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INBRIEF

HM'S GREETINGS TO PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Asif Ali Zardari of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of continued progress, development and stability for Pakistan under the leadership of President Asif. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further growth in a manner that serves mutual interests.

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR



HH Sayyid Shihab thanked the ambassador for his efforts in boosting bilateral relations.

*At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received at his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Khaled Mohamed Abdel Halim Radi, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. HH Sayyid Shihab thanked the ambassador for his efforts in boosting bilateral relations, wishing him continued success. On his turn, the ambassador expressed his heartfelt appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to him during his tenure in Oman. He wished His Majesty good health and a long life and the Sultanate of Oman further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — **ONA***

HYDROM LAUNCHES GREEN HYDROGEN INCENTIVES

Hydrom, the orchestrator of Oman's national green hydrogen strategy, has announced new fiscal incentives designed to enhance the commercial viability of projects that will be awarded through the ongoing third green hydrogen auction round. The measures represent a targeted response to a market sounding exercise conducted by Hydrom earlier this year and evolving global market dynamics, reaffirming the country's position as one of the world's most structured and investment-ready hydrogen ecosystems.

DETAILS ON P13

Oman reaffirms support for maritime safety

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman has affirmed its full support for the efforts of the UN Security Council and international initiatives aimed at addressing maritime challenges and threats, calling for enhanced regional and international cooperation and sustained coordination to uphold navigation safety and maritime security.

This came during Oman's address delivered by First Secretary HH Sayyid Shihab bin Harib al Said, member of Oman's Permanent Delegation to the United Nations in New York, at the Security Council's high-level session titled "Maritime Security: Prevention, Innovation and International Cooperation to Address Emerging Challenges." The session was held as part of discussions on the agenda item "Maintenance of International Peace and Security."

Oman emphasised the importance it places on maritime security, given its natural resources, geographical factors and its strategic location overlooking the Strait of Hormuz — a vital passage for international trade, maritime navigation and global seaborne oil exports.

Oman's statement highlighted national efforts to enhance maritime navigation safety and security, including initiatives that led to a ceasefire agreement between the United States of America and the relevant authorities in Yemen, ensuring freedom of navigation and the uninterrupted flow of international commercial shipping in the Red Sea. — **ONA**

Israel pounds Gaza killing 123 in last 24 hours

ISRAEL'S military pounded Gaza City on Wednesday prior to a planned takeover, with another 123 people killed in the last day according to the Gaza health ministry, while Hamas held further talks with Egyptian mediators.

The 24-hour death toll was the worst in a week and added to the massive fatalities from the nearly two-year war that has shattered the enclave housing more than 2 million Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated an idea - also floated by US President Donald Trump - that Palestinians should simply leave.

"They're not being pushed out, they'll be allowed to exit," he told Israeli television channel i24NEWS. "All those who are concerned for the Palestinians and say they want to help the Palestinians should open their gates and stop lecturing us."

Arabs and many world leaders are aghast at the idea of displacing the Gaza population, which Palestinians say would be like another "Nakba" (catastrophe) when hundreds of thousands fled or were forced out during the 1948 war.

Israel's planned re-seizure of Gaza City — which it took in the early days of the war before withdrawing — is probably weeks away, officials say. That means a ceasefire is still possible though talks have been floundering and conflict still rages.

Israeli planes and tanks bombed eastern areas of Gaza City heavily, residents said, with many homes destroyed in the Zeitoun and Shejaia neighbourhoods overnight. Al Ahli hospital said 12 people were killed in an air strike on a home in Zeitoun. Tanks also destroyed several houses in the east of Khan Yunis in south Gaza, while in the centre, Israeli gunfire killed nine aid-seekers in two separate incidents, Palestinian medics said. Israel's military did not comment.

Eight more people, including three children, have died of starvation and malnutrition in Gaza in the past 24 hours.



Palestinians gather to receive cooked meals from a food distribution centre in Gaza City on Wednesday. — ***AFP***

Egyptian security sources said the talks would also discuss the possibility of a comprehensive ceasefire that would see Hamas relinquish governance in Gaza

Hamas chief negotiator Khalil al Hayya's meetings with Egyptian officials in Cairo on Wednesday were to focus on stopping the war, delivering aid and "ending the suffering of our people in Gaza," Hamas official Taher al Nono said in a statement.

Egyptian security sources said the talks would also discuss the possibility of a comprehensive ceasefire that would see Hamas relinquish governance in Gaza and concede its weapons.

SEE ALSO P6

Trump-Putin summit to take place on US military base

WASHINGTON: The summit between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin will be held at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska, a White House official said on Wednesday.

The two leaders will meet on Friday to discuss an end to the more than three-year war in Ukraine, in what will be their first standalone summit since a 2018 meeting in Helsinki.

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson - located near Alaska state capital Anchorage - is made up of the Elmendorf Air Force base and the Army's Fort Richardson, which were combined in 2010.

The base is the headquarters for entities including Alaska Command - responsible for US forces in the state - as well as the Alaskan NORAD Region, which helps provide aerospace control and warning.

The US military regularly conducts intercepts of Russian aircraft that venture near American airspace in Alaska, contacting Moscow's planes visually or electronically.



Traditional Russian wooden nesting dolls depicting Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump at a gift shop in Moscow. — ***AFP***

Russia launched a full-scale war on Ukraine in February 2022, and Trump has spent the first months of his second term in office trying to broker a peace accord, an effort that has so far failed to yield a breakthrough.

Meanwhile, Trump said on Wednesday he'd had a "very good call" with European leaders including Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky as he prepares for Friday's summit with Putin.

"We had a very good call. He was on the call - President Zelensky was on the call. I would rate it at 10, you know, very, very friendly," he told reporters during an event at Washington's Kennedy Center.

Trump added that he wants to hold a "quick second" meeting with Putin and Zelensky after the Alaska summit. — **Agencies**

SHORT*TAKES*



LIGHT DRIZZLE IN DHOFAR AFTER DAYS OF DRY WEATHER

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 13

Parts of the Wilayats of Dhalkout, Salalah and Taqah in Dhofar Governorate witnessed light drizzle on Wednesday, particularly in northern areas and on the mountain slopes, marking the return of mild khareef conditions after several days of dry weather.

Meteorological researcher Zaher al Shaqsi said the weather reflects the climatic diversity experienced in the governorate during the khareef season. He noted that historical climate records document exceptional events, most notably in 1949 and 1950, when the khareef season disappeared entirely from western Dhofar for two consecutive years, forcing residents at the time to relocate to the central and eastern parts of the governorate.

Al Shaqsi explained that this period, locally known as 'Aunot Akheet' or 'The Year of Drought', was among the most challenging in the history of western Dhofar due to severe aridity. He stressed that climatic patterns show the khareef season can, in certain years, exceed, fall short of, or meet its average levels, depending on the region and prevailing weather conditions.

This climatic legacy, he added, underlines the importance of continued study and monitoring to better understand the factors affecting the sustainability of the khareef season, which remains a vital environmental and tourism asset for Dhofar Governorate.

ARAB FORUM FOR SCOUT CONCLUDES



The forum saw the participation of delegations from 12 Arab and Gulf countries. ***— ONA***

SALALAH: *The Second Arab Forum for Scout and Guide Pioneers, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman in Dhofar Governorate, concluded on Wednesday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. The forum saw the participation of delegations from 12 Arab and Gulf countries, members of the Arab Union for Scout and Guide Pioneers, alongside the Sultanate of Oman. These included Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Tunisia, Sudan, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Jordan.*

Mohammed bin Jassim al Alawi from the Kingdom of Bahrain delivered a speech on behalf of the Arab Parliamentary Scout Union, emphasising that the cooperation and solidarity witnessed during the forum demonstrate that the Scout and Guide movement has been — and will remain — a platform for promoting noble values. ***— ONA***

WAKAN VILLAGE ATTRACTS OVER 27,000 VISITORS

NAKHAL: *Wakan Village in the Wilayat of Nakhal, Al Batinah South Governorate, welcomed 27,428 visitors from January to July 2025, compared to 24,093 visitors during the same period in 2024, according to official statistics.*

Dr Al Mutasim bin Nasser al Hilali, Director of Heritage and Tourism in Al Batinah South Governorate, said that the village's diverse tourist attractions have established it as a year-round sustainable destination. He noted that summer tourism peaks due to the village's mild climate and seasonal fruit harvests, which begin with apricots in June, followed by peaches, then figs and pomegranates in July, and three varieties of local grapes (Al Maqdmani, Al Malasi and sour grapes) in August. The recent opening of "View Wakan" cafe, the village's third cafe, has further boosted visitor numbers, especially on weekends and official holidays. ***— ONA***



The village offers unique experiences such as mountain stays and hiking along ancient trails. ***— ONA***

AI can boost film-making among Omani youth

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

SEVENTY-five young Omanis recently gained firsthand experience using Artificial Intelligence in film-making, sparking their creativity and desire to produce advanced films on par with international movies.

An exclusive workshop on AI in cinema-making was held as part of the Oman Film Society's (OFS) efforts to empower Omani youth and cultivate a new generation of creative film-makers in collaboration with the Youth Centre.

Titled 'Experience the Skill of Film-making with Artificial Intelligence', the specialised workshop was led by trainer Abdulaziz al Abri and took place across three governorates: Muscat, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Batinah North over nine days, running from July 20 to August 14.

Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society, stated in an interview with the Observer that the ambitious project aimed to reach passionate film-makers.

"Through this workshop, we aim to connect with as many young people interested in film-making as possible and shape a generation of Omani film-makers equipped with modern film-making techniques," he said.



An exclusive workshop on AI in cinema-making was held as part of the Oman Film Society's efforts to empower Omani youth.

The workshop, which began in Muscat and travelled through Al Sharqiyah North before concluding in Suhar, Al Batinah North, attracted over 75 male and female students from across Oman. The training programme covered various topics, including scriptwriting principles and using AI tools to produce footage. The participants completed five practical projects over three intensive days to showcase their newly acquired skills.

Trainer Abdulaziz al Abri emphasised the promising level of creativity displayed by Omani youth during the workshop. He noted the participants' enthusiasm for interacting with AI tools and technologies and the impressive results achieved in a short time frame.

"This experience, conducted in three governorates, served as a platform for unleashing the talents and ambitions of young individuals, and the outcomes achieved in just nine days are a source of pride and optimism," he said.

Al Abri stressed the importance of continuing such training initiatives, highlighting that integrating AI into cinematic work is no longer a luxury but a necessity to keep pace with the global digital transformation in the industry.

10,000 benefit from early retinopathy screening

MUSCAT: The National Programme for Early Detection of Diabetic Retinopathy using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has successfully screened over 10,000 eligible patients. This achievement reflects the programme's rapid implementation and its impact on preventing retinopathy complications and protecting diabetic patients from the risk of vision loss.

The AI-powered national screening programme has expanded its services to 25 health centres across all governorates. This expansion is part of national efforts to enhance ophthalmology services, leverage modern technologies, and utilise AI to support early diagnosis and ensure timely access to screening and treatment.



The AI-powered national screening programme has expanded its services to 25 health centres. ***— ONA***

Dr Majid bin Salim al Shaibani, Retina and Intraocular Inflammation Consultant at Al Nahdha Hospital and Operational Director of the National Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme, said: "Since the programme's nationwide launch, we have screened over 10,000 patients in less than six months, detecting numerous retinopathy cases at early stages before noticeable symptoms appeared." He added that preliminary data indicates a detection rate exceeding 30% of screened cases — a level of effectiveness unattainable before the introduction of AI technologies.

Dr Al Shaibani explained that diabetic retinopathy is a silent disease in its early stages, often diagnosed only after serious complications arise. Early detection enables prompt intervention, whether through close monitoring, laser treatment, or intraocular injections, significantly reducing the risk of progression to advanced stages that may cause permanent blindness. This aligns with global recommendations to prevent diabetes-related blindness.

Regarding referral mechanisms, he noted that the programme is electronically linked to the national health records system (Shifa), allowing detected cases requiring further evaluation or treatment to be directly referred to specialised eye clinics in reference hospitals. Priority is determined based on severity to ensure urgent cases receive timely care. **— ONA**

Wadi Al Jifnain Dam: Providing major protection from floods

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUG 13

Strategically located in the Wilayat of Al Seeb near Sultan Qaboos University, Wadi Al Jifnain Dam is one of the significant water projects by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. It serves the purpose of protecting the area from the risk of flooding.

Wadi Al Jifnain is known for its significant water flow during heavy rains, which can cause damage to surrounding areas.



The dam has many facilities and was constructed using compacted earth.

The ministry has around 200 dams and is actively involved in constructing dams to improve water security and manage flood risks.

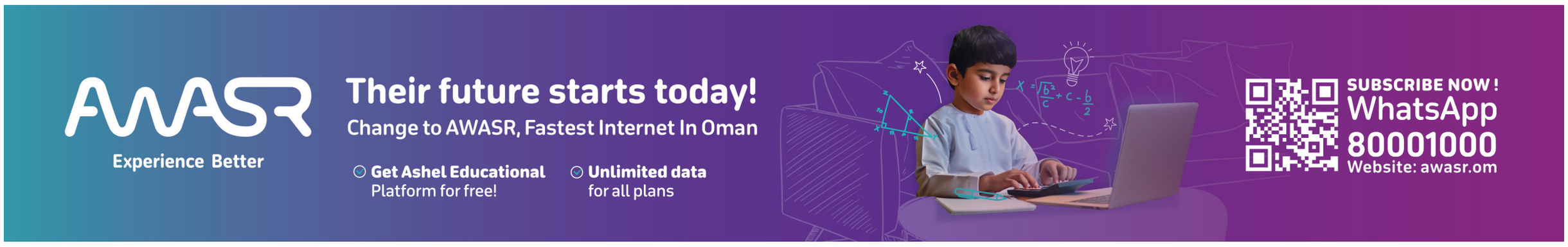
The three main categories of dams are groundwater recharge, surface storage and flood protection, all contributing to water security and flood prevention efforts.

According to Eng Yousef bin Masoud al Mantheri, Director of the Department of Dams at the Ministry, the dam aims to safeguard commercial and residential areas of Al Khoudh, Al Hail and Al Mawaleh in Muscat Governorate.

"This dam is one of the largest in Wadi Al Jifnain. Its storage capacity is approximately 11.5 million cubic metres, representing about 50% of the total storage capacity of the entire system. The dam acts as the final barrier to floodwaters before they reach the sea, protecting the commercial and residential areas of Al Khoudh, Al Hail and Al Mawaleh," explained Al Mantheri while speaking to the Observer.

The project, executed by Strabag Oman and supervised by consultant Sering Engineering Services, aims to intercept and store floodwaters from Wadi Al Jifnain watershed.

Al Mantheri highlighted that following the floods caused by cyclones Gonu and Phet, the construction of this dam will significantly reduce human losses and protect development projects downstream of the dam.



SHORT*TAKES*



During the event, students presented a performance of the Omani folk art. — **ONA**

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL ART WEEK IN CHINA

BEIJING: *Represented by the Ministry of Education, the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the 2025 International Art Week held in the Chinese city of Dunhuang from August 9 to 14 under the theme "Ode to Peace".*

The event brings together artists, youth talents, teachers and intellectuals from different countries of the world. The participants focus on promoting cultural dialogue and innovative arts. They also seek to integrate cultural heritage into educational curricula to foster understanding among nations of the global community.

During the event, students from Salalah Basic Education School for Boys, an educational establishment affiliated to the Unesco in Dhofar Governorate, presented a performance of the Omani folk art of "Al Bar'aa", which has been included on Unesco's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2010 as a unique element of the Sultanate of Oman.

"Al Bar'aa" art simulates the spirit of chivalry, courage, generosity and hospitality for which the people of Dhofar Governorate are famous. — **ONA**

QUALIFIERS FOR QURAN COMPETITION BEGIN IN MADHA

MADHA: *The preliminary qualifiers for the 33rd edition of the Sultan Qaboos Quran Competition commenced on Wednesday at the Sultan Qaboos Mosque in the Wilayat of Madha, Musandam Governorate. Organised by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science of the Diwan of Royal Court, the competition features 26 male and female contestants from Madha and Dibba centres. The competition aims to reinforce the esteemed care for the Holy Quran, encourage youth and talented individuals to memorise it, promote the teachings and ethics of the Quran; and foster a spirit of honourable competition among participants.* — **ONA**

OMAN, SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

NEW YORK: *The Sultanate of Oman and the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis signed a joint statement in New York to establish diplomatic relations, based on cooperation and friendship between the two countries.*

The statement was signed on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman by Ambassador Omar bin Said al Kathiri, Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and on behalf of the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis by Ambassador Mutryce Agatha Williams, Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations. During the signing ceremony at Oman's Permanent Mission to the UN, the Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis conveyed the greetings of Dr Terrance Drew, Prime Minister and Dr Denzil Douglas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis, to the Omani government. She expressed her country's aspiration to elevate bilateral relations between the two nations.



