

O M A N  D A I L Y

Observer



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HOW MUSANDAM'S
AL JERIZ CONTINUES
TO BIND GENERATIONS
TOGETHER

HIS MAJESTY, BAHRAIN KING HOLD CORDIAL MEETING

H M l e a d s w e l c o m i n g p a r t y f o r K i n g o f B a h r a i n i n S a l a l a h

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK and King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain held a cordial meeting at Bait Al Rabat in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, on Saturday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty renewed his welcome for the King and his accompanying delegation. His Majesty also expressed his delight on this fraternal visit, wishing the King and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Dhofar Governorate.

On his turn, the King expressed his thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the warm welcome and reception.

Earlier, King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa arrived in the Sultanate of Oman, on a private visit to Dhofar Governorate lasting several days.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the welcoming party for the King at the private airport in Salalah. Alongside His Majesty, the King was received by some of the Royal family members, ministers and senior officials.

— ONA

SEE ALSO P2 & P3



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain held a cordial meeting at Bait Al Rabat in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate.

PALESTINIANS DESPAIR AFTER UN DECLARES FAMINE IN GAZA



A Palestinian boy holds an empty pot as he waits with others to receive cooked rice in front of a charity kitchen in Gaza City on Saturday. — AFP

GAZA CITY: Desperate Palestinians clutching pots and plastic buckets scrambled for rice at a charity kitchen in Gaza City on Saturday, a day after the United Nations declared a famine in the war-battered territory.

AFP footage from Gaza's largest city, which Israel plans to seize as part of an expanded military offensive, showed women and young children among the chaotic jostle of dozens clamouring and shouting for food. One young boy used his hands to scrape a few leftover grains from the inside of a cooking vat. Another young girl sat on the edge of a tent and scooped rice from a plastic bag on the ground.

"We have no home left, no food, no income... so we are forced to turn to charity kitchens, but they do not satisfy our hunger," said Yousef Hamad, 58, who was displaced from the northern city of Beit Hanoun.

— AFP

Shabab Oman II wins Ambassadors of the Sea Award

AMSTERDAM: The Royal Navy of Oman's (RNO) vessel Shabab Oman II has won the Ambassadors of the Sea Award during its participation in the crew parade at Amsterdam Sailing Festival 2025, hosted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and lasts until Sunday.

The efforts made by Shabab Oman II's crew culminated with winning this award in recognition of their remarkable military discipline during the parade and their display of authentic Omani clothing and folk music that captivated the audience and painted a dazzling picture depicting the depth and authenticity of the Omani heritage.

Princess Laurentien of the Dutch Royal Family visited Shabab Oman II while docked in the port of Amsterdam, reflecting the deep historical ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

During the visit, the princess toured the ship and learned about Oman's rich maritime heritage and the ship's noble mission of building bridges of friendship and peace between peoples.

She expressed her admiration for the ship's authentic Omani symbolism, combining ancient history with a modern spirit.



Princess Laurentien of the Dutch Royal Family visited Shabab Oman II while docked in the port of Amsterdam.

She stressed that such visits strengthen the bonds of cooperation and friendship between the two friendly countries.

This visit embodies the depth of the relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands and reflects their keenness to foster

ties of friendship, maritime and cultural cooperation thus enhancing cultural dialogue and mutual understanding between the two friendly peoples. — ONA

OMAN

HM WELCOMES BAHRAIN KING IN SALALAH



SALALAH: King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain arrived in the Sultanate of Oman on Saturday on a private visit to Dhofar Governorate lasting several days. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the welcoming party for the King at the private airport in Salalah. Alongside His Majesty, the King was received by some of the Royal family members, ministers and senior officials. — ONA



Tender

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) Representative of the Industrial Innovation Academy announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
5/2025/ PEIE/ HQ-5	Construction Works For Mebam Village Development Project South Al Sharqiyah Governorate	07-09-2025	02-10-2025	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.

Madayn Representative of the Industrial Innovation Academy 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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in t f y o



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BAHRAIN KING HAMAD BIN ISA AL KHALIFA ARRIVES IN SALALAH

SALALAH: King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain arrived in the Sultanate of Oman on Saturday on a private visit to Dhofar Governorate lasting several days. — ONA



OMAN

HM GREETS UKRAINE’S PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine on the occasion of his country’s Independence Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to President Zelensky for continued success in achieving stability and prosperity for his country’s people. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The race drew a large audience of camel owners, breeders and enthusiasts.

THAMRAIT SUMMER CAMEL RACE 2025 CONCLUDES

THAMRAIT: The curtain came down on Saturday on the second edition of the Thamrait Summer Camel Race 2025, held at the Wilayat of Thamrait’s race track in the Governorate of Dhofar. The event, organised by the Office of the Wali of Thamrait, drew a large audience of camel owners, breeders and enthusiasts.

The programme featured five competitive rounds: four for the ‘participant’ weanling category over two kilometres, and one for the ‘difficult’ weanling category over 1.5 kilometres.

The highlights of the results are: Second round (Jaadan–cash category): ‘Saib,’ owned by Ramis bin Salem Jadad, secured first place.

Al Sa’ab round (Abkar category): ‘Mahdia,’ owned by Malhi bin Ali al Masahli, claimed top honours.

Third round (Abkar category): ‘Al Sharta,’ owned by Muslim bin Mohammed Jadad, finished first.

Fourth round (Jaadan–Sara round): ‘Sayyaf,’ owned by Abdullah bin Farih Masan, took first place.

Final round (Car round): ‘Maani,’ owned by Noah bin Muslim al Masahli, emerged victorious.

The event concluded with Ahmed bin Hamad al Maawali, Wali of Thamrait and event sponsor, honouring the winners along with supporting entities.

The Thamrait Summer Camel Race highlights Oman’s dedication to preserving camel racing as an authentic heritage sport while strengthening its role as a cultural attraction that contributes to domestic tourism and enhances Oman’s presence across the Gulf. — ONA

FIFTH PRODUCTIVE FAMILIES EXHIBITION ENDS IN RUSTAQ

AL RUSTAQ: The fifth marketing exhibition for productive families concluded at Rustaq Public Park, bringing together more than 37 booths featuring traditional foods, clothing, accessories, and handicrafts. A special corner has also been set up for drawing and Arabic calligraphy.

The three-day exhibition serves as an important platform to support and empower productive



A special corner was set up for drawing and Arabic calligraphy

families, helping them market high-quality products while boosting their contribution to the local economy.

It also provides a space for community engagement and a showcase of national talent. Adding to the attractions, visitors also took part in the paragliding shows which were held on Thursday and Saturday.

— ONA

Teachers gear up for fresh academic year tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 23

THE new academic year, 2025-2026, will kick off tomorrow (Monday) for the teaching and administrative staff in all educational institutions and schools across the Sultanate of Oman.

The students will begin their new academic year next Sunday.

The Ministry of Education stated that it has received 16 new schools in nine educational directorates to operate at the beginning of the new academic year.

The ministry has earmarked RO 20 million for the establishment of 80 new schools as well as new facilities in existing schools. New facilities have already been implemented in 68 schools at a cost of RO 15 million with 53 of them expected to be operational this year. An amount of RO 7 million has been



MoE received 16 new schools in 9 educational directorates to operate at the beginning of the new academic year.

allocated for renovation work, RO 4 million to refurbish 77 science laboratories.

The ministry formed committees from various education directorates across the governorates to review school transportation and ensure they meet safety and security specifications before renewing contracts.

The ministry renewed 20,828 transportation contracts. Furthermore, the educational directorates across the governorates floated tenders to lease 800 new school buses.

The Ministry of Education said that work is underway to install advanced AI-powered visual surveillance systems in a number of public schools across the governorates. This project is financed by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the ministry’s Initiatives Support Committee, at a cost of RO 200,150.

SEVEN COOPERATION MEMORANDA SIGNED AT OCCI EXHIBITION

SALALAH: The ‘Tamkeen and Sumou’ exhibition, organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), concluded with seven memoranda of cooperation signed between participating institutions. The agreements aim to support SMEs, promote their products, and enhance business sustainability.

The Social Investment Center at OCCI also signed a memorandum with MyHessati, a social investment platform, to strengthen cooperation in developing innovative social investment tools for SMEs, aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

The exhibition featured over 75 SMEs from sectors including tourism, retail, restaurants, and handicrafts. Specialised corners included Entrepreneurs, Innovation, Handicrafts, and Little Pioneer, allowing children to showcase their talents.

Additionally, the event hosted the Sohar International Competition, which encouraged innovation and excellence in product presentation.

— ONA

Taqa Club triumphs as Omani Traditional Games Season ends in Salalah

SALALAH: The Omani Traditional Games Season concluded on Saturday at Al Dahariz Beach in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate.

The three-day event, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, featured the Dhofar Governorate Clubs Championship for Traditional Omani Games. Strong competition unfolded across three traditional games: Al Sayyad, Lakad and Yous.

Alongside the championship, visitors enjoyed several activities, including an exhibition of traditional Omani games, a virtual reality (VR) corner to experience these games, and an interactive space for children to learn and participate.

In the final results, Taqa Club



Taqa Club bagged the first place, followed by Mirbat Club in second, and Salalah Club came third

claimed first place, followed by Mirbat Club in second, and Salalah Club in third. The closing day also witnessed the crowning

of the winners and the honouring of individuals and institutions that supported the event’s success.

Ibrahim bin Khalfan al Shibli,

General Supervisor of the Omani Traditional Games Season, highlighted that the initiative reflects the ministry’s commitment to preserving traditional sports and games.

He noted that such events not only safeguard an authentic element of Omani heritage but also promote environmental awareness under the theme of “sports and a sustainable environment.”

The Omani Traditional Games Season further aims to introduce visitors to the cultural, sporting, and civilisational heritage associated with these traditional games while enhancing Salalah’s appeal as a tourism destination during the khareef season.

The three-day event introduced

visitors to Oman’s cultural heritage and traditional sports, while supporting the preservation of traditional games.

The season included the Dhofar Governorate Clubs Championship for Traditional Omani Games, with two groups of clubs competing in Al Sayyad, Al Lakad and Al Yous. Visitors can explore accompanying pavilions, including exhibitions of traditional games, a virtual reality (VR) corner, and an interactive space for children to experience these games.

The event highlighted the governorate’s rich cultural traditions and contributed to Salalah’s tourism appeal during the season. – ONA

SHORT TAKES



The championship showcased high levels of beauty and authenticity

DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL ARABIAN HORSE BEAUTY CUP 2025 ENDS

MIRBAT: The Dhofar International Arabian Horse Beauty Cup 2025 concluded in the Wilayat of Mirbat. The event was organised by the Dhofar Governor’s Office, in cooperation with Dhofar Tourism Company, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The championship witnessed strong competition, showcasing high levels of beauty and authenticity. The final results were as follows: Young Colts: Rasheeq Al Ezz (36) won first place (gold champion), Eragon Zalia (35) secured second place (silver champion) and Etro Skah (39) came in third (bronze champion). Young Fillies: Alia Jamran took first place, followed by SM Rajwa in second and Ayla DS in third. One-Year-Old Colts: Bahr Akmal won gold, Ghazal AM took silver and Mutabahi Al Aila earned bronze. One-Year-Old Fillies: Jazzy DC secured first place, Joel Al Shahaniya came second and Tasneem AS took third. — ONA

SOCIAL INNOVATION CONFERENCE HELD IN SALALAH



SALALAH: A major social innovation conference was held in Salalah, organised in collaboration with the Regional Network for Social Responsibility. The opening ceremony took place under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. Hatim bin Hamad al Taie, Editor-in-Chief of Al Roya, highlighted the ethical responsibilities associated with artificial intelligence (AI), emphasising the need to balance innovation with privacy, ensure fair use of data, and uphold transparency. He urged companies to integrate responsible AI practices into their social responsibility strategies. — ONA

Global, Omani voices unite for ‘Power to Dream’ in Muscat

MUSCAT: Three international and eight Omani speakers will converge in Muscat at the end of September to share their perspectives on the power of dreaming big. The Power to Dream thought leadership conference, organised by Black and White Oman in association with BPOS, will take place on September 28. The event, marking Omani Youth Day celebrations, will be hosted by veteran journalist Bikram Vohra. Omani Youth Day is celebrated annually on October 26. The international lineup includes Chris Gardner, entrepreneur, international best-selling author, and the inspiration behind the popular film Pursuit of Happyness; Chetan Bhagat, India’s bestselling English-language author and motivational speaker; and Laura Dekker, the youngest solo sailor to circumnavigate the globe. The trio will share insights on how they pursued their dreams to achieve remarkable success, offering inspiration to the youth of Oman. Adding a local flavour, eight Omani speakers will take the stage: Dr Lamya al Haj, academician, coach, researcher, SQU associate professor and founder of a GCC speakers’



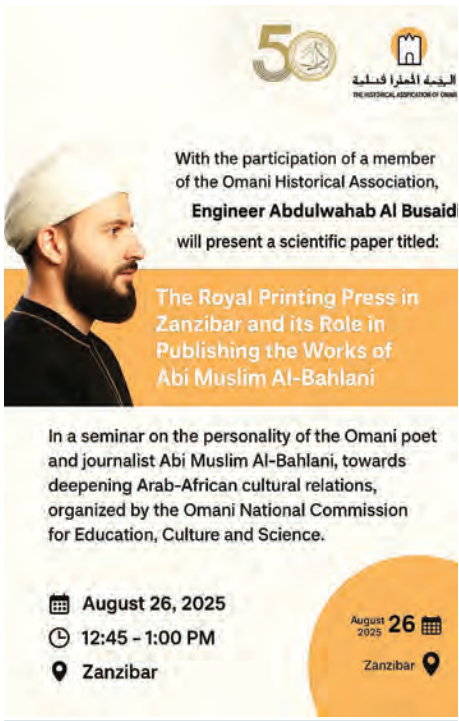
platform; Hatim Abdissalaam, motivational speaker, youth influencer and soon-to-be author; Hassan Ali Husain, entrepreneur and founder of Arab Board Games; Noor al Esry, the youngest student speaker in the lineup; Haitham Sulaiman, award-winning film-maker; Mohamed al Khaifi, innovative woodworker; Manasik al Moosawi, AI design expert; and Nooralhuda al Mandhari, adventurer, mountain climber and founder/co-founder of HUN’na and Ghudu. Their talks will add depth and relatability to the “Power to Dream” theme for Omani youth. Speakers will highlight how dreams, combined with sacrifice, determination, perseverance and grit, paved the way for their success.

