained unchanged, with Oman holding onto their 1-0 lead through solid defence.

The third quarter saw Oman take full control of the game. Ayman Madid doubled the lead in the 34th minute and then scored again in the 40th minute to make it 3-0 by the end of the quarter.

In the final quarter, Mario Mučić narrowed the gap for Croatia with a penalty corner goal in the 47th minute. Oman quickly responded with a fourth goal by Maytham al Wahaibi in the 49th minute. Croatia pulled one back with a second goal by Josip Krleza, again from a penalty corner in the 53rd minute. However, Elias al Noufli sealed the victory for Oman with a fifth goal in the 55th minute, ending the match 5-2 in Oman’s favour.

Head coach Mohammed bin Hobais Bait Jandal commented: “We secured an important win against Croatia and drew

with Egypt, which positively impacted the players’ morale. We’ve seen improvements in discipline and performance, especially in fitness and tactical execution.”

He added, “we plan to maintain this momentum, taking each game seriously without overconfidence.”

Coach Bait Jandal also revealed that player Faisal bin Awad al Lawan sustained a muscle injury that will sideline him for the remainder of the tournament. However, he confirmed that the rest of the squad is ready to step up and maintain the team’s strong performance.

Elias al Noufli noted the win over Croatia was the result of a new tactical plan tailored for an unfamiliar opponent. We followed the coach’s instructions and controlled the game. Despite the tough match against Egypt, we earned a valuable draw and will aim to improve in the upcoming games.

National wheelchair basketball team heads to Jordan

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 7

The national wheelchair basketball team delegation departed Muscat on Monday, for Jordan to participate in the 9th West Asia Wheelchair Basketball Club Championship.

The tournament, organised by the Jordanian Paralympic Committee and hosted by the Ajyal Al Ghad Club in the capital, Amman, will be held from July 13 to 19.

It features wide participation from West Asian teams and represents a key step in enhancing Oman’s presence on the regional Paralympic stage.

The Omani team is participating in the championship by official invitation from the organisers, as part of the Oman Paralympic Committee’s ongoing preparations for upcoming events, most notably the hosting of the West Asia Championship for Persons with Disabilities scheduled for February 2026.

This participation offers a valuable opportunity for the players to gain experience



The tournament, organised by the Jordanian Paralympic Committee

The Omani team is participating in the championship by official invitation from the organisers, as part of the Oman Paralympic Committee’s ongoing preparations for upcoming events, most notably the hosting of the West Asia Championship for Persons with Disabilities scheduled for February 2026.

in real competitive settings, improve technical skills, foster team cohesion, and assess the team’s readiness ahead of major future tournaments.

The championship will see intense competition among ten teams representing nine countries: The UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, two teams from Jordan, and Oman, reflecting the challenging nature of the tournament for the Omani side.

Mohammed al Hinai, head of the delegation and Secretary-General of the Oman Paralympic Committee, explained that the team held a closed domestic training camp for one week at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The camp focused on improving the players’ physical and technical readiness, boosting their mental preparedness, and enhancing team chemistry following the finalisation of the squad list.

He added that upon arrival in Amman, the team will enter an external training camp in coordination with Ajyal Al

Ghad Club.

The camp includes five consecutive friendly matches, one per day, to test the players’ abilities in real game scenarios, adapt to the coach’s tactics, and identify strengths and weaknesses.

The national team delegation includes: Mohammed al Hinai as head of the delegation, Hamoud al Amri as head coach, and Mousa al Siyabi as assistant coach.

The squad features ten players: Zaher bin Khalfan al Atbi, Hafidh Awlad Ahmed, Younis al Toubi, Ali al Ghassani, Ahmed al Numani, Maktoum al Muqbali, Khamis al Masoudi, Ashraf al Khasibi, Amjad al Wahaibi, and Salem al Hishami.

This participation aligns with the vision of the Oman Paralympic Committee to elevate the visibility of para sports both regionally and internationally, and to prepare the national team to compete at the highest levels, achieving results that reflect the strong support and attention provided by the Sultanate of Oman to this important group of athletes.

SHORT TAKES



Brian Campbell holds up the trophy. — Reuters

CAMPBELL WINS JOHN DEERE CLASSIC TITLE

WASHINGTON: Brian Campbell parred the first hole of a sudden death playoff to beat Emilio Grillo and claim his second US PGA Tour title of 2025 at the John Deere Classic in Silvis, Illinois.

Campbell, 32 had won his first PGA title at the Mexico Open in February, reward for grinding his way back onto the tour after injuries threatened to derail his career after his rookie season back in 2017.

He and Argentina's Grillo both carded four-under-par 67s on Sunday to finish 72 holes on 18-under 266 at TPC Deere Run.

For the playoff they returned to the par-four 18th, where Campbell's second shot from the fairway landed 16 feet from the pin.

Grillo's tee shot was in the right rough and his second shot came out hot, racing through the green. His chip back left him a 23-footer from just off the green and after he failed to make it, Campbell calmly stepped up and two-putted for the win.

"Right now it's surreal," said Campbell, who attended college in Illinois and made his first PGA Tour start in this event. "It all started here as an amateur, my first invite here ... I have no words. To let alone be in a playoff and to finish it off this way has just been amazing."

Campbell who also won his Mexico title in a playoff, had a two-shot lead after rolling in a 14-foot putt at the 13th for his fifth birdie of the day.

He dropped one adrift with a double-bogey at the 15th, but was back on top by one after a birdie at 17.

Behind him Grillo reached 18-under with an eight-foot birdie at the 17th -- his fifth birdie of the day, and the Argentinian nearly seized the victory at the 72nd hole where his 37-foot birdie putt was an inch wide.

"I played well, that's all I can do," he said. "I got myself there, I gave myself a chance," added Grillo, whose two tour titles both came in playoffs.

David Lipsky, chasing his first tour title, played in the last group and was tied for the lead on 18-under after rolling in an eight-foot eagle putt at the 17th. But he missed out on the playoff after a bogey at 18.

He was tied for third with Kevin Roy, who had six birdies in his six-under 65.

Max Homa closed with a 69 to head a group of six players tied on 268. — AFP



Serbia's Novak Djokovic's in action. — Reuters

Djokovic and Cobolli to Wimbledon quarterfinals

NOVAK

DJOKOVIC overcame a sluggish start against Alex de Minaur to reach his 16th Wimbledon quarterfinal under the gaze of eight-time winner Roger Federer on Monday.

The Serb was lethargic and unusually tentative in the early stages of his last 16 match against the Australian 11th seed on Centre Court but eventually found his rhythm to win 1-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

It keeps the seven-time champion on track for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam, which would be the crowning achievement of an astonishing career.

If he wins the crown on Sunday, the 38-year-old would also draw level with Federer's record of eight men's titles at the All England Club.

The retired Swiss great watched from the royal box as his long-time rival was given his toughest test of the tournament so far.

Sixth seed Djokovic was broken in the first game and conceded two more breaks as De Minaur ran away with the first set.

The Serb committed 16 unforced errors, including four double faults in the opener.

Djokovic broke immediately at the start of the second set but then became bogged down in a game lasting nearly 19 minutes, which De Minaur won on his sixth break point.

Both players struggled to hold onto their serve in an attritional battle but Djokovic, pleading for support from the crowd, held his nerve to level the match, letting out a



Italy's Flavio Cobolli in action. — Reuters

roar as De Minaur went long.

The third set went with serve until the ninth game, when De Minaur skewed a forehand wide to concede the crucial break.

De Minaur found new inspiration in the fourth set, surging into a 4-1 lead but crumbled at the pivotal moment as Djokovic fought back, reeling off five games in a row to seal the win.

Flavio Cobolli marched into the Wimbledon

quarterfinals on Monday, leading a dashing Italian advance by snuffing out the once-lethal Marin Cilic in a statement win that lit up a sunny but breezy Court Two.

Wielding his bright orange racket like a fluorescent sabre, the 23-year-old carved through the Croatian's defences to win 6-4 6-4 6-7(4) 7-6(3), lighting the way for compatriots Jannik Sinner and Lorenzo Sonego.

— Agencies

Norris wins dramatic British Grand Prix title

SILVERSTONE: An emotional Lando Norris boosted his world title bid in memorable fashion on Sunday when he drove to a commanding rain-splashed victory ahead of McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri in a chaotic British Grand Prix.

The 25-year-old Briton made the most of series leader Piastri's mid-race misfortune, when he was given a 10-second penalty for slowing excessively while leading behind the safety car, to finish 6.8112 seconds clear.

It was his first home win, his fourth win of the year and the eighth of his career, lifting him within eight points of the Australian.

"Thank you, McLaren, thanks everyone," said Norris.