A joint statement was signed in New York to establish diplomatic relations. — **ONA**

On his turn, Ambassador Al Kathiri underlined the Omani government's welcome of this important step, which stems from the attention both governments place on establishing diplomatic relations to lay the foundation for enhanced dialogue and open avenues of cooperation, serving the interests of both countries and their peoples. — **ONA**

Counting screens enhance transparency of projects

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, AUG 13

AT construction sites across the Al Batinah North Governorate, a quiet but powerful change is catching the public's eye with large digital screens counting down the days until a project's completion.

These are not just timers. In fact, they are bold statements of accountability, turning every passerby into a stakeholder.

In a first-of-its-kind government initiative in the region, digital counters at all major public projects were introduced, following the direct vision and instructions of the Governor. The goal is to make progress visible, deadlines undeniable and safety measurable.

Engineer Waleed al Nabhani, the Director of the Projects Department at Al Batinah North Municipaliaty, explained that each display is divided into two distinct sections. "The first shows a live countdown to the expected completion date. When the timer hits zero, the project's status is revealed instantly. If the work is finished on time, the counter confirms success but if not, the display turns red, signalling a missed deadline", he said.

"This is an honest mirror for us as project managers. It challenges our teams to deliver on time while giving the public the right to hold us accountable. It's about credibility, trust and a shared commitment to results", he added.



This is an honest mirror for us as project managers. It challenges our teams to deliver on time while giving the public the right to hold us accountable. It's about credibility, trust and a shared commitment to results

ENGINEER WALEED AL NABHANI



The screens that light up construction sites across the governorate stand as symbols of a new era in public works management.

The first project to feature this technology is the Liwa Entrance Project, a landmark development valued at RO 2.1 million. It includes landscaped green areas, pedestrian and cycling paths, parking spaces and distinctive architectural landmarks, serving as both a gateway and a welcoming statement for the wilayat.

The second section of the display highlights safety performance by showing the number of hours worked without a Lost Time Injury (LTI). This internationally recognised metric underscores the project's compliance with occupational safety standards and its commitment to worker welfare.

The dual display concept blends transparency with quality assurance. It allows citizens to see, not just hear about how well projects are advancing, while also reinforcing a safety first culture.

As these screens light up construction sites across the governorate, they are more than digital devices which stands as symbols of a new era in public works management, one where transparency isn't promised but it's displayed.

Traditional Dhofari cuisine spices up khareef Dhofar Season

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUG 13

Khareef in Dhofar is a complete sensory journey — where the cool, rainy weather, the aroma of fresh greenery and the taste of authentic Omani flavours come together to create unforgettable memories.

Dhofari cuisine is deeply connected to its land and history. It is built around local meats, grains, dairy products and a unique mix of Omani and Indian spices passed down through generations.

During Khareef Dhofar Season, the experience of tasting these flavours becomes even more special against the backdrop of misty mountains and cool breezes.

"The Khareef Dhofar Season draws tourists to try more of our traditional dishes", says Chef Salim al Maashani, who runs a local restaurant in Salalah's Al Haffa Souq. "From slow-cooked Shuwa to tropical fruits, every flavour tells the story of Dhofar". Dhofari Shuwa (Traditional Barbecue) is cooked slowly in an underground oven or over charcoal, offering smoky, tender bites that pair perfectly with the misty, cool weather. Also, there is harees, a comforting wheat-and-meat dish simmered for hours until creamy, while Aseeda — a sweet made from flour, ghee and local honey — warms the soul on rainy evenings.

This is in addition to farfaina (Dried Fish) which is a bold and authentic flavour of the sea, reflecting Dhofar's rich fishing heritage, perfect for visitors seeking a true local experience.



During Khareef, the experience of tasting Dhofari flavours becomes even more special against the backdrop of misty mountains and cool breezes.

Fresh milk, yoghurt and ghee remain a staple in Dhofari households and provide a simple yet authentic taste of the region's pastoral traditions.

No culinary journey in Salalah is complete without Omani Halwa, a delicacy made with saffron, cardamom and rose water, often served warm. Visitors enjoy it alongside traditional Omani coffee (Qahwa), flavoured with cardamom and sometimes saffron, creating a welcoming ritual that reflects Dhofari hospitality.

Tourists often describe these moments — sitting in a traditional majlis, sipping aromatic coffee while tasting the rich, silky halwa — as one of the highlights of their trip.

Khareef brings life to Dhofar's farms, turning the region into a paradise of fresh fruits. Fresh Coconuts, enjoyed straight from the shell, are sold along the scenic roadsides.

"I never forget the taste of fresh coconut water in the middle of the misty hills", says Mariam Mohammed, a frequent visitor from Bahrain. "It's the perfect complement to Salalah's magical weather".

Enjoying local cuisine in Khareef is more than a meal — it's an immersive cultural experience. From trying Shuwa and Harees after a mountain hike, to sipping Omani coffee with halwa in a rain-cooled majlis, every moment connects visitors to Dhofar's soul.

MANAGING CHILDREN'S SCREEN TIME

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 13

As the new school year approaches, parents are increasingly concerned about their children's daily habits, especially those formed during the summer break. One of the most prominent of these habits is the excessive use of mobile phones, tablets, or video games — a behaviour that can negatively affect focus, academic performance and a child's physical and mental wellbeing.

Recent studies confirm that excessive use of electronic devices before bedtime reduces sleep quality in children and affects their ability to wake up early — a crucial factor during school days.

Additionally, sitting for long periods in front of screens limits physical activity, causes vision problems and weakens social interaction skills.

Education experts advise starting early to regulate device usage times, rather than waiting until the first day of school to enforce rules.

Parents can set up a gradual plan at least two weeks before school starts, reducing the time spent on games or videos daily while offering attractive alternatives such as family activities, reading, or sports.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Organising a child's time helps reduce dependency on devices. A fixed daily routine — including set times for waking up, meals, homework and play — gives the child a sense of stability and limits the chaos that might otherwise lead to more screen time.

A common misconception among parents is that reducing device time means depriving a child of fun.

In reality, providing enjoyable alternatives is key. Engaging children in creative activities like drawing or involving them in group sports such as swimming or football helps them release energy and form new friendships.

Psychologist Nouf al Zaabi explained that during the summer break, children's use of electronic devices can double, which is natural due to the absence of a school routine.

"Sometimes, parents even hand over phones to keep children occupied while managing household chores. The problem begins when this pattern continues into the school year, with some children spending over four hours a day in front of screens, directly affecting their focus and sleep", she said.

According to her, the solution is not sudden prohibition but wise time management and setting clear family-wide rules, while encouraging real-life activities that naturally draw the child away from devices. She said that practical steps include removing unhelpful apps and replacing them with educational or purposeful entertainment, which gradually limits long internet sessions.

Setting clear daily screen-time limits helps children adapt to an organised routine that protects them from the risks of overuse. It is also recommended to turn off and keep phones away during homework, even controlling internet access if necessary to maintain focus. When children successfully reduce screen time and engage in physical or mental activities, rewarding them with a small gift or favourite meal can be a powerful motivator.

DECISION MAKING

It is important that children feel part of the decision making process. Nouf suggests having a calm conversation with the child about the reasons for reducing screen time and its effects on sleep and academic performance. When children understand the benefits, they are more likely to commit to the rules.

In addition, parents cannot expect their children to limit phone use while they themselves spend hours on screens. Setting a positive example by managing device time within the family and prioritising face-to-face communication strengthens the child's commitment to change.

When device use is reduced before school starts, parents often notice improved moods, higher physical activity levels and better focus during tasks. Sleep becomes more regular, leading to easier early mornings and a stronger mental readiness for the school day.

THE SOLUTION IS NOT SUDDEN PROHIBITION BUT WISE TIME MANAGEMENT AND SETTING CLEAR FAMILY-WIDE RULES, WHILE ENCOURAGING REAL-LIFE ACTIVITIES THAT NATURALLY DRAW THE CHILD AWAY FROM DEVICES



SHORTTAKES



MILITARY COLLEGE CONTINUES TO WELCOME STUDENTS

MUSCAT: *The Military Technological College (MTC) is continuing to welcome its new batch of female general diploma students.*

These students, who were accepted through the Higher Education Admission Centre of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, are completing the essential admission requirements, which include written exams, medical check-ups and personal interviews.

This year, the college opened admissions for both male and female students in its programmes (without employment). To create a comprehensive educational environment that meets various needs, the college is providing on-campus housing for male students and dedicated transportation for female students.

The initiative reflects the MTC's commitment to supplying the local job market with qualified national talent capable of meeting the demands of national development. In its programmes (without employment), the MTC grants a bachelor's degree.

Students who do not meet the academic requirements can receive an advanced diploma qualification after completing three years of specialised engineering studies.

The academic journey at the college begins with a foundational year that includes courses in English, mathematics, physics and computer science, preparing students for the specialised engineering programmes. ***— ONA***

An integrated destination for Khareef Dhofar Season

TOURISM and entertainment projects are a vital support for Khareef Dhofar Season, monsoon season, as they provide comprehensive destinations that meet the needs of visitors, boost economic and commercial activity; and open up broader horizons for investment and the employment of national talent. These destinations are particularly important during the Khareef Dhofar Season, as they serve as attractions for visitors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

They offer a mix of cultural, recreational and commercial experiences while also encouraging entrepreneurship; and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which positively impacts the local economy and the sustainability of tourism.

Samharam Resort is one such destination for the 2025 Khareef Dhofar Season. It provides integrated facilities and services that combine shopping, dining; and cultural and recreational activities, attracting visitors of all ages. Mohammed bin Ahmed al Hadri, a site supervisor at Samharam Resort, said the resort hosts a consumer exhibition organised by Al Awail Company for the Management and Organisation of International Exhibitions and Festivals. The exhibition features 150 to 160 shops from various Arab and foreign countries, with diverse pavilions to meet visitor needs. Additionally, a handicrafts section includes about 28 shops for SMEs and low-income individuals, supervised by the SME Development Authority (Riyada).

He added that the outdoor area includes a variety of restaurants, cafes and games for both children and adults.

There is also a stage that hosts children's competitions and artistic performances. He noted that the "Rifle" section features cafes, many of which are managed by Omani youth and enjoys a wide turnout from visitors.

Musallam bin Abdulsalam Al Rawas, owner of Sar Events Company, stated that this is the first year the "Rifle" event is being held at the resort, marking its third consecutive year during Khareef Dhofar Season.

He explained that the event includes a large selection of restaurants, a family and youth entertainment area and a stage with Omani and Gulf performances, in addition to hosting talented artists from Oman and other GCC countries.

He added that the event offers various competitions for all ages and annually employs young Omanis who are job seekers and freelancers. He noted that the number of employees this year exceeded 45 young people, with a public turnout that reflects the event's success as a recreational destination during the Khareef season.

Regarding visitor impressions, Sufyan bin Ghassan al Rashdi from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate said Samharam Resort is an outstanding tourist destination for families and visitors. The variety of modern facilities and events creates a joyful atmosphere that enhances the pleasure of the visit.

He emphasised the importance of increasing public facilities in the future to accommodate the large turnout.

Ahmed bin Ali al Saadi from Musandam Governorate explained that his recent visit to Khareef Dhofar Season introduced him to the notable development in tourist and recreational events, with a diversity of programmes and integrated services that make the tourist experience more exceptional. **— ONA**



Integrated facilities and services that combine shopping, dining and recreational activities attract visitors of all ages. ***— ONA***

وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development

رؤية عُمان 2040 OmanVision
نتقدم بثقة Moving Forward with Confidence

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
401/2025	Supplying, providing and preparing feeding meals for residents of the Social Welfare House in Rustaq	Companies specialized in the field of Supply and nutrition services registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with excellent or first or second or third or fourth degree.	Wednesday 20-08-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 28-08-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
402/2025	Providing care services for the elderly at the Social Welfare House in Rustaq and providing general services for the building, including cleaning and gardening	Companies specialized in the field of Cleaning, laundry and pest control services registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree.	Wednesday 20-08-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 28-08-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link **(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)**, On **Thursday 14/08/2025**.
- 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"

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SHORT*TAKES*



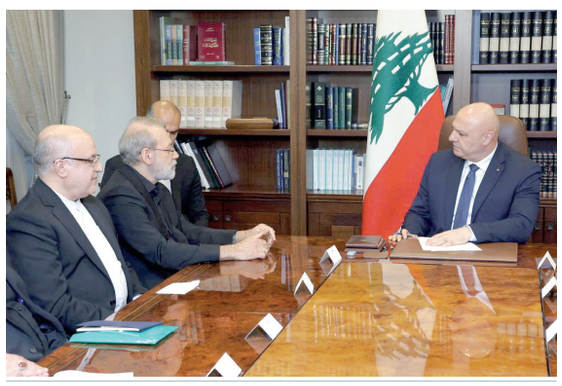
Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan shakes hands with his Syrian counterpart Asaad al Shaibani as they meet in Ankara. ***— Reuters***

ANKARA, DAMASCUS WARN ISRAEL OVER SYRIA ACTION

ANKARA: *Türkiye's foreign minister and his Syrian counterpart on Wednesday warned Israel not to stir up chaos in Syria and demanded an end to all external interventions aimed at destabilising the war-torn country. "Certain actors are bothered by the positive developments in Syria," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said after talks with Syria's Asaad al Shaibani in Ankara.*

"Israel is currently one of the biggest actors in this dark picture," he said of its ongoing military incursions since the overthrow of Syrian strongman Bashar al Assad late last year. "The emergence of chaos in Syria... appears to have become a priority for Israel's own national security," he said. Standing next to him, Al Shaibani also warned against efforts to foster chaos in Syria. "We're facing new challenges that are no less dangerous than those we encountered during the years of war, foremost among them are repeated Israeli threats... through air strikes," he said. Fidan said efforts to destabilise Syria could be clearly seen in the March bloodshed in the coastal Latakia and in the recent deadly violence that gripped the southwestern province of Sweida as well as in the northeast. ***— AFP***

IRAN SECURITY CHIEF VOWS 'SUPPORT' FOR LEBANON



Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani meets with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun (R). ***— Reuters***

BEIRUT: *Iran's top security chief vowed in Lebanon on Wednesday that his government would continue to provide support. Ali Larijani's trip to Lebanon comes after Iran expressed opposition to a government plan to disarm Hezbollah, which before a war with Israel last year was believed to be better armed than the Lebanese military. "If... the Lebanese people are suffering, we in Iran will also feel this pain and we will stand by the dear people of Lebanon in all circumstances," Larijani, the head of the National Security Council, told reporters after landing in Beirut.*

Following his arrival in Beirut, Larijani vowed that his government would continue to provide support, after it expressed opposition to the disarmament plan. "It is forbidden for anyone... to bear arms and to use foreign backing as leverage," Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said. As well as President Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, Larijani also met parliament speaker Nabih Berri.

— AFP

THAI COURT TO RULE THIS MONTH ON CASE SEEKING PM'S DISMISSAL

BANGKOK: *Thailand's Constitutional Court announced on Wednesday that it will rule this month on a case seeking to oust Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra over her handling of a diplomatic spat with Cambodia. A group of conservative senators filed a case accusing Paetongtarn of unprofessional conduct and breaching ministerial ethics during a border row with Cambodia that led to the two neighbours' bloodiest military clashes in decades.*

The Constitutional Court said in a statement that it will deliver its verdict in the case at 3:00 pm (0800 GMT) on August 29. Paetongtarn, daughter of controversial billionaire ex-PM Thaksin Shinawatra, took office less than a year ago when her predecessor was thrown out of office by the same court.

Suspended from her duties by the court last month, the 38-year-old has defended her actions, insisting she acted in the country's interests. In a leaked phone recording, Paetongtarn addressed Cambodian statesman Hun Sen as "uncle" during a call about the tensions and referred to a Thai military commander as her "opponent".

Conservative lawmakers allege she breached constitutional provisions requiring "evident integrity" and "ethical standards" among ministers.

If the verdict goes against her, Paetongtarn would become the third Shinwatra to be ousted early as premier. ***— AFP***

Amid global condemnation, Israel approves Gaza plan

THE Israeli military said on Wednesday it had approved the framework for a new offensive in the Gaza Strip, as Hamas condemned what it called "aggressive" Israeli ground incursions in Gaza City. The approval for the expanded offensive comes days after Israel's security cabinet called for the seizure of Gaza's largest city, following 22 months of war that have created dire humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territory.