Cultural icons to be feted at Unesco-backed seminar

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiousef

THE life and legacy of two distinguished Omani personalities — Abu Muslim al Bahlani (Nasir bin Salim al Rawahi), the poet and journalist, and Ibn Ruzayq (Hamid bin Muhammad al Nakhali), the historian and man of letters — will be highlighted at a seminar organised by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, on August 26–27 in Zanzibar. Part of Unesco’s programme marking the 50th and 100th anniversaries of historic milestones and influential global figures, the seminar will feature academics, researchers and educators from Oman and Zanzibar. The sessions will introduce these cultural icons internationally, review their intellectual contributions and underscore Oman’s efforts in presenting its heritage to the world. The event is jointly supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth; the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism; the National Records and Archives Authority; the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture

The seminar will bring together academics, researchers, and educators from Oman and Zanzibar to spotlight these cultural icons on the international stage, and showcase Oman’s commitment to sharing its heritage with the world



The seminar will feature academics, researchers and educators from Oman and Zanzibar

and Science; the University of Nizwa; the University of Technology and Applied Sciences; the Omani Society for Writers and Literati; and the Omani Astronomical and Space Society. Unesco previously recognised Other Omani figures honoured by Unesco include Al Khalil bin Ahmed

al Farahidi (2006), Rashid bin Omeira (2013), Shaikh Nur A’Din al Salmi (2015) and Abu Mohammed al Azdi (2015). Eng Abdulwahab al Busaidi, member of the Oman Society for Astronomy and Space and the Oman Historical Association, told the Observer from Zanzibar that the first day will focus on Abu Muslim al Bahlani, featuring papers on his biography, poetry, media role, symbolism of place in his works and his contribution to strengthening Arab–African cultural ties. “The second day will spotlight Ibn Ruzayq, exploring his biography, methodology in historical writing, global influence, and legacy in Arab and foreign archives,” he added. His own paper, The Royal Printing Press in Zanzibar and its Role in Publishing the Works of Abu Muslim al Bahlani, will examine how Al Bahlani’s writings fostered deeper Arab–African cultural relations. “These seminars embody Unesco’s vision of highlighting the educational, cultural and scientific roles of member states by documenting figures and events of global significance,” said Dr Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Abri, Secretary of the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development

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
414/2025	General maintenance work on the Al Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities at the Wilayat of Ibri	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the second or third degree	Friday 12-9-2025 02:00 PM	Wednesday 22-10-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
415/2025	Removing the outer wall and constructing a new wall for the Juvenile Affairs Department at Al-Khuwair	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with an excellent or first degree	Sunday 07-09-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 25-09-2025 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 **Sunday 24/08/2025**.

❖ 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



S Korea’s President Lee Jae Myung shakes hands with Japan’s PM Shigeru Ishiba. — Reuters

JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA AGREE ON CLOSER COOPERATION

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung agreed on Saturday to closer security and economic ties ahead of Lee’s planned summit with US President Donald Trump on Monday. On his first official visit to Japan since taking office in June, Lee met Ishiba at the premier’s residence in Tokyo to discuss bilateral ties between the East Asia neighbours, including closer security coordination with the United States under a trilateral pact signed by their predecessors.

“As the strategic environment surrounding both our countries grows increasingly severe, the importance of our relations, as well as trilateral cooperation with the United States, continues to grow,” Ishiba said in a joint announcement with Lee after their meeting.

Lee reaffirmed support for closer relations with Japan as he did when he met Ishiba for the first time in June on the sidelines of a Group of Seven summit in Canada. We “agreed that unwavering cooperation between South Korea, the US and Japan is paramount in the rapidly changing international situation, and decided to create a virtuous cycle in which the development of South Korea-Japan relations leads to stronger cooperation,” Lee said alongside Ishiba. — Reuters

UK’S FARAGE SETS OUT PLAN FOR ‘MASS DEPORTATION’



Nigel Farage

LONDON: Former Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage set out plans on Saturday for “mass deportations” of migrants who have crossed the English Channel on small boats if his Reform UK party forms Britain’s next government. In an interview with The Times newspaper, Farage said he would withdraw Britain from the European Convention on Human Rights and sign deals with Afghanistan, Eritrea and other top countries of origin to repatriate illegal migrants.

“We can be nice to people, we can be nice to other countries, or we can be very tough to other countries ... I mean (US President Donald) Trump has proved this point quite comprehensively,” Farage said. Asked if he was concerned that asylum seekers would be killed or tortured if they were sent to countries with poor human rights records, Farage said he was more worried about the threat he believed asylum seekers posed to Britons. Farage added that he would end the right to claim asylum or to challenge deportation for those who arrived by small boats by replacing existing human rights legislation and opting Britain out of refugee treaties, citing a national emergency. — Reuters

SUMMER OF FIRES

Portugal suffers new wildfire death



A fourth Portuguese firefighter died of injuries sustained battling a wildfire on Saturday. Eight people have now died in the two countries that have been gripped by a summer of fires fuelled by heatwaves, tinderbox conditions and strong winds. Portugal’s presidency said that a firefighter had died of injuries suffered this week in Sabugal in the northeast. The media said the 45-year-old had been working for a private company battling the fires. — AFP

SEOUL FIRES WARNING SHOTS AFTER N KOREAN TROOPS CROSSED BORDER

SEOUL: South Korea fired warning shots at North Korean soldiers that briefly crossed the heavily fortified border earlier this week, Seoul said on Saturday after Pyongyang accused it of risking “uncontrollable” tensions. South Korea’s new leader Lee Jae Myung has sought warmer ties with the nuclear-armed North and vowed to build “military trust”, but Pyongyang has said it has no interest in improving relations with Seoul.

Seoul’s military said several North Korean soldiers crossed the border on Tuesday while working in the heavily mined Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas. The incursion prompted “our military to fire warning shots”, Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, adding “the North Korean soldiers then moved north” of the de facto border.

Pyongyang’s state media said earlier on Saturday that the incident occurred as North Korean

soldiers worked to permanently seal the frontier dividing the peninsula, citing a statement by Army Lieutenant General Ko Jong Chol. Calling the event a “premeditated and deliberate provocation”, Ko said Seoul’s military used a machine gun to fire more than 10 warning shots towards the North’s troops, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. “This is a very serious prelude that would inevitably drive the situation in the southern border area. — AFP

With no peace deal, Trump threatens Russia sanctions

US President Donald Trump renewed a threat to impose sanctions on Russia if there is no progress toward a peaceful settlement in Ukraine in two weeks, showing frustration at Moscow a week after his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska. “I’m going to make a decision as to what we do and it’s going to be, it’s going to be a very important decision, and that’s whether or not it’s massive sanctions or massive tariffs or both, or we do nothing and say it’s your fight,” Trump said. He said he was unhappy about Russia’s strike on an American factory in Ukraine this week, which caused a fire that injured some of the facility’s employees.

“I’m not happy about it, and I’m not happy about anything having to do with that war,” Trump told reporters at the White House.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, meanwhile, said on Friday that Russia was doing everything it could to prevent a meeting between him and Putin, while Russia’s foreign minister said the agenda for such a meeting was not ready.

Zelensky has repeatedly called for Putin to meet him, saying it is the only way to negotiate an end to the war. Trump had said he had begun the arrangements for a Putin-Zelensky meeting after a call with the Russian leader that followed their Alaska meeting on August 15. Zelensky accused Russia of stalling. “The meeting is one of the components of how to end the war,” he said on Friday at a press conference in Kyiv with Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte. “And



A service member of the Ukrainian Armed Forces fires towards Russian troops near a front line, in Zaporizhzhia region. — Reuters

“I’m going to make a decision as to what we do and it’s going to be, it’s going to be a very important decision, and that’s whether or not it’s massive sanctions or massive tariffs or both, or we do nothing and say it’s your fight

DONALD TRUMP

since they don’t want to end it, they will look for space to (avoid it).”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told NBC there was no agenda for such a summit. “Putin is ready to meet with Zelenskiy when the agenda would be ready for a summit. And this agenda is not ready at all,” he said. The statement echoed Moscow’s established rhetoric about a leaders’ meeting being impossible unless certain conditions were met. Asked for his response to Lavrov’s comments and what the next steps are, Trump told reporters earlier on Friday: “Well, we’ll see. We’re going to see if Putin and Zelenskiy will be working together. It’s like oil and vinegar a little bit.”

Trump had taken sanctions off the table in preparation for his summit in Anchorage with Putin. But at the same White House event

where he mentioned possible sanctions, he showed a photograph of his meeting with Putin on the red carpet in Alaska, saying Putin wanted to attend the World Cup 2026 soccer tournament in the United States. “I’m going to sign this for him. But I was sent one, and I thought you would like to see it, it’s a man named Vladimir Putin, who I believe will be coming, depending on what happens. He may be coming, and he may not, depending on what happens,” Trump said.

During a visit to a nuclear research centre, Putin said Trump’s leadership qualities would help restore US-Russia relations. “With the arrival of President Trump, I think that a light at the end of the tunnel has finally loomed.

And now we had a very good, meaningful and frank meeting in Alaska,” Putin said. — Reuters



GAZA CHILDREN SCREAM OF HUNGER

GAZA: A Palestinian boy extends an empty pot in front of a charity kitchen to receive cooked rice, in Gaza City. The United Nations agencies and aid groups had warned for months of a looming famine in Gaza, where Israel has severely restricted aid and at times completely cut it off during its nearly two-year war.

UN officially declared a famine in Gaza on Friday, blaming “systematic

obstruction” of aid by Israel. The International Committee of the Red Cross said the famine declaration “must serve as a catalyst for immediate and concrete action”.

Turkish First Lady Emine Erdoğan has written to US President Donald Trump’s wife, Melania Trump, and urged her to contact Israel’s prime minister and raise the plight of children in Gaza, authorities in Ankara said on Saturday. — Agencies

NATIONAL SECURITY

Iranian forces kill gunmen in the southeast



Iranian security forces shot dead six gunmen in a clash in southeastern Iran on Saturday, a day after five police officers were killed by armed rebels in the restive region, the official news agency IRNA reported. Iran’s southeast has been the scene of sporadic clashes between security forces and armed groups. Tehran accuses some of them of ties to foreign powers and involvement in cross-border smuggling and insurgency. — Reuters

DAM-LIKE BLOCKAGE

Pakistan lake threatens ‘catastrophic’ floods



A 7-km lake in northern Pakistan, created by a mountain mudslide, is threatening to burst and unleash potentially “catastrophic” floods downstream, officials warned on Saturday. The mud flow descended into the main Ghizer River channel and blocked it completely on Friday, creating the lake in Gilgit Baltistan province, the National Disaster Management Authority said. The blockage created a “dam-like structure” that poses a significant threat of bursting. — Reuters

The New York Times

Was head-binding an ancient way to get a leg up?



FRANZ LIDZ

The author is a New York Times archaeology, science and film essayist

PARENTS have been meddling with their children's heads, if not their minds, since prehistoric times. To achieve the desired forms — flat, round, conical — the pliable skulls of newborns were typically either wrapped tightly in cloth or bound between boards. The origins of this practice, known as artificial cranial deformation, have been traced to early Homo sapiens in Australia about 13,000 years ago, and, amid some scholarly contention, potentially to Neanderthal populations 45,000 years ago.

The practice has been documented on every continent except Antarctica. In the region that is now Peru, early inhabitants apparently believed that a sloping forehead was an advantageous feature, with the earliest evidence dating back to the fourth millennium BC. The stretched, sloped skulls found among the remains of the Paracas culture (active from roughly 800 BC to AD 100) have even fuelled the fanciful idea of an unearthly origin. “Paracas skulls conform to stereotypical images of aliens in 20th-century pulp science fiction,” said Matthew Velasco, an anthropologist at Cornell University. “In other words, modern artists made head shape into something extraterrestrial, which seems like a pretty flimsy basis to argue for space alien influence on ancient societies.”

In his new book, “The Mountain

Embodied”, Velasco details the cranial modification traditions of the Collaguas and Cavanas, neighbouring peoples that lived in the Colca Valley of highland Peru. During the Late Intermediate Period, from about 1100 to 1450, the Collaguas employed methods to make their heads assume a longer, narrower shape, while the Cavanas sought to make their heads wide and squat. Over time, the Collaguas’ elongated look became the dominant style of cranial modification in the valley.

These deliberate alterations resulted in craniums that mimicked the silhouettes of mountains sacred to their respective cultures. Velasco quotes a 16th-century Spanish scribe and translator who wrote that the Collaguas wore tall, brimless hats called chucos and fashioned head shapes to pay homage to Collaguata, the distant volcano that they considered their ancestral home. The Cavanas, the translator observed, sculpted the skulls of their babies in tribute to Gualcagualca, the snow-laden peak that loomed over their town. Andean head-shaping has traditionally been viewed as a way to visually distinguish different ethnic groups, similar to the way Han Chinese foot-binding was perceived. Velasco’s book argues for a shift towards understanding it from the perspective of the people who practiced it. Instead of seeing head-shaping solely as a trait that marked insider and outsider, he suggests that the custom may also have held a

The practice has been documented on every continent except Antarctica. In the region that is now Peru, early inhabitants apparently believed that a sloping forehead was an advantageous feature, with the earliest evidence dating back to the fourth millennium BC.

deeper meaning for those within the Andean culture.

To Velasco, personhood is not simply an inherent aspect of being human, but a quality that empowers individuals, places or things to fully partake in social affairs, and in Andean societies, this was not predetermined. “Sacred mountains and objects could be fully interacted with as people,” Velasco said. “Mountains particularly were thought of as vital participants in society, and, as anthropologists, we take that idea seriously, even if it seems strange.”

In a 2018 study, Velasco examined the skulls of 213 once-mummified humans buried in two Collagua cemeteries. Based on skeletal analyses, he theorised that cranially modified Collagua girls and women may have benefited from a more privileged existence, with better access to a wider range of foods and a lower incidence of violence. By the 15th century, the Incas had assimilated the valley into their empire. While they permitted head-shaping among the locals, recent scholarship indicates that the Incas did not adopt it. The Spanish invaders outlawed the tradition in the 16th century, first by order of Francisco de Toledo, Viceroy of Peru, in 1573, and a decade later by the Third Council of Lima, which specifically described women performing the procedure.

“There’s simply no evidence that shows cranial modification caused neurological damage,” Velasco said.