"This is beautiful. Winning

at home. This is a dream." Nico Hulkenberg finished a stirring third for Sauber to claim the first podium appearance of his long career after 239 races.

"It feels good," the veteran German said. Lewis Hamilton took fourth for Ferrari ahead of Red Bull's four-time champion Max Verstappen.

In an epic event run in extreme and changeable weather conditions, Pierre Gasly was sixth for Alpine, ahead of Aston Martin's Lance Stroll, Williams' Alex Albon, two-time champion Fernando Alonso in the second Aston Martin and Mercedes' George Russell. On a cool and wet summer's day in central England, the race began as the sun slanted through the clouds following



McLaren's British driver Lando Norris lifts the trophy. — AFP

torrential rain, Verstappen leading a controlled formation lap behind the safety car.

In F1's 75th anniversary year, it was the 1,173rd race since the inaugural world championship event at Silverstone on May 13, 1950, and with the field so closely-packed few races had been more keenly anticipated.

Russell and Leclerc gambled on switching to slick tyres before the start as Verstappen led the opening lap from his 44th pole ahead of Piastri, Norris and Hamilton.

RB's Liam Lawson went off at Stowe on lap one, triggering a virtual safety car (VSC), and Franco Colapinto retired his Alpine after stalling in the pit-lane.

The race re-started on lap five

with Piastri hounding Verstappen before a second VSC intervention when Gabriel Bortoleto abandoned his Sauber. It was stop-go stuff with everyone waiting for more rain.

After chasing him, Piastri passed Verstappen at Stowe on lap eight to lead. Verstappen then ran off at Becketts and Norris passed him before they all pitted as the rain resumed.

Norris suffered a slow stop, giving second, behind Piastri, back to Verstappen, in appalling conditions that prompted another full safety car and wiped out the Australian's 13-second advantage.

"There's water in my visor, a huge splash and I can't see," reported Leclerc after bouncing across the grass at Becketts. — AFP

SPORTS



Mexico players celebrate after the match. — Reuters

MEXICO DEFEAT USA TO RETAIN GOLD CUP TITLE

MEXICO defeated the United States 2-1 to retain the CONCACAF Gold Cup and lift the title for a record-extending 10th time on Sunday.

A header 13 minutes from time from Mexico skipper Edson Alvarez completed a come-from-behind victory for 'El Tri' after a typically hard-fought tussle between the North American arch-rivals and 2026 World Cup co-hosts.

The win was no less than Mexico deserved after dominating for long periods against Mauricio Pochettino's inexperienced USA side, who went into the tournament missing several first-choice regulars.

Alvarez's winner capped a fairytale return to Houston after he had limped off in tears at the same venue during Mexico's opening game of the Copa America last year.

"It's a very emotional moment for me," the West Ham midfielder said afterwards.

"Ever since I got to Houston, I've been thinking about that heartbreak. I just asked life to give me one more joy." The USA had got off to a dream start, center-back Chris Richards heading the hosts into a fourth-minute lead in front of just under 71,000 fans at Houston's NRG Stadium.

Sebastian Berhalter's perfectly flighted curling free-kick from wide on the right sowed panic in the Mexican defence and Crystal Palace defender Richards stooped to glance in a powerful header which cannoned off the underside of the



US defender Tim Ream (13), Mexico midfielder Edson Alvarez (4) and Mexico goalkeeper Angel Malagon (1) pose with the fair play, best player, and best goalkeeper awards. — Reuters

bar and over the line.

But that early effort was to be the USA's best chance of a first half that Mexico controlled, spending most of the opening 45 minutes camped in the host nation's territory.

Mexico's 16-year-old prodigy Gilberto Mora threatened to grab an equaliser in the 24th minute but

his curling shot was saved by USA goalkeeper Matt Freese.

Three minutes later though Mexico drew level.

Marcel Ruiz threaded a superb pass through to veteran striker Raul Jimenez, who crashed an unstoppable shot into the roof of the net.

JOTA TRIBUTE

Jimenez celebrated by producing a shirt bearing the name and number 20 of late former Wolverhampton Wanderers team-mate Diogo Jota, the Liverpool and Portugal star who died in a car crash in Spain last week. Mexico continued to carve out the better chances through the

remainder of the half and Roberto Alvarado's low shot forced another good save from Freese in the 35th minute.

Freese needed to be alert again five minutes from half-time, Mora's powerful strike being parried away by the USA goalkeeper as it hurtled towards the top corner.

Alex Freeman almost nodded the USA back in front on the stroke of half-time after pouncing on hesitation by goalkeeper Angel Malagon, but his header cannoned back off the face of the Mexico stopper. The second half followed a similar pattern, with Mexico looking much the more threatening side as the USA struggled to create anything at the other end. The breakthrough finally came though in the 77th minute, when Johan Vazquez's flick on from a free-kick was met by Alvarez who powered a header into the net past Freese.

The goal was chalked off for offside, but replays showed Alvarez was clearly onside, and after a check by the Video Assistant Referee, the on-field decision was overturned and the goal stood.

Mexico have now won the Gold Cup a record 10 times, three more than the USA, who have seven.

"Obviously we're disappointed not to come away with a win," USA captain Tim Ream said after the defeat. "We started out really well and then they obviously got a spell in the game in the second part of the first half. We just missed a little bit of calmness when we won the ball, to try and move them around a little bit," Ream added. — AFP



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SECURED FUNDING

The CBO said RO 5 million was allocated to 28-day treasury bills.

TREASURY BILL
ISSUANCE TOTALS
RO 20.3 MILLION

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced the successful allocation of government treasury bills worth a total of RO 20.3 million for the week.

In a statement, the CBO said RO 5 million was allocated to 28-day treasury bills. These were issued at an average accepted price of RO 99.700 per RO 100, translating to a discount rate of 3.91071% and a corresponding yield of 3.92248%.

Meanwhile, 91-day treasury bills accounted for RO 15.3 million of the total. These were allocated at an average accepted price of RO 98.936, with a minimum price of RO 98.930. The average discount rate for this tranche stood at 4.26790%, with an average yield of 4.31381%.

The repo rate for transactions involving these bills is currently 5%, while the discount rate under the Treasury Bills Facility with the CBO is set at 5.50%.

Treasury bills are short-term, government-backed instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance and managed by the Central Bank of Oman. They offer secure investment opportunities for licensed commercial banks and are a key tool in managing short-term liquidity in the local financial market.

These instruments are also tradable through repurchase agreements (repos) and can be easily liquidated by discounting with the CBO. Banks can additionally conduct interbank repo transactions, contributing to the creation of a benchmark for short-term interest rates.

Apart from supporting financial market stability, treasury bills provide the government with a flexible mechanism for financing expenditures without disrupting broader economic objectives. — ONA

Etlaq set for Duqm-2
suborbital rocket launch

HIBBA AL KINDI
DUQM, JULY 7

ETLAQ, the MENA region's first spaceport established at Duqm in the Sultanate of Oman, is preparing for its first experimental rocket launch of the year with the 'Duqm-2' mission. The launch is scheduled sometime between 10 pm on Tuesday and 6 am on Wednesday.

At the heart of the mission is KEA-1, a 12-metre, guided, two-stage suborbital vehicle built by Stellar Kinetics, a New Zealand based vertically integrated orbital rocket manufacturing start-up.

Fuelled by liquid oxygen and propane, the two-tonne KEA-1 will target a 500-kilometre apogee, while demonstrating advanced spaceflight capabilities, such as stage separation and active guidance, while also proving that the rocket can perform under Middle Eastern summer conditions and under tight development timelines.

A key feature of the Duqm-2 launch is its use of hot staging — a technique in which the next stage's engines ignite before the previous stage has fully separated. This contrasts with traditional staging, where the first stage shuts down and detaches before the next stage ignites.

Onboard the mission are a pair of education-centric research payload suites. The first is from UK based Joint Universities Programme for In-Orbit Training, Education and Research (JUPITER), representing a collaboration of the University of Surrey, the University of Portsmouth and the University of

Fuelled by liquid oxygen and propane, the two-tonne KEA-1 will target a 500-kilometre apogee.

At the heart of the mission is KEA-1, a 12-metre, guided, two-stage suborbital vehicle built by Stellar Kinetics, a New Zealand based vertically integrated orbital rocket manufacturing start-up.

Southampton.

The JUPITER payload consists of two satellites: a Jovian-O 6U cube satellite (CubeSat) carrying a prototype deployment system; and an earth observation instrument, DAVE (Dual Aperture for Viewing Earth), which is equipped with two small cameras - one to capture images and videos of Earth, and the other is a space-facing camera to monitor space debris.