Israeli armed forces chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir "approved the main framework for the IDF's operational plan in the Gaza Strip," a statement released by the army said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has not provided a precise timetable for when Israeli troops will enter Gaza City, where thousands have taken refuge after fleeing previous offensives.

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli air strikes on Gaza City have intensified in recent days, with the residential neighbourhoods of Zeitoun and Sabra hit "with very heavy air strikes targeting civilian homes, possibly including high-rise buildings". Agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that Israeli strikes or fire had killed at least 35 people across Gaza on Wednesday.

Footage from Gaza City on Tuesday showed Palestinians fleeing Israeli strikes on the Zeitoun and Asqoola using overladen carts, vans and bikes.

"I didn't bring a mattress or anything and we just escaped death and now we're running away and we don't know where to go," said displaced Palestinian Fidaa Saad.



A Palestinian girl cries as she tries to receive cooked meals along with others, in Gaza. ***— Reuters***

UN-backed experts have warned of widespread famine unfolding in the territory, where Israel has drastically curtailed the amount of humanitarian aid it allows in. The health ministry in Gaza says at least 235 people including 106 children have died of hunger

Israel's plans to expand its offensive into Gaza City come as diplomacy aimed at securing an elusive ceasefire and hostage release deal has stalled for weeks, after the latest round of negotiations broke down in July.

Egypt said on Tuesday it was working with fellow Gaza mediators Qatar and the United States to broker a 60-day truce "with the release of some hostages and some Palestinian detainees, and the flow of humanitarian and medical assistance to Gaza without restrictions, without conditions". Hamas said early on Wednesday that a senior delegation had arrived in Cairo for "preliminary talks" with Egyptian officials.

Israel's plans to expand the Gaza war have sparked international outcry as well as domestic opposition. Reserve and retired pilots who served in the Israeli air force on Tuesday rallied in Tel Aviv to demand an end to the conflict. "This war and expansion will only cause the death of the hostages, death of more Israeli soldiers, and death of many more innocent Palestinians in Gaza," said Guy Poran, a former Israeli air force pilot.

UN-backed experts have warned of widespread famine unfolding in the territory, where Israel has drastically curtailed the amount of humanitarian aid it allows in. The health ministry in Gaza says at least 235 people, including 106 children, have died of hunger since the war began in October 2023, with many cases recorded in recent weeks.

— AFP



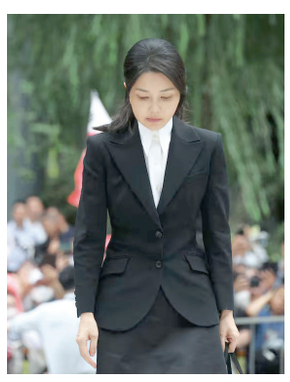
TYPHOON PODUL BLOWS THROUGH TAIWAN

KAOHSIUNG: *Typhoon Podul pounded Taiwan on Wednesday, shutting down businesses, grounding flights and knocking out power for tens of thousands of households, while parts of mainland China made ready for the storm. Wind gusts of up to 178 kilometres per hour were recorded shortly before the typhoon made landfall in Taitung County in southeastern Taiwan, the Central Weather Administration (CWA) said.*

One person was missing after he went fishing and was swept away, and 33 have been injured, the National Fire Agency said. More than 7,300 people have been evacuated from their homes, with trees and signs toppled as the storm swept across central and southern regions still recovering from storms. "We are worried about this typhoon," Kaohsiung fisherman Huang Wei said as he tied down his boat with extra ropes hours ahead of Podul making landfall. ***— AFP***

GRANTED WARRANT

South Korea's ex-first lady Kim arrested



South Korea's former first lady Kim Keon Hee was arrested over a range of charges including stock manipulation and corruption, prosecutors said. The arrest occurred hours after the Seoul Central District Court reviewed the prosecutors' request for an arrest warrant against the 52-year-old. The court granted the warrant, citing the risk of tampering with evidence, after prosecutors submitted an 848-page opinion laying out Kim's alleged "unlawful acts". ***— AFP***

FLAMES SURGE

Wildfire sweeps through northern Morocco



A major mountain forest fire close to the tourist city of Chefchaouen in northern Morocco was spreading on Wednesday. The fire has officially been declared a "major" one, a source said, adding that Canadair firefighting aircraft were working to contain the flames. According to news site Le360, two Canadair planes were operating "despite strong winds" in Chefchaouen province, home to 400,000 people, including 50,000 in the provincial capital. ***— AFP***

CONTINUOUS CLASHES

Strikes target army celebration in Sudan



Drone strikes targeted the Sudanese town of Tamboul, southeast of the capital Khartoum, during a celebration organised by the army. Chaos had erupted in the central square where "hundreds of people had gathered" for the ceremony as air defences responded. There were no immediate reports of casualties from the strikes, the first in Al Jazira state in months, and neither the army nor its paramilitary foes issued any comment. ***— AFP***

FLIGHT ACHIEVEMENT



Swiss pilot Raphael Domjan gives a thumb up prior to take off, in Sion. — **AFP**

SWISS PILOT SURPASSES SOLAR-POWERED PLANE ALTITUDE RECORD

GENEVA: *Swiss pilot Raphael Domjan beat the altitude record for a solar-powered electric plane in a flight that took him soaring to 9,521 metres, his team announced on Wednesday. The Solar-Stratos plane made the landmark flight from Sion airport in southwest Switzerland on Tuesday, taking advantage of warm air thermals to go beyond the record that has stood for 15 years.*

The certified altitude record for a solar plane stands at 9,235 metres. The achievement is "one of those unforgettable peaks that define great human and technological adventures", the SolarStratos mission said in a statement. Domjan's flight lasted five hours and nine minutes. "I share this moment of joy with all the people who have been preparing for this achievement for years," the 53-year-old "eco-explorer" said.

The data will be sent to the World Air Sports Federation governing body, which will decide whether to validate the new record. "It is the pressure altitude corrected to standard density altitude that is recognised as the official reference for aviation altitude records," the SolarStratos team said.

Domjan is aiming to be the first to take a solar-powered plane above 10,000 metres — flying at the same altitude as airliners.

If this barrier is broken, the team hopes to go on and make a first manned solar-powered flight into the stratosphere, which at Switzerland's latitude begins at around 12,000 metres.

"This achievement marks a major milestone on the path toward reaching the stratosphere using only solar power — and already fulfils the mission's goal: to capture imaginations with emblematic, spectacular challenges that promote solar energy and the protection of our biosphere and planet," SolarStratos said.

The front-mounted single propeller plane, registration HB-SXA, is made of carbon fibre to ensure lightness and strength.

SolarStratos is 9.6 metres long, and its huge wingspan of 24.8 metres accommodates the 22 square metres of high-spec solar panels topping the wings, and allows for flying at low speeds. The plane can take off at low speeds, from 50 kilometres per hour upwards. Its maximum speed is 140 kph, while its cruising speed is around 80 kph. A warm-up flight on July 31 got to 6,589 metres — surpassing the plane's previous best in 2024. — **AFP**

DEADLOCKED PLASTICS TREATY TALKS AT CLIFF'S EDGE

GENEVA: *Negotiators from 184 countries remained riven on Wednesday on how to curb plastic pollution, less than 36 hours before they were slated to deliver a binding global treaty. Diplomats are "at the edge of a cliff," one official observer said.*

Dozens of ministers have arrived in Geneva to try to break the deadlock as the 10-day talks hurtle towards a close, but widely divergent positions have made the search for a so-called landing zone "very difficult", according to Danish Environment Minister Magnus Heunicke.

A new draft of the treaty text, streamlined by the talks chair, is expected later on Wednesday, several sources. A plenary meeting to take stock of where things stand is scheduled.

The debate continues to pit the so-called "Like-Minded Group" of chiefly oil-producing countries that refuse restrictions on the production of plastic or certain chemicals thought to be harmful to health against a much larger "high ambition" bloc that favours such measures.

David Azoulay, director of the environmental health programme at the Center for International Environmental Law group, said he expects the new summary text to be "very weak" and a "lowest common denominator", falling short of the treaty's purpose: resolving the global plastic pollution crisis.

— ***AFP***

Trump wants Ukraine to have say on territory talks

US President Donald Trump has said Ukraine must be involved in talks about land in any truce deal with Russia, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Wednesday, suggesting Kyiv and its European allies had got their message across before a superpower summit. The comments were among the first indications of what came out of talks between Trump, European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, intended to influence Trump as he prepares to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday.

Trump's insistence on involving Ukraine, if confirmed, could bring a measure of relief to Ukraine and its allies, who have feared that Trump and Putin could reach a deal that sells out Europe's and Ukraine's security interests and proposes to carve up Ukrainian territory. Trump and Putin are due to discuss how to end the three-and-a-half-year-old conflict, the biggest in Europe since World War Two. Trump has said both sides will have to swap land to end the fighting that has cost tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions.

On a day of intense diplomacy, Zelensky flew into Berlin for German-hosted virtual meetings with European leaders and then with Trump. The Europeans worry that a land swap could leave Russia with almost a fifth of Ukraine, rewarding it for almost 11 years of efforts to seize Ukrainian territory, and emboldening Putin to expand further west into the future. "The second point on which things were very clear, as expressed by President Trump, is that territories belonging to Ukraine cannot be negotiated and will only be negotiated by the Ukrainian president," Macron said.

"There are currently no serious territorial exchange schemes on the table." German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Trump would prioritise reaching a ceasefire on Friday, adding that there was no question of legally recognising Russia's territorial holdings.

Zelensky said there should be a three-way meeting between himself, Putin and Trump. Merz said Ukraine was prepared to negotiate on territorial issues, but "legal recognition of Russian occupation is not up for debate".



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (R) and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz walk in the garden of the chancellery in Berlin. — **AFP**

"If the United States of America now works towards a peace in Ukraine that safeguards European and Ukrainian interests, he can count on our full support in this endeavour," Merz said at a joint press conference with Zelensky.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Wednesday that he warned US President Donald Trump ahead of his talks with Vladimir Putin this week that the Russian leader is "bluffing" about his desire to end the war. "I told the US president and all our European colleagues that Putin is bluffing," he said at a joint briefing in Berlin with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. "He is trying to apply pressure before the meeting in Alaska along all parts of the Ukrainian front. Russia is trying to show that it can occupy all of Ukraine."

Zelensky's comments, made after a virtual call with Trump and European leaders, come as Russian forces step up pressure on the battlefield in eastern Ukraine, aiming to force Kyiv to give up land. Zelensky, who said he hoped the main topic of the talks in Alaska would be an immediate ceasefire, added that any discussions regarding territory should be covered during a three-leader meeting. "Regarding our principles and territorial integrity, in the end, this is all decided at the level of leaders," he said. "Without Ukraine, it is impossible to decide this. And, by the way, everyone also supports this." Zelensky said Trump told him he would debrief him about his talks with Putin.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told US President Donald Trump and European leaders that support for Ukraine was unwavering and that there should be robust security guarantees as part of any peace deal with Russia. "The Prime Minister was clear that our support for Ukraine is unwavering — international borders must not be changed by force and Ukraine must have robust and credible security guarantees to defend its territorial integrity as part of any deal," a readout of a call from Starmer's Downing Street office said. — **Reuters**

Thousands battle Greece fires as heatwave bakes Europe

PATRAS: Greece on Wednesday battled to contain more than 20 wildfires, including one menacing its third-largest city Patras, as a heatwave stoked blazes and forced the evacuation of thousands in southern Europe. Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, the Balkans and Britain have this week wilted in high temperatures that fuel wildfires and which scientists say human-induced climate change is intensifying.

Since dawn on Wednesday, 4,850 firefighters and 33 planes were mobilised across Greece on what promised to be "a very difficult day", fire service spokesman Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said.

A fire near the ancient Mycenaean archaeological site of Voudeni, just seven kilometres (four miles) from Patras, threatened forested zones and homes, and the area was covered by a thick cloud of smoke, a journalist reported.

Fierce wind "is hampering the task of water bombers, and is making collecting water at sea more difficult", the president of the firefighter officers' union, Kostas Tsigkas, told public broadcaster ERT. In the western Achaia region in the Peloponnese, to which the coastal city of Patras belongs, around 20 villages were evacuated on Tuesday. Other fronts were burning on the popular tourist island of Zante and the Aegean island of Chios, scarred by a huge wildfire in June that ravaged more than 4,000 hectares.

The Greek coastguard said it had helped evacuate nearly 80 people from Chios and near Patras. The national ambulance service reported 52 hospitalisations from Achaia, Chios and the western town of Preveza, including "a small number of firefighters", mostly for respiratory problems and minor burns.

Temperatures are due to come close to 40C in parts of western Greece on Wednesday, including the northwest Peloponnese, national weather service EMY forecast.



People stand on a road as a wildfire burns a forest near the city of Patras, Greece. — **AFP**

After Greece requested four water bombers from the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to bolster its resources, leftist opposition party Syriza criticised the conservative government's preparation for the fires that hit every year. Greece needed "a bold redistribution of resources in favour of civil protection", an "emphasis on prevention", better coordination and new technologies in its civil protection system, Syriza said.

At the other end of the Mediterranean, wildfires continued to dominate the news in Spain, where cooler temperatures and greater humidity were expected to help control blazes in which two people have died.

Authorities in the northwestern region of Castile and Leon, where flames have threatened a world heritage Roman mining site, said almost 6,000 people from 26 localities had been evacuated from their homes. A total of 199 wildfires have scorched nearly 98,784 hectares across Spain this year, more than double the area burned during the same period in 2024. — **AFP**

Borrowed tomorrows and the hands that hold them



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

SOME mornings in Muscat I wake before the city stirs. Heat gathers early, heavy before sunrise. At a summer camp last week, a girl in the front row asked how to plan a life when the map keeps changing. I thought of the way young people are testing ideas in courtyards, on shorelines and in the shade of palm groves. Our children are planning futures in moving weather.

Across our region, where temperatures are rising twice as fast as the global average, the changes are undeniable. Summers stretch longer. Farmers shift planting and harvest times. Fishers study the wind and the heat before deciding to set out. Families recalculate how to keep food fresh and homes livable. Water scarcity is pressing hard. Estimates place GDP losses in water stressed areas between six and fourteen per cent by mid century. For the half of our people under 25, climate change is a daily context rather than a distant concern.

It is in this environment of heat, scarcity and uncertainty that I see the true measure of our youth.

I see it in young volunteers planting and restoring mangroves to shield coastal communities from storms. In engineering students building low cost irrigation timers and greywater reuse systems to help farmers stretch every drop. In youth groups mapping heat hotspots near schools and clinics as they advocate for shade and safe spaces. These actions may be small in scale, yet they show what is possible when trust is given and skilled hands are invited to shape solutions.

The same determination appears in how young people view the systems that guide their future. Recent global surveys reveal that more than half would trust decisions made by artificial intelligence over those made by humans, shaped by frustration with corruption and disappointment in broken promises. This is no rejection of human responsibility. It is a call for leadership that is fair, transparent and faithful to commitments.

It is an invitation to match their readiness with genuine opportunity.

We can meet this readiness with choices that strengthen what already works. Ministries can back small pilots and integrate them into wider programmes once they prove effective. Universities can align final year projects with urgent community needs in water, waste and cooling.

Foundations and companies can open microgrant opportunities that release funds in stages. Public agencies can offer seasonal placements inside project teams, leading to roles if the work delivers. Health and education providers can include heat safety, mental health first aid and climate awareness in training so families are prepared when extreme weather comes.

Across our region, where temperatures are rising twice as fast as the global average, the changes are undeniable. Summers stretch longer. Farmers shift planting and harvest times. Fishers study the wind and the heat before deciding to set out

These investments carry economic weight. Every trained solar technician, every building retrofit and every restored hectare of mangrove or rangeland reduces vulnerability while creating livelihoods. In places where many young people have waited for meaningful work, climate action can be a driver of economic resilience. When we link the two, we prepare for storms and for the seasons that follow.

I have listened to young people speak with urgency and hope. Many describe slow progress from those in power, yet they remain determined to carry responsibility themselves. They say they are ready to work, to innovate, to lead and they want leaders who match that readiness with honesty and follow through.

Some even place more trust in technology driven decisions than in human ones, not from cynicism, but from a desire for fairness and results. In these voices, there is no waiting for rescue. There is a call for partnership and for a future shaped together.

RAZOR-THIN RACE WILL TEST MILEI'S POPULARITY

NICOLÁS MISCULIN

Argentina's wild-haired, firebrand President Javier Milei will face a crucial litmus test in an upcoming local election that could derail ambitious economic reforms as his austerity-fuelled experiment fuels social tensions.