Texas legislature gives final approval to redistricting map



J. DAVID GOODMAN

The writer is the Houston bureau chief for The New York Times

THE Texas Legislature gave final approval on Saturday to an aggressively redrawn congressional map that kicked off a redistricting race between the parties that is likely to affect the fight for Congress long before any ballots are cast in the 2026 midterm elections. Gov Greg Abbott has said he would sign the map into law once it reaches his desk.

The state Senate passed the map in a party-line vote just days after it was approved by the Texas House on Wednesday. The new lines on Texas’ congressional districts were drawn to deliver Republicans up to five US House seats and help preserve the party’s thin majority. “I’m convinced that if Texas does not take this action, there is an extreme risk that the Republican majority will be lost,” said state Sen Phil King.

Texas Democrats, who temporarily blocked the passage of the map with a walkout in the state House, said the newly drawn lines illegally diminished the voting strength of Black and Hispanic Texans. They have vowed to file suit against the map after it is adopted. After more than eight hours of debate on Friday, a procedural motion by the Republicans denied the Democrats a chance to filibuster, moving the chamber to the final vote. The motion argued that a Democratic state senator who had planned to filibuster, Carol Alvarado, had promoted it as a campaign fundraising event.

The bill passed on a vote of 18-11 just after 12:30 am. Dan Patrick called for people in the gallery — who were shouting “shame” and “fascist” — to be removed. The Senate adjourned until Tuesday at 3 pm. The repercussions of the push for redistricting in

Texas have proved dramatic. President Donald Trump first broached the Texas gerrymander months ago to Republicans, hoping to stave off Democratic victories in US House elections that would cost his party control of the chamber in 2027. Since then, mid-decade redistricting — once a rarity in American politics — is threatening to reverse decades of movement towards less partisan political mapmaking.

On Thursday, Democratic lawmakers in California approved a new map of their state designed to swing five Republican seats to Democrats, a numerical counter to Texas that is likely to go before California voters in a November referendum. Trump is also pressing Republican legislators to counter in Missouri, Indiana and Ohio, where more Republican seats could be squeezed out of maps that already favour the GOP.

The hours of discussion in the Texas Senate on Friday included some details on how the effort had been organised behind the scenes. King said that the National Republican Redistricting Trust, which helps coordinate the party’s redistricting strategy, had been involved in Texas’ redistricting. He had spoken to its executive director, Adam Kincaid, early in the state’s process and as recently as Monday.

“I know he has been involved in some of the early map drawing,” King said at one point while engaging with a Democratic colleague on Friday. “Everyone knows, senator, that he has been involved since the beginning.” Kincaid did not respond to a request for comment.

The results of the nationwide redistricting push might not save Republican control of the US House, where



President Donald Trump appears in the Oval Office in the White House.

The state Senate passed the map in a party-line vote just days after it was approved by the Texas House on Wednesday. The new lines on Texas’ congressional districts were drawn to deliver Republicans up to five US House seats and help preserve the party’s thin majority.

the party currently holds a slender four-seat majority. Off-year elections almost always favour the party out of power in the White House. Even without the states most likely to redistrict — Texas, California, Missouri, Indiana and Ohio — 27 House seats that were decided by fewer than 5 percentage points in 2024 will remain in play; 14 of them are held by Republicans.

But the spasm of mid-decade redistricting could make the House even more fiercely partisan than it is now, as both parties move to take seats from their rivals. Regardless, the Texas map’s passage was a major victory for Trump. Gov. Gavin Newsom of California may have numerically nullified the president’s gains in Texas, but he still faces a campaign to get his maps approved by voters who overwhelmingly backed the nonpartisan redistricting commission that the new map would temporarily supplant.

In New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul met with state Democratic leaders on Thursday, but they still face legal impediments that are likely to stop any redistricting there before 2026. Other Democratic states, such as Maryland and Illinois, are running into similar hurdles. No such impediments faced Texas, where the Republican-dominated state Legislature completely controls the process around redistricting. The redrawing of congressional districts usually happens only after the decennial US census, in order to account for changes in population over time.

But with encouragement from Trump, state leaders in Texas said they were legally permitted to redraw the lines at any time. And they said that recent US Supreme Court precedent allowed them to do so with the explicit goal of boosting the number of Republicans in the US House.

OPINION

Can your phone become a source of stress?



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

WE'VE all been there: you forget your phone at home and panic about getting reunited with it. When you check into a hotel at your holiday destination, the first thing you ask for is the Wi-Fi password. When travelling on an airplane, you would probably feel anxious until you get back online.

This phenomenon is known as 'digital anxiety', which is not a diagnosed mental illness but more of a psychological state of stress or tension linked to our use of modern technology, particularly smartphones and social media.

This tension often shows a constant sense of urgency or discomfort when you're unable to check your phone or respond to notifications.

Over time, this can evolve into a habit that affects your focus, mood, and overall mental well-being. People with digital anxiety often feel guilty or anxious when they don't respond to messages right away and may start to panic if the person they are contacting is not replying to them immediately. They also have what is known

as fear of missing out (FOMO) when away from their phone. They spend more time checking their phone repeatedly for no clear reason and have difficulty focusing during tasks or real-life conversations.

With time, a person with digital anxiety develops sleep disturbances because of nighttime scrolling or blue light exposure from their smartphones, which interferes with their ability to fall asleep.

According to psychologists, digital anxiety is caused by the fact that smartphones are intentionally designed to hijack your attention. The constant scrolling is engineered by algorithms that read your preferences and keep you distracted, which eventually leads to low-level anxiety that becomes part of your daily life.

You became less patient when talking to real people because you don't have the fast-forward button to speed up their talk. Behavioural psychologists explain that.

Different apps manipulate our brain's reward system to get us emotionally attached to our phones. Each notification we receive makes us feel 'important,' so we keep seeking that validation again.

Digital anxiety, which is not a diagnosed mental illness but more of a psychological state of stress or tension, is linked to our use of technology

Some of us use the term 'followers' to refer to people we know on social media, which gives us a fake sense of superiority: "We must be special to be followed." We also call those who have frequent presence on social media 'influencers,' even when all they do is promote products or do stunts on each other to gain more popularity.

To let go of digital anxiety, you can observe your phone habits without judgement. Start by simply recording how many times a day you pick up your phone and when.

Do you do it more when you are feeling bored? Or when there is no one around to talk to? You can also schedule intentional screen-free time starting with 10 minutes a day without touching your phone, especially during the first hour after waking and the last hour before bed.

Turn off non-essential notifications, as every alert is a demand for your attention. Replace mindless scrolling with meaningful habits, such as reading a book or taking a walk.

In my opinion, the above tips can help you avoid digital anxiety for a better mental well-being, so why not try them out?

AILING US NUCLEAR WORKERS IN LIMBO AS TRUMP PAUSES MEDICAL CLAIMS

VALERIE VOLCOVICI

Steve Hicks worked for 34 years at the Y-12 National Security Complex - which enriched the uranium for the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945 and to this day remains a key site in the United States nuclear weapons complex.

He is spending his retirement managing the 30 daily medications he takes to treat the effects of two cancers and nerve damage linked to radiation exposure and petitioning the US Department of Health and Human Services to pay the medical bills for thousands of fellow Y-12 employees stricken with cancers associated with their employment. "I made a good living there but I am not happy that I am this sick. And there are people who worked there that are sicker than me," Hicks, 70, said in an interview. Assembling the petitions is a complicated process. It can take years to gather the thousands of pages of evidence required to document the causes of 22 types of cancer the US government recognises as associated with radiation exposure at its nuclear workplaces.

Now Hicks' effort to win benefits and compensation for him and thousands of nuclear workers is in limbo after the HHS suspended indefinitely the expert medical bodies charged with reviewing those claims, according to interviews with 18 former workers, board members and administration officials. And some of Hicks' petitioners do not have time to wait.

While Hicks did get medical coverage earlier for kidney cancer, he is now seeking assistance for treating skin cancer. Hicks - who voted for Donald Trump - said he has sent dozens of letters to the president, Tennessee's senators and lawmakers in other states with major weapons facilities. "I've contacted politicians and the White House and haven't heard anything back."

The suspension of the board and its impact on the claims processes had not been previously reported. The CDC, an agency of HHS, confirmed the indefinite suspension, but did not provide further details about the future of the board.

"Meetings of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health are currently paused due to outstanding administrative requirements, which the programme is actively working to resolve," a CDC spokesperson said in a statement.

The Energy Department said that it is learning from past mistakes as it focuses on modernising the nuclear arsenal. "The Department of Energy and NNSA (National Nuclear Security Administration) are continuing to learn from past experiences and are using that learning to improve our systems and practices to provide the safest possible work environment," the statement said. —Reuters

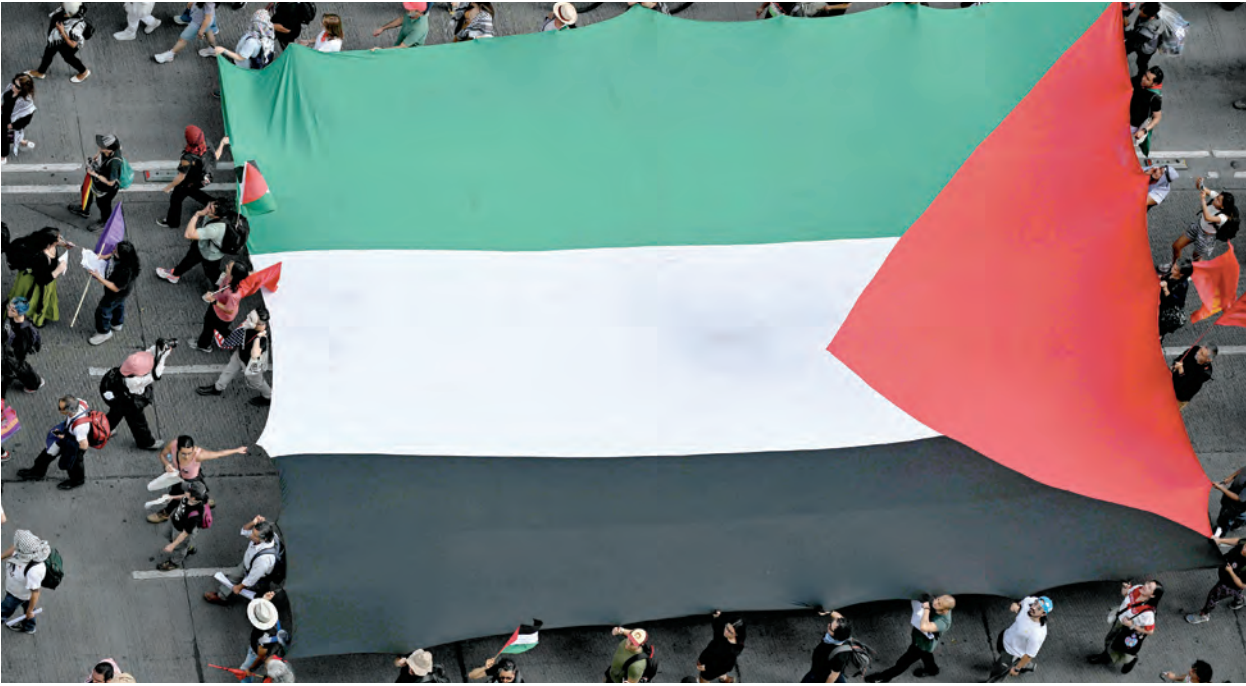
Recognition of Palestine: The hypocrisy of the West

THE question of which nations are granted recognition as sovereign states is a form of hypocrisy. There are no strict, universally applied standards, just guidelines that are interpreted flexibly.

Recognising a state depends less on fulfilling precise criteria and more on geopolitical interests, diplomatic convenience and internal politics. Borders, population, governance and diplomatic capacity are cited as benchmarks. Yet in practice, these are fluid concepts. Palestine meets these standards more convincingly than Israel did when it was first recognised in 1948. Palestine has a long-standing permanent indigenous population of Muslims, Christians and Jews going back centuries. They have valid claims to the land of Palestine and it is still bravely defended by its people.

Conversely, Israel gained recognition despite its borders being undefined and governance unresolved. Its recognition came largely thanks to the post-war climate when European guilt over the Holocaust was at its greatest. The Zionists used this guilt in 1948 and continue to use it today. It is easy to forget that Arabs played no part in the Holocaust but are being made to pay a heavy price for it.

Recognition of Palestine in the West is less about legality or morality and more about political posturing. Recently, countries like France, the UK and Canada announced intentions to recognise Palestine as a state. At first glance, this seems a moral stand, a move towards justice and self-determination for Palestinians . But beneath the surface, it's nothing more than a political gesture designed for domestic consumption. Such declarations are unlikely to produce any tangible change on the ground. For all their talk of sovereignty, these governments have done little to



Members of the Global Movement for Palestine wave a giant Palestine flag during a rally against Israel's actions and the ongoing food shortages in the Gaza strip, in Mexico City last week. — AFP



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

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nothing to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians, especially those in Gaza living under Zionist blockade, poverty and genocide.

The gap between hollow pronouncements and actual aid is vast. In this context recognition simply masks the West's continuing indifference. There's hypocrisy in this: recognising Palestine without offering concrete support, without addressing the urgent needs of the Palestinians languishing in hunger and hardship. Words become hollow when they aren't coupled with action. Recognition becomes a political tool, a mirage that gives the illusion of progress while the suffering persists. We should be sceptical. Recognition that ignores real help only deepens the illusion that acknowledgement alone will lead to change. History teaches us that words, no matter how noble, seldom translate into real action. Actual progress demands serious diplomacy, economic aid and military pressure. The reality is that these recent declarations are more

about propaganda than effect. They serve domestic political ends for those governments making them, not the plight of the Palestinians. Words without deeds are empty and the suffering of Gaza's inhabitants endures as a testament to this truth. Recognition, without substance, is merely a reflection of political interests. An act that fosters false hope. It does nothing to feed the hungry, bind wounds or secure peace. Until genuine political will and tangible action are undertaken, the cycle of words and promises will continue, leaving the Palestinians in their suffering. The path to justice is long and treacherous. Palestinians are right to regard recognition of their state as yet another Western illusion, a distraction peddled by governments more concerned with domestic approval than with ending their suffering. In the final analysis, words and recognitions are shadows of real action. Simply one more deceit to allow the Zionists to continue their criminal ethnic cleansing.

Historical aphorisms to light the way



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

WE are born worriers, aren't we? We can't seem to help it. Whether we are concerned about things we have done, or worried about our futures, it appears to be a very human state to doubt whether we have done, or are doing, the right thing.