The second payload comes from Taiwan-based "SIGHT Space", a student-founded space education initiative from the National Central University.

SIGHT Space's SIGHT PocketQube II satellite is designed to measure real-time structural stress and environmental data (temperature, pressure, acceleration) during suborbital flight.

It is part of an ongoing effort to

build small, accessible satellite platforms for education, research and lightweight spaceflight validation.

Significantly, the latest Duqm-2 mission follows the successful launch of Duqm-1 in December 2024, which marked Oman's entry into space.

Earlier this year, Etlaq officials unveiled that Duqm-3, scheduled for launch in October, will have a more complex launch and operational procedures, while Duqm-4, scheduled during December, will also have different parameters.

The missions are part of the spaceport's recently announced experimental rocket launch initiative, dubbed the Genesis Programme, which aims to develop Oman's space launch culture before full-scale commercial operations in 2027.

Oman LNG posts record-breaking production in 2024

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 7

MAJORITY Omani state-owned Oman LNG achieved a production record of 11.98 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) in 2024 – the highest in its 20-year history, the company announced this week.

Revenues earned by the triple-train liquefaction complex – from LNG exports as well as local sales of natural gas liquids (NGLs) – soared to a total of \$6.5 billion, according to its 2024 Annual Report.

"2024 marked a historic year for Oman LNG, delivering record-breaking production, flawless operational performance and transformational commercial agreements. As we celebrate over three decades of successful operations, we stand poised to enter a new era with the commencement of our long-term SPAs (Sales and Purchase

Oman LNG's output of 11.98 MTPA was shipped to markets worldwide in a total of 181 cargoes.

Agreements) in 2025," the company noted.

Saud a Shukaili, Chairman of Oman LNG, commented: "As we mark over 30 years of Oman LNG's pioneering journey, I am honoured to present our 2024 Annual Outlook Report — a testament to our resilience, strategic foresight and unwavering commitment to Oman's

prosperity. The past year unfolded against a backdrop of global energy market volatility, geopolitical shifts and accelerating climate action."

In comparison, Oman LNG's output in 2023 was 11.5 MTPA, which was already above the nameplate capacity of 10.4 MTPA.

The output increase in 2024 was the result of a major

debottlenecking and plant rejuvenation project that helped add one million tonnes to the triple-train facility's design capacity.

Last year's production of 11.98 MTPA was shipped to markets worldwide in a total of 181 cargoes — 126 from Oman LNG and 55 from Qalhat LNG — compared with 173 cargoes in 2023.

Another key highlight of 2024 was the company's success in securing offtake commitments under its Beyond 2024 (B24) programme, covering output for the extension phase spanning a 10-year period through to 2034.

"2024 laid the foundation for Beyond 2024 (B24) agreements, securing Oman LNG's future," the company stated in its report.

Around 10.4 MTPA of the plant's output is now committed under long-term SPAs with a large portfolio of global partners, while the remainder will be offered

on the spot market — where natural gas is bought and sold for immediate or near-term delivery.

"Our new agreements represent more than just contracts — they are the foundation for Oman LNG's next decade of success. By balancing term commitments with trading flexibility, we have created a portfolio that is both secure and adaptable to market dynamics," said Mahmoud al Balushi, Chief Commercial Officer.

Khamis al Hashmi, Chief Financial Officer, added that Oman LNG's revenue of \$6.5 billion, coupled with a Net Income After Tax (NIAT) of \$1.7 billion, attested to the company's financial resilience.

"Our strategic portfolio optimisation balances long-term contracts (91%) with spot market agility — ensuring value for shareholders while funding Oman's energy transition," he stated.

ADVERTORIALS

BOLD STATEMENT



This premium sedan is meticulously tailored for discerning customers.

HONGQI H6: A NEW BENCHMARK IN LUXURY AND PERFORMANCE

MUSCAT: The all-new Hongqi H6, launched in Feb 2025, is a bold statement in luxury, innovation and region-specific performance, combining cutting-edge technology with the refined elegance Hongqi is renowned for. This premium sedan is meticulously tailored for discerning customers who demand more — from comfort and safety to power and design.

The Hongqi H6 impresses with its striking design, featuring a prominent grille, split LED headlights and a streamlined fastback silhouette that commands attention.

Its elegant exterior is matched by an opulent cabin, crafted with NAPPA leather seats, microfiber accents and 253-colour ambient lighting that transforms every drive into a luxurious escape.

Built for the region, the H6 is equipped with a high-efficiency air conditioning system engineered for the Middle Eastern climate, along with an infotainment system that supports Arabic and seamless smartphone connectivity through Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The spacious interior, comparable to larger C-segment vehicles, ensures superior comfort on longer drives.

Under the hood, the H6 features a next-generation 2.0T engine available in both high and low-power variants, paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission.

The high-power variant accelerates from 0–100 km/h in just 6.8 seconds, delivering exhilarating performance while maintaining fuel efficiency at 17.9 km/L.

On the safety front, the H6 leads with a 5-star C-NCAP rating, thanks to over 68 per cent high-strength steel construction, 9 airbags and 23 precision sensors that support its intelligent safety suite. To complete the experience, a Dynaudio premium sound system offers immersive audio, turning every journey into a refined acoustic experience.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, commented: “With the introduction of the Hongqi H6, we are bringing a new standard of luxury and performance to Oman.

It is a vehicle that not only reflects sophistication and power, but also caters to the specific needs of our market — from its advanced air conditioning system to Arabic-language support in the infotainment. The H6 is designed for those who expect more from every drive”.

AMOUAGE PRESENTS EXPRESSION OF BOUNTIFUL GENEROSITY EXCLUSIVE TO HARRODS

MUSCAT: It may be a cliché, but like many others, it happens to be true: the hospitality of the people of the Middle East is second to none.

In this part of the world, etiquette dictates that guests and visitors are to be honoured, looked after and treated with the utmost kindness.

Being a host is a privilege and having the opportunity to lavish others with generosity is seen as a blessing. Indeed, the region is full of stories of gatherings to which all passersby are invited —



unforgettable events in which the spirit of togetherness is celebrated beneath a crescent moon. Ever since its creation in 1983, the esteemed High Perfumery House of Amouage has espoused these values, extending

the munificence of its native Oman not just to the Middle Eastern region but to the entire world.

It is no coincidence that from its founding, Amouage has called its perfumes the Gift Of Kings: its creations have always been seen as precious opportunities for sharing.

Such thoughts were high on the mind of Amouage’s Chief Creative Officer, Renaud Salmon, when he began to conceive the next perfume for the acclaimed Essences Collection.

Own a Toyota Corolla Cross and get benefits

OWN a Toyota Corolla Cross and get exclusive benefits. Enjoy free service from 3 years / 30,000 km up to 10 years / 100,000 km (whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance and Scratch & Win prizes. In addition, gain entry into a Raffle Draw to win one of 16, iPhone 16 Pro Max, and a chance to win one of five international holiday packages to Istanbul for two adults (4 nights, 5 days) in the Grand Raffle Draw.

(Terms & Conditions apply. Benefits vary by model, variant, model year and manufacturing year. Customers are encouraged to visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for full details). The campaign that began on June 1 will last until July 31, 2025.

Born from the legacy of the world-renowned Corolla, the Corolla Cross combines versatility, style and innovation in one bold package. It is everything you love about Corolla, elevated



The Corolla Cross combines versatility, style and innovation in one bold package.

for a new adventure. With its commanding stance, spacious interior and Toyota’s signature reliability, the Corolla Cross is crafted to help you Live Elevated.

Built on Toyota’s advanced TNGA (Toyota New Global Architecture) platform, this SUV is designed from the ground up

for enhanced driving comfort, stability and performance.

Whether navigating city streets or exploring open roads, the Corolla Cross empowers every journey with confidence.

With its wide, confident posture and refined styling, the Corolla Cross exudes strength and presence. The sculpted

front grille, accentuated by a bold bumper and sleek double trapezoid design, creates a striking and mature expression. Sharp wraparound headlamps with integrated Daytime Running Lights flow outward from the grille, enhancing its assertive and modern look.

Smooth, aerodynamic lines run along the sides, giving way to a sleek cabin that balances elegance with practicality.

Muscular wheel arches and a sturdy lower body emphasise its SUV character, while the 17” alloy wheels add a sense of strength and agility. At the rear, the solidly contoured fenders and stylish rear spoiler enhance performance and aerodynamics too. The Corolla Cross is equipped with a responsive 1.8L hybrid electric engine paired with an electronically controlled CVT transmission.

This smart pairing delivers a thrilling acceleration experience along with impressive fuel efficiency, making it ideal for both urban commutes and weekend getaways.