Milei has been able to tame runaway inflation with a ruthless austerity plan and he aims to keep his unorthodox economic experiment going by generating more investor confidence and blocking any laws that the current opposition-controlled Congress could pass that would affect the country's finances.

That plan hinges on an electoral victory in the October midterms.

While the October outlook is favourable for Milei, analysts say a local election in the province of Buenos Aires on September 7 could pose a challenge to the radical right-wing leader. His party will be up against the powerful centre-left Peronists on their home turf, which they currently govern and which is also home to 40 per cent of the country's voters.

"The only question mark is the province of Buenos Aires", said Lucas Romero, an analyst for consulting firm Synopsis, who said the local election could be an indication of how the October vote might play out. Defeat in October would "hinder his ability to assure the market that his economic changes can last years".

"And the impact of the September election would cast doubt on that election", he added.

While many voters have celebrated the reduction in inflation, which is expected to fall below 30 per cent annually this year compared to triple-digit figures in the recent past, the drastic cuts in public spending have sparked protests from retirees, teachers and doctors.

A recent poll by the consulting firm D'Alessio IROL/Berensztein showed that Milei's approval rating dropped to 43 per cent from 46 per cent, while disapproval has grown to 55 per cent from 53 per cent.

The consulting firm Trespuntozero highlighted that Milei's popularity — a key factor in the ruling party's election campaign-fell nearly 4 points to 44 per cent in August.

"The province of Buenos Aires is in a dead heat between Peronism and La Libertad Avanza (Milei's party)", Shila Vilker, director of Trespuntozero, said, adding that voting intent for Libertad Avanza is slightly below that 44 per cent.

"The government's main focus is winning the October elections". ***— Reuters***

Duty to protect climate

ALTHOUGH the International Court of Justice turned 80 this year, there is a sense in which it has never felt younger. In a David-versus-Goliath moment, the tiny Pacific Island state of Vanuatu recently changed international law forever by bringing the world's most important issue before its highest court. The result is an ICJ advisory opinion on "the legal obligations of states in respect of climate change", as requested — at Vanuatu's urging — by the United Nations General Assembly (with 132 states co-sponsoring the resolution).

The questions posed to the ICJ were as simple as they were seismic: What obligations, under international law, do states have to tackle climate change? And what are the legal consequences if they fail to do so?

The ICJ's answer was unequivocal. States have a duty to protect their citizens from climate change — a duty rooted not only in treaties like the Paris climate agreement, but also in environmental law, human-rights law and customary international law. "Climate change", said the court's president, Yuji Iwasawa, speaking from the Peace Palace in The Hague, "is an urgent and existential threat of planetary proportions". "The science is clear". notes John Silk, the Marshall Islands' representative to the UN, "and now the law is, too". The fact that this bold message was delivered unanimously by the highest court in the international system would have been extraordinary enough. But the path that led to this outcome is even more remarkable.

The most significant climate case ever heard by the ICJ began not in a ministry or a think tank, but in a classroom. It was conceived by a group of 27 Pacific Islands law students who formed the Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC), led initially by Solomon Yeo and then by Cynthia Houniuhi, both from the Solomon Islands, as well as Vishal Prasad from Fiji, Siosiua Veikune from Tonga and others. These were not seasoned diplomats, nor were they backed by billionaires. But they were determined. "Whether you win or lose, some fights are worth fighting", argued Justin Rose, a former lecturer at the University of the South Pacific (in Fiji), whose classroom exercise first planted the seed of this unlikely revolution in 2019. The ruling delivers a resounding victory for the climate-justice movement that has been gaining momentum ever since the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg staged her first solo protest. Now, for the first time, the movement's inter-generational demand for dignity and legal recognition has a concrete judicial imprimatur.

It is also a triumph for the Global South. For decades, developing countries have called attention to the injustice of being exposed to the gravest consequences of a problem they did not cause. Now, the ICJ has acknowledged this asymmetry and taken the first step towards correcting it, vindicating, in particular, the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change: small island states with vanishing coastlines, salinising freshwater and intensifying cyclones. Countries long treated as voiceless victims have become the protagonists in a world-spanning legal story.

This was not the first attempt to bring climate justice to The Hague. Palau and the Marshall Islands made a similar effort in 2012, but it stalled for lack of political backing. The difference this time lay not just in the Pacific Islanders' persistence, but also in their strategy for building solidarity. Refusing to follow the usual, stodgy diplomatic script, they brought the warmth of the South Pacific to international law. Houniuhi always wore a rorodara (a seashell-studded ceremonial headdress) to address the UN and her group treated the courtroom drama as occasion for song and dance. Hearings were celebrated as watch parties.

The Pacific Islanders also built coalitions across oceans and generations — working with Vanuatu's then-Foreign Minister Ralph Regenvanu, Caribbean allies and youth activists worldwide.

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What obligations, under international law, do states have to tackle climate change?



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Plastic pollution plague blights Asia

ISABEL MALSANG

KULSUM Beghum sorts waste at a landfill in Dhaka. Her blood contains 650 microplastic particles per millilitre, according to an analysis funded by a waste pickers' union.

"Plastic is not good for me," she said through a translator during an interview in Geneva, where she came to bear witness on the sidelines of 184-nation talks to forge the world's first global plastic pollution treaty. "It started 30 years ago" in the Bangladeshi capital, the 55-year-old said, supported by her union.

At first, "plastic was for cooking oil and soft drinks", she recalled. Then came shopping bags, which replaced traditional jute bags. "We were attracted to plastic, it was so beautiful!"

Today, in one of the most economically fragile countries on the planet, plastic is everywhere: lining the streets, strewn across beaches, clogging the drains.

Alamgir Hossain, a member of an association affiliated with the International Alliance of Waste Pickers, showed photos on her phone.

Beghum wants non-recyclable plastics banned, pointing out that she cannot resell them and they have no market value.

"No one collects them," she said.

Indamathi from Bangalore in southern India, who did not give her full name, concurs: 60 per cent of the plastic waste that arrives at the sorting centre she set up is non-recyclable, she said.

This includes crisp packets made of a mixture of aluminium and plastic, and other products using "multi-layer" plastic. "No one picks them up from the streets and there are a lot of them," she said.

Scientists attending the treaty negotiations at the United Nations in Geneva back her up.

"Multi-layer plastic bags are a disaster for the environment," said Stephanie Reynaud, a polymer chemistry researcher at France's National Centre for Scientific Research.

"They cannot be recycled."

Indamathi was also critical of what she described as public policy failures.

After single-use bags were banned in her country in 2014, for example, she saw the arrival of black or transparent polypropylene lunchboxes, which are also single-use.

"We're seeing more and more of them on the streets and in landfills. They've replaced shopping bags," she said.

According to a recent OECD report on plastic in Southeast Asia, "more ambitious public policies could reduce waste by more than 95 per cent by 2050" in the region, where plastic consumption increased ninefold since 1990 to 152 million tonnes in 2022.

After single-use bags were banned in her country in 2014, for example, she saw the arrival of black or transparent polypropylene lunchboxes, which are also single-use

Consumer demand is not to blame, argues Seema Prabhu of the Swiss-based NGO Trash Heroes, which works mainly in Southeast Asian countries.

The market has been flooded with single-use plastic replacing traditional items in Asia, such as banana leaf packaging in Thailand and Indonesia, and metal lunchboxes in India.

"It's a new colonialism that is eroding traditional cultures," she said. According to her, more jobs could be created "in a reuse economy than in a single-use economy".

Single-dose "sachets" of shampoo, laundry detergent or sauces are a scourge, said Yuyun Ismawati Drwiega, an Indonesian who co-chairs the International Pollutants Elimination Network NGO.

"They are the smallest plastic items with which the industry has poisoned us - easy to carry, easy to obtain; every kiosk sells them," she said.

In Indonesia, collection and sorting centres specialising in sachets have failed to stem the tide, mostly shutting down not long after opening.

In Bali, where Ismawati Drwiega lives, she organises guided tours that she has nicknamed "Beauty and the Beast".

The beauty is the beaches and luxury hotels; the beast is the back streets, the tofu factories that use plastic briquettes as fuel, and the rubbish dumps. **— AFP**

TRUMP AND PUTIN... A STRAINED RELATIONSHIP

LÉON BRUNEAU

Donald Trump styles himself as a strongman. And that's exactly what he sees in Vladimir Putin.

Their complicated relationship will be put to the test at a summit in Alaska on Friday, where the two leaders who claim to admire each other will seek to outmanoeuvre one another over how to end Russia's war on Ukraine.

While the two were close to a bromance during Trump's first term (2017-2021), their relationship has grown strained during his second term. The US president has expressed anger with Putin for pressing on with his brutal three-year-old war in Ukraine, which Trump calls "ridiculous."

Trump describes the summit as "really a feel-out meeting" to evaluate Putin's readiness to negotiate an end to the war.

"I'm going to be telling him, 'You've got to end this war,'" Trump said.

The two leaders notably have radically different negotiating strategies: the Republican real estate magnate usually banks on making a deal, while the Russian president tends to take the long view, confident that time is on his side.

Referring to Trump's meeting with Putin, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that Trump needs "to see him face to face... to make an assessment by looking at him."

Trump praised Putin for accepting his invitation to come to the US state of Alaska, which was once a Russian colony.

"I thought it was very respectful that the president of Russia is coming to our country, as opposed to us going to his country or even a third place," Trump said on Monday.

It will be only the second one-on-one meeting between the men since the 2018 Helsinki summit.

Trump calls Putin smart and insists he's always "had a very good relationship" with the Kremlin leader.

But when Russian missiles pounded Kyiv earlier this year, Trump accused him of "needlessly killing a lot of people," adding in a social media post: "He has gone absolutely CRAZY!"

For his part, Putin has praised the Republican billionaire's push to end the Ukraine war. "I have no doubt that he means it sincerely," Putin said last year when Trump was running for president.

Since returning to the White House in January, the American president has forged a rapprochement with Putin, who has been sidelined by the international community since the February 2022 war on Ukraine.

Trump and Putin, aged 79 and 72 respectively, spoke for 90 minutes by phone in February, both expressing hope for a reset of relations.

But after a series of fruitless talks and continued deadly Russian bombing of Ukrainian cities, Trump has appeared increasingly frustrated.

*"I am very disappointed with President Putin," Trump told reporters last month. "I thought he was somebody that meant what he said. **— AFP***

Can democracy survive AI?

DIGITAL technology was supposed to disperse power. Early Internet visionaries hoped that the revolution they were unleashing would empower individuals to free themselves from ignorance, poverty and tyranny. And for a while, at least, it did. But today, ever-smarter algorithms increasingly predict and shape our every choice, enabling unprecedentedly effective forms of centralised, unaccountable surveillance and control.

That means the coming AI revolution may render closed political systems more stable than open ones. In an age of rapid change, transparency, pluralism, checks and balances, and other key democratic features could prove to be liabilities. Could the openness that long gave democracies their edge become the cause of their undoing?

Two decades ago, I sketched a "J-curve" to illustrate the link between a country's openness and its stability. My argument, in a nutshell, was that while mature democracies are stable because they are open, and consolidated autocracies are stable because they are closed, countries stuck in the messy middle (the nadir of the "J") are more likely to crack under stress.

But this relationship isn't static; it's shaped by technology. Back then, the world was riding a wave of decentralisation. Information and communications technologies (ICT) and the Internet were connecting people everywhere, arming them with more information than they had ever had access to, and tipping the scales towards citizens and open political systems. From the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union to the colour revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Arab Spring in the Middle East, global liberalisation appeared inexorable.

That progress has since been thrown into reverse. The decentralising ICT revolution gave way to a centralising data revolution built on network effects, digital surveillance and algorithmic nudging. Instead of diffusing power, this technology concentrated it, handing those who control the largest datasets – be they governments or big technology companies – the ability to shape what billions of people see, do and believe.



The coming AI revolution may render closed political systems more stable than open ones.



IAN BREMMER

The writer is Founder and President of Eurasia Group and GZERO Media, is a member of the Executive Committee of the UN High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence

As citizens were turned from principal agents into objects of technological filters and data collection, closed systems gained ground. The gains made by the colour revolutions and the Arab Spring were clawed back. And most dramatically, the United States has gone from being the world's leading exporter of democracy – however inconsistently and hypocritically – to the leading exporter of the tools that undermine it.

The diffusion of AI capabilities will supercharge these trends. Models trained on our private data will soon "know" us better than we know ourselves, programming us faster than we can programme them, and transferring even more power to the few who control the data and the algorithms.

Here, the J-curve warps and comes to look more like a shallow "U." As AI spreads, both tightly closed and hyper-open societies will become relatively more fragile than they were. But over time, as the technology improves and control over the most advanced models is consolidated, AI could harden autocracies and fray democracies, flipping the shape back towards an inverted J whose stable slope now favours closed systems.

In this world, the CPC would be able to convert its vast data troves, state control of the economy, and existing surveillance apparatus into an even more potent tool of repression. The US would drift towards a more top-down, kleptocratic system in which a small club of tech titans exerts growing influence over public life in pursuit of their private interests. Both systems would become similarly centralised – and dominant – at the expense of citizens. Europe and Japan would face geopolitical irrelevance (or worse, internal instability) as they fall behind in the race for AI supremacy.

Dystopian scenarios such as those outlined here can be avoided, but only if decentralised open-source AI models end up on top.

For now, however, the momentum lies with closed models centralising power.

History offers at least a sliver of hope. Every previous technological revolution – from the printing press and railroads to broadcast media – destabilised politics and compelled the emergence of new norms and institutions that eventually restored balance between openness and stability. The question is whether democracies can adapt once again, and in time, before AI writes them out of the script.

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SPORTS

AFC *CL PLAYOFF*



REFEREEING ERRORS DASH SEEB HOPES AS FC GOA ADVANCE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 13

Seeb rued some refereeing decisions including a penalty rejection as hosts FC Goa won 2-1 in the AFC Champions League playoff in India's Goa on Wednesday.

In the 43rd minute, the ball touched the hand of Dejan Drazic inside the box but the Chinese referee denied a penalty after consulting the line referee at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

The triumph confirmed FC Goa's progression to the Group Stage of the AFC Champions League Two 2025/2026, while Seeb will continue their continental campaign in the AFC Challenge Cup.

Goals from Dejan Drazic (24th minute) and Javier Siverio (52') put the hosts in control before Nasser al Rawahi pulled one back for Seeb on the hour mark. Despite a spirited second-half push, Seeb's hopes were dashed amid what the Omani side felt were a series of questionable officiating calls by the Chinese referee in charge.

Seeb, the 2022 AFC Cup champions, began with intent. Within two minutes, Nasser al Rawahi forced FC Goa defender Pol Moreno into an acrobatic clearance, followed by Zahir al Aghbari's blocked attempt inside the box. The Omani side's pressure continued in the 23rd minute when Al Rawahi's timely tackle set up Abdulaziz al Muqbali, whose curling strike was parried away by goalkeeper Hrithik Tiwari.

Just a minute later, FC Goa broke the deadlock. Borja Herrera's instinctive long pass found Drazic, who eluded Al Rawahi's challenge before chipping the ball into the net. After the break, the hosts doubled their lead in the 52nd minute when Herrera's corner delivery found Siverio, who rose above the Seeb defence to head home.

Seeb responded quickly, with Ali al Busaidy cutting the ball back for Nasser al Rawahi to finish from close range in the 60th minute. The goal injected life into the match, but despite late pressure, the visitors couldn't find an equaliser.

While the loss means Seeb miss out a historic milestone to become the first Omani club to reach the AFC Champions League Two Group Stage, the club will now turn their focus to making a strong impact in the AFC Challenge League, where they aim to replicate the continental success of their 2022 AFC Cup triumph.





Ahli Sidab players celebrate with the Under-18 Hockey League trophy after thrashing Seeb 10-1 in the final.

Ahli Sidab crowned U18 Hockey League champions

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 13

AHLI Sidab Club were crowned champions of the 2025 U18 Hockey League after delivering a dominant attacking display in the final, defeating Seeb Club with a resounding 10-1 victory, leaving the latter to settle for second place. In the third-place playoff, Al Ittihad Club edged past Masirah Club 1-0 to claim the bronze medal.

In the individual awards, Abbas al Noufli from Masirah was named the league's top scorer with 10 goals, while Issa al Raisi from Seeb won the best goalkeeper award and Saad al Fazari from Ahli Sidab was chosen as the best player of the tournament.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Marwan al Juma, Chairman of the Oman Hockey Association, at the Hockey Oman Stadium in Al Amerat, where he crowned the winning teams and honoured the outstanding players.