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself... nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance", said Franklin D Roosevelt, who, in the earliest stages of his presidency during March 1933, sought to shake America out of the malaise of its Great Depression. Roosevelt had just inherited the poisonous chalice of a presidency that had 25 per cent of its population unemployed, farmers walked off their farms in despair, homeowners were thrown on the streets made destitute by the ever-avaricious banks, many of which themselves were to come crashing down. It was a time of unparalleled economic hardship, a time when 10 million Americans never knew where they would sleep that night, or where their next meal was coming from.

Do you think the thousands of Americans who thought the only way out was to take their own lives were 'challenged' by the visceral realities, baring the very self-doubt which put them on that skyscraper window ledge, that bridge railing, or on the train tracks in front of an oncoming train? I think

not, but what is clear is that Roosevelt wasn't going to apportion blame, make excuses, or 'sugarcoat' the challenges that lay ahead and in presenting the raw truth that there was no magic solution, but that apathy, sloth and wallowing in self-pity were not the answer; and that every individual must exorcise their own demons before the nation could regain its feet.

Amazingly, within two years, America was 'up off the canvas', punch-drunk maybe, it had survived. It was unsteady, but would shake its head, clear its thoughts and gain a respect for itself that has characterised and sometimes caricatured, the resilience, the bravado, the machoism and boldness that is America today. Hitler, Hirohito, Mussolini, Stalin and even Churchill, gravely underestimated Roosevelt, who of course had his own unique challenges, being wheelchair bound with a paralytic disease, probably the debilitating Guillain-Barré syndrome, so for him, compassion and understanding weren't only words and even more certainly, he understood that only with the right words could he revive a nation that was slipping away, not flailing or fighting, but passive, insouciant, lethargic and indifferent to its demise. He made them understand that with self-awareness they could regain self-respect and eventually, the respect of others and that's how you resurrect a nation on its knees.

We can take strength of character further

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself... nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance

by taking the philosophical perspective of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose most famous aphorism from his 1888 volume 'The Twilight of Idols': "Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich starker", was along the lines that "Whatever doesn't kill us, makes us stronger". Which emboldens anyone who hears it, when they hear it. Deliberation, contemplation, even reflection, may give us pause... to consider a less dramatic response, less turmoil. But what we cannot doubt is that once again, words demonstrate the power to excite and incite us, to arm us with certainty that denies hesitancy and imbues us with the boldness and character of warriors, scholars and explorers.

It's no use worrying. It will not change anything and regret, bad or wrong choices simply show us to be human. What we can do though, is take strength from others, or more correctly from the inspirational words of others, to be all that we are capable of being. If that makes us more than what we ever thought we could be, or to achieve more than we ever dreamed, then that is why we value words, respect them and seek to understand more of them. That's why we must read and learn, because we need to unlock our greatest potential.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us". Great words to live by, don't you agree.

GERMAN FIRM GIVES 'SECOND LIFE' TO USED EV BATTERIES

LÉA PERNELLE

A German company is putting used electric vehicle batteries to new use by stacking them into fridge-size units that homes and businesses can use to store their excess solar and wind energy.

This week, the company Voltfang — which means "catching volts" — opened its first industrial site in Aachen, near the Belgian and Dutch borders. With around 100 staff, Voltfang says it is the biggest facility of its kind in Europe in the budding sector of refurbishing lithium-ion batteries.

Its CEO David Oudsandji hopes it will help Europe's biggest economy ween itself off fossil fuels and increasingly rely on climate-friendly renewables. While wind turbines now dot Germany's countryside and photovoltaic panels are found on many rooftops, he says the country still needs to build up battery storage capacity.

"We want to ensure European sovereignty in energy supply by enabling renewable energy production through storage", Oudsandji, 29, said.

"We can generate enormous amounts of electricity from solar and wind energy, then store it in a decentralised way all across Germany and distribute it", he said.

"This means that the more renewable energy we use, the more storage capacity we deploy, the less we need fossil gas or oil".

Inside the site, technicians receive used EV batteries and test them to determine their remaining lifespans.

Those still found to be in good condition are reconditioned for their "second life" and fitted inside cabinets the size of large refrigerators — effectively huge power banks for excess electricity.

Among the first customers is the discount supermarket chain Aldi Nord, which wants to store power from its rooftop solar panels for later use.

Voltfang, founded in 2020 by three university engineering students, aims to produce enough systems by 2030 to store a capacity of one gigawatt-hour (GWh) of electricity per year, enough for 300 homes. It is one of many small steps meant to help Germany's decades-old "Energiewende", or energy transition.

Last year, renewables covered nearly 60 per cent of electricity produced in Germany and the target is 80 per cent by 2030. One problem for solar and wind is what to do on days when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow.

Such "dark lulls", most common in winter, have at times forced Germany to temporarily import power produced by French nuclear reactors or Polish coal plants.

To guarantee a secure supply, conservative Chancellor Friedrich Merz's government plans to build around 20 new gas-fired power plants by 2030. The Greens and environmental groups have denounced this as a step backwards in German climate policy and fear the country will not meet its goal of carbon neutrality by 2045. — AFP

Palestinian statehood is not the answer...

IN response to Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza and its escalating human-rights violations in the West Bank, the international community has revived the push for Palestinian statehood. At the end of July, France and Saudi Arabia co-chaired a high-level meeting in New York, attended by representatives from more than 100 countries, to generate momentum towards this goal. Since then, Canada, Australia and several Arab countries have joined the calls for recognition, while the United Kingdom has said it intends to do so if Israel does not agree to a ceasefire.

Although widely welcomed as a significant diplomatic initiative, advancing the idea of Palestinian statehood at a time when nearly 2.2 million people face a systematic starvation campaign orchestrated by Israel is nothing more than political theatre. The version of a "Palestinian state" currently being promoted by the international community will neither end the genocide in Gaza nor deliver a genuine sovereign state.

The revival of Palestinian statehood at this particular moment serves only one purpose: to grant Israel legitimacy and diplomatic cover for its atrocities in Gaza and ongoing assaults in the West Bank. As of March 2025, 147 of 193 UN member states had already recognised a Palestinian state. Yet an international community unwilling — or unable — to end the genocide and the deliberate starvation of Gaza will never be able to force Israel to make the types of concessions required for a truly sovereign Palestinian state.

In reality, the moment for Palestinian statehood has already passed. For decades, Israel has worked systematically to render this prospect nearly impossible. Territorially, institutionally, financially and legally, any such entity would bear little resemblance to a sovereign nation-state. For starters, the territory under discussion is fragmented, broken into disconnected enclaves and would at most comprise 40 per cent of the West Bank — likely excluding



The version of a "Palestinian state" currently being promoted by the international community will neither end the genocide in Gaza nor deliver a genuine sovereign state.



MANAL A JAMAL

The writer is Professor of Political Science at James Madison University and the author of Promoting Democracy: The Force of Political Settlements in Uncertain Times

Gaza altogether.

Will the international community compel Israel to relinquish control of Area C, the 60 per cent of the West Bank that remains under full Israeli military and administrative authority? Will it pressure Israel to yield control of the Gaza Strip? Since 1967, every Israeli government has expanded settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and systematically encouraged Jewish citizens to move to the West Bank by offering financial benefits and infrastructure development.

Each settlement hosts a civilian security unit funded and armed by Israel's Ministry of Defence and effectively backed by the Israeli military. Will the international community pressure Israel to dismantle these settlements, or to establish a single legal system that subjects Palestinians — both Christian and Muslim — and Jewish Israelis to the same laws? Under the 1995 Oslo II interim agreement, Israel retains full control over all water resources in the occupied territories. This arrangement provides Palestinians with access to only 20 per cent of the water from the West Bank's mountain aquifer, a resource shared by Israelis and Palestinians.

Will the international community

force Israel to establish a fairer distribution of resources between Palestinian communities and Jewish-Israeli settlements in the West Bank? At present, Israel controls virtually all of the occupied territories' external borders. Every Palestinian — including Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas — must obtain Israeli permission to enter or leave and often even to travel within the territories themselves. Will the international community make Israel relinquish control over borders and crossings?

The PA, established in 1994 to administer Palestinian affairs in the West Bank and Gaza, has functioned less as a government than as a subcontractor for Israel's military occupation. Israel even reserves the power to approve its election results. Will the international community demand that Israel and its allies allow genuinely free and fair elections — and accept the results? Under the 1994 Paris Protocol, Israel controls the transfer of value-added tax revenues to the PA, which constitute a major source of its income. Will the international community force Israel to allow a Palestinian government to manage its own revenues?

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Oman School in action at the Arab School Championship.

OMAN SCHOOL FUTSAL VS SAUDI IN ARAB CHAMPIONSHIP

MUSCAT: Oman’s school futsal team will face Saudi Arabia on Sunday at Al Hussein College Stadium in what promises to be a decisive fixture at the ongoing Arab School Championship in Jordan. The match will kick off at 6:00 pm (Oman time).

Fresh off their opening victory against Libya with a 4-2 scoreline, the young Omanis enter the second match with confidence and determination. A win against Saudi Arabia would take the team a step closer to securing the championship title, before concluding their group campaign against hosts Jordan on Tuesday at 6:00 pm (Muscat time).

Coach Confident
“Our team is fully prepared for this crucial game against Saudi Arabia. After the win in our first match, the players have continued their preparations with high morale and strong motivation. All players are ready, and our objective is clear – to claim victory and reach six points.”
Salman al Mudelwi, Coach of Oman’s school futsal team said.

As part of the cultural and educational activities accompanying the championship, participating delegations enjoyed a touristic excursion to Ajloun Castle and the ancient ruins of Jerash. The visit offered students an opportunity to explore Jordan’s rich history, heritage, and cultural landmarks, reflecting the tournament’s broader goal of fostering cultural exchange alongside sporting competition.

The Arab School Championship, organised under the supervision of the Jordanian and Arab School Sports Federations, continues to provide a platform for young athletes from across the region to showcase their talent while strengthening educational and cultural ties.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 23

The curtain has fallen on the group stage of the 2025 U-21 Youth Hockey League, after an exciting third and final round filled with thrilling matches and notable results. The total number of goals scored in the tournament so far has reached 66 goals, and the three clubs advancing to the knockout stage have been determined.

In Group One, Ahli Sidab secured qualification after a sweeping victory over Saham in the first encounter with a score of 15-0. Saham later withdrew from the return match, which was counted as a 3-0 win for Ahli Sidab. With this, Ahli Sidab topped the group with a perfect record (6 points), while Saham exited the tournament without any points.

Group Two witnessed the dominance of Masirah, who continued their impressive performances and wrapped up their campaign with a big 7-1 victory over Seeb. This confirmed their well-deserved qualification after collecting 9 points from three matches, scoring 28 goals and conceding only one. Meanwhile, both Seeb and Sohar exited the tournament early.

Group Three proved to be the most dramatic. Salalah and Ittihad finished level on both points and goal difference (6 points – 4/4 each). Salalah managed

Group Two witnessed the dominance of Masirah, who continued their impressive performances and wrapped up their campaign with a big 7-1 victory over Seeb



Masirah captain drives past two Seeb defenders.

to win their final thrilling clash 3-2, forcing the tie to be settled via shoot-outs, where Salalah triumphed 3-1, snatching the qualification spot after a nail-biting contest. Nasr ended their campaign without any points, suffering three straight defeats.

MASIRAH CRUSH SEEB 7-1 TO SEAL FINALS SPOT
Masirah defeated Seeb 7-1 in their Group Two match at Sohar Sports Complex, confirming their place in the

finals. Masirah began with relentless pressure, as Mahmoud al Sheedi scored in the 6th minute and doubled the lead a minute later, finishing the first quarter 2-0.

At the start of the second quarter, Nasser al Noufali extended the lead from a penalty corner in the 18th minute, ending the first half 3-0.

The third quarter passed quietly without goals, but Masirah stormed back in the fourth: Ibrahim al Yousifi netted the fourth, followed by a

as runners up in the local tournament, which ended in Salalah last month, after they suffered a loss against Al Nahdha in the final match in penalties.

Squad:
Jawad al Azi, Osama al Mahruqi, Nasser al Saqri, Sameer al Hatmi, Said al Ghanbousi, Mohammed Bait Sabee, Abdulaziz al Shaqsi, Loqman al Jadidi, Masoud al Bahri, Abdullah al Jabri, Ibrahim al Kindi, Osama Bait Sameer, Ziyad al Rasbi, Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Abdulaleem al Rawahi, Nayef Bait Sabeeh, Turki Bait Rabee, Ali al Balushi, Yassar al Balushi, Rashad al Dheen, Mohammed al Oraibi, Abdulhadi al Manwari, Essa al Buraidi and Adnan al Mushefiri.

Ahli Sidab, Masirah, Salalah Reach Final Stage in the U21 Hockey League

second from Nasser al Noufali. Seeb pulled one back through Zakaria al Nabhani from a penalty corner, but Al Abbas al Noufali converted a penalty stroke in the 55th minute before Ibrahim al Balushi sealed the scoring in the 58th minute, completing the 7-1 rout.

SALALAH SECURE QUALIFICATION IN SHOOT-OUT DRAMA
Salalah claimed their place in the finals after defeating Ittihad in shoot-outs (3-1) following a tie on points and goals (4-4).

The match at Salalah Youth Complex was full of excitement. Salalah took a first-half lead through Mohammed al Hasani and Abdulaziz al Rasbi (2-0). In the third quarter, Thabet Saeed pulled one back for Ittihad, but Hazaa al Balushi restored Salalah’s two-goal cushion. Ittihad responded again with a goal by Sanad Saud, ending regulation at 3-2 for Salalah, and leading to the decisive shoot-outs.

QUALIFIED TEAMS FOR THE FINAL STAGE
Thus, Ahli Sidab, Masirah, and Salalah have advanced to the final stage, which will be played in a round-robin format among the three teams. The top two will then face off in the grand final, scheduled for August 31 at Oman Hockey Stadium.

SHORT TAKES



Harry Kane celebrates scoring the fifth goal with teammates. — Reuters

BAYERN THRASH LEIPZIG 6-0 IN OPENER

Forward Harry Kane scored a second-half hat-trick in 14 minutes and Michael Olise bagged two goals as champions Bayern Munich obliterated visitors RB Leipzig 6-0 in the Bundesliga opener on Friday, putting down an early marker.