OMRAN CONCLUDES ‘FUTURE INVESTMENT PIONEERS’ PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has successfully concluded the “Future Investment Pioneers” programme, a pioneering initiative aimed at equipping a select group of Omani students with the skills and knowledge needed to understand investment dynamics in the tourism sector.

By nurturing their entrepreneurial mindset and innovative thinking, the programme supports the broader vision of building a national talent pool capable of shaping the future of Oman’s tourism industry.

The 12-week programme brought together 16 students from six leading academic institutions, including Sultan Qaboos



The programme brought together 16 students from six leading institutions.

University and offered them a rich learning experience through interactive workshops, mentorship sessions and hands-on activities.

Participants developed practical skills in product development, entrepreneurial thinking and professional communication,

while also exploring key topics such as investment analysing and attraction, mechanisms of entering strategic partnerships, tourism product innovation and return on investment analysis from an investor’s perspective.

Commenting on the programme, Mundher al Moosawi, Director of Business Development at Omran Group, said: “This programme reflects our commitment to nurturing future tourism leaders by offering a comprehensive experience that blends practical learning with investment thinking.

We strive to inspire and empower youth to actively contribute to the sector’s sustainable growth and position Oman as a promising investment destination”.

Bank Muscat triumphs with excellence in digital banking award

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been honoured with the Excellence in Digital Banking Award at the annual Digital Transformation Conference “OER Live DX Oman 2025,” organised by Oman Economic Review magazine (OER).

The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Suba’a bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary-General of the Secretariat-General of National Celebrations and attended by numerous officials, entrepreneurs and experts in the fields of finance and digital technology.

Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager of Digital



This recognition underscores Bank Muscat’s pivotal role in advancing digital transformation.

Banking at Bank Muscat, received the award on behalf of the Bank.

The event served as a platform for experts and specialists in technology to discuss current and future trends in digital transformation, while also recognising distinguished individuals and companies in this arena. This recognition underscores Bank Muscat’s pivotal role in advancing digital transformation within the banking and financial services sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Bank has embraced the latest digital technologies, aiming to deliver a seamless and exceptional experience for customers through a diverse range of innovative services

tailored to meet their varied needs.

On this occasion, Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili expressed his gratitude for the award, which highlights Bank Muscat’s significant contribution to shaping the modern financial and banking landscape in the Sultanate of Oman.

He emphasised the Bank’s commitment to applying the principles of digital transformation and investing in cutting-edge technologies as essential steps towards achieving strategic objectives aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Al Jufaili also acknowledged the OER magazine for the award and thanked customers for their continued trust in Bank Muscat.

BUSINESS

NEWCONCESSION



Gulf Alloys' plant in SOHAR Port and Freezone.

OMAN CHROMITE BOOSTS STAKE IN FERROCHROME VENTURE

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 7

OMAN CHROMITE has increased its equity stake in Gulf Alloys and Metals (FZC) LLC, the operator of a low-carbon ferrochrome smelter at SOHAR Port and Freezone, further strengthening its position in the value-added segment of the chrome supply chain.

The company disclosed last week that the additional investment was funded entirely from internal accruals, underscoring its financial stability and long-term commitment to downstream integration.

The publicly-traded mining firm, partly owned by Minerals Development Oman (MDO), says it anticipates a positive upturn in its financial and operational performance on the back of a number of notable milestones achieved during 2024.

Most significant has been the acquisition of a new mining concession which, upon development, is set to bolster access to new chromite ore deposits and reverse a decline in availability of this key commodity.

“The company’s acquisition of an exploration and mining concession for Area 11-A, located in northern Oman with an area of 1,438 km², represents one of the most significant achievements in its history,” said the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

“This area is expected to help address previous challenges such as the lack of available sites and the depletion of ore reserves in the company’s old mines.

Exploration activities have already commenced,” he added in the Directors’ Report for fiscal 2024.

Chromite ore (also known as chrome ore) is processed to make metallic chromium, which is used in the production of stainless steel, in chromium plating and as an alloy in cast iron and steel.

Chromium compounds are also used as colours in paint, ceramics and plastics; and as a catalyst in making chemicals and refining oil. Additionally, it is used as a refractory in furnace linings.

Established by Royal Decree in 1991, Oman Chromite produces metallurgical and refractory chromite ores for a variety of industrial applications. In June 2022, the company entered into a joint arrangement with MDO — a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — to share the cost of exploration, evaluation and feasibility phases covering the development of two sites at Liwa and Mahadha. MDO holds a 25.4 per cent stake in Oman Chromite.

Gulf Alloys’ ferrochrome smelter, in which Oman Chromite originally held a 20 per cent stake, began operations last year, with a second production line launched in January 2025. The expansion is expected to further bolster Oman Chromite’s earnings.

OMAN OIL PRICE REACHES \$69.71 PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil for September delivery on Monday reached \$69.71 per barrel. The price of Oman oil decreased by 6 cents compared to last Friday’s price of \$69.77.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for July delivery reached \$63.62 per barrel, a decrease of \$4.25 compared to the price for June delivery.

Meanwhile, Brent crude futures fell as low as \$67.22 a barrel but by 10:18 GMT were up 40 cents,



or 0.6%, to \$68.80. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$67.14, up 4 cents and up from an earlier low of \$65.40.

“For now, the oil market remains

tight, suggesting it can absorb additional barrels,” said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

The Opec+ decision will bring nearly 80% of the 2.2 million bpd voluntary cuts from eight Opec producers back into the market, RBC Capital analysts, led by Helima Croft, said in a note.

However, the actual output increase has been smaller than planned so far and most of the supply has been from Saudi Arabia, they added.

— Agencies

New residence redefines coastal living in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 7

AL MOUJ Muscat has unveiled its latest milestone in luxury real estate with the launch of Azura Beach Residences, a groundbreaking waterfront development that introduces the first dual-frontage homes in the Sultanate of Oman — offering residents breathtaking views of both the ocean and the marina.

This exclusive new neighbourhood, set within the West Point precinct of the sought-after Al Marsa District, reflects a bold evolution in Al Mouj Muscat’s vision for integrated coastal living.

In an exclusive interview with the Oman Observer, Salma al Hashmi, Vice President of Marketing at Al Mouj Muscat, explained the inspiration behind the project and how Azura exemplifies the developer’s commitment to community-centric design, sustainability and architectural distinction.

“Our vision is always rooted in four guiding principles,” Al Hashmi began. “We listen intently to what our customers truly value. We study the



This exclusive new neighbourhood reflects a bold evolution in Al Mouj Muscat’s vision for integrated coastal living.

geographical character of each plot of land. We aim to deliver sustainable design and we integrate nature into every aspect of the community. Azura Beach Residences is a perfect manifestation of that vision”.

According to Al Hashmi, the unique location — with the marina to one side and the open sea on the other — naturally lent itself to a design that maximises both water views and a sense of openness.

“The land inspired us,” she said. “It’s peaceful, it’s rare and it called for something distinctive — something that embraces the rhythm of nature while meeting the evolving desires of our

residents”.

Launched on July 6, 2025, Azura Beach Residences spans 19,500 sq m of prime coastal land and offers just 309 units, including 286 one- to three-bedroom apartments and 23 four-bedroom chalets — each designed with private plunge pools, three-car parking spaces and seamless indoor-outdoor layouts that amplify natural light and scenic vistas.

This sense of intentional exclusivity is central to the project’s long-term value proposition. “The number of homes is deliberately limited,” Al Hashmi emphasised. “We continuously assess market

demand and respond with carefully calibrated offerings. Exclusivity here isn’t about scarcity for its own sake — it’s about ensuring each residence retains value, appeal and a strong sense of privacy”.

“As you’ve seen by yourself tonight,” she added, “the interest has been phenomenal. We’re anticipating a full sell-out of this sector within just a few days”.

Beyond architecture, Azura Beach Residences is designed to enhance the lifestyle fabric of Al Marsa District.

Residents benefit from direct access to Al Mouj Walk and the marina promenade, while enjoying integrated amenities such as an infinity pool, landscaped relaxation zones, co-working lounges, children’s play areas and a fully equipped gym.

The community is also preparing to launch new sports facilities, including padel and tennis courts, as part of its broader vision for healthy living. “Wellness is not an afterthought — it’s an essential pillar of our masterplan,” said Al Hashmi.

“From walking tracks to leisure and fitness spaces, every detail is crafted to encourage movement, mindfulness and connection with nature”.