The final match started at a high tempo, with Ahli Sidab imposing their dominance from the opening minutes. Said al Fazari opened the scoring in the third minute, followed by a second goal from Rashid al Alawi via a penalty corner in the ninth minute. Despite Seeb's efforts to respond, including shots from Abdulkarim al Balushi and Al Yazan al Balushi, the first quarter ended with Ahli Sidab leading 2-0.

In the second quarter, Seeb pressed forward in search of a goal, but a quick counterattack led by Eyad al Alawi brought the third goal. Said al Fazari then scored his second in the 20th minute, followed by a fifth from Maitham al Wahaibi in the 27th and a sixth from Saad al Fazari in the 30th minute, giving Ahli Sidab a comfortable 6-0 lead by half-time.

The third quarter saw Ahli Sidab maintain their attacking superiority, with Said al Fazari completing his hat-trick in the 34th minute and Rashid al Alawi netting the eighth in the 38th minute, keeping the team firmly ahead at 8-0.

Early in the final quarter, Al Yazan al Balushi scored Seeb's only goal, but Saad al Fazari quickly responded with a ninth goal from a penalty corner in the 52nd minute. Mohammed al Nasri then sealed the scoring with the 10th goal, ending the match 10-1 and confirming Ahli Sidab as champions.

Al Ittihad secured third place in a tightly contested match against Masirah that remained goalless for two quarters. Masirah threatened through Abbas al Noufli, Hassan al Balushi and Al Fadl al Noufli, but Al Ittihad replied with organised attacks and strong goalkeeping. The breakthrough came in the third quarter when Omair Awad scored the only goal of the game from a precise through-pass. Despite Masirah's persistent pressure in the final quarter, Al Ittihad held on for a valuable victory that earned them the bronze medal.

KEY FIXTURE

Ahmed al Darmaki, Board Member of the OHA, affirmed that the conclusion of the U18 League was a great success, noting that the competition is a key fixture in the association's calendar and a vital part of its strategy to prepare national teams and build a solid foundation for the future.

He emphasised that the league offers an ideal opportunity to identify promising talent and select players for the national U18 team for upcoming competitions, adding that focusing on this age group is the first step in developing the sport and sustaining achievements.

Al Darmaki also highlighted the association's commitment to monitoring player performance through coaching staff who assess physical, technical and psychological skills, creating both individual and team training plans to enhance abilities.

He stressed that work with these players continues beyond the league through training camps and development programmes, a strategy that he said contributed significantly to the senior national team's success in winning the Asian Hockey Federation Cup this year, with many players coming from these programmes.



Al Ittihad and Masirah players in action during the third-place playoff match. Al Ittihad won 1-0 to finish third.

In the individual awards, Abbas al Noufli from Masirah was named the league's top scorer with 10 goals, while Issa al Raisi from Seeb won the best goalkeeper award and Saad al Fazari from Ahli Sidab was chosen as the best player of the tournament.

VITAL*WINNER*



Liverpool fans with a banner in memory of Diogo Jota before the Crystal Palace v Liverpool final in the FA at Wembley Stadium, London. ***— Reuters***

LAST LIVERPOOL GOAL HAD SPECIAL MEANING FOR JOTA

LONDON: *Diogo Jota revealed the emotional meaning behind his last Liverpool goal in a touching interview before his death in a car crash.*

Jota and his brother Andre Silva died when their Lamborghini went off the road in the accident in northern Spain on July 3.

The Portugal forward was on his way back to England to start pre-season training after helping Liverpool win the Premier League title last term.

Jota's final goal for Liverpool was the vital winner in the Merseyside derby against Everton at Anfield in April.

Speaking in an interview just weeks before his death, Jota admitted he felt proud to be able to contribute to Arne Slot's team by scoring in such an important game.

"It was a very tough season for me but I was always there fighting and I could help the team that day and I'm proud of what I could still do", he said in the documentary titled "Champions 24-25: The Inside Story".

"It's hard to describe. That's the feeling I look for when I play football, that's why you put all your life and all your efforts to moments like that, moments where you can decide an important game".

Jota, 28, spent five years with Liverpool after joining from Wolves in 2020.

He won the Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup during his time at Anfield.

"It is something I could not even dream as a kid, I wanted to play in the Premier League but I could never imagine to win it", Jota said in the documentary about his Liverpool success.

"Pictures that will be shown forever. It is a remarkable achievement for a small guy that came from Gondomar, where I had this dream".

Liverpool have posthumously retired his number 20 shirt and the club have announced that Jota will be remembered with a permanent sculpture outside Anfield, while a mural of the star already adorns the wall of a building near the stadium. ***— AFP***



Jayden Seales of West Indies celebrates the dismissal of Mohammad Rizwan of Pakistan during the third and final ODI match between West Indies and Pakistan at Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago. ***— AFP***

Seales seals Windies ODI series win over Pakistan

TAROUBA, Trinidad and Tobago: An inspired Jayden Seales led the West Indies to a crushing 202-run victory over Pakistan in the third and deciding one-day international in Trinidad on Tuesday.

The fast bowler blew away the Pakistan top order en route to figures of 6-18 as the tourists were bundled out for just 92 in a chase of 295 to win.

The Windies had reached 294-6 in their 50 overs batting first, powered by captain Shai Hope's brilliant unbeaten hundred.

The Caribbean side sealed a much-needed first ODI series win against Pakistan since 1991, after being swept aside 3-0 and 5-0 in Test and T20 series respectively by Australia earlier in the summer.

"We stress on negatives a lot in West Indies", said Hope. "So many positives to shout about. Great to see the guys pulling off history.

"Seales is a quality bowler... He's a class act. Anything you ask him to do, he puts his hands up".

Pakistan's reply got off to a horrendous start as Seales removed Saim Ayub, Abdullah Shafique and Mohammad Rizwan inside the first three overs to reduce them to 8-3.

Seales then trapped Babar Azam lbw for just nine to leave Pakistan's hopes of a 2-1 series win in tatters.

"Seales made it difficult for us. Done so throughout the series. But we lost three early wickets, that's what cost us", said Pakistan skipper Rizwan.

Left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie took two wickets through the middle overs, before Seales returned to remove tailenders Hasan Ali and Naseem Shah and complete a six-fer.



Jayden Seales of the West Indies raises the ball to the crowd after claiming 6 wickets for 18 runs. ***— AFP***

The hosts, who lost the opening game of the series, wrapped up the win when Pakistan number 11 Abrar Ahmed was run out by Roston Chase.

Pakistan had started strongly with the ball after winning the toss and electing to field, as the West Indies struggled to find the boundary.

The home side were 68-3 when Keacy Carty was dismissed lbw by Abrar for a 45-ball 17.

The usually big-hitting Sherfane Rutherford also never got going and crawled to 15 from 40 deliveries before falling to Ayub.

But Chase helped revive the innings with a quickfire 36, giving Hope some much-needed assistance.

Chase was bowled by Naseem and Motie was caught and bowled by Mohammad Nawaz as the West Indies' batting effort threatened to peter out.

But Hope and Justin Greaves plundered 110 runs from the final 8.1 overs in a blistering assault to get their team close to 300.

Hope finished on 120 not out, with 10 fours and five sixes, completing his 18th one-day international century.

He now sits behind only Brian Lara and Chris Gayle on the all-time list for most ODI tons for the Windies.

Greaves more than played his part, clubbing an unbeaten 43 from just 24 balls.

— AFP

BRIEF SCORES:
West Indies 294 for six in 50 overs (S Hope 120 no) v Pakistan 92 all out in 29.2 overs (J Seales 6/18)
Match result: West Indies win by 202 runs
Series: West Indies win 2-1
Toss: Pakistan

Man Utd in 'no man's land' due to lack of plan: Rashford

MANCHESTER: Marcus Rashford decried Manchester United's lack of strategy as leaving the English giants in "no man's land" after joining Barcelona on loan.

The 27-year-old, who played 426 times for United after coming through the club's academy, left Old Trafford in January for a loan spell at Aston Villa after falling out of favour with new manager Ruben Amorim.

United went on to have their worst season since being relegated in 1973/74 as they finished 15th in the Premier League and failed to qualify for European competition.

Rashford believes the root of United's problems is in the instability caused by appointing six different managers since Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.



FC Barcelona's Raphinha celebrates scoring their third goal with Marcus Rashford during a friendly match against Como in Barcelona. ***— Reuters***

"We have been way below where we deem United to be but then if you take a step back, which I've been able to do, especially over these last six months, what do you expect?"

Rashford said. "When Liverpool went through this, they got (Jurgen) Klopp, they stuck with him. They didn't win in the beginning. People only remember his final few years when he was competing with (Manchester) City and winning the biggest trophies. "To start a transition, you have to make a plan and stick to it. It's not easy to do. But this is where I speak about being realistic with what your situation is.

"We've had that many different managers, different ideas and different strategies to win that you end up in no man's land".

United have failed to even contend for the Premier League title or the Champions League since Ferguson's departure.

Rashford is one of the few success stories for the Red Devils in that time. After breaking into the team as an 18-year-old in 2016, he went on to score 138 goals for the club, winning two FA Cups and two League Cups.

However, he believes the winning culture embedded during Ferguson's 27-year tenure has been worn away.

"When Ferguson was in charge, not only were there principles for the first team but they were for the whole academy", Rashford added.

"Any team that has been successful over a period of time, they have principles that mean that any coach or player that comes in has to align to or add to the principles. "At times, United were hungry to win... but it was reactionary. You can't expect to win the league". Rashford appears to have played his last game for United with his move to Spanish champions Barca containing an option to buy for a reported 35 million euros (£30 million, $41 million). **— AFP**

Five-goal Fenerbahce rally past Feyenoord, Benfica on song

JOSE MOURINHO's Fenerbahce rallied past Dutch club Feyenoord on Tuesday to advance 6-4 on aggregate into the Champions League qualifying playoffs. Fenerbahce had lost 2-1 in the Netherlands last week and were a goal down in the second leg of the third qualifying round in Istanbul after Feyenoord defender Tsuyoshi Watanabe struck the first of his two goals on the night after 41 minutes for Robin van Persie's side.

But Mourinho's team fought back with goals from Archie Brown and Jhon Duran just before the break getting the hosts back on track with Fred, Youssef En-Nesyri and Talisca adding three more in a thrilling second half for a 5-2 win on the night.

Fenerbahce will host Benfica, who beat Nice 4-0 on aggregate, in the first leg of the playoff round next week with a place in the 36-team league phase at stake.

In Lisbon, Benfica defeated the French club 2-0 on the night thanks to goals from Norwegian duo Fredrik Aursnes (19) and Andreas Schjelderup (27).

Elsewhere, Rangers advanced past Czech team Viktoria Plzen 4-2 over two legs and next play Club Brugge, who reached the last 16 of the Champions League last season.

Rangers had won 3-0 at Ibrox last week but fell to a 2-1 defeat on Tuesday with Lyall Cameron opening his account for the club with a consolation strike.

"We had some really good moments, but disappointed how many shots we gave them, how many chances we gave them", said Rangers manager Russell Martin.

"So, again, another brilliant bit of learning and we're through to the last qualifying round for the Champions League, but I am annoyed.

That wasn't enough. There's too many scary moments".

Club Brugge came back from a two-goal deficit on the night to beat RB Salzburg 3-2 at home and advance 4-2 on aggregate.

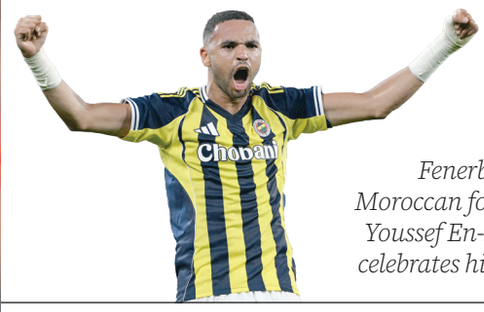
— AFP



Nice's Nigerian forward #09 Terem Moffi (R) is challenged by Benfica's Portuguese defender #04 Antonio Silva during the Uefa Champions League third round second-leg match between SL Benfica and OGC Nice at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. ***— AFP***



Fenerbahce's Colombian forward Jhon Duran celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the Uefa Champions League 3rd round second leg match against Feyenoord. ***— AFP***



Fenerbahce's Moroccan forward Youssef En-Nesyri celebrates his goal.



Benfica's Norwegian forward Andreas Schjelderup celebrates scoring their second goal against OGC Nice in Lisbon. ***— AFP***



Fenerbahce's Brazilian midfielder Talisca celebrates after scoring his team's fifth goal at the Fenerbahce Sukru Saracoglu Sport Complex in Istanbul.



Alcaraz eases past Medjedovic before rain forces suspension in Cincinnati

CINCINNATI: Carlos Alcaraz beat Hamad Medjedovic 6-4, 6-4 to reach the Cincinnati Open last 16 on Tuesday, battling the sweltering Ohio heat to notch a tour-leading 50th victory of the season before the evening session was suspended due to rain.

The Spanish second seed also secured his 13th consecutive win at an ATP Masters 1000 tournament, converting three of seven break points in a deliberate, slow-paced contest.

Treated for neck pain after the first set, Serbia's Medjedovic ramped up in the second to shorten rallies, out-hitting Alcaraz 25-16 on winners but committing 38 unforced errors to the Spaniard's 18.

"I know he's a really powerful player," Alcaraz said.

"His shots are incredibly hard to return. He has a big serve also. I know he doesn't like to run too much from side to side, so my plan was to make him run as much as I could".

Monte Carlo and Rome champion Alcaraz next faces Italian Luca Nardi as he continues his bid for an eight Masters 1000 title.

Earlier, Andrey Rublev rallied from a set down to edge Alexei Popyrin 6-7(5), 7-6(5), 7-5 in a fierce 3-1/2-hour battle.

The Russian ninth seed will play against Argentine Franciso Comesana, who claimed a stunning 6-7(4), 6-4, 7-5 win over American Reilly Opelka.



Carlos Alcaraz (ESP) returns a shot against Hamad Medjedovic (SRB) during the Cincinnati Open. ***— Imagn Images***



Jasmine Paolini (ITA) returns a shot against Ashlyn Krueger (USA) during the Cincinnati Open. ***— Imagn Images***

GAUFF ADVANCES

In the women's draw, second seed Coco Gauff advanced after Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska withdrew from their third-round clash due to illness. The American will face Lucia Bronzetti, who beat 23rd seed Jelena Ostapenko 1-6, 6-3, 6-4.

It marked the second third-round walkover, following fellow Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk's withdrawal before her match against Polish third seed Iga Swiatek.

The Wimbledon champion will take on Romanian Sorana Cirstea in the round of 16.

In the evening session, men's third seed Alexander Zverev and women's fourth seed Jessica Pegula were forced off the court mid-match due to rain and the threat of lightning.

The suspension was particularly frustrating for Zverev, who had a 6-4 5-4 lead in his match against American Brandon Nakashima and was about to serve for the win.

Pegula rallied to take the second set 6-3 in her meeting with Magda Linette, leaving their match all square after the Pole won the first 7-6(5).

Canadian Open winner Ben Shelton's match with Roberto Bautista Agut and Dane Clara Tauson's match with Veronika Kudermetova were both moved to Wednesday.

Seventh seed Jasmine Paolini, last season's Roland Garros and Wimbledon finalist, defeated American Ashlyn Krueger 7-6, (7/2), 6-1 while German qualifier Ella Seidel continued her strong showing with a 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (8/6) defeat of McCartney Kessler.

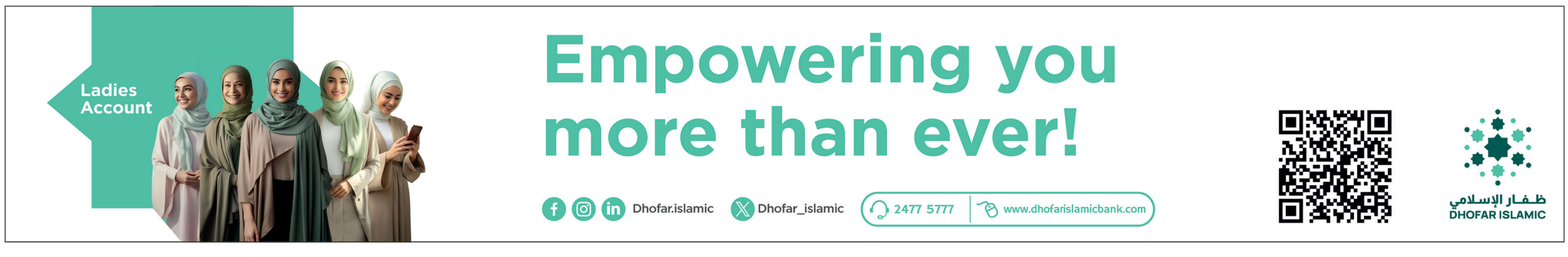
Two-time Grand Slam champion Barbora Krejcikova outlasted American Iva Jovic 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

— Reuters

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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN **$67.36**
BRENT **$65.80**
LIGHT **$63.56**



SHORT*TAKES*



The governorate's electrical extension projects reached 50 per cent completion.