England captain Kane, who was the league’s top scorer in the past two seasons, opened his account in the 64th minute before bagging two more goals in the 74th and 78th to complete Bayern’s impressive show of strength in the season premiere.

The Bavarians had the visitors on the backfoot from the start and they struck twice in five minutes to quickly put the game to bed.

On both occasions they outplayed Leipzig with a quick passing combination at the edge of the box. Olise drilled in from a tight angle in the 27th minute and new signing Luis Diaz notched his first league goal on his Bundesliga debut with a powerful shot off the crossbar in the 32nd.

With Leipzig dazed, Serge Gnabry thought he had scored a third goal for the hosts in the 40th but his shot was deflected onto the crossbar. Two minutes later, however, he delivered a well-timed assist for France international Olise to slot in his second goal of the evening.

Kane then picked up the baton in the second half, getting onto the scoresheet in the 64th minute after early work from Diaz. He then threaded a low shot past two defenders to make it 5-0 before completing his hat-trick a little later. — Reuters



Al Ahli’s Edouard Mendy lifts the trophy and celebrates on the podium with Franck Kessie and teammates after winning the Saudi Super Cup. — Reuters

AL AHLI WIN SAUDI SUPER CUP AS RONALDO NETS 100TH AL NASSR GOAL

Al Ahli beat Al Nassr 5-3 on penalties to win the Saudi Super Cup final in Hong Kong after a dramatic 2-2 draw on Saturday as Cristiano Ronaldo netted his 100th goal for the losing side.

Portugal forward Ronaldo, 40, opened the scoring in the 40th minute from the penalty spot to reach the milestone after Ali Majrashy was penalised for handball.

Al Ahli, who won this year’s Asian Champions League title, responded in first-half stoppage time through Franck Kessie, who finished low past Al Nassr keeper Bento after a well-placed pass from new signing Enzo Millot.

Both sides pushed for a winner in the second half and Ronaldo tested Edouard Mendy with a powerful strike before Firas al Buraikan struck the post.

Marcelo Brozovic restored Al Nassr’s lead in the 82nd minute, capitalising on a poor clearance and firing home from inside the box.

Al Ahli equalised again in the 89th minute, however, when Roger Ibanez headed in a Riyad Mahrez corner after Bento misjudged the ball.

In the shootout, Al Ahli converted all five penalties and although Ronaldo converted his spot-kick, Al Nassr missed one to hand the Jeddah-based club their second Saudi Super Cup title. — Reuters

Tottenham shock Man City with 2-0 victory at Etihad

TOTTENHAM

Hotspur continued their impressive recent Premier League record at Manchester City with a 2-0 win on Saturday as Joao Palhinha took advantage of a goalkeeping blunder by James Trafford and Brennan Johnson also scored.

Spurs, who have now won three of their last five league games at the Etihad, maintained their unbeaten start under manager Thomas Frank following an opening 3-0 win over Burnley.

Both sides squandered chances before Johnson broke the deadlock in the 35th minute, thanks largely to lazy defending by Rico Lewis. Johnson latched onto a pass from Richarlison and finished with a shot into the top corner.

The goal was initially flagged for offside but that decision was overturned by VAR.

Palhinha, signed on loan from Bayern Munich this month, doubled the visitors’ lead in first-half stoppage time when new signing Trafford inexplicably tried to play out from the back to nervy gasps from the crowd.

Richarlison pounced, rolling the ball to Palhinha whose deflected shot found the back of the net.

“First of all, the coach pushed me to come here and showed me the project he has here at Tottenham”, Palhinha said. “It is such a great club and I am really glad to be in the Premier League again”.

The 22-year-old Trafford, meanwhile, started for the second successive game amidst speculation that City’s regular keeper Ederson is headed to Türkiye’s Galatasaray.

City, champions four years in a row before finishing third last season, started with a 4-0 win at Wolverhampton Wanderers, but Spurs brought them quickly back down to earth as thousands of home fans poured out of the ground before the final whistle.

Joyous Spurs supporters, meanwhile, chanted “It’s happened again, Manchester City, it’s happened again”, after last season’s 4-0 win at Etihad.

City had started well, Omar Marmoush forcing Spurs keeper Guglielmo Vicario into action and an Erling Haaland header that floating just over the bar.

Frank, who led Brentford to a 2-1 victory at Manchester City in 2022, became the third manager to beat City boss Pep Guardiola away in the league with two different teams after Jose Mourinho (Real Madrid and Manchester United) and Antonio Conte (Chelsea and Spurs). — Reuters



Tottenham’s Brennan Johnson celebrates scoring the first goal. — Reuters

Omani Karate Team Competes at 2025 West Asia Championship in Amman

AMMAN: The Omani Karate National Team is participating in the West Asia Karate Championship 2025, held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, August 24-25, 2025, under the leadership of Shaikh Salem bin Hamad al Mahrrouqi, Chairman of the Oman Karate Committee and Member of the Majlis Ash’shura — representing the Wilayat of Adam, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

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

A group of elite Omani international and Asian referees also participated in managing the competition, including Youssef al Siyabi, Suleiman al Hinai, Hilal al Abdali, Mohammed al Hinai, Tarek al Raisi, Khalifa al Rasbi, Adel al Hinai, Zulfa al Kanadi and Al Munther al Alawi; and they attended the referees’ course held alongside the



Omani karate referees taking part in the event



Picture of the players, the administrator and the head of the Oman Karate Committee.

championship to enhance their skills and learn the latest international regulations and standards.

On the sidelines of the championship, coaches Ali al Shabibi and Waleed al Mahmoudi participated in a coaches’ course aimed at developing training skills and enhancing the technical competencies of the participating coaches.

Additionally, the West Asia Karate Union Members’ Meeting was held, with the participation of Shaikh Salem bin Hamad al Mahrrouqi, the union’s agenda and key points contributing to the development of karate in the region and the promotion of cooperation among member countries were discussed.

The participation of the Omani team comes as part of its efforts to achieve outstanding results reflecting the development of karate in the Sultanate of Oman and to strengthen its presence in regional and international championships.

SPORTS



Melissa Jefferson-Wooden of the US celebrates winning the women's 100m final. — Reuters

J E F F E R S O N - W O O D E N

CEMENTS TOKYO SPRINT FAVOURITE STATUS WITH BRUSSELS WIN

US sprinter Melissa Jefferson-Wooden underlined her world 100m title credentials at Friday's Diamond League meet in Brussels with a dominant victory over a stacked field, but Agnes Jebet Ngetich fell short in her world record bid in the 5,000m.

The 24-year-old American will head to the September 13-21 world championships in Tokyo as firm favourite for a potential sprint double after she clocked 10.76 seconds for victory in the Belgian capital.

She left a loaded field trailing in her wake. World champion and Olympic silver medallist Sha'Carri Richardson took second in a distant 11.08 sec, with Briton Daryll Neita in third, just ahead of Jamaican

sprint legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce (11.17). "I know that I'm in great shape and that it's all about putting together the perfect race at the perfect time, when it matters the most and that is at the world championships in Tokyo", said a confident-sounding Jefferson-Wooden.

"So now all the small meetings are done and it's time to go back home and work on the biggest one of the season. "The plan is definitely to go out there and take gold. I feel like I put myself in a really good spot to be a contender for that and now it's time to have trust".

SOLO RUN
Ngetich was left making a long, solo run in the 5,000m at the King Baudouin Stadium after the

pacemakers dropped out and none of the field could cope with her continued high pace.

But the Kenyan flagged to finish in 14:24.99, well off teammate Beatrice Chebet's world record of 13:58.06.

"Today's race was not bad", said Ngetich. "I am happy with the win but I wanted to run faster."

"I really wanted to improve my personal best, but today I had to push alone and it was hard. The next thing now is to focus on the world championships. "I am doubling the 5,000m and 10,000m; and I'm really ambitious. I want to make at least one podium, that is the most important thing. To get a medal at the highest stage in the world".

Bahrain's Winfred Yavi, Olympic champion in the 3,000m steeplechase, set a world best of

4:40.13 in the rarely-run one mile steeplechase at the 14th Diamond League meeting of the season.

There remains just the August 27/28 finals in Zurich before the elite of track and field head to the Tokyo worlds.

Sha'Carri Richardson's partner Christian Coleman had to be content with fourth in 20.42 sec in the 200m, Alexander Ogando of the Dominican Republic triumphing in 20.16.

American Jacory Patterson claimed the men's 400m in 44.05 sec ahead of teammate Vernon Norwood and Britain's Charlie Dobson.

American Chase Jackson landed 20.90m to better Valerie Adams' 11-year meet record in the women's shot put and there was a first ever Diamond League win for Jamaican Ralford Mullings in the men's discus,

Lithuania's world record holder Mykolas Alekna finishing second to ensure a place at next week's Zurich finals.

"Now I'm going to keep on training and hopefully I'll do better during the final", said Alekna.

"The hard training sessions are almost over, I still do some now and then. But I feel I'm getting faster and more explosive. So I'm almost ready for Tokyo".

In a series of non-Diamond League events, Jamaican world champion Antonio Watson won a second 400m in 44.89 sec, while Kenya's Ferdinand Omanyala — whose 9.77 sec in 2021 put him 10th on the all-time world list — could only finish seventh (10.49) in a 100m won by South African Gift Leotlela in 10.13 sec. — AFP

BUSINESS

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SHORT TAKES



The workshops drew participation from prominent Indian tourism companies and representatives

MOHT WRAPS UP TOURISM WORKSHOPS IN INDIA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has successfully concluded a series of promotional workshops in India, attended by 25 Omani tourism establishments and 150 Indian companies engaged in outbound tourism. The initiative aimed to foster closer cooperation between the Omani tourism sector and Indian tourism companies, attract target tourist segments, and enhance Oman's presence in one of its priority international markets.

The workshops drew participation from prominent Indian tourism companies and representatives of specialised media outlets, reflecting the growing interest in tourism offerings.

Through presentations by Omani tourism institutions, participants were introduced to a diverse range of tourism packages, services, and facilities, as well as exclusive offers designed specifically for the Indian market.

In addition to the presentations, a series of bilateral meetings were held to discuss opportunities for enhancing collaboration, integration, and partnerships across various tourism sectors. These discussions are expected to contribute to increasing Oman's competitiveness and attracting more visitors to Oman.

This promotional initiative forms part of the Ministry's wider strategy to organise targeted events in key global markets. The campaign seeks to attract diverse tourist segments, promote Oman's attractive tourism offerings, and gain a deeper understanding of market-specific preferences and expectations.

Officials emphasised that such workshops and external exhibitions not only raise awareness of Oman as a comprehensive tourism destination but also help identify visitor aspirations in the context of ongoing global tourism transformations.

— ONA

MoCIIP to launch Golden Residency Programme

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 23

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will organise on Sunday, August 31, an event titled 'Sustainable Business Environment' at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Recreation.

The event will be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, with the attendance of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, alongside dignitaries, investors and officials from both the public and private sectors.

The event will witness the launch of the Golden Residency Programme for investors,

creating a new gateway for investors and their families to settle and grow in a safe, stable and opportunity-rich environment. It will also mark the launch of the Elite Companies Initiative, designed to empower high-performing Omani companies to expand locally and globally through a comprehensive package of incentives and facilities.

In addition, the Commercial Registration (CR) Transfer Service will be inaugurated on the Oman Business Platform using electronic authentication, representing a



MUBARAK BIN MOHAMMED AL DOHANI



The Sustainable Business Environment event will also include the signing of strategic cooperation agreements to develop the construction sector

The event will help create a new gateway for investors and their families to settle and grow in a stable, and opportunity-rich environment

pioneering step towards digitising all business transactions, reducing both time and costs for investors.

The Sustainable Business Environment event will further include the signing of strategic cooperation agreements to develop the construction sector with SQU, the GUTech, the Oman Energy Association (OPAL) and eBinaa Professional Services LLC.

Mubarak bin Mohammed al Dohani, Director-General of Planning at the ministry, Head of the Digital Transformation Team, and the ministry's official spokesperson, affirmed, "Through

these initiatives and agreements, the ministry seeks to reinforce Oman's position as a leading global investment destination by providing a stable and attractive business environment that offers investors quality opportunities for long-term growth and settlement. The initiatives aim to empower high-performing Omani companies to expand into regional and international markets and strengthen their competitiveness, while also accelerating digital transformation in business processes to enhance efficiency and transparency.

Hydrom concludes Korea roadshow to boost green hydrogen ties

SEOUL: Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), the state-owned company leading Oman's green hydrogen strategy, has wrapped up its promotional roadshow in the Republic of Korea, advancing Oman's ambitions to position itself as a global clean energy hub.

The mission, led by Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, was joined by Shaikh Zakariya bin Hamad al Saadi, Oman's Ambassador to Korea, and Eng Abdulaziz bin Said al Shaithani, Managing Director of Hydrom. The delegation met senior Korean energy institutions and hosted the Oman-Korea Green Hydrogen Investment Forum in Seoul.

Al Hadhrami said Oman is moving steadily to cement its position as a major centre for the production, transport and export of green hydrogen.

"Our vision is to diversify the energy mix through renewables and green hydrogen, securing stability, supporting the economy, and creating sustainable value. These efforts align

Oman is moving steadily to cement its position as a major centre for the production and export of green hydrogen



The Omani delegation met Korean energy institutions and hosted the Oman-Korea Green Hydrogen Investment Forum in Seoul

with Oman's goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050," he said.

The roadshow also highlighted Oman's integrated national hydrogen ecosystem, including land allocations, shared infrastructure

and regulatory frameworks. It coincided with financial incentives announced by Hydrom to improve project viability and attract global investors. Oman and Korea signed a memorandum of understanding in

August 2023 to deepen cooperation on clean energy technologies, policies, and capacity building.

Al Hadhrami said the agreement builds on historic oil and gas ties and extends the partnership into hydrogen, innovation and supply chain development.

Ambassador Al Saadi said the forum in Seoul marked an important step in strengthening bilateral economic ties and opening new opportunities in renewables. "The Embassy gives priority to promoting Oman's investment prospects and facilitating direct links between government and business in both countries," he noted.

Hydrom's Managing Director Al Shaithani told the forum that Oman has earmarked more than 50,000 sq km for hydrogen projects. Nine projects have already been awarded through two bidding rounds with investments exceeding \$50 billion, targeting production of 1.5 million tonnes annually by 2030.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



AL ISLAMI FOODS RETURNS TO OMAN OFFERING PREMIUM HALAL PRODUCTS

Al Islami Foods, a UAE pioneer in the wholesome food products sector and a global leader in halal foods, is pleased to announce its return to the Sultanate of Oman market with its extensive range of premium halal products. Consumers in Oman can now enjoy Al Islami products, including frozen poultry and meat, vegetables and fruits.