NEW SUBSEA CABLE ENHANCES REGIONAL DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 7

OMANTEL, Oman’s leading provider of integrated telecommunications services, and du, the prominent UAE-based telecom and digital services provider, have officially announced the activation of the Oman Emirates Gateway (OEG) — a state-of-the-art 275-kilometre international fibre optic submarine cable system connecting the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

The OEG system links three major international data centres: Equinix MC1 in Barka, datamena DX1 in Dubai and Equinix SN1 in Salalah.

This high-capacity express route is set to transform the region’s digital landscape by delivering



This express route is set to transform the region’s digital landscape by delivering ultra-low latency connectivity. Image for illustration only.

ultra-low latency connectivity, significantly improving operational efficiency and enhancing digital services between the two Gulf countries.

Sami al Ghassany, Chief Technology and Digital Officer at Omantel, said: “The full activation

of the Oman Emirates Gateway marks a pivotal milestone in our journey towards digital transformation in Oman and beyond.

We are proud to contribute to the region’s content enrichment and to establish a robust, high-capacity corridor that will empower businesses across Oman and the UAE. This achievement goes beyond mere connectivity; it propels the entire region towards innovation, growth and global competitiveness”.

Karim Benkirane, Chief Commercial Officer of du, added: “The Oman Emirates Gateway is far more than just an optical cable; it is a bridge towards future-proofing the digital infrastructure of the region. This project will be a cornerstone for hyperscalers, content providers and

international carriers, empowering them to enhance their presence and operational capability to meet the growing demands of the digital era”.

The newly activated system offers dual-route resilience through both terrestrial and subsea links, ensuring high reliability and superior network performance.

Its infrastructure is built to support the growing demand for cloud services, hyperscale computing and data-intensive applications, with direct connections to key regional data centres that facilitate international business and digital expansion.

The launch of the OEG project further reinforces Omantel and du’s roles as leading wholesale telecommunications providers in the Middle East.

DISRUPTIVE APPROACH

Trump threatens extra 10% tariff on BRICS



President Donald Trump said the US will impose an additional 10% tariff on any countries aligning themselves with the “Anti-American policies” of the BRICS group of developing nations, whose leaders kicked off a summit in Brazil on Sunday.

The BRICS group of developing nations is presenting itself as a haven for multilateral diplomacy amidst violent conflicts and trade wars. — Reuters

QUASH POLICY

India sued over electronic waste rules



The Indian unit of US air conditioning giant Carrier has become the latest major firm to sue Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government over electronic waste rules that have hiked the fees manufacturers must pay to recyclers.

Samsung, LG Electronics, Daikin and Tata’s Voltas have also brought suits, which are set to be heard by the High Court of Delhi on Tuesday. — Reuters

PRODUCTION RISE

German industrial production up



German industrial production rose unexpectedly strongly in May, official data showed on Monday, boosting hopes that Europe’s top economy has turned a corner despite trade tensions with the United States.

Industrial production rose by 1.2 per cent month-on-month, after dropping 1.6 per cent in April after US President Donald Trump announced swingeing tariffs, Destatis said. — AFP

OPINION

Common steps organisations take to save a sinking ship



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman

LAST week, my article was on the aftermath (as in what happens) when senior leaders and/or influential members (such as shareholders, partners, etc.) ignore vital signs of a sinking organisation, especially when there is a consistent pattern of low and degrading financial performance. This week, I will focus on the common steps that many organisations tend to follow in an attempt to prevent such a situation from occurring. Briefly put, the usual approach is as follows: 1) organisations introduce a new face (typically after firing the CEO and/or other senior executives), 2) promote strong profiles (to instil internal and external trust); and, finally 3) make big and bold promises (usually around positive change). The expectation is a total turnaround, gaining new customers, launching fresh solutions, increasing revenue and ultimately improving profit margins. The reality, however, is often different. Most of the time, the initial changes produce short-term optimism and maybe a slight uptick in performance, but they rarely lead to sustained improvement. In some cases, these actions might even accelerate the organisation's decline. Here are the most common steps I have observed, based on my own experiences and research. The first major step is announcing a new leadership team to “save” the organisation. This often starts with the appointment of a new CEO, followed by reshuffling or

replacing key members of the executive team. Previous executives are asked to leave and new faces are brought in with bold promises to drive change and “save the ship”. While this may look good on paper and may even be the right move, it’s unfortunately most of the time executed poorly. In many cases, the new CEO surrounds himself with loyalists, be they friends, former colleagues, or individuals who align closely with their personal vision and agenda. The problem is that this loyalty does not always translate to competence or the ability to challenge flawed assumptions. Instead of addressing the root causes of failure, the new team may end up reinforcing the same mistakes, simply dressed in a new narrative. Time typically reveals the outcomes of such choices. The second step revolves around cost-cutting. Once the new leadership is in place, aggressive cost-cutting measures follow next. These may include slashing project budgets, freezing or reducing headcounts, minimising marketing spend, trimming employee benefits and even halting innovation initiatives. On paper, these cuts show instant financial relief. Expenses go down and profit margins may temporarily look better. However, the impact is often negative in the medium to long term. Key operations can be disrupted, innovation is paused or even abandoned and employee morale plummets drastically.

The first major step is announcing a new leadership team to “save” the organisation. This often starts with the appointment of a new CEO, followed by reshuffling or replacing key members of the executive team.

While some level of trimming might be necessary, the problem arises when cost-cutting becomes the primary strategy, especially when done without a clear, longer-term vision. Cost optimisation should be strategic, not just reactive. Thirdly, sales teams become the next area of focus. Targets are increased and performance pressure mounts. Leadership demands higher revenue to demonstrate a recovery. The logic is simple: just bring in more money and we are saved. This approach often ignores a fundamental issue, which is why the revenue was declining in the first place. Were customers dissatisfied? Was the product or service outdated? Was competition stronger? If these underlying issues aren’t addressed, revenue might temporarily rise due to short-term deals or pressure tactics, but the growth won’t last. Understanding the “why” behind performance problems is essential. Otherwise, any gains will be temporary and unsustainable. A change in leadership, cost cuts and aggressive sales targets might buy time and instil hope. Nevertheless, without a deeper diagnosis and a more thoughtful, evidence-based plan, they rarely deliver lasting results, trust me. Organisations that fail to grasp this reality often repeat the cycle until there is nothing left to save. Next week, we will look at what true transformation for organisations looks like. Until then, continue observing and stay positive.

BUBBLE TEA GIANT EMBODIES STARBUCKS’ CHINA DILEMMA

KA SING CHAN

Fast-food provider Mixue’s success is adding a bitter taste to Starbucks’ attempts to sell a stake in its business in the People’s Republic. The Chinese company has grown into the world’s biggest food and beverage chain by selling sub-\$1 drinks and adapting quickly as domestic consumers spend less. That’s hard for the \$107 billion premium-brand US coffee icon to compete with. Both Mixue and Starbucks opened their first stores in China in 1999. For the latter the challenge was to introduce coffee culture to a nation obsessed with tea. This turned out to be a smooth blend. Chinese consumers have become more picky and cost-conscious of late, though and the Seattle-based heavyweight’s market share has dropped to 14% from 34% in 2019, per market data provider Euromonitor. Starbucks is trying to fight back. It announced its first-ever price cut in China last month, although its offerings are still far more expensive than those from Mixue and other rivals like Luckin Coffee. But Starbucks cannot compete on pricing alone. Its problems run deeper than that. Amidst all the talks about China’s weak consumer demand, some of the best-performing stocks in the past year have been the so-called new consumption plays, which include trendy toy maker Pop Mart International and handcraft jewellery retailer Laopu Gold. These are brands that resonate deeply with the shifting spending preferences of young Chinese to focus on intangibles such as convenience, experience or personalisation. Mixue’s robust supply chain, for instance, allows it to reduce costs and introduce new beverages — or even new interior designs — to its more than 45,000 outlets within weeks. The same process may take much longer for Starbucks’ 7,800 stores in China. And a similar strategy caused problems at its US stores in the past. Boss Brian Niccol even told shareholders in March that Starbucks can learn from “several lessons” in its China supply chain and improve its North American business. Shareholders have rewarded Mixue’s strategy: its market value has soared almost 80% to some \$25 billion since its Hong Kong listing in March. Starbucks China, meanwhile, may be worth several billion dollars, Bloomberg reported in May, citing sources. Its same-store sales have at least levelled off recently, halting the earlier slump. And Niccol has emphasised the need to find ways to grow. That would seem to require having a local partner — and buyer — with a Mixue-style understanding of how to take advantage of China’s new consumer logic. — Reuters

Unlocking investment and trade with Indonesia



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The writer is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor



A driver of this evolving relationship is the notable expansion of economic ties.