AL BATINAH SOUTH POWER PROJECTS ADVANCE

AL RUSTAQ: *Electricity sector indicators show notable progress in infrastructure projects in Al Batinah South during Q2 2025, according to the seventh indicator's "Economic and Development Reports – Electricity Sector Plan".*

Nama Distribution Company said operational results reflected its commitment to expanding networks to meet growing demand.

Some projects exceeded planned targets, while others faced logistical challenges the company aims to resolve through its planned measures.

The Al Shaabiya Southern Power Transformer Station in Al Musannah reached 100 per cent completion, ahead of schedule.

In Wadi Al Maawil, the power station project achieved 45 per cent completion, compared to a target of 65 per cent.

The Khazaen transformer station in Nakhal reached 53 per cent against a 62-per cent target, while in Al Rustaq, the 33 and 11 kV network rehabilitation in valley areas hit 90 per cent completion, compared to a 98-per cent goal. Delays were attributed to difficulties working within residential areas.

The governorate's electrical extension projects reached 50 per cent completion against a 54-per cent target, signalling good progress in meeting rising energy needs.

These developments mark a significant step in strengthening Al Batinah South electrical infrastructure, supporting urban and economic growth, and ensuring sustainable energy supply in the years ahead. — ONA

Hydrom launches green hydrogen incentives

HYDROM, the orchestrator of Oman's national green hydrogen strategy, has announced new fiscal incentives designed to enhance the commercial viability of projects that will be awarded through the ongoing third green hydrogen auction round.

The measures represent a targeted response to a market sounding exercise conducted by Hydrom earlier this year and evolving global market dynamics, reaffirming the country's position as one of the world's most structured and investment-ready hydrogen ecosystems.

The new incentive includes a 90% reduction in land lease fees during the development stage with potential for further relief during the Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) phase, alongside significant reductions in base royalties during the initial years of production, and Corporate Tax exemptions for up to 10 years.

Together, these measures are designed to support early-stage project economics, improve internal rates of return and facilitate accelerated progress towards final investment decisions.

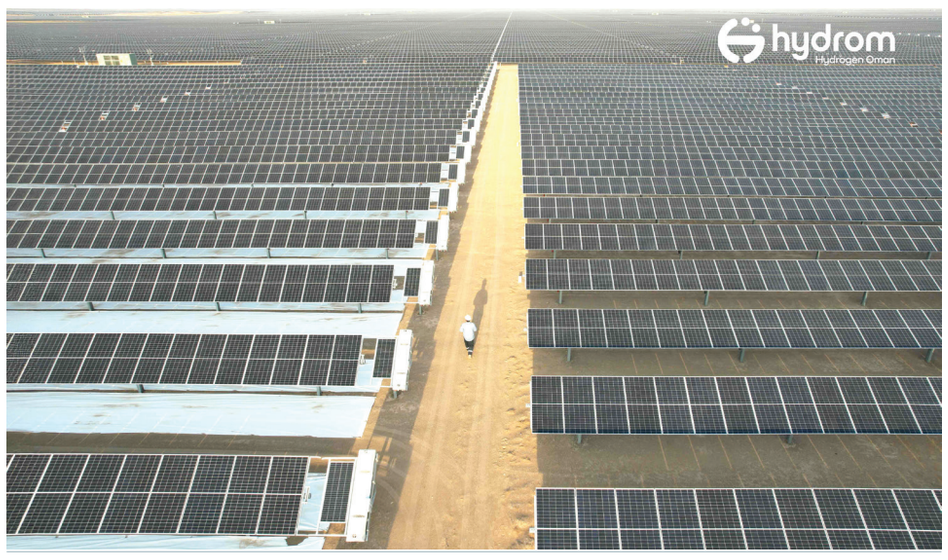
Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, said, "The global hydrogen landscape is entering a phase of consolidation, with developers prioritising jurisdictions that provide regulatory certainty, strong project economics and credible offtake potential.

"The newly introduced incentives reflect Hydrom's proactive approach to evolving market dynamics, reaffirming Oman's position as a delivery-focused, investment-ready destination for large-scale hydrogen development."



The newly introduced incentives reflect Hydrom's proactive approach to evolving market dynamics, reaffirming Oman's position as a delivery-focused, investment-ready destination for large-scale hydrogen development.

ENG ABDULAZIZ AL SHIDHANI
Managing Director of Hydrom



Oman's third auction round is progressing with strong momentum, offering a land block of up to 300 square kilometres in Duqm.

Designed with flexibility, transparency and scalability at its core, Oman's third auction round is progressing with strong momentum, offering a land block of up to 300 square kilometres in Duqm and inviting proposals for projects covering a minimum of 100 square kilometres.

Bidders have the flexibility in defining their project footprint within the block, enabling tailored configurations that align with individual development strategies and market requirements.

To date, almost 100 registrations have been received from major industry players and consortia across the green hydrogen value chain.

This strong market response underscores a sustained appetite for structured, policy-backed green hydrogen development opportunities.

Round 3 continues to attract serious first movers and institutional investors seeking to scale up operations in a competitive and structured environment.

The Statement of Qualification (SoQ) submission window remains open until October 31, 2025, and Hydrom encourages all interested parties to register and submit their documents via the dedicated platform.

To support the formation of strong consortia in Round 3, Hydrom will launch an updated consortium matchmaking list, an established tool that has successfully connected qualified participants seeking strategic project partnerships.

Oman to unlock 2 TCF of additional gas from Block 61: OQEP

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 13

Block 61 – one of Oman's largest gas blocks, currently accounting for around one-third of the country's total gas production – is the focus of a new initiative to uncover additional gas resources to help meet future demand growth, according to OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP), a key shareholder with a 30% non-operating interest in the licence.

Energy supermajor BP is the operator of Block 61 with a 40% equity stake. Current production from the licence averages 1.5 billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d) of gas, along with around 60,000 barrels per day (bpd) of condensate.

Plans are now underway to unlock further gas volumes from this flagship asset, said OQEP – the upstream energy arm of OQ Group.

"OQEP worked with its partner BP to update the asset development plan for Block 61, which anticipates developing up to 2 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of additional recoverable gas resources for future growth," the publicly traded oil and gas firm stated in its Directors' Report.



Block 61 currently accounts for around one-third of Oman's total gas production

OQEP officials had earlier revealed that the additional gas volumes, expected to be unlocked through an updated Field Development Plan (FDP), are being considered for the country's planned fourth LNG train project, with a proposed capacity of 3.8 million tonnes per year.

The FDP, which targets reserves beyond the current 2P estimates, is anticipated to receive government approval by late 2025 or early 2026.

Final investment decisions (FIDs) for both the FDP and the new LNG train are expected in 2026, with OQ joining BP and other partners in monetising these additional resources through LNG exports.

Other stakeholders in Block 61 include Thai energy giant PTTEP (20%) and Malaysia's Petronas (10%).

Also during the first half of this year, OQEP added new licences to its substantial upstream portfolio while advancing the development of existing assets.

Notably, the company and its partners in Block 53, containing the prolific Mukhaizna heavy oil field, secured an amendment to the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA), extending the agreement by 15 years to 2050 under improved fiscal terms.

This extension is expected to enable the production of up to an additional 800 million gross barrels of oil.

In June, OQEP and its Block 47 partner, ENI Oman BV, secured an agreement with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to extend Phase 1 of Block 47 by six months from March 24, 2025, allowing for the drilling of an exploration well.

Furthermore, as part of its ongoing collaboration with the ministry, OQEP — alongside financial adviser Scotiabank — supported the marketing of Blocks 18, 36, 43A and 66 to attract new investment into Oman's exploration and production sector.

These blocks form part of the 15 blocks the ministry plans to promote during 2025 and 2026 with OQEP's continued assistance.

In addition, OQEP and Turkish Petroleum Corporation signed a Cooperation Agreement to explore new opportunities, followed by an exclusive agreement with the ministry to assess and evaluate selected blocks.

SHORT*TAKES*



The initiative includes a complimentary 50-point vehicle check.

MHD'S KHAREEF CHECK: PRE & POST SEASON SERVICE FOR YOUR JAGUAR AND LAND ROVER

MUSCAT: *MHD ACERE is delighted to announce the launch of the Khareef Check for Jaguar and Land Rover owners.*

Designed to ensure that your journey is both safe and unforgettable, the Khareef Check includes 2 services — a pre-Khareef check to make certain that your vehicle is prepared to handle the challenging rain-soaked terrains, misty and foggy trails; and muddy paths that define the iconic landscape of Dhofar Governorate and another check post the Khareef Dhofar Season, to test the condition and functionality of the vehicle to ensure you never stop discovering.

The Khareef Dhofar Season presents an opportunity to embark on an exceptional journey to Dhofar, to experience the lush, green beauty that transforms the region.

However, navigating these unique conditions demands your vehicle be in peak condition.

The Khareef Check initiative allows patrons to put their mind at ease, ensuring their vehicle is thoroughly inspected both before and after the season.

The initiative includes a complimentary 50-point vehicle check, comprising free fluid-top up of engine oil, coolant, steering oil, visual inspection of tyres, brakes, brake pads, suspension, coolant hosing system, transmission, battery, wiper blades, lights and more.

Thorough inspections by expert technicians assure peace of mind for Jaguar and Land Rover owners, allowing them to make the most of the season and what lies ahead.

In addition, customers can enjoy savings on necessary repairs and replacements using only genuine parts by availing up to 20% discount.

"At Jaguar Land Rover, we believe in creating unforgettable driving experiences and the Khareef Dhofar Season offers a unique opportunity to explore nature's beauty in its most lush and vibrant form. Our Khareef Check ensures that our customers can embark on these journeys with confidence, knowing their vehicles are prepared for the challenges ahead", remarked Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO MHD ACERE.

He also stated that, "We are committed to providing exceptional service and ensuring that every drive is a testament to the luxury and reliability that define our brand".

OMAN AIR PARTNERS WITH TURKISH AIRLINES TO ENHANCE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

MUSCAT: *Oman Air and Turkish Airlines have proudly announced a strategic Frequent Flyer Programme (FFP) Partnership to enhance the travel experience for their loyalty members from across the globe.*

With this partnership, members of each programme will access expanded mileage accrual opportunities across a broader global network.

As of August 1, 2025, Turkish Airlines connects members of Miles&Smiles, its 21+ Million member-strong loyalty programme, to Muscat, Salalah and Khasab in Oman; and across the Oman Air network.

In addition, members of Oman Air's loyalty programme, Sindbad, will gain access to Turkish Airlines' vast global network, with new earning opportunities across Türkiye, Europe, Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Americas.

"This latest loyalty agreement, part of our ongoing partnership, is a meaningful step in expanding the value of our Sindbad programme and strengthening Oman Air's international reach", adds Mike Rutter, Chief Commercial Officer at Oman Air.

"We look forward to offering our guests even more rewarding travel experiences around the world". "Miles&Smiles becomes even more accessible with this agreement", says Ahmet Olmuştur, Chief Commercial Officer at Turkish Airlines.

"This partnership opens doors for our leisure and business travellers, simplifying their global journeys and making each trip a remarkable story", he added.

BYD Seal 7 DM-i: Premium plug-in hybrid sedan

BYD's premium plug-in hybrid sedan, the BYD Seal 7 DM-i, takes the driving experience to new heights with outstanding performance and a striking profile. Powered by cutting-edge technology, BYD continues to win the hearts of automotive enthusiasts through its focus on safety, luxury and modern products.

The Seal 7 DM-i stands as a testament to BYD's commitment to delivering technology for a better life. Equipped with BYD's leading plug-in hybrid (PHEV) engine and the ultra-efficient DM-i 4.0 system, it offers remarkable fuel efficiency and an impressive driving range of up to 850 km.

With 265 horsepower and a 0–100 km/h acceleration time of just 7.9 seconds, it delivers thrilling performance alongside high-speed charging capabilities. Beyond its advanced engineering, the BYD Seal 7 DM-i is a true work of art. Inspired by the ocean, its interior features ripple-effect seat patterns that evoke the deep waves and calmness of the sea, defining a new generation of automotive aesthetics. Powered by a 1.5L turbocharged engine and supported by an advanced EHS system, the Seal 7 DM-i consumes just 1.5 litres of fuel per 75 km in pure electric mode (WLTC), or 6 litres in hybrid mode. Its 7kW charger ensures fast, efficient charging with improved heat dissipation for added safety and reliability in longer drives. Designed for the modern lifestyle of the consumers, the Seal 7 DM-i offers a smart, intuitive cockpit and intelligent driving features such as ventilated seats with 6-way power adjustments, a rotatable 12.8" Full LCD Instrument Panel with 6 speakers.



The Seal 7 DM-i stands as a testament to BYD's commitment to delivering technology for a better life.

Perfect for families seeking both practicality and excitement, it includes a range of safety and comfort technologies such as an Electronic Child Safety Lock and a green purification system, ensuring a cleaner and safer cabin environment.

The Seal 7 DM-i also delivers premium convenience and comfort with Dynaudio speakers, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity, a wireless charging pad and 31-colour ambient lighting to enhance your driving experience.

A spacious interior, generous 465L trunk capacity, smart power tailgate with sensors and wide-angle panoramic sunroof combine to offer both luxury and functionality.

OCCI COMMITTEE DISCUSSES UNIFIED INSURANCE POLICY

MUSCAT: The Finance and Insurance Committee of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), chaired by Mustafa bin Salman bin Ahmed, OCCI Board Member and Committee Head, discussed on Wednesday the latest developments regarding the unified insurance policy, which aims to standardise coverage and terms across insurance companies.

The meeting also reviewed the fees and charges imposed by banks on borrowers, stressing the importance of conducting a comprehensive study based on data and statistics from the Central Bank of Oman, particularly as around 80% of companies operating in the Omani market are classified as small and medium enterprises.



The meeting also reviewed the fees and charges imposed by banks on borrowers.

The meeting further examined the fees imposed by commercial banks on SME accounts.

The committee discussed a proposal to hold a joint seminar with the Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre to introduce the centre's services and its role in resolving financial disputes through commercial arbitration.

It also reviewed a proposal to organise a dialogue session to discuss financing challenges and personal loans that support the employment of Omanis in SMEs.

Additionally, the meeting considered a proposal for a training initiative for workers in the insurance sector, which would include short and long term programmes, as well as a professional diploma in insurance.

BankDhofar highlights benefits of its high yield savings account

MUSCAT: BankDhofar is reaffirming its commitment to providing exceptional value to its customers through its popular High Yield Savings Account, which offers customers one of the most competitive interest rates in the market — up to 4% per annum.

BankDhofar's High Yield Savings Account continues to stand out in the Omani market by offering highly competitive interest rates and seamless banking convenience designed to meet the evolving financial needs of individuals across the Sultanate of Oman.

This account is available to both Omani nationals and expatriates residing in Oman.

The account is ideal for individuals looking to maximise returns on their savings without restricting access to their funds. Interest is calculated on the daily end-of-day balance and credited to the account at the beginning of each month, making it suitable for both short- and long-term savings goals.



This account is available to both Omani nationals and expatriates residing in Oman.

In addition to offering a high return on savings, the account functions as a fully operational account, allowing customers to carry out everyday banking transactions through BankDhofar's mobile app, internet banking and nationwide branch network.

Customers also benefit from 24/7 access to their funds through ATMs and CDMs; and are provided with a debit card upon account opening. The account is compatible with BankDhofar's mobile app, where customers can monitor balances, manage transactions and control their debit card with ease.

Commenting on the product, Amjad bin Iqbal al Lawati , Chief Retail Banking Officer of BankDhofar said, "At BankDhofar, we understand that our customers are looking for smarter ways to save and manage their money.

The High Yield Savings Account is designed to meet these needs by combining flexibility with excellent returns.

It allows customers to earn more without sacrificing the convenience of everyday banking.

This account is a reflection of our long-term commitment to providing financial solutions that are practical, rewarding and aligned with the lifestyle of today's consumer".

To open a High Yield Savings Account, Omani nationals are required to present their civil ID, which may also serve as proof of address if the address on the card matches.

Expatriates must provide a valid passport copy, resident ID and proof of address such as a utility bill, lease agreement, employer letter, or bank statement. In addition, proof of permanent address may be requested, which can also be verified through documents like a passport, bank statement, or utility bill.

This account exemplifies BankDhofar's dedication to providing robust and customer-centric financial solutions that cater to the diverse needs of the Omani community.