This strategic move reinforces Al Islami's deep-rooted commitment to serve families across the GCC with 'Real Halal' goodness. Founded in 1970, Al Islami Foods has long been a pioneer in shaping the region's burgeoning halal food sector through frozen products made with premium ingredients and real halal, hand-slaughtered, never-stunned chicken and meat with no added hormones.

With its recent refocus on 'Food is a Blessing' as a guiding philosophy, each Al Islami product is meticulously prepared to deliver unparalleled convenience and promises the best taste without compromising on taste.

Commenting on the expansion, Sharon Jabbour, Marketing Director at Al Islami Foods, said, "Al Islami's return to Oman is much more than a commercial expansion; it is a revival of a cherished relationship with Omani consumers, many of whom remember us as a trusted Halal brand bringing uncompromising quality and taste."

"Our products are designed to meet the evolving needs of fast-paced lifestyles of modern households, transforming the way individuals experience meals together. Oman has always held a special place in our story, and we're thrilled to reenter the hearts and kitchens of Omani families," she added.

A leader in Halal Foods for five decades, Al Islami Foods is an Emirati brand with an unrivalled global presence that embodies the principles of quality and innovation.

The brand has been recognised as one of the top halal brands globally, securing a coveted position among the Top 5 Halal Products Companies in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 2023, and was awarded the prestigious title of iHalal Brand in 2021.

Al Islami products are now available in the following supermarkets across Oman: Lulu Hypermax, Makkah Market and Ramez.

MUZN ISLAMIC OFFERS HOME FINANCING FOR SELF-EMPLOYED

NBO Muzn Islamic has announced offering Shariah-compliant home financing solutions tailored for self-employed customers, small business owners and freelancers. With a competitive profit rate and financing tenure of up to 25 years, Muzn Islamic Banking's home financing is designed to provide flexibility and peace of mind while ensuring a quick and seamless approval process. Customers can also benefit from convenient repayment options, including cheque payments.



Salima al Marzooqi, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said, "we believe that home ownership should be available and accessible for all hardworking individuals, regardless of their employment status. Therefore, we are committed to offer inclusive financial solutions that cater to real needs. By supporting self-employed customers, we are not only addressing an underserved segment, but we are also reinforcing our role as a partner in their long-term financial journey."

Limited-edition BMW M4 CS VR46 launches in Oman

AL JENAIBI

International Automobiles, the exclusive importer of BMW Group vehicles in Oman, has announced the arrival of a single model of the BMW M4 CS Edition VR46 in Oman, one of the most exclusive BMW M models ever built.

With just 92 units produced worldwide, this exclusive edition pays tribute to the legendary Valentino Rossi, nine-time motorcycle World Champion and BMW M works driver since 2023.

Oman has received a single allocation, making this a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for local collectors and M fans alike.

The BMW M4 CS Edition VR46, created in honour of Rossi's 46th birthday, has been developed in close collaboration with the champion and carries distinctive visual elements that link directly to his career. These include the Sao Paulo Yellow accents – echoing Valentino Rossi's vibrant racing colours and signature style, the legendary racing number 46 on the bonnet and doors, and hand-painted carbon components featuring Rossi's autograph.

The model is available exclusively in two paint finishes: Frozen Solid White and Marina Bay Blue, each limited to 46 units worldwide. The model in Oman is in the blue shade, complemented by high-gloss black M forged



wheels and the M Carbon exterior package. Inside, the car features lightweight M Carbon bucket seats upholstered in Merino leather and Alcantara in Night Blue with Sao Paulo Yellow stitching. A matching Alcantara M steering wheel, carbon fibre trim elements, and model-specific "M4 CS Edition VR46" badging complete the cockpit.

At its core, the M4 CS Edition VR46 is a performance machine. Powered by a 3.0-litre, inline six-cylinder M TwinPower Turbo engine producing 550 hp, it accelerates from

0 to 100 km/h in 3.4 seconds and reaches a top speed of 302 km/h. The M xDrive all-wheel-drive system with active M differential ensures optimal traction, while adaptive M suspension, M Carbon ceramic brakes, and a specially tuned exhaust system deliver a driving experience worthy of both the racetrack and the open road.

This singular vehicle is now available at the Al Jenaibi International Automobiles showroom in Al Qurum. Grab it now before it's gone! Call 800 50008.

AHLIBANK, AL NOOR PARTNER TO EMPOWER VISUALLY IMPAIRED

In line with its steadfast approach to supporting various segments of society and promoting social and economic inclusion, ahlibank supported and enabled specialised training programmes in project management and financial literacy, targeted at individuals with visual impairments, in partnership with Al Noor Association for the Blind.

More than 100 beneficiaries have benefited from the association by providing advanced educational tools specifically designed to meet their needs, with the goal of empowering them both intellectually and professionally, and enhancing their financial independence.

This reflects the bank's ongoing commitment to social responsibility and its efforts to empower underserved communities through impactful and sustainable development initiatives.

The ahlicares team visited the association's premises to personally deliver the educational tools and engage directly with individuals with visual impairments.

The visit provided an opportunity to exchange



experiences, better understand the challenges faced by beneficiaries, and reaffirm the bank's dedication to building genuine human connections that create lasting positive impact.

The training programmes aim to introduce participants to key concepts of entrepreneurship for small businesses and personal financial management, enhancing their capabilities to overcome professional challenges when provided

with a supportive and enabling environment.

Jumana al Hashmi, Assistant General Manager – Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at ahlibank, said: "At ahlibank, we firmly believe that individuals with visual impairments possess exceptional capabilities that deserve empowerment and support. Financial inclusion cannot be fully achieved without integrating them into developmental and educational initiatives. This initiative reflects our unwavering belief in the importance of building a society where everyone has equal opportunities to grow and learn."

This partnership continues ahlibank's longstanding record of social initiatives represented by the ahlicares' team. The bank has previously launched impactful programmes and contributions serving various groups, including providing medical supplies and assistive devices for the elderly, organising awareness and educational activities for children, alongside partnerships with organisations focused on community welfare and education.

SPAR Oman opens in Al Amerat, launch offers available until Sept 6

SPAR Oman has announced the grand opening of its supermarket, located in the vibrant community of Al Amerat. The new store is designed to deliver a Value Shopping Experience that combines freshness, convenience, variety and affordability.

To mark the occasion, SPAR Oman is offering special promotions on a wide range of products until September 6, giving customers even more reasons to explore the new outlet.

SPAR Oman is renowned for its uncompromising commitment to freshness and quality. The new

supermarket in Al Amerat features an extensive selection of food and non-food products, ensuring customers have access to everyday essentials and specialty items alike.

From locally sourced fruits, vegetables and seafood to fresh bakery delights, the store aims to make every visit rewarding.

An exclusive butchery section features premium beef and lamb cuts sourced from trusted suppliers in Australia and New Zealand; perfect for customers seeking superior quality meats.

Speaking at the store launch, Kanan Khimji, Director, Khimji



Ramdas, said: "We are proud to bring SPAR's global retail standards to the people of Al Amerat. This store reflects our commitment to value pricing, local relevance

and premium quality. Health and nutrition remain our top priorities, and we are dedicated to adding value to the communities we serve through outstanding service and excellent product offerings."

Moosapeta Sridhar, CEO of SPAR Oman, added: "SPAR Oman has stayed true to its values of freshness, choice and value, complemented by superior customer service. The first SPAR store in Al Amerat is designed to deliver value-for-money buys and everyday essentials. Our aim is to uphold SPAR's image as the neighbourhood-value store, ensuring proximity and convenience

for every customer."

The opening of SPAR Al Amerat marks another milestone in SPAR's growth journey, reaffirming its position as a trusted name in grocery retail across the Sultanate of Oman. The outlet is committed to offering exceptional customer service in a friendly environment. Trained staff are "There for you" to ensure a friendly, comfortable shopping experience.

For added convenience, the store is open daily from 6 am to 2 am, making it easier for customers to shop at their preferred time, emphasising convenience.

SHORTTAKES

OMAN’S REAL ESTATE TRADING HITS RO 3.38 BN IN 2024



The figures highlight Muscat and Al Batinah North as the most active governorates in real estate sector

MUSCAT: The total value of real estate trading in Oman reached approximately RO 3.38 billion in 2024, according to the annual statistical book issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Muscat Governorate led the market in trading value, recording around RO 1.25 billion, followed by Al Batinah North Governorate with RO 877.8 million, Al Dakhiliyah with RO 380.7 million and Al Batinah South with RO 359.4 million. Dhofar Governorate recorded RO 216.7 million, Al Sharqiyah South RO 74.4 million and Al Dhahirah RO 72.5 million. Al Sharqiyah North registered RO 66.5 million, Al Buraimi RO 49.6 million, Al Wusta RO 15.7 million and Musandam RO 12.1 million.

In terms of building activity, total building permits — including both new and renewed — reached 36,517 in 2024, marking a decrease of 16.4 per cent compared to 2023, which recorded 43,701 permits.

Al Batinah North Governorate accounted for the largest share with 6,664 permits, followed by Al Batinah South (6,478), Muscat (6,236), Al Dakhiliyah (5,313), Al Sharqiyah North (2,853), Al Sharqiyah South (2,793), Dhofar (2,610), Al Dhahirah (2,072), Al Buraimi (609), Musandam (558) and Al Wusta (331).

Meanwhile, building completion certificates increased significantly by 41 per cent, reaching 23,743 in 2024 compared to 16,834 in 2023. Al Batinah North again led with 5,458 certificates, followed by Al Batinah South (4,289), Muscat (3,548), Al Dakhiliyah (3,142), Al Sharqiyah North (1,787), Al Sharqiyah South (1,774), Al Dhahirah (1,447), Dhofar (1,430), Al Buraimi (441), Musandam (279) and Al Wusta (148).

Residential permits made up the largest share of building permits, totalling 28,789, followed by agricultural permits (2,361), combined residential and commercial permits (1,903), and governmental permits (1,636).

Additionally, 971 industrial permits, 474 commercial permits, 224 permits for other uses, 87 tourist permits, 56 permits for places of worship, and 16 educational permits were issued. — ONA

CREDIT GROWTH CONTINUES AS COMMERCIAL BANK BALANCES RISE

MUSCAT: Conventional commercial banks in Oman continued to expand their lending, with the total credit balance granted rising 7.2 per cent during the period from June 2024 to June 2025.

Credit to the private sector grew by 4.8 per cent, reaching RO 21.5 billion by the end of June 2025.

On the investment side, total bank investments in securities rose 1.3 per cent to approximately RO 5.7 billion. Investments in government development bonds increased by 5.1 per cent to RO 2



billion, while investments in foreign securities fell 6 per cent to RO 2.1 billion.

On the liabilities side, total deposits at conventional commercial banks grew 4.7 per cent, reaching RO 25.8 billion. Government deposits surged 9.9 per cent to RO 5.9 billion, whereas public sector deposits declined 7.3 per cent to RO 1.7 billion.

Private sector deposits rose 4 per cent to RO 17.1 billion, accounting for 66.4 per cent of total deposits. — ONA

Musandam set for economic boost with new projects

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 23

MUSANDAM Global Investment Company (MGIC), a publicly listed closed joint-stock company on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), has embarked on a series of projects designed to drive economic diversification and sustainable growth in Musandam Governorate.

According to Abdul Razzaq al Balushi, CEO, Musandam Global has established itself as a key driver of economic and social transformation in Musandam since its founding in 2023.

“With 1,885 shareholders from the Musandam community, MGIC embodies local empowerment and long-term investment impact, reflecting the Butterfly Effect theory, where small, strategic investments generate transformative economic growth,” Al Balushi said. “The company plays a pivotal role in launching strategic projects that drive economic diversification and regional prosperity, particularly in the construction and infrastructure sectors,” he added in an interview with The Business Year, a global business intelligence publisher.

Notably, Musandam Global is participating in the governorate’s first-ever integrated residential neighbourhood project under the Surouh initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

“Our flagship development, Tilal



Musandam Global plays a pivotal role in launching strategic projects that drive economic diversification and regional prosperity in the governorate

Musandam Global is partnering with Polish start-up to pilot the first-ever deployment of its Airborne Wind Energy technology

Al Nakheel (Palm Hills) in Khasab, is a standout project featuring 650 residential units, including detached and semi-detached villas, townhouses and apartments, spread across 650,000 square metres. The development is thoughtfully designed with public facilities and commercial zones to enhance the community experience. The Surouh

initiative reflects Oman’s vision for contemporary urban communities that emphasise citizen well-being, stable living environments, and adaptable planning frameworks,” Al Balushi said.

Additionally, to support the introduction of sustainable energy solutions in the governorate, Musandam Global is partnering with Polish start-up Njord Energy to pilot the first-ever deployment of its Airborne Wind Energy (AWE) technology in the region.

Under a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the two sides will collaborate on a Proof of Concept (PoC) for deploying an Airborne Wind Energy system designed to demonstrate the feasibility and reliability of continuous renewable energy generation in Musandam.

Furthermore, Musandam Global is partnering with leading Turkish investors to establish Musandam Drydock and Marine Industries LLC, catering to ship repair, maintenance and manufacturing services.

“The facility is expected to drive innovation, support Oman’s fisheries sector and strengthen the maritime supply chain, ensuring long-term economic benefits for the country. The project aligns with Oman Vision 2040, aiming to bolster logistics, infrastructure and maritime capabilities, while reinforcing Musandam’s strategic role in international trade and shipbuilding excellence,” the CEO said.

MSX Main Index rises for ninth week amid sectoral sell-offs

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange’s (MSX) main index gained 30 points last week, closing at 4,960 points and marking its ninth consecutive week of growth. Despite this, sectoral indices declined due to increased selling by individual investors.

The industrial sector recorded the steepest losses, falling 79 points, followed by the services sector (-25 points), the Shariah index (-6 points to 470 points) and the financial sector (-4 points, closing at 8,167 points).

Overall market activity showed

mixed trends. Market capitalisation rose to RO 29.65 billion, a weekly gain of RO 42.8 million, while trading value increased 3.1 per cent to exceed RO 125 million. However, the number of executed transactions dropped 25.5 per cent, from 13,709 to 10,210.