THE contours of global commerce are being redefined by collaborations among nations in the Global South, forging innovative pathways for mutual growth and development. Within this transformative environment, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Indonesia are strategically positioned as key players in their respective regions, demonstrating a growing convergence of interests that points towards a robust bilateral partnership. While historical interactions have fostered a foundation of cultural understanding, the current momentum indicates a deepening engagement across political and economic spheres, suggesting the emergence of a potentially transformative economic corridor linking Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1977, both nations have steadily cultivated meaningful connections, marked by the opening of embassies in each other’s capitals — Indonesia in Muscat (2011) and Oman in

Jakarta (2013). This deepening of diplomatic ties has facilitated enhanced communication and cooperation. The shared Islamic heritage provides a natural cultural affinity, while concurrent membership in organisations such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) offers platforms for aligned action on global issues. A key driver of this evolving relationship is the notable expansion of economic ties. As per Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) bilateral trade volume has witnessed substantial growth, reaching \$2.22 billion in 2023, a significant increase from \$464 million in 2012. This upward trajectory reflects complementary economic strengths that position both nations for mutual benefit. An analysis of trade dynamics reveals both opportunities and areas for potential enhancement. While Indonesia historically maintained a trade surplus, the year 2023 saw a shift, with Oman’s exports to Indonesia reaching \$1.86 billion, contrasting with Indonesia’s exports to Oman of \$364 million. This imbalance is largely attributed to Oman’s significant exports of semi-finished

iron (\$1.04 billion), refined petroleum (\$539 million) and acyclic alcohol derivatives (\$124 million). Indonesia’s export portfolio to Oman includes key commodities such as palm oil (\$150 million), cars (\$79.3 million) and refined petroleum products, showcasing Indonesia’s diverse manufacturing capabilities. This complementarity in economic outputs provides a solid foundation for expanded trade activities. Indonesian companies, such as PT Medco Energy International, have established a presence in Oman’s energy sector. Furthermore, Oman Vision 2040 programme actively encourages further Indonesian investment, particularly in sectors like real estate and tourism, with a focus on Integrated Tourism Complexes. The people-to-people dimension of this relationship is also significant. Approximately 80,000 Indonesian workers contribute to Oman’s economy, fostering grassroots connections between the two societies. Tourism flows are also on the rise, facilitated by the introduction of a visa-free agreement in 2019. These interpersonal connections contribute to a favourable environment

for strengthening business relationships. Looking ahead, digital cooperation presents an exciting avenue for growth. Recent high-level discussions have centred on collaboration in areas such as digital infrastructure, cybersecurity and innovation. Indonesia’s thriving digital economy offers attractive opportunities for Omani investors, while Omani expertise in specific technological fields could contribute to Indonesia’s development. Oman’s strategic geographic location provides Indonesian businesses with a valuable gateway to the broader MENA region. Conversely, Indonesia’s membership in ASEAN and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) offers Omani businesses potential access to the dynamic Southeast Asian market, encompassing over 650 million consumers. Untapped trade potential exists within specific sectors. Estimates suggest that Indonesia has the capacity to increase its exports of refined petroleum to Oman by an additional \$31.5 million, while Oman could potentially increase its exports of iron ore to Indonesia by \$10.7 million. These figures illustrate immediate opportunities for trade expansion. For Omani businesses seeking to enter the Indonesian market, focusing on Indonesia’s large consumer base, exceeding 250 million people, is advisable. Beyond current exports, significant potential exists for expansion in sectors such as chemicals, metals, methanol, raw aluminium, gypsum and polypropylene. Indonesian businesses targeting Oman should leverage existing strengths in sectors including wood products, electrical appliances, textiles, furniture and foodstuffs.

BUSINESS

THE Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has signed a financing agreement with the Oman LNG Development Foundation to establish a new visitor centre at the historic Qalhat archaeological site. Valued at RO 3 million, the project aims to support the ministry's efforts in developing and promoting Unesco World Heritage sites across the Sultanate of Oman.

The upcoming Qalhat Archaeological Visitor Centre will span 5,000 square metres and feature two museum exhibition halls showcasing excavated artefacts.

Additional amenities include administrative offices, a café, a gift shop, an outdoor events plaza, shaded walkways connecting the centre to the ancient ruins, seating areas and dedicated parking spaces.

The agreement was formalised by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and Dr Amer bin Nasser al Matani, CEO of the Oman LNG Development Foundation.

Qalhat, one of Oman's oldest

NEW CENTRE TO BOOST QALHAT'S HERITAGE AND TOURISM APPEAL

Qalhat, one of Oman's oldest cities, is strategically located on the Sea of Oman and historically served as a prominent maritime trade hub linking India, Yemen, and beyond.



Valued at RO 3 million, the project aims to support the Ministry's efforts in developing and promoting Unesco World Heritage sites across the Sultanate of Oman.

cities, is strategically located on the Sea of Oman and historically served as a prominent maritime trade hub linking India, Yemen and beyond.

The city was once renowned for its export of Arabian horses and as a melting pot of cultures.

Khalifa bin Mubarak al Farsi, Director of the Qalhat Archaeological Site Department, said the project marks a significant step in enhancing the cultural identity of Qalhat, Sur and the wider Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

Eng Ismail bin Sulaiman al Sawafi, General Manager of Social Responsibility and Public Relations at Oman LNG, noted that the project will help position Qalhat as a heritage tourism destination at local, regional and global levels.

He added that it will also generate employment opportunities and support local artisans and producers.

Qalhat was officially added to the Unesco World Heritage List in 2018, underscoring its historical and archaeological importance.

— ONA

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CHANGE OF NAME
I DANNY D'CO STA, holder of Indian Passport No. (S6271653). son of RITA D'COSTA having permanent residence in SHALOM HOUSE, KARNATAKA, UDUPI DIST, and TAJ (complete postal address in India) and presently residing in OMAN, AL AL MUSANNAH, Post Box No. 625, PC No. 311, (complete postal address in Oman) intend to marry Ms. MARITEL TERITORIO (holder of Indian/ PHILIPPINES Passport bearing No., (P9710527B), D/o (Poz ABESZLLA), having permanent DULAG LEYTE (complete permanent address) at Embassy of India, Muscat. I swear that I am marrying him/her at my own free will and not under any duress and intimidation, Any objection towards this marriage may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P.O.Box No., 1727, Postal Code No. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman within 30 (thirty) days of publication of this newspaper advertisement

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CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniiffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

INDIAN male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

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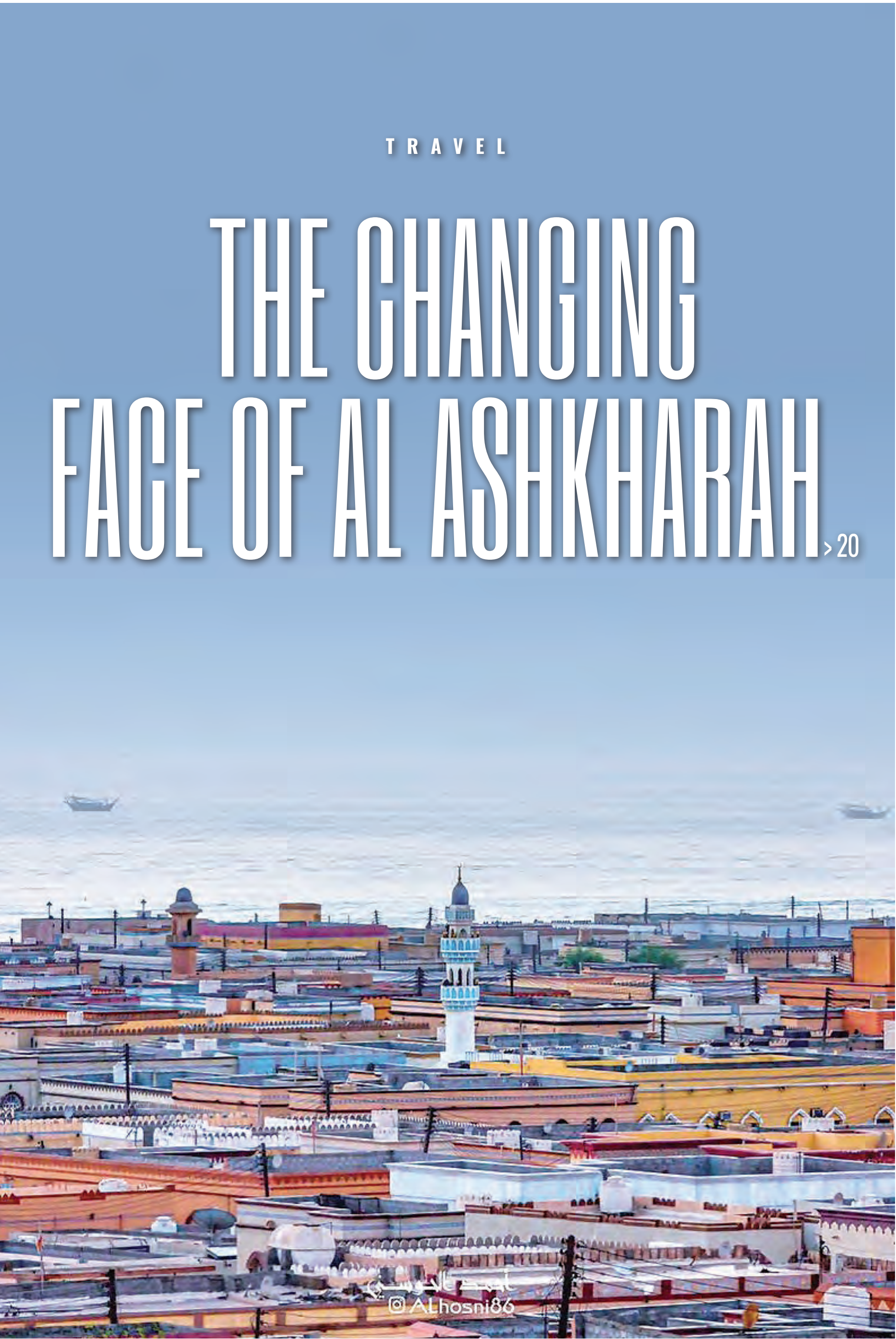
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ART/LIFE



