

OMAN
عمان
DAILY

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SUNRISE 05:44 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:25 AM

DHUHR 12:16 PM

ASR 03:42 PM

MAGHRIB 06:43 PM

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12

Overcast skies until Friday, rain unlikely

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, AUG 18

The satellite images, on Monday, indicated low clouds or fog, dust suspension, cloud condensation, stratus clouds and cumulus cells influencing the weather conditions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dhofar is currently experiencing the influence of the monsoon, which has been intensified by the Easterly Trough. In contrast, Al Hajar Mountains and surrounding areas have seen the impact of local cloud formations, while other parts of the northern governorates have been affected by the Easterly Trough.

Muscat is not expected to receive rainfall, but it will experience overcast skies due to the trough until Friday. Meteorologist Younis al Riyami explained that the Easterly Trough is originating from India and Pakistan, with its effects reaching the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, Oman, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Al Riyami stated, “The impacts of the trough can be observed across Al Hajar Mountains and the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar, as well as parts of Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South governorates. Other areas may also receive isolated rain. Al Wusta has been significantly affected by the downdraft wind, which could impact horizontal visibility.” There is a concern for Al Wusta as it is a popular route to Salalah.

Tourist dies in Jabal Samhan; caution urged

MIRBAT: A tourist died after slipping from a steep slope while mountain climbing on Jabal Samhan in the Wilayat of Mirbat, the Oman Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said.

Rescue and ambulance teams in Dhofar, supported by local citizens, attended the scene, but the victim sustained severe injuries that proved fatal, according to the authority. Further details were not immediately available. CDAA called on citizens, residents and visitors to exercise extreme caution in mountainous and high-altitude areas — especially during the khareef season when trails are slick and the risk of falls rises — and to follow safety guidance at all times.

DEAL OR NO DEAL?



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Donald Trump shake hands during a meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on Monday. **SEE ALSO P7**

‘Skibidi’, ‘tradwife’: Trendy words added to Cambridge dictionary

LONDON: Words popularised by Gen Z and Gen Alpha including “skibidi”, “delulu”, and “tradwife” are among 6,000 new entries to the online edition of the Cambridge Dictionary over the last year, its publisher said on Monday.

Cambridge University Press said tradwife, a portmanteau of traditional wife, reflected “a growing, controversial Instagram and TikTok trend that embrace traditional gender roles”. The dictionary also took on the challenge of defining skibidi, a word

popularised in online memes, as a term which had “different meanings such as cool or bad, or can be used with no real meaning”.

The gibberish word was spread by a YouTube channel called “Skibidi Toilet” and is associated with the mindless, “brain-rot” content found on social media and consumed by Gen Alpha’s overwhelmingly digital lifestyle. The dictionary defined delulu, derived from the word delusional, as “believing things that are not real or true, usually because you choose to”.



Other new phrases include “inspo”, “mouse jigglers” and “forever chemical” added to the Cambridge dictionary

As an example, it cited a 2025 speech in parliament where Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese used the phrase “delulu with no solulu”.

“It’s not every day you get to see words like skibidi and delulu make their way into the Cambridge Dictionary,” said Colin McIntosh, Lexical Programme manager at the Cambridge Dictionary.

“We only add words where we think they’ll have staying power. Internet culture is changing the English language and the effect is fascinating to

observe and capture in the Dictionary.” “Inspo” is a new phrase which is short for inspiration.

Work from home culture has given rise to “mouse jigglers”, referring to a way to pretend to work when you are not.

There is also “forever chemical”, man-made chemicals that stay in the environment for years and have gained traction as concerns grow about the irreversible impact of climate change on the health of humans and the planet.

— AFP



RAZAT ROYAL FARM OPENS TO VISITORS

Razat Royal Farm in Salalah has begun welcoming visitors on Monday. It offers an opportunity to explore the farm’s diverse agricultural spaces, tropical and ancient trees and various farm products, establishing it as a comprehensive tourist destination managed with precise technical and scientific standards.