SHORTTAKES



The event brought together decision-makers, innovators and specialists to examine transformative trends and solutions in the energy sector and smart facilities management.

Salalah seminar explores future of sustainable energy and smart facilities

SALALAH: *The Dhofar branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in collaboration with Global Chemical Systems and Maintenance Limited, hosted an economic seminar in Salalah on "The Future of Sustainable Energy and Facilities Management."*

The event brought together decision-makers, innovators and specialists to examine transformative trends and solutions in the energy sector and smart facilities management.

Held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, the seminar featured speeches from sector leaders.

Ghazi bin Said al Hamar, Director of OCCI's Dhofar branch, stressed that renewable energy and smart facilities management are now key pillars for energy security and resource sustainability.

He described the seminar as a platform for exchanging best practices, addressing challenges and formulating practical recommendations.

Eng Shawqi bin Noor Mohammed al Balushi, Adviser to Global Chemical Systems and Maintenance Limited, highlighted the crucial role of sustainable energy in developing a strong, balanced and cost-efficient economy, noting its alignment with the green transition goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The programme covered five key themes: renewable energy transition, smart facility management, innovation in infrastructure, enabling policies and legislation, and future challenges and opportunities in sustainable energy. Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Asyad Group, Oman Water Association, Felix Pharmaceutical Industries and several academic institutions.

The seminar aimed to enhance partnerships with scientific and service institutions, showcase the latest innovations in energy, water and facilities management and promote operational efficiency in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the target of net-zero emissions by 2050. ***— ONA***

Oman Oil price reaches $67.36/barrel

MUSCAT: *The official price of Oman oil for October delivery reached $67.36 on Wednesday. The price of Oman oil on Wednesday decreased by $1.10 compared to Tuesday's price of $68.46.*

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for August delivery reached $69.37 per barrel, an increase of $5.75 compared to the price for July delivery.

Meanwhile, international oil prices edged lower on Wednesday after the IEA noted supply overtaking demand this year, while investors awaited Friday's meeting between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. ***— Agencies***

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE INDEX CLOSES 0.14 PER CENT UP

MUSCAT: *The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 Index closed on Wednesday at 4,900.31 points, up 6.7 points, or 0.14 per cent, compared to the last trading session's close of 4,893.61 points.*

Trading value reached RO 21,309,851, a decrease of 24.9 per cent compared to the last trading session's value of RO 28,393,583.

A report issued by the MSX indicated that market capitalisation decreased by 0.018 per cent compared to the last trading day, reaching approximately RO 29.56 billion.

The value of non-Omani purchases on the stock exchange amounted to RO 548,000, representing 2.57 per cent, while the value of non-Omani sales amounted to RO 1,875,000, representing 8.80 per cent.

Net non-Omani investment decreased by RO 1,327,000, representing 6.23 per cent. ***— ONA***



The trading value on Wednesday reached RO 21,309,851.

Oman can leverage AI to boost transparency

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 13

SECURE and targeted use of artificial intelligence can help Oman's government and private sector enhance transparency, performance and citizen engagement, according to Jennifer McGinty, founder and director of McGinty Consulting.

On her first visit to Oman, McGinty spoke at the Labour Forum 2025, organised by the Ministry of Labour, on how AI can be used effectively and safely.

She said her aim was to introduce employees to practical tools while stressing the importance of data security. "I have a lot of experience working with large private companies such as Indeed, Bain & Company, Deloitte and USAID, which excel in using AI tools.

But I've noticed that in the Middle East, North Africa and even the US, government agencies are far behind," she told the Observer.



Oman's Vision 2040 offers an excellent opportunity to use digital platforms to connect young people with government programmes: Jennifer McGinty

"If they are using AI tools, they are often not using them in a safe and secure way.

Some are putting proprietary information — private data about citizens and their governments — into public AI platforms that are not securely stored." McGinty said Oman's Vision 2040 — particularly its focus on youth employment — offers an excellent opportunity to use digital platforms to connect young people with government programmes.

"Oman has a great opportunity to use these AI tools to communicate directly with citizens — through emails, public platforms, or social media," she said.

"I hope the Ministry of Labour will take some of these tools and use them to improve communication." For decision-makers, especially in AI departments across ministries and in the private sector, she recommended starting with a needs-based or baseline study.

"You have to understand what employees are spending their time on and where they need help.

Without that, you risk buying 20 different AI tools, and people will only use one or two — which is a waste of money," she explained.

Praising Oman as "one of the most hospitable places" she has visited, McGinty added: "People here are so respectful, much more than in many other countries I've been to. I'm very impressed."

OQEP REPORTS RO 317.4 MILLION HALF-YEAR EBITDA

MUSCAT: OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) posted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of RO 317.4 million ($825.6 million) for the first half of 2025, with revenue of RO 428.1 million ($1.1 billion), according to its audited results.

Adjusted cash flow from operations rose 20 per cent to RO 289.2 million, while return on capital employed reached 24.4 per cent (25.8 per cent in Q2). The cash balance increased by 31 per cent year-on-year.

The Board recommended basic quarterly dividends of RO 57.7 million for the second and third quarters of 2025, and a performance-linked H1 dividend of RO 44.2 million, to be paid in September and November.

Operationally, average daily output was 222.3 thousand barrels of oil equivalent (kboe/d). Strategic projects advanced, including the early commissioning of the Basat C expansion, extension of the Block 53 exploration and production agreement to 2050, and the start of construction at the Marsa LNG project in Suhar.



Adjusted cash flow from operations rose 20 per cent to RO 289.2 million.

CEO Eng Ahmed bin Said al Azkawi said performance was strong despite softer oil prices, driven by higher sales volumes and efficiency gains, and reaffirmed OQEP's commitment to growth in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Average daily volumes comprised 120.1 thousand barrels of oil and condensates and 102.3 thousand barrels of gas. The Basat C expansion added 37 thousand barrels per day of processing capacity, improved production facilities and increased well tie-in capacity. The Block 53 agreement extension adds an estimated 800 million barrels of oil to future output.

The $1.6 billion Marsa LNG project with TotalEnergies will be among the lowest-carbon LNG terminals globally.

New exploration agreements with Genel Energy and Turkish Petroleum Corporation cover promising concessions, with drilling planned in Blocks 54, 47 and 11. Up to $25 million will be invested over three years.

Additional concessions (18, 36, 43A, 66 and 15) will be marketed through 2025–2026 to attract foreign investment, keeping production between 220,000 and 230,000 boe/d, while tightly managing costs. **— ONA**

STABLE OUTLOOK

Moody's upgrades Pakistan's credit rating



Moody's upgraded Pakistan's credit rating to 'Caa1' from 'Caa2' with a stable outlook, citing an improved external financial position. The move followed Finance Minister Mohammed Aurangzeb's remarks on possible rate cuts from 11% amid positive indicators.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called the upgrade proof that policies are on the right track, reflecting growing investor confidence. ***— Reuters***

WEAKER GROWTH

IEA cuts crude oil demand forecast



The International Energy Agency (IEA) lowered its 2025 crude oil demand forecast by 680,000 bpd increase, down from 700,000, blaming weaker global growth and uncertainty.

IEA's latest monthly report contrasts with OPEC's outlook, which projects stronger growth. The revision reflects concerns over slower economic expansion in major economies and potential market instability. ***— dpa***

CREDIT CONTRACTION

China loans slump for first time in 20 years



China's new yuan loans fell in July for the first time in 20 years, well below forecasts, signalling weak private sector demand despite seasonal declines after June's gains.

Broader credit growth improved, suggesting the central bank may not rush to ease policy. ANZ strategist Xing Zhaopeng cited last year's low base and debt resolution as factors behind stronger money supply. ***— Reuters***

Food security: A pillar of stability amid global challenges



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI.

THE Sultanate of Oman has witnessed significant improvements in several food and nutrition security indicators over the past few years, as highlighted by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources when reviewing this issue at the Second United Nations Food Systems Assessment Summit, held recently in Ethiopia.

Like other countries, Oman is working to develop strategies to enhance local food production, diversify supply chains, ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, and combat malnutrition.

These strategies include several aspects, including the development of a national strategy for food security, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, an environment and natural resources strategy, and a strategy for genetic diversity of local animals.

Oman currently ranks high in the Food Security Index, ranking third in the Arab world and thirty-fifth globally in this index for 2022.

This places it ahead of many Arab countries in this regard, along with its ongoing efforts to protect the environment, promote sustainability, reduce pollution, and efficiently manage natural resources.

The state is also committed to improving the quality of life by offering products free of negative effects, promoting health prevention, and raising public health indicators.

This is in addition to its great interest in water resources and their daily uses.

The importance of food security for Oman and Arab countries lies in its role as one of the fundamental pillars for achieving economic, social, and political stability in light of global challenges such as climate change, geopolitical crises, and fluctuations in global food prices.

Achieving food security contributes to reducing social and political tensions resulting from food scarcity or rising prices.

It also achieves sustainable development, as providing food contributes to improving population health and increasing productivity, which is reflected in economic growth.

It also reduces heavy reliance on food imports, especially when countries are exposed to external shocks, thereby supporting national security, especially during times of crisis or war.

We are well aware that agriculture and achieving food security require the provision of natural resources, such as fresh water, which is one of the obstacles in the region, limiting agricultural expansion.

This drives the region to a heavy reliance on imports, with more than 80-90% of food imported in many Arab countries, exposing them to global market risks.

Today, this requires reduced investment in agricultural technology and a reliance on modern technologies such as smart agriculture, along with drip irrigation and vertical farming.

Like other countries, Oman is working to develop strategies to enhance local food production, diversify supply chains, ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, and combat malnutrition.

This is in addition to providing integrated local supply chains for storage, transportation, and distribution infrastructure, so that the lack of savings in these methods does not lead to significant losses in agricultural production.

Other challenges today include creating sustainable development policies for the agricultural sector, long-term strategic planning, and addressing issues affected by climate change.

All countries in the region are working to enhance food security by developing local agriculture and supporting farmers, improving productivity, providing loans and technologies, expanding modern agriculture, recycling water, and building strategic food reserves by encouraging investment in food security and supporting cooperation between government institutions, the private sector, and international partnerships.

These countries have made significant strides in enhancing food security in recent years, but challenges remain, especially in light of scarce natural resources and reliance on imports.

Finally, working to provide food and investing in this field enhances the capabilities of agricultural communities and provides job opportunities for many national cadres.

GOLD TARIFF SAGA FITS WITH TRADER-UNFRIENDLY TREND

GEORGE HAY

***Gold** enthusiasts' wild tariff ride appears to be over. On Monday, President Donald Trump confirmed that imports of the precious metal from Switzerland into the United States would not face tariffs, after a five-day wild goose chase where it looked like they might.*

That's a clear positive, but the rumpus fits into a wider trend that's ultimately unhelpful for traders.

Applying the 39% tariff on US imports of Swiss goods to 1 kilogramme bricks of gold never made much sense. The US futures contract traded on the New York Commodity Exchange (Comex) is a key metric for investors to hedge exposure to the London spot price of the metal. Making that more expensive might have therefore encouraged this to happen elsewhere – the spread of the Comex contract over that of London jumped to over $100 an ounce between last Tuesday and last Friday.

Applying the 39% tariff on US imports of Swiss goods to 1 kilogramme bricks of gold never made much sense. The US futures contract traded on the New York Commodity Exchange (Comex) is a key metric for investors to hedge exposure to the London spot price of the metal.

On the face of it, the kerfuffle seems to have been a labelling oversight rather than an intentional slap. Either way, it's far from the first commodities upheaval this year.

Late last month Trump unveiled a 50% tariff on copper pipes and wiring but exempted less refined versions of the red metal, prompting Comex copper prices to slump 20%.

Earlier this year, huge amounts of both copper and gold flowed into the US ahead of the assumed tariffs, only for Trump to change his mind on how they would be implemented.

Normally, large traders like $47 billion Glencore and privately held Trafigura and Vitol like the volatility created by market dislocations.

Amid supply chain upheavals during the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, they could use their global logistical networks to exploit price arbitrages around the world. That year, for instance, Vitol's turnover nearly doubled to over $500 billion.

Glencore had a decent first half trading metals. But operating profit in its energy and steelmaking coal division dropped from $326 million to $40 million year-on-year.

Among other challenges, boss Gary Nagle pointedly commented that a situation in which "tariffs are being announced on Monday, changing on Tuesday, and being scrapped on Wednesday" did not necessarily provide the "structural arbitrage opportunities" that traders find lucrative. ***— Reuters***

European Union's flawed investment strategy

LAST year, former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi produced a landmark report on the future of European competitiveness, in which he recommended that the European Union increase annual investment by more than €800 billion ($930 billion) – the equivalent of more than 4% of its GDP. This report has now become the intellectual foundation for an ambitious strategy to revitalise growth in Europe. But Europe should be careful what it wishes for. As Japan has shown, investment is no panacea.

The idea that more investment is the key to economic success is a potent one in Europe. The so-called Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000, sought to increase investment in research and development to 3% of GDP.

That target has remained on the official EU agenda for a quarter-century, but has never been reached. In 2015, the European Commission added another investment goal: its Investment Plan for Europe sought to mobilise €315 billion in additional investment within three years, in order to increase competitiveness and long-term growth.

But investment has not saved Japan from several decades of stagnation. Since 1970, Japan's gross fixed capital formation has averaged – and, often, significantly exceeded – 30% of GDP. That is much higher than not only the EU average, but also the rate in Germany, the EU's strongest economy, where gross fixed capital formation has hovered around 23% of GDP.

The four-percentage-point difference between the most recent values (26% in Japan, and 22% in both Germany and the EU) amounts to about €800 billion annually – exactly the amount Draghi recommends adding to total EU investment. Of course, the type of investment matters.

Whereas investment in new machinery leads to diminishing returns once a company has enough capacity to serve the market, investing in new ideas should theoretically be bound by no such constraints. But if one singles out R&D investment, Japan performs even better.



Flags are seen behind the logo of the European Investment Bank, pictured in the city of Luxembourg, Luxembourg. ***— Reuters***



DANIEL GROS

The writer is Director of the Institute for European Policymaking at Bocconi University.

In 2000, when the EU set its Lisbon Strategy target, Japan was already investing nearly 3% of its GDP in R&D – a rate it has maintained over the last 25 years, compared to the EU's average of 2%.

And yet, despite impressive rates of investment in fixed capital and R&D, Japan's economy weakened over the last quarter-century. In the 1980s and 1990s, Japan boasted the world's second-largest economy, powered by a manufacturing sector that seemed unbeatable.

Now, Japan is the world's fourth-largest economy, having recently fallen behind Germany despite having a much larger population (120 million, compared to 80 million), owing partly to yen depreciation.

One might argue that this is an unfair comparison, because evaluating an economy at current exchange rates, without accounting for inflation differentials, does not adequately reflect the quality of life. But if one looks at per capita income at purchasing power parity, Japan was at rough parity with Germany 20 years ago, and is now doing worse than Italy.

In any case, exchange rates are not irrelevant, at least politically: The Japanese are well aware of their declining purchasing power when they travel abroad, and they undoubtedly notice foreign tourists flaunting their purchasing power in Japan. This may have helped to create fertile ground for the far right.

So, what explains Japan's economic underperformance?

The answer is not unfavourable demographics. In fact, Japan's population is not shrinking nearly as fast as conventional wisdom suggests, having fallen since the turn of the century by only three million, to just under 124 million last year, with employment increasing by ten percentage points.

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OMAN OFFERS RO 75 MILLION DEVELOPMENT BONDS FOR SUBSCRIPTION



THE Central Bank of Oman (CBO), acting on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, has announced the launch of Issue No 76 of Government Development Bonds, worth RO 75 million, with the option to increase by up to RO 15 million. The bonds carry a five-year maturity and a 4.35% annual coupon rate.

Bidding opened on August 13 and will close on August 19, 2025, with the competitive auction set for August 20. Settlement will take place on August 24, and interest will be paid semi-annually on February 24 and August 24 until maturity on August 24, 2030.

The offer is open to investors of all nationalities, both in and outside Oman, via competitive bidding only. Applications must be submitted through commercial banks.

Non-banking institutions and individuals may also participate directly if subscribing for RO 1 million or more, subject to bank approval.

Prospective investors must obtain an investor number from the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company's website (www.mcd.om) or the "Oman Shares" app at least one day before applying.

Prospectuses and subscription forms are available on the CBO and Ministry of Finance websites and social media channels.

The bonds carry the full, unconditional guarantee of the Government of Oman, can be used as collateral with licensed banks, and are tradable on the Muscat Stock Exchange at prevailing market prices.