Bank Sohar International dominated investor attention, with trades worth RO 32.1 million, representing 25.6 per cent of total trading value. OQ Basic Industries followed with RO 22 million, while Bank Muscat accounted for RO 19.1 million (15.3 per cent).



Overall market activity showed mixed trends.

Individual investors leaned towards selling, capturing recent gains, with sales making up 24 per

cent of total trading value versus purchases of 19.3 per cent.

As a result, 44 securities declined in price, 21 rose and 27 remained unchanged.

Top gainers included Muscat Thread Mills (+8.3 per cent to 195 baisas), Oman Finance Bonds (+5.6 per cent to 75 baisas), the 68th issue of Government Development Bonds (+5.2 per cent), Bank Sohar International (+4.3 per cent to 144 baisas), and Ominvest Mandatorily Convertible Bonds (+3.8 per cent to 82 baisas).

On the losing side, Oman Qatar

Insurance fell 9.6 per cent to 177 baisas, Sembcorp Salalah dropped 7.2 per cent to 167 baisas and Oman Fisheries declined 6.9 per cent to 27 baisas.

In corporate news, Abraj Energy Services announced a five-year extension for the operating contracts of four drilling rigs from Occidental Oman, through August 2030, valued at RO 85 million.

The move is seen as a step towards strengthening financial sustainability and supporting growth in the energy services sector. — ONA

NEW TRUMP DEAL

US to take 10 per cent equity stake in Intel



President Donald Trump said the US would take a 10-per cent stake in Intel under a deal with the struggling chipmaker that converts government grants into an equity share, the latest extraordinary intervention by the White House in corporate America.

The deal puts Trump on better terms with Intel CEO Lip-Bu Tan, after the president recently said the CEO should step down due to conflicts of interest. — Reuters

BIDDERS FOR COSTA

Coca-Cola exploring sale of Costa Coffee



US soft drinks company Coca-Cola is working with investment bank Lazard to review options, including a potential sale, of British coffee chain Costa, which it acquired in 2018 for over \$5 billion, Sky News reported. Coca-Cola, Costa and Lazard did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Atlanta-headquartered Coca-Cola has held initial talks with a small number of potential bidders for Costa. — Reuters

FED RATE CUT LIKELY

Wall Street’s indexes close higher



Wall Street’s main indexes ended higher on Friday, with the blue-chip Dow hitting a record closing high, as investors piled into stocks after US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell hinted at a near-term interest-rate cut during his Jackson Hole Symposium speech. His comments paved the way for a potential rate cut at the Fed’s September 16-17 meeting, although Powell stressed the importance of jobs and inflation data due before then. — Reuters

OPINION

Localisation of agro-food industries in Oman



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

AGRICULTURE in Oman is more than production; it is about safeguarding food security, sustaining rural families, celebrating cultural know-how and countering shifting climates. With finite land and dwindling water, the nation draws on centuries-old palm-studded oases and desert-edge farms, mastering dates and citrus, and then augments this heritage with greenhouses, high-tech greenhouses, affordable dairy and a rising aquaculture industry.

Over the past decade, Oman has invested in a 360-degree food pipeline, knitting mills, hatcheries, dairy parlours, dates refinements and chilled-seafood hubs into an ecosystem that cuts down on outside essentials, lifts the economy and gears output to global-standard identities.

Arable expansion is no longer the operating question; the solution kit is far more sophisticated: (i) laser-guided water resource finesse; (ii) high-density greenhouses sheltered from desert extremes; (iii) an unbroken, hygienic, chilled journey from harvest to home and table; (iv) the transformation of dates, yoghurt and farmed shrimp from primary ingredients into branded, profit-strengthening signatures; (v) an inland transport network that threads past sandy ridges and through looming mountains, knitting hinterland farmsteads to central logistics hubs and to the commercial arteries of the Gulf and beyond.

Policy Architecture: Vision 2040 and Food-Security Platforms

Oman Vision 2040 places food and water security among its strategic priorities, calling for efficient resource use.

Recommendations

A) Water and Climate Resilience

1. Deploy basin-scale smart metering complemented by basin-level, dynamic

water accounting; categorise all use permits according to volumetric ceilings and proportionate recharge goals.

2. Broaden blanket adoption of well-designed deficit irrigation and subsurface drip in tree, palm and nut orchards; evaluate salinity profiles and remediate with gypsum/soil amendments and salt-resilient lines.

3. Pilot synergistic, blended-water systems initially targeting grains and non-leafy animal feed; develop and publish transparent safety protocols.

4. Aflaj modernisation fund to finance canal lining, leakage repairs and telemetry — respects communal governance while introducing sufficient technical resilience.

B) Productivity and Technology

5. Greenhouse acceleration programme: co-finance semi-intensive greenhouses equipped with evaporative cooling, fertigated systems and integrated pest management, bundling power tariff incentives with mandatory efficiency benchmarks.

6. National horticulture genetics initiative: fast-track heat-tolerant cultivars of tomato, cucumber and pepper, leveraging public-private partnerships.

7. Date palm genomics and propagation: enlarge elite cultivar tissue-culture production capacities, map and register mother gardens.

C) Value-Addition and Branding

8. Dates 2.0: create a National Date Quality Mark that incorporates grading, secure packaging and end-to-end traceability.

9. Dairy product diversification: offer financial incentives for production of refined cheeses, lactose-free lines, and fortified protein beverages.

10. Poultry integration and contract farming: develop standardised grower contracts that codify animal welfare.

11. Seafood processing excellence: implement HACCP and BRCGS certification

Vision 2040 not only anoints food and water security as sovereign objectives, but also streams concerted money

upgrades, conduct plant hygiene audit cycles.

D) Feed and Forage Strategy

12. Formulate optimised feed rations incorporating locally produced by-products

13. Forage water-productivity standards: certify farms that hit defined water-per-tonne limits.

E) Quality, Safety and Standards

14. Unified Food Quality Authority dashboard

15. National cold-chain code with temperature-logging for poultry, dairy, and seafood; connect compliance records to retailer contracts.

F) Finance and Market Development

16. Blended finance facility combining development and commercial banks, to finance SME greenhouses.

17. Export acceleration: special task force to secure GCC retail listings, run category pilots and develop e-commerce-ready packaging.

18. Public procurement as market anchor: establish local-content thresholds for schools, hospitals and military contract.

G) Skills, Extension and Data

19. AgTech extension corps: educate a cohort of agronomists and veterinarians in hydroponics, integrated pest management, dairy nutrition and biosecurity; assign them to producer associations.

20. Data commons: release anonymised farm-gate and wholesale prices, water-use data, and yield trends to stabilise markets and inform investor decisions.

H) Governance and Institutional Efficiency

21. Harmonise post-merger governance: confirm authority lines, define investment thresholds and set divestiture clauses for the unified food-and-fisheries enterprise; share an adaptable 36-month project visibility horizon.

22. Create a consolidated permitting portal for greenhouses, aquaculture and value-add plants with statutory exit times; digitise land-lease and water-right processing flows.

OMAN BOLSTERS GOVERNANCE AMID GLOBAL FAILURES



DR NIRANJAN SHETTY

The writer is Asst Prof of Business Management, CBFS

Robust guidelines are vital to monitor performance and achieve success in any system. Corporate governance codes provide the framework for how organisations are directed, monitored and controlled. They set objectives, safeguard stakeholder interests, and build long-term value. Yet their effectiveness depends on how regulators

enforce them and how seriously society views corporate conduct. A recent GlobalData ESG-Governance Factors report highlighted repeated failures that have eroded consumer trust in global corporations. Cases of tax avoidance, inflated executive pay, lobbying and corruption have tarnished reputations and weakened public confidence. The report stressed that governance codes must strengthen decision-making, ensure compliance with law, and uphold moral obligations toward external stakeholders.

PwC’s 2024 survey reinforced these concerns, ranking corporate fraud among the top three most disruptive economic crimes after cybercrime and corruption. Despite rising scandals, company references to governance in reports peaked in 2021 and have since declined, suggesting waning corporate attention to governance at a time of growing need.

Internationally, governance codes issued by the G20/OECD and ICGN have shaped standards, while countries such as the UK, South Africa and Singapore have set benchmarks adopted worldwide. Governance reporting today is a key tool to enhance accountability and prevent fraud.

Oman has kept pace with global standards. The Commercial Companies Law (CCL), issued under Ministerial Decision 146/2021, anchors the country’s corporate governance regime, overseen by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP). For public joint stock companies (SAOGs), updated governance codes were introduced in 2016, covering board responsibilities, internal controls, CSR, auditing and reporting obligations.

Oman keeps spending steady as oil prices soften

OMAN'S mid-year fiscal snapshot tells a simple story with important implications: in a world of cooling oil prices and uneven global growth, the government is keeping its priorities straight — protecting people, paying its bills on time and pressing ahead with development projects that underpin Vision 2040. That mix of prudence and purpose deserves support.

By the end of Q2 2025, the general budget recorded a modest deficit of RO 259 million as public revenue reached RO 5.839 billion against spending of RO 6.098 billion. Hydrocarbon receipts softened as the realised oil price averaged \$75 per barrel and production averaged 988,000 barrels per day. In short, revenues dipped 6 per cent year-on-year, while spending rose 5 per cent — and yet the policy signals are reassuring.

Where did the money go? Precisely where most citizens would expect in a tightening cycle: social sectors and basic services. By mid-year, RO 3.122 billion had been channelled into security and social welfare (52 per cent), education (21 per cent), health (19 per cent) and housing (8 per cent). This is not rhetorical prioritisation; it is budgetary fact, and it aligns with Vision 2040’s human-capital pillar.

Crucially, the state did not retreat from growth-enabling investment. Development expenditure by ministries and government units reached RO 688 million by Q2 — already 76 per cent of the RO 900 million allocated for the full year — reflecting an accelerated pace of ongoing projects.

The second pillar of confidence is liquidity support to the real



Development expenditure by ministries and government units reached RO 688 million by Q2



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The writer is the head of business and politics section at Oman Observer

Slashing development would be short-termism and preserving essential investment while keeping debt stable and prioritising social sectors is the more responsible path

economy. The Ministry of Finance reports more than RO 749 million paid to private-sector suppliers by the end of Q2, with fully documented dues settled within an average of five working days.

Third, debt management remains disciplined. Public debt stood at RO 14.1 billion at the end of Q2, down from RO 14.4 billion a year earlier, after repayments of outstanding obligations.

What about subsidies — the most sensitive line item when households feel price pressures? The evidence points to a calibrated, citizen-first approach. Allocations by mid-year included RO 339 million to the electricity sector, RO 289 million to the Social Protection System, RO 44 million for oil products and RO 111 million for water and wastewater. The strategy is not blanket largesse; it is targeted cushioning to manage volatility and protect the most vulnerable while maintaining incentives for efficiency. That balance — compassion with constraints — should be encouraged, not politicised.

There are also signs that diversification is slowly but steadily working. Current (non-hydrocarbon) revenue ticked up 2 per cent year-on-year to RO 1.928 billion, even as oil and gas receipts cooled. Meanwhile, GDP at constant prices rose 2.5 per cent year-on-year in Q1 2025. These are incremental gains, not a transformation — but they are moving in the right direction, and they validate a policy mix that resists panic and backs productivity.

What should policymakers double down on in H2?

First, keep the subsidy architecture targeted and data-driven. As electricity and water demands grow with population and industry, gradual stabilisation paired with smart meters and consumption bands will protect households while nudging efficiency.

Second, sustain the “five-day” payment discipline as a non-negotiable KPI. If anything, expand e-invoicing and supplier portals so SMEs see status in real time.

Third, use the fast pace of development execution to lock in productivity: prioritise logistics links, utility upgrades, digital infrastructure and human-capital projects with high multiplier effects.

Fourth, broaden the base of non-oil revenue without burdening growth sectors. The quiet 2 per cent rise in current revenue is welcome; the next leg should come from compliance, digital tax administration and service-fee rationalisation, not blunt increases that risk competitiveness.

Finally, communicate the medium-term fiscal track clearly. Markets, businesses and families plan better when they understand the glidepath for deficits, debt, and development outlays under different oil scenarios.

BUSINESS

DAMASCUS: Syria will issue new banknotes, removing two zeros from its currency in an attempt to restore public confidence in the severely devalued pound, according to seven sources familiar with the matter and documents reviewed by Reuters.

The step is intended to strengthen the Syrian pound after its purchasing power collapsed to record lows following a 14-year conflict that ended with President Bashar al Assad's ouster in December.

Confirming the move, Syria's Central Bank Governor Abdelkader Husrieh said on Friday the revaluation was a strategic pillar of fiscal and monetary reforms.

"We have formed committees with public and private banks and experts from the central bank to determine the requirements for changes" in the currency, he told Saudi state-owned broadcaster Al Arabiya, describing the new currency as a "necessity".

SYRIA TO REVALUE CURRENCY, DROPPING TWO ZEROS IN BID FOR STABILITY



Syria to issue new banknotes in December, sources say

He said a time frame to introduce the new currency was still "under review".

The Syrian pound has lost more than 99 per cent of its value since war erupted in 2011, with the exchange rate now at around 10,000 pounds to the US dollar, compared to 50 before the war.

The sharp depreciation has made daily transactions and money transfers increasingly difficult.

Families usually pay for weekly grocery runs from black plastic bags holding at least half a kilogramme of 5,000-pound notes, currently the highest denomination.

In an attempt to ease transactions and improve monetary stability, Syria's central bank informed private banks in mid-August that it intended to issue new currency by 'removing zeros', according to a document seen by Reuters.

Reuters spoke to five commercial bankers, one central bank source and one Syrian economic official who said the central bank had informed them that two zeros would be removed. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a decision that had not yet been made public.