ENTERTAINMENT

‘Superman’ returns to screens with ‘kindness, flying dogs and space battles’



DONNING THE famous red cape for the first time in the new “Superman” movie gave actor David Corenswet a big confidence boost.

A relative newcomer, Corenswet follows in the footsteps of Christopher Reeve and more recently Henry Cavill, taking over the role of Clark Kent and Superman in the reboot movie, which was launched with a red carpet fan event in London on Wednesday.

“When the cape gets on, it really ties the whole thing together. You walk out with it flowing behind you, you feel like, ‘Yeah, I’m all right, I’ll do okay,’” Corenswet, whose acting credits include TV series “The Politician” and “Hollywood” and films “Twisters” and “Pearl”, said on the red carpet. “Superman” offers the first look at director James Gunn’s vision for the remake of the DC Universe (DCU) at Warner Bros.

The “Guardians of the Galaxy” filmmaker, who also wrote the “Superman” screenplay, said he wanted to combine elements from the comic books and the mythos of Superman in cinema.

“My ‘Superman’ is about, you know, in a world where there’s so much meanness and so many petty things happening, Superman, who can often be seen as old-fashioned or too earnest, too kind, he is those things. I think that’s the most rebellious thing that you can be in this day and age,” Gunn said.

“It’s a movie about kindness. But it’s all told in this universe with giant monsters and flying dogs and robots and space battles and everything else”.

“The Marvelous Mrs Maisel” actress Rachel Brosnahan takes on the role of Lois Lane and “Nosferatu”, “About a Boy” and “X-Men” franchise actor Nicholas Hoult stars as Superman’s nemesis Lex Luthor.

Hoult also drew inspiration from comic books for his portrayal of the iconic villain.

“For instance, reading ‘All-Star Superman’, Lex really prides himself on being the peak alpha human and so I really wanted to bring that kind of energy,” Hoult said. Brosnahan said her predecessors in the role had set the bar high. Gunn’s vision for the movie was what set it aside from previous films, she said.

“I think James’s knowledge of and love for these characters and the different adventures that he’s taking them on with the different friends he’s taking them with, kind of inherently brings it into present day,” said Brosnahan.

“Superman” begins its global cinematic rollout on July 9. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



EDUCATION

Students inspect the model of Moon during an exhibition initiated by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) aimed to popularising space science at a college in Hyderabad. — AFP



FILM

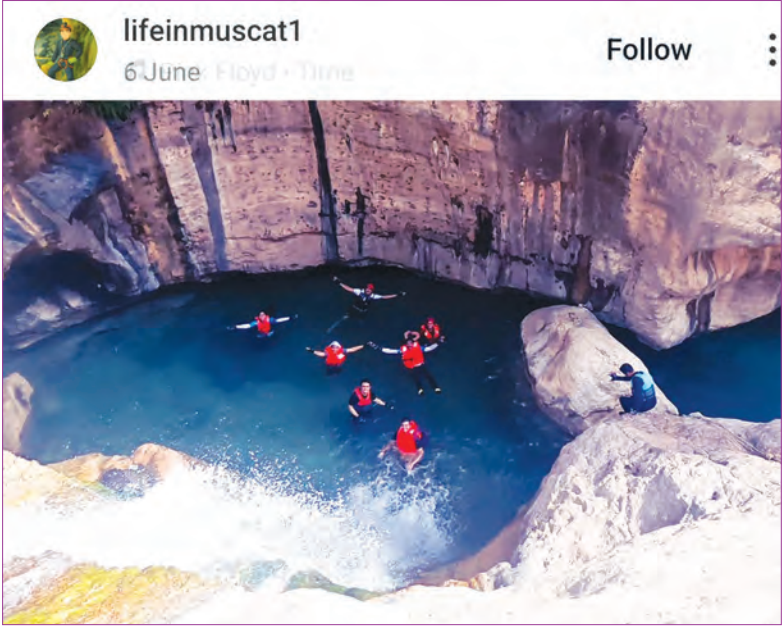
The character M3GAN appears in the horror film M3GAN 2.0, directed by Gerard Johnstone, in an undated studio photograph. — Reuters



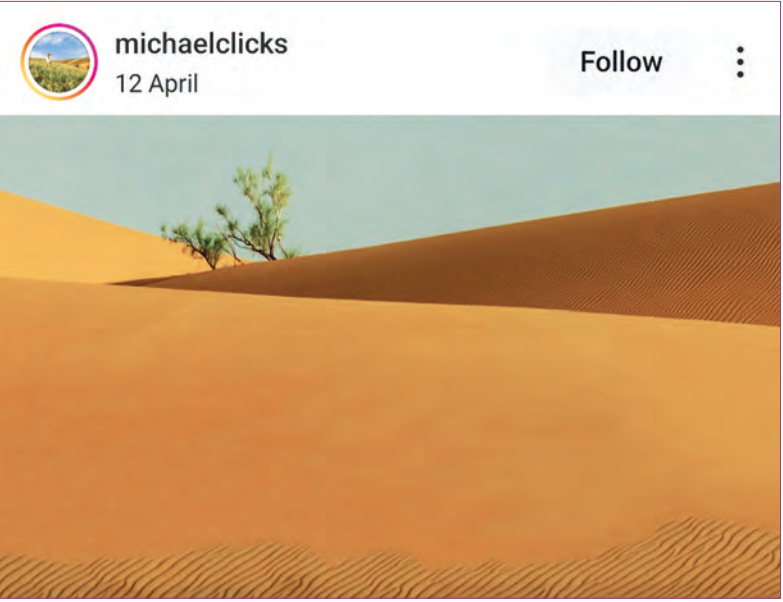
FASHION

The Original Birkin, the handbag crafted by French luxury fashion house Hermès for artist Jane Birkin and offered to her in 1985, is displayed during a media preview of Sotheby’s Paris Fashion Icons Sale. — Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Enjoying the Plunge



Beauty of Remote Places

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Roman bigfoot? UK archaeologists probe ‘unusually large’ shoes



ARCHAEOLOGISTS in northern England have uncovered a remarkable discovery at the Roman site of Vindolanda: a collection of “unusually large” 2,000-year-old shoes, prompting ongoing speculation and investigation. The shoes, measuring over 30 cm (approximately 11.8 inches) in length — equivalent to a European size 49 and a US size 15 — were excavated by experts from the Vindolanda Trust, established in 1970 to preserve and study Roman remains along Hadrian’s Wall. Found in a defensive ditch at the Magna Roman Fort in Northumberland — an area often used by Romans as a rubbish dump — the discovery has puzzled archaeologists because only a tiny fraction of Vindolanda’s extensive shoe collection matches this extraordinary size. Interestingly, about a quarter of the shoes found at the Magna site fall into this large

category, adding a further layer of mystery. Rachel Frame, a senior archaeologist involved in the excavation, described the find as “really unusual” and explained that efforts are now focused on understanding who might have worn the oversized footwear. “We’re trying to identify which regiments would have been stationed here and why there are so many large shoes at this specific site compared to others,” she said. Since the first exceptionally large shoe was uncovered in May, the team has continued to discover more, with soil conditions playing a crucial role in preserving organic materials like leather and textiles over centuries. Frame highlighted that the site reflects a diverse mix of cultures within the Roman Empire, reminding us that its reach was vast, stretching far beyond the Italian heartland. — AFP