REPORT ON P4

HAMAS ACCEPTS NEW GAZA TRUCE PLAN

THE DEAL PROPOSED AN INITIAL 60-DAY TRUCE, PARTIAL HOSTAGE RELEASE, RELEASE OF SOME PALESTINIAN PRISONERS AND PROVISIONS TO ALLOW FOR THE ENTRY OF AID

HAMAS has accepted a new ceasefire proposal for Gaza, a senior member of the group said on Monday, after a fresh diplomatic push to end more than 22 months of war.

Mediators Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, have struggled to secure a lasting truce in the conflict, which has triggered a dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

But after receiving a new proposal from mediators, Hamas said it was ready for talks. “The movement has submitted its response, agreeing to the mediators’ new proposal. We pray to God to extinguish the fire of this war on our people,” senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said on Facebook.

Earlier, a Hamas source said that the group accepted the proposal “without requesting any amendments”.

Egypt said it and Qatar had sent the new proposal to Israel, adding “the ball is now in its court”. Israel has yet to respond.

A Palestinian source familiar with the talks said mediators were “expected to announce that an agreement has been reached and set a date for the resumption of talks”, adding guarantees were offered to ensure implementation and pursue a permanent solution. According to a report in Egyptian state-linked media Al Qahera, the deal proposed an initial 60-day truce, partial hostage release, release of some



Palestinians gather to receive cooked meals from a food distribution centre in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on Monday. — **AFP**

Palestinian prisoners and provisions to allow for the entry of aid.

The proposal comes more than a week after Israel’s security cabinet approved plans to expand the war into Gaza City and nearby refugee camps, which has sparked international outcry as well as domestic opposition. Out of 251 hostages taken during Hamas’s October 2023 attack that triggered the war, 49 are still held in Gaza including 27, the Israeli military says, are dead. Alluding to the dire humanitarian

conditions for the more than two million people living in the Gaza Strip, where UN agencies and aid groups have warned of famine, Abdelatty stressed the urgency of reaching an agreement.

“The current situation on the ground is beyond imagination,” he said.

Egypt said on Monday it was willing to join a potential international force deployed to Gaza, but only if backed by a UN Security Council resolution and accompanied by a “political horizon”.

— **AFP** **SEE ALSO P6**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The partnership focuses on exchanging expertise and transferring technology. — ONA

OMAN, EGYPT SIGN ENERGY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

CAIRO: The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Cairo witnessed the signing of an Omani-Egyptian private-sector partnership agreement in the energy field.

The partnership focuses on exchanging expertise, transferring technology and developing high-quality products in line with the highest environmental standards, serving local, regional and international markets.

Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of Oman to Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League, affirmed: “We continue working to translate our shared history into tangible economic and developmental partnerships that serve the aspirations of both nations and drive sustainable development within a strategic framework that fosters innovation and enhances added value.” This partnership paves the way for further cooperation, joint projects, and contributions in delivering innovative solutions to support the infrastructure of the two countries. — ONA

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: A symposium on the challenges of climate change on resources in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar was held on Monday, titled “Dams in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and their Impact on the Sustainability of Water Resources.”

The symposium was organised by the Oman Water Society under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. He emphasised that water represents a strategic axis for sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman, noting that its management is directly linked to the future of economic, social and environmental development, especially in light of the challenges posed by climate change. He added that choosing Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to host this symposium reflects the wilayat’s importance due to its environmental, agricultural and tourism diversity, which makes it a model for finding innovative solutions that enhance water security and achieve the sustainability of natural resources.

He pointed out that the organisation of this symposium aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which made the sustainability of natural resources a fundamental pillar of its development project. He stressed the importance of benefiting from successful experiences and the outcomes of discussions and recommendations to transform them into practical policies and executable procedures. — ONA

ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES AMBASSADORS OF UAE, SENEGAL

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, on Monday, received in his office Shaikh Mohammed bin Maktoum al Maktoum, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the deep-rooted historical bilateral relations, while affirming the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation and joint coordination to achieve the aspirations of the leadership of the two countries.

Gen Al Numani also received Ibrahima Seck, Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting addressed the existing relations between the two friendly countries and discussed areas of joint cooperation and ways to enhance them in various fields.