Meetings on the currency overhaul have been chaired by Central Bank Deputy Governor Mukhlis al Nazer, according to the commercial bankers who attended the meetings. — Reuters

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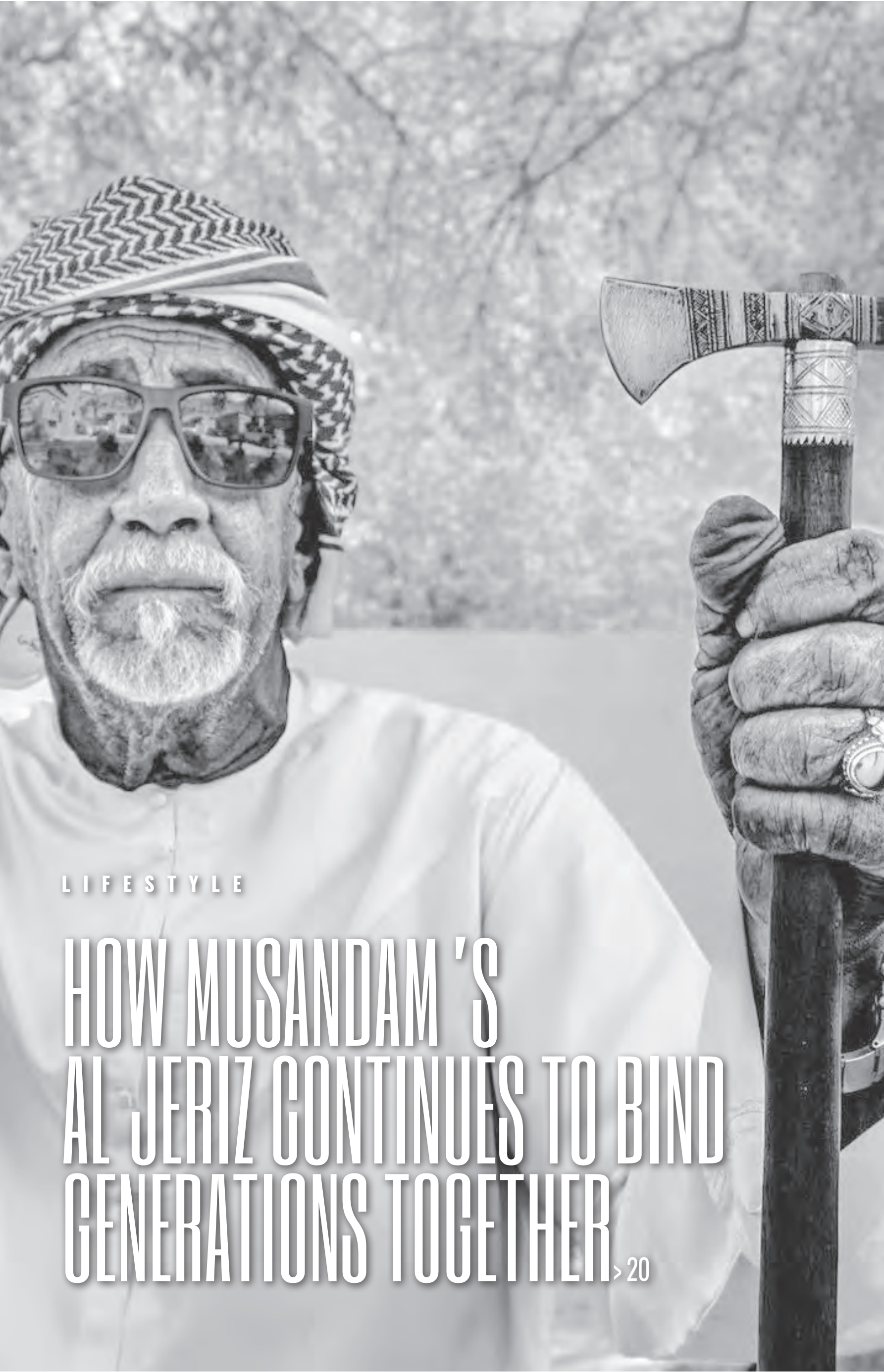
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ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

HOW MUSANDAM 'S AL JERIZ CONTINUES TO BIND GENERATIONS TOGETHER

> 20

GASTRONOMY

At the Alaska Summit, an unlikely local dish gets a cameo



IN THE END, the high-stakes summit meeting of President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, proved notably short on specifics. But one tiny detail caught the eye of many Alaskans: a lunch menu featuring a humble, nostalgic local dish called halibut Olympia.

“It has the vibe of being homey and comforting and mildly retro, but palatable,” said Jeremy Pataky, an editor and co-publisher of Edible Alaska magazine. “I would not characterise it as haute cuisine. To see that on the menu for an extremely high-level state dinner felt a bit surprising.”

Images of the menu were published on Saturday by National Public Radio, which said it was among documents that appeared to have been created by the American staff and accidentally left on a hotel printer. The menu included a green salad, a “duet” of filet mignon and halibut Olympia, and crème brûlée.

Sadly, halibut Olympia did not get its Mount Olympus moment. The summit ended early on Friday, and lunch was cancelled.

But its appearance on the menu prompted some head-scratching. “In our culinary Venn diagram of what’s possible to harvest at sea between Alaska and Russia, I mean certainly we have halibut, so there’s that,” Pataky said.

Though the seafood dish is eaten elsewhere and possibly named for a town in Washington state, Alaskans feel a keen sense of ownership about it, and there are even regional variations. In general, it is prepared with fish generously covered in a mayonnaise-based sauce, sprinkled with cracker crumbs and baked atop a bed of sautéed onions.

Versions of it have appeared in the state’s community cookbooks from at least as far back as the late 1950s, many calling specifically for Best Foods mayonnaise. Some who grew up in Alaska have negative memories of the once-common weeknight dish, comparing it to tuna casserole.

“Freezer-burned, squeaky halibut, coated in mayonnaise and bread crumbs and sometimes bacon,” recalled chef Beau Schooler, of In Bocca al Lupo in Juneau.

At the close of the last century in Alaska, halibut were large and abundant, often caught by sport fishermen, portioned, frozen and served in regular rotation over the winter until people grew tired of them. In recent decades, Alaskans’ attitudes towards the fish have changed. Halibut have grown smaller on average, less plentiful and much more expensive, at times costing up to \$40 a pound. — NYT

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



HERITAGE

A man from Douar Amziri in the rural commune of Tilougguite in Morocco’s Beni Mellal-Khenifra region communicates using a whistled language. — AFP



FILM

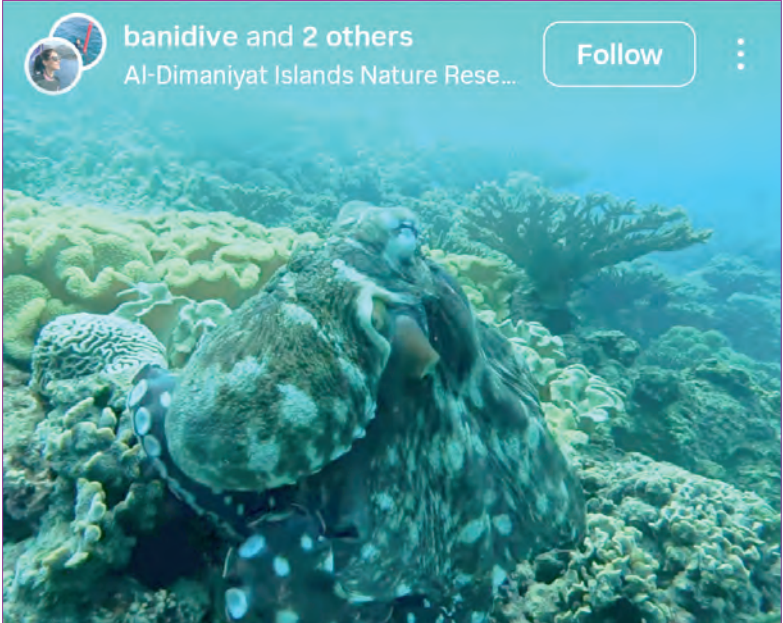
Australian actress Samara Weaving (L) and US actor Karl Glusman attend a launch event and special screening of 20th Century Studios’ “Eenie Meanie” at the Aero Theatre in California. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Two women sell bread on the market of the Lentilleres free zone, a 9-hectare green space consisting of vegetable gardens and disparate dwelling in France. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Fossil shows a sharp-toothed mammal thrived among dinosaurs



AROUND 145 million years ago, the beach in what is today Dorset, England, was covered in a lagoon teeming with dinosaurs, pterosaurs, crocodiles and turtles. Making its way among all these beasts was a small puff of fur with excruciatingly sharp teeth. Scientists last month described the prehistoric mammal in The Proceedings of the Geologists’ Association. They named it Novaculadon mirabilis, from novacula, the Latin word for razor. “The premolars form quite a sharp cutting edge,” said Steven Sweetman, a palaeontologist in England and an author of the paper. The species was probably omnivorous, with teeth designed for processing vegetation but also possibly meat. The mouse-size Novaculadon came from an order of mammals called multituberculates, named for the round “tubercles,” or outgrowths on their teeth. They were among the most successful groups of ancient mammals yet discovered, living alongside dinosaurs during the Mesozoic era. Though unrelated to mice and rats, they probably filled

a similar role as a food source for larger predators while also dispersing seeds and controlling insects. The Novaculadon specimen was found in a rock on the Dorset beach. Its full jawbone was found with the majority of its teeth intact, including a robust incisor and premolars, though it lacked the molars. The fossil was so complete that researchers knew almost immediately they had found something new. The jawbone was part of a skeleton of an animal that most likely died nearby and hadn’t been damaged in transport by rivers or other bodies of water. The Novaculadon was probably doing things similar to the activities of the modern brown rat. The finding demonstrates how these mammals forged a niche that allowed for their survival well past the dinosaur age. “This wasn’t some meek, pathetic creature — it was an animal that was well adapted to its particular lifestyle,” said Steve Brusatte, a vertebrate palaeontologist who was not involved in the study. — SARA NOVAK / NYT



Tall ships sail into Amsterdam for giant maritime festival



TALL SHIPS from around the world paraded up the North Sea Canal into Amsterdam with crews from Peru, Uruguay, Germany and France waving from their decks as crowds cheered along the banks. The spectacle launched Amsterdam’s five-day maritime festival, a celebration of ships, sailors and the city’s seafaring past that is expected to draw between 2.3 and 2.5 million visitors. The Sail-in Parade is the most challenging moment of the festival, harbour master Milembé Mateyo said. “There’s a lot of press, there are an extreme amount of boats who want to see it, a lot of people in high places who want to be there, so that is the most (challenging),” he said. “Once that is safely over, I can finally sleep and enjoy the rest of the festival.” The Sail Amsterdam festival - now in its 10th edition - is part of the city’s 750th anniversary celebrations. This year, it will feature around 50

tall ships and 700 historic vessels. Sail Amsterdam chairman Arie Jan de Waard said this year’s theme for the event was “United by Waves”, chosen in response to global tensions. “It’s important that we connect through the water and through the cultures on the ships and the crews who gather here in Amsterdam,” he said. “I think that’s very, very important.” - THOUSANDS OF SPECTATORS - The parade began in IJmuiden on the North Sea coast, where the first ships passed through the giant sea locks shortly after 10:00 am before making the 25-kilometre (15.5-mile) journey inland. The flotilla, stretching around 10 kilometres, included naval training vessels, steamships, sailing heritage craft and a swarm of recreational boats that joined the procession. Thousands of spectators lined the canal from the locks to the IJ harbour behind Amsterdam’s Central Station, where the tall ships

were greeted with cannon salutes and music. Families perched on camper vans, schoolchildren leaned over barriers and pensioners waved flags as crews shouted greetings from the rigging. The event was first organised in 1975 to celebrate Amsterdam’s 700th birthday. It has been held every five years since then, except for in 2020, when it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. That makes this year’s event the first in a decade. Over the coming days visitors will be able to board the tall ships, watch a parade of hundreds of international crew members through the city centre and attend concerts and receptions along the waterfront. On Sunday, the vessels will sail out to sea in a second grand parade. Among the lighter traditions is the piramide, where locals float home-made rafts cobbled together from surfboards, chairs or anything else that drifts. Few make it to the finish, but the point is spectacle rather than seamanship. — AFP

FEATURES



BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY AWF AL SHEHHI

AS OMANI men assemble quietly in a rugged mountain village to celebrate a momentous occasion, the air is filled with the rhythmic sounds of poetry and song, but what truly captures the eye is the striking presence of the men from Al Shehhi tribe. Among them, each carries Al Jeriz — a distinctive walking stick that immediately sets them apart. Unlike the simple canes of other tribes, theirs are elaborately carved, with metal heads engraved with symbols and geometric patterns that tell stories of resilience and identity. These sticks are not just utilitarian objects; they are revered cultural symbols, worn with pride and purpose.



In Musandam's dramatic landscapes — where cliffs rise sharply from the sea and wind whispers through mountain passes — Al Jeriz holds a storied place in daily life and ritual. Crafted from native woods like sidr or wild olive, each stick begins its life as a carefully chosen branch. Artisans spend months drying and smoothing the wood before adding intricate carvings known as “sunbursts”, unique to each piece. The detailed engravings and often metal adornments reflect a tradition rooted in patience, craftsmanship and a deep connection to the land. Historically, Al Jeriz served a practical role — used to assist with mountain treks, as a weapon for defence, or as a symbol of status during ceremonies. Today, it is a cherished emblem of heritage, one that proudly accompanies tribal gatherings, folk performances and national celebrations. During the traditional “Nadba”, the sticks are struck against the ground in unison — becoming instruments of cultural expression that echo through mountain valleys. The importance of Al Jeriz extends beyond the battle cries of old. For generations, it has been handed down from elders to the youth, symbolising continuity and identity.

Recognising its significance, the government established a dedicated training centre in Khasab in 2005. The centre now offers courses to young Omanis, passing on the skills of artisanship and ensuring that this tradition does not fade into obscurity. Graduates of the programme receive certification, enabling them to continue producing these remarkable sticks and further preserving their cultural heritage. This effort is complemented by a growing trend among the younger generation. Increasingly, young Omanis, especially those reaching a certain age or participating in significant events, incorporate Al Jeriz into their traditional dress. During weddings, festivals and national celebrations, they wear the sticks alongside the Omani khanjar and belt as symbols of pride and cultural continuity. Ensuring that this tradition remains alive, young men carry these engraved sticks as a sign of respect for their elders, and as a reminder of who they are — members of a proud, resilient community. Why are such traditions so vital? In a rapidly



changing world, they serve as anchors — preserving the stories, values and artistry of generations long gone. Al Jeriz embodies more than craftsmanship; it embodies resilience, social cohesion and cultural identity. As the younger generation carries the torch, meticulously maintaining and evolving these traditions, Oman's rich heritage remains vibrant and relevant. In Musandam's public squares and parks, models of Al Jeriz stand as silent guardians of history, beckoning passersby to remember a time when simple sticks carried profound meaning — symbolising endurance, artistry, and an unbreakable bond between past and future. As the tribe's proud members gather, their unique walking sticks serve as a potent reminder: in tradition lies the strength to endure through ages, and in their hands, that strength continues to flourish.