Chanel looks to build cultural capital with arts magazine

OVER A CENTURY

after Coco Chanel founded her label in Paris, the French fashion house is making a foray into the boutique print media sphere by starting its first glossy arts magazine. Chanel’s new annual tome, Arts & Culture, was released last month, with the first issue devoted to chronicling the practice and lives of contemporary artists (alongside plenty of promotional Chanel editorial content). It features cultural essays about artists like Tracey Emin, Lu Yang and Tomás Saraceno. There’s an interview with photographer Stephen Shore and a report on artificial intelligence art by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. The cover depicts a bust of Chanel that was made by sculptor Jacques Lipchitz in 1921. “This is Chanel’s first arts and culture magazine and you can feel Gabrielle Chanel’s legacy in its pages,” said Yana Peel, the brand’s president of arts, culture and heritage, using Chanel’s birth name. “She was a voracious reader and was known for surrounding herself with a network of audacious creatives. We’re trying to extend that legacy through physical print media.” “We’re seeing a resurgence of interest in independent magazines and in independent bookstores,” Peel added. “We want to give this moment the amplification that we can through the global stage Chanel has”. The magazine also unabashedly promotes the Chanel universe. It features figures who have professionally collaborated with the brand, like actress Tilda Swinton and architect Peter Marino, alongside stories that celebrate Chanel’s history. Among them is an essay by



art historian RoseLee Goldberg titled “A Life of Performance: Gabrielle Chanel and the Avant-Garde” and a lengthy visual essay by photographer Roe Ethridge, who captured an array of Chanel’s personal belongings, like selections of her jewelry and a handwritten letter to her from Jean Cocteau. Lending an indie feel to things, the publication will be available only at a selection of independent book and magazine stores like Casa Magazines in New York City, Foreign Exchange News in London, Libreria Bocca in Milan and Still Books in Seoul, South Korea. Chanel’s art magazine arrives at a

moment when fashion houses have been striving to adapt to changing consumer attitudes about luxury. “This is something we’ve been seeing for a while, like when Bottega Veneta took down all their social media channels, to focus on more meaningful world-building marketing tactics,” said Emily Huggard, a professor of fashion communication at Parsons School of Design. “As people move away from consumption, brands are finding ways to build cultural capital and social capital. Younger generations see something garish about luxury, a tone deafness in luxury’s exclusivity, so brands are looking for other ways to connect”. “This magazine shows how brands want to now link themselves to enduring culture, instead of transient moments,” she added. “For Chanel, this also allows them another way to tell their historical story, which can get tiring to do”. Huggard cited another example in Loewe’s new monograph dedicated to Jonathan Anderson’s tenure at the Spanish luxury house, which includes a foreword by novelist Zadie Smith. There’s also Saint Laurent, which announced a film production division in 2023 and Van Cleef & Arpels, which established and (generously) funds a roving contemporary dance festival, Dance Reflections. Huggard was not surprised that Chanel’s magazine was chock-full of Chanel content. She considered whether that prevented it from being taken seriously as an art publication. “When people read something like this, they can tell there’s a brand undertone to it,” she said. “But it all depends on the writers, how the articles are done and if it feels culturally tapped in. A magazine like this can be relevant, if they get that synergy right”. — NYT

FEATURES



some improvements lately, too. They're free to use and now equipped with water systems and solar panels, making camping even more convenient. Previously, our biggest gripe was the public toilets, but even they've improved. There are now enough facilities that make life easier for campers and day-trippers alike.

It's also noticeable how much the place has grown in terms of accommodation. Homestays and houses for rent — especially big ones for families — are available now. The locals have been quite creative with investments and you can see it in the variety of entertainment options and restaurants. It used to be just small cafes and simple eateries, but now trendy cafes and more sophisticated dining places have sprung up, offering everything from fresh seafood to fusion dishes.

Over the years, the changes have been clear. There were times during summer when finding a spot to



THE CHANGING FACE OF AL ASHKHARAH

BY YERU EBUEN

IF YOU VISITED Al Ashkharah five years ago, you'd probably think it was a place that time forgot. The windswept coast, with its relentless breeze running through the town, still carries the same sort of rhythm you see during Khareef Dhofar Season in Dhofar Governorate. That monsoon weather makes Al Ashkharah not just bearable but almost inviting during the scorching summer heat, especially if you're in Muscat. It's about a three-hour drive from the city and honestly, it's one of those scenic routes that makes the journey worth it — passing through stretches of desert, the occasional patch of greenery and fields that seem to sway as if in harmony with the wind.

Al Ashkharah has always had that sort of wild feel to it. I often think of it like those cowboy towns you catch in old movies — quiet, a little scruffy and full of charm. Back then, driving along the coastal road, one thing that stood out was how the sand seemed to run right across the highway, creating these beautiful, almost surreal scenes. The wind was always pushing it around, painting the whole landscape in shifting shades of beige and gold. It was popular among the locals as a summer retreat. But the old coastal houses? They looked like they had seen better days. Many

of them were abandoned, with the sand beginning to take over some rooftops and walls. You'd find tiny settlements scattered here and there, but the main part of town was where everyone gathered, especially in the evenings. I loved how slow everything was, the way time seemed to drift past with the wind.

Since then, Al Ashkharah's grown a lot. The new Dana Hotel opening soon speaks volumes about how much the town has changed. For years, Astana Hotel was the go-to spot for quick getaways and camping trips. Camping there was straightforward — you'd set up your tent and just soak in the natural surroundings. It's still popular among those who prefer a simple escape. But with families wanting more comfort, the Dana Hotel's duplex-style rooms and ocean views seem to be a sign of the town moving forward. It's clearly a step in the right direction.

The Al Ashkharah Festival is a real highlight now. Over recent years, it's become a huge tourist magnet, bringing in visitors from all over Oman and beyond. The festival transforms the normally quiet parks into lively hubs packed with activities. Camel racing is a big draw, attracting crowds eager to see these animals compete. There are also ziplines for kids, a variety of desert sports and even cultural exhibitions — things that not only entertain but also showcase Al Ashkharah's rich history. The local government has put effort into boosting tourism. They've been developing activities like dune bashing, traditional music performances and even art stalls, turning Al Ashkharah into a lively spot during the festival season.

<blockquote>In recent years, Al Ashkharah has built a reputation as a surf and kitesurfing hotspot. These water sports are pretty exciting; surfing involves riding the waves on a board, while kitesurfing combines surfing with the power of a large kite that pulls you across the water. Both activities attract enthusiasts from around the region and as the industry grows, more places are offering lessons and equipment rentals. It's no surprise that Al Ashkharah's beaches are getting busier, especially during the summer months.

</blockquote>For me and my friends, Al Ashkharah has always been our summer escape. We don't mind the drive — three hours doesn't seem long when you're heading to a place where the sands are still untouched and the breeze is brisk. The beach sheds have seen

camp was almost impossible because families would spend days there, enjoying every minute of their weekend. While I genuinely love seeing Al Ashkharah develop, I still hold onto its old charm. I love how the sands running along the roads, swept by those strong gusts of wind that seem to have a life of their own. I still get a kick out of seeing the camels wandering freely, sometimes strolling right up to your tent or knocking softly on the fabric in search of scraps. It's a reminder of how much of its heritage and simple life remains buried beneath the new developments.

What I really treasure, though, are the cultural activities. Al Ashkharah always had a sort of laid-back community spirit that makes it special. Locals offering you a cup of coffee or sharing their fresh catch of the day with strangers — they're the small acts that make the place feel like home. And I've always believed the town has so much potential. Seeing it slowly turn into a more established tourist destination is exciting, but my hope is that all the new growth doesn't drown out what made me fall in love with it in the first place.

I hope the character of Al Ashkharah stays true — the windswept sands, the laid-back vibe, the genuine hospitality of the people. The new hotels, festivals and water sports are fantastic additions, but I want the town to retain its soul. It's that combination of natural beauty, colourful traditions and stories of generations that keeps Al Ashkharah special. Because ultimately, it's not just the scenery or the activities that make it memorable. It's the community, those unplanned moments — a camel nudging your tent or a local inviting you to share fresh fish — that stay with you long after you leave.

As I look forward to seeing what the future holds for Al Ashkharah, I can't help but feel optimistic. It's growing, yes, but with careful steps. The town is finding ways to balance progress and preservation; and I hope it continues to do so. Because in the end, Al Ashkharah isn't just a place to visit; it's a spot that leaves a mark on your heart. And no matter how much it changes, I know I'll keep returning, drawn back by that familiar wind and the warmth of the people who call it home.