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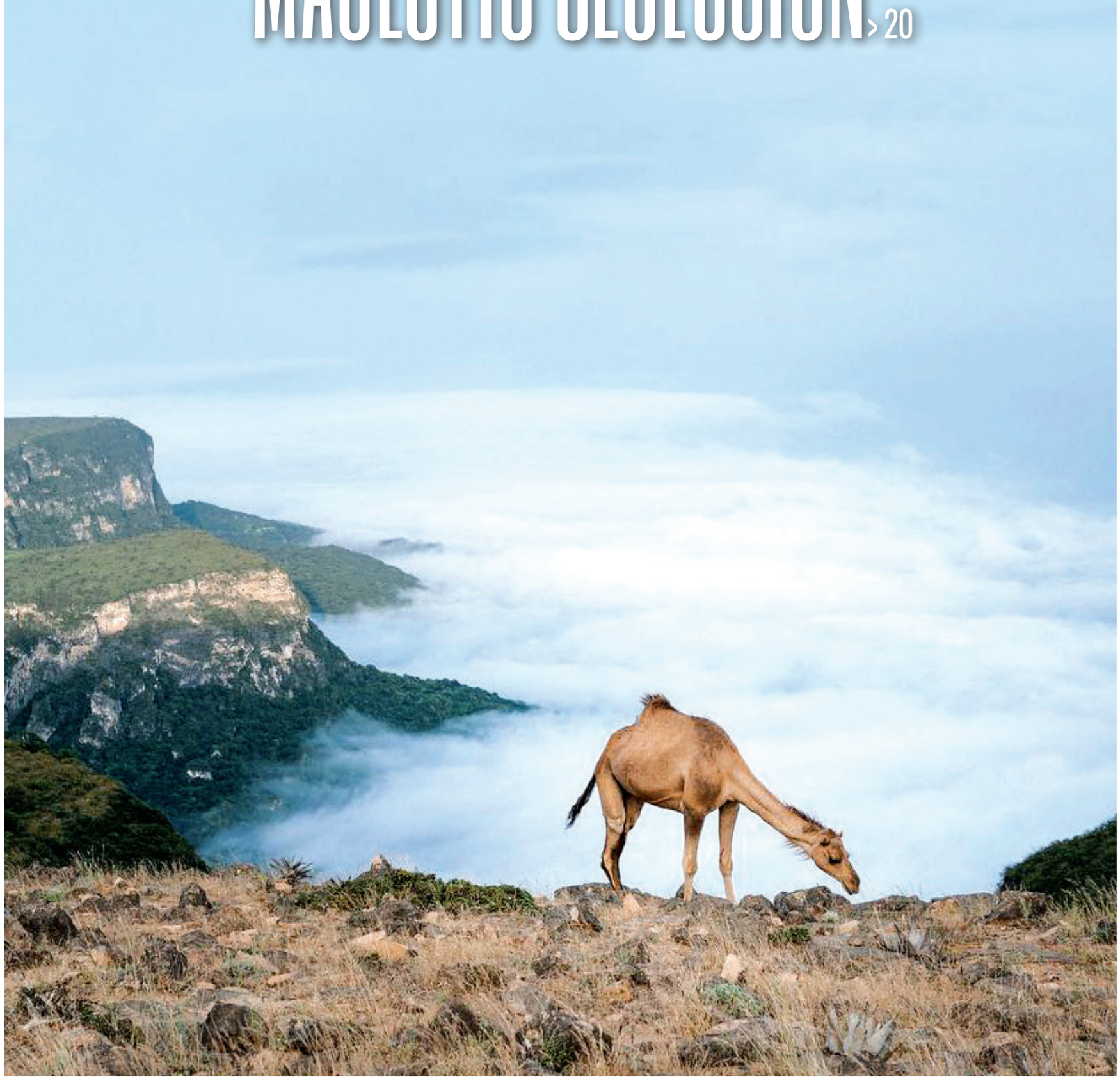
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TRAVEL

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> 20



CHANGING WORLD

Does taking and sharing photos enhance the enjoyment of travel?



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
The writer is a Senior Editor at Oman Daily Observer.

THE DEBATE over whether taking photos and videos whilst travelling enhances or detracts from the experience is complex, with valid arguments on both sides. Some argue that constant documentation pulls individuals away from the present moment, while others contend that it deepens engagement with friends and family to see their whereabouts.

Many travellers find that the act of photography encourages them to observe their surroundings more closely, leading to a heightened appreciation of details they might otherwise miss. This engagement can foster a more meaningful connection with the place and its culture.

Conversely, a significant concern is that excessive focus on capturing the perfect shot can divert attention from the immediate experience. This distraction can diminish the overall enjoyment of a trip, as individuals may spend more time worrying about sharing the right picture rather than immersing themselves in the moment.

For example, my friend's cousin, who recently returned from a trip, told me he was feeling stressed by the need to share more than 20 photos with his family group daily, realising he wasn't truly enjoying anything anymore. I may be mistaken, but honestly, I confronted him by telling him that 'pleasing others or showing off' is a consequence of him not enjoying his trip.

Additionally, the pressure to create 'Instagrammable' content can lead to choosing destinations based on their visual appeal rather than genuine interest, and even staging moments for social media rather than experiencing them authentically. This phenomenon is especially common among younger generations. Some travellers even report feeling depressed during trips due to the constant pressure of taking photos for blogs, neglecting to enjoy the real moments. I call this utter madness.

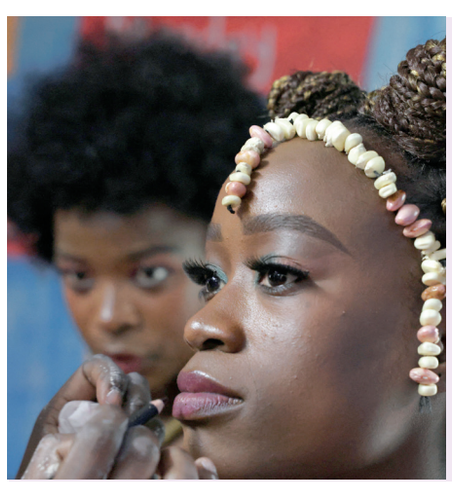
Ultimately, finding a balance between documenting and experiencing is essential. Consciously deciding the purpose of a photo – whether for artistic expression or memory preservation – can help travellers be more selective.

Instead of 'machine-gunning' hundreds of photos, taking a few carefully considered pictures or short videos can be more effective for memory recall without sacrificing the present moment. Opting for fewer, higher-quality images and videos is key to enjoying your trip.

The convenience of smartphone cameras, which are less cumbersome than traditional equipment, also allows for more spontaneous capture without significant distraction. The aim should be to use photography as a tool to enhance, not replace, the travel experience, ensuring that memories are both captured and genuinely lived.

Until next time, enjoy your trip and stop worrying about sharing your photos and videos with others.

QUICK FEATURES



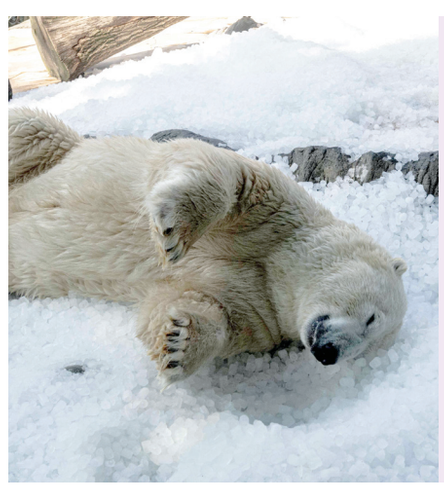
LIFESTYLE

Queenfrey Fideliah 21, a Kenyan model, applies make-up at backstage during the Mr and Miss Kibera leadership contest 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya. — Reuters



FILM

US actress Rhea Seehorn attends the premiere of Universal's "Nobody 2" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California. —AFP



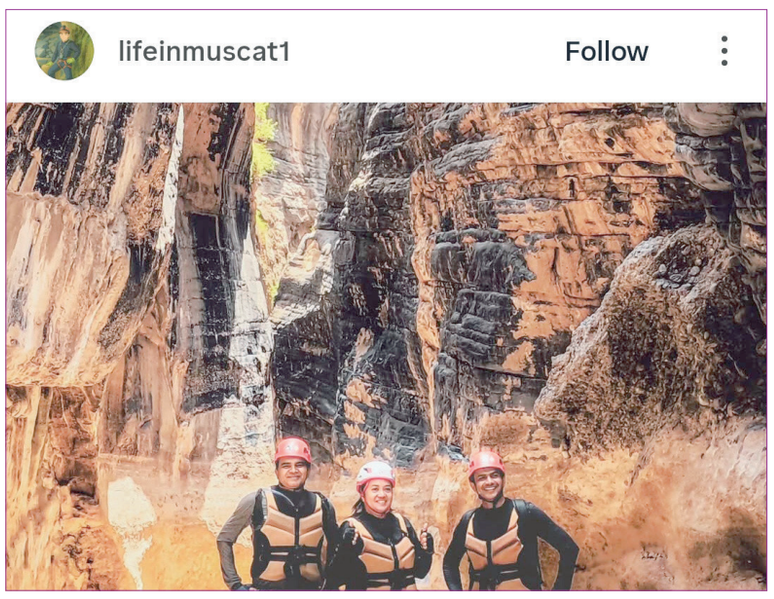
ANIMAL PLANET

A polar bear cools down on ice cubes in its enclosure on August 13, 2025, at the Prague zoo as temperatures reached 32 degrees Celsius. —AFP

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Taylor Swift announces 12th studio album 'The Life Of A Showgirl'



TAYLOR SWIFT has announced her 12th studio album, "The Life Of A Showgirl," during her boyfriend Travis Kelce's podcast.

There is no confirmed release date, but it has been made available for pre-order and will be sent out by October 13, according to the UK singer's website, which had a countdown timer that expired on Tuesday.

Swift appeared in a clip with her NFL star boyfriend Kelce and his brother Jason, a former NFL player, on their "New Heights" podcast, where she opened a briefcase with "TS" printed on it, which contained the album but with its cover blurred out.

In the clip, she told the brothers: "So I wanted to show you something, this is my brand new album, 'The Life Of A Showgirl.'"

The brothers screamed and Travis shouted "TS 12."

"The Life Of A Showgirl" is Swift's first album since she announced she had regained control over her back catalogue and purchased the rights to all of her concert films, music videos, album art and photography, as well as her unreleased songs.

The pop star has been re-recording her first six albums and releasing them as "Taylor's Version," following a dispute with retired talent manager Scooter Braun after he acquired the back catalogue when he bought Swift's former label.

Her master copies were then sold in a deal with Shamrock Capital, before Swift bought them back from the company in May. Her 12th album follows 2024's "The Tortured Poets Department" and comes after Swift's billion-dollar, record-breaking Eras Tour ended in December.

She made history last summer when the tour became the highest-grossing of all time, and Swift became the first solo artist to perform at London's Wembley Stadium eight times on a single tour. — PA Media/dpa



Scientific Breakthrough Offers Sustainable Soil Solutions for Desert Areas

BY YERU EBUEN

IN THE arid soils of regions like Oman, where salinity levels are high, organic matter is scarce, and water resources are limited, conventional farming practices often struggle to deliver sustainable yields. However, emerging scientific research offers new hope, emphasising the importance of underground microbial communities and their dynamic interactions with plant roots.

A recent study published in the journal Science — one of the world's most respected scientific publications — provides fresh insights into how harnessing these subterranean relationships could revolutionise agriculture in such challenging environments. The research, a collaborative effort involving scientists from the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and international institutions, explores the complex feedback mechanisms between plants and soil microbes. It calls for a shift towards ecologically informed practices that go beyond traditional methods, with a focus on restoring soil vitality and resilience.

The study was developed over a year through the combined expertise of five scientists, including Dr John Klironomos, Professor of Biology, Chemistry and Environmental Sciences at AUS, alongside colleagues from China and the Netherlands. Their research centres on plant – soil feedback: the understanding that plants influence the microbial composition beneath their roots through chemical signals, which in turn affect plant health, nutrient uptake, water access and disease resistance. When managed correctly, these interactions can significantly bolster crop productivity and sustainability.

For countries such as Oman — where agriculture often depends on limited groundwater and is



threatened by soil degradation — the implications are profound. Implementing microbial inoculants — beneficial bacteria and fungi introduced into the soil — along with natural biostimulants could enhance the growth of staple crops like dates and vegetables, even under extreme soil conditions.

"Plants and microbes have always interacted," said Dr Klironomos. "The real breakthrough lies in actively managing these relationships to support long-term soil health, rather than just focusing on immediate yields."

In Oman, where desert soils are inherently fragile, adopting such practices could mark a significant step forward. By integrating ecological principles — such as crop rotation, intercropping and reduced tillage — with microbiome management, farmers could revitalise degraded land, reduce dependence on chemical inputs and build resilience against climate stress.

The study also highlights advances in molecular biology, including identifying the genes involved in root-microbe communication. These discoveries pave the way for breeding crop varieties optimised to interact more effectively with soil microbes, further enhancing sustainable production systems.

To facilitate wider adoption of these innovative approaches, AUS has established the Sharjah Sustainable Agriculture Research Group, which brings together experts from soil ecology, environmental science and biotechnology. While primarily based in the UAE, the group's expertise and findings are highly relevant to neighbouring countries like Oman, where arid conditions dominate and sustainable land management is urgently needed.

At its core, the research advocates a cultural shift: recognising soil not merely as inert ground, but as a living, breathing ecosystem that responds dynamically to human intervention. Embracing this perspective could enable Oman and similar nations to develop agricultural systems that are not only productive but also resilient to climate change and capable of conserving biodiversity.

The full findings are detailed in the paper 'Steering Plant–Soil Feedback for Sustainable Agriculture,' published in the July 2025 edition of Science.







GO BEYOND THE TOURIST TRAIL INTO SARFAIT'S MAJESTIC SECLUSION

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED TABOOK

A REMOTE enclave in Oman's Dhofar region offers a profound retreat from the modern world, embodying untouched natural beauty and quiet reflection. Sarfait, situated on the outskirts of Salalah in the largely inaccessible far west of Dhofar, remains largely off the tourist radar — a pristine landscape where clouds seem to cleanse the spirit.

The journey from Salalah to Sarfait covers less than 50 kilometres but feels like traversing between different realms. The route begins across gentle plains before spiralling into the mountains along what is renowned as 'Sarfait Road', one of Oman's most scenic drives. The winding ascent skirts rugged cliffs and is frequently shrouded in thick fog, creating the illusion of driving through the sky itself.

Upon reaching Sarfait, visitors are greeted not by crowds or commercialisation but by clean mountain air and the earthy aroma of rain-washed soil. With its elevation offering sweeping views of the Arabian Sea — jagged peaks meeting endless blue horizons — the landscape feels both limitless and timeless. During the khareef (monsoon) season, the area transforms into a living watercolour, where mists drape the greenery and gentle rains breathe new life into the environment.

Surrounding Sarfait are other natural marvels. Al Mughsail Beach to the east boasts dramatic rock arches and blowholes that spout sea spray high into the air. Close by, Al Fazayah Beach offers secluded, pristine sands and turquoise waters, perfect for solitude. From the clifftops, observers can watch the ocean dissolve into the fog, creating a scene that feels ethereal and eternal.

Sarfait's appeal extends well beyond scenery. Its rugged trails invite hikers to explore, while its quiet coves and ridges provide ideal spots for camping or contemplative solitude. Here, visitors reconnect with nature and themselves, away from the noise and heat of urban life.

The region also acts as a gateway to other noteworthy destinations. Less than an hour away lies Wadi Darbat, renowned for seasonal waterfalls, lakes and boat rides. To the north, Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve protects rare flora and fauna, including the endangered Arabian leopard. Additionally, archaeological sites such as Al Baleed and Khor Rori — historic ports linked to the ancient frankincense trade — are within reach for those interested in Oman's rich history.

What sets Sarfait apart from other Dhofar destinations is its unspoiled authenticity. There are no cafés, no busy resorts, no crowds — only an unadulterated patch of earth where nature rests quietly. It is not suited to hurried visits but calls instead for an immersive experience: sitting atop a rock, watching clouds drift by, attuning oneself to the rhythms of wind and water.

Capturing Sarfait's essence in photographs proves challenging; its true beauty resides in feelings: the crispness of the mountain air, the dim light filtering through leaves, the silence that amplifies one's heartbeat. Once visited, many find themselves longing to return, drawn back by an irresistible sense of serenity. In a world obsessed with destinations offering the latest amenities, Sarfait reminds travellers that authentic experiences are rooted in nature's untouched purity. It stands as a stark reminder: sometimes, the most profound journeys are those that pause and listen.

Visitors are advised to exercise caution near military zones, especially along the Oman-Yemen border, where strict rules apply regarding photography and access.