For his part, the Senegalese Ambassador



The meetings affirmed the importance of enhancing cooperation. — ONA



expressed his appreciation for the development of bilateral relations, commending the Sultanate

of Oman’s regional and international role in supporting security and stability. — ONA

Workshop looks at family protection amid challenges

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 18

IN light of the contemporary challenges facing families, the Ministry of Social Development, represented by the General-Directorate of Social Development in Dhofar Governorate, in cooperation with the Public Prosecution, organised a dialogue session on ‘Family Protection in the Face of Contemporary Challenges’.

The session was held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development, and attended by a number of families, specialists, and those interested in family affairs.

It was aimed to enhance community awareness of the role of the family in raising generations and emphasise the importance of family dialogue as a means of preventing problems. It also highlighted contemporary challenges facing families, such as addiction and cyberbullying, and proposed solutions and mechanisms to enhance family stability. It also discussed legislation and policies related to family protection.

Badr bin Fraish al Yahyaei, Director-General of Social Development in Dhofar Governorate, emphasised that organising the session is a continuation of the ministry’s efforts to support family cohesion and empowerment, as the cornerstone of comprehensive and sustainable development. He pointed to what His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik emphasised in his Royal speech regarding the role of the family in raising children and instilling authentic values,



The programme included four working papers addressing the efforts of relevant authorities to promote family stability.

The session highlighted contemporary challenges facing families, such as addiction and cyberbullying, and proposed solutions and mechanisms to enhance family stability. It also discussed legislation and policies related to family protection

independent of the influence of social media.

Furthermore, he stressed that the accelerating challenges facing society require adherence to Islamic values and authentic Omani principles, which the ministry seeks to consolidate through the session to raise awareness among society and parents about key family issues.

The programme included four working papers addressing the efforts of relevant authorities to promote family stability. The Public Prosecution reviewed ‘The Legal Framework for the Role of the Family in Raising Children’ which addressed children’s rights in Omani legislation, the family’s legal responsibility for raising children, and the reality of juvenile cases in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Royal Oman Police discussed

in its working paper ‘The Sense of Security and Its Role in Enhancing Family Security and Safety’, highlighting the importance of a sense of security in addressing family risks and enhancing preventive intervention. The Ministry of Social Development presented in its working paper ‘Family Issues: From Prevention to Treatment’, which focused on the social challenges facing families and appropriate preventive and treatment solutions.

The session concluded with a working paper from the Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Salalah on “The Family is a Trust and Raising Children is a Mission,” which highlighted the value-based and religious dimensions of raising children and instilling authentic customs and traditions.

Oman hosts first Middle East launch of DJI Matrice 400 drone

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 18

Oman hosted the first-ever launch in the Middle East of the DJI Matrice 400 (M400) drone, during the inaugural edition of the Firas Summit. The event was organised by the Ibn Firas Drone Centre at the St. Regis Al Mouj Hotel in Muscat, under the auspices of Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, with the participation of leading experts and decision-makers from government, private and military sectors.

The summit aims to strengthen Oman’s position as a regional hub for drone technology and industry, opening new opportunities for

the national economy in the knowledge economy, digital transformation, smart cities and artificial intelligence. It also serves as an annual platform to showcase the latest innovations and exchange expertise between national institutions and international companies, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The summit featured the first Middle East unveiling of DJI’s Matrice 400, produced by global UAV leader DJI, which controls more than 80 per cent of the global market. The event included a live demonstration of the drone’s capabilities in aerial surveying, 3D mapping, urban planning, utilities, energy, telecommunications, agriculture and security, highlighting its role in improving efficiency, cutting costs



The partnership with the Ibn Firas Center will boost Oman’s position as a regional hub for drone technology.

and speeding up project delivery. Mohammed al Harthy, CEO of the Ibn Firas Drone Center, stressed

that the summit marks a turning point in building an integrated national ecosystem for drones that goes beyond equipment supply to include training, development and innovation. He noted that the centre has executed more than 200 projects within Oman, delivered over 1,000 drones to civilian and military sectors, and contributed to housing sector development through land surveys. He also emphasised their growing role in security, particularly in effective border surveillance compared to traditional methods. He added that this year’s Firas Summit focuses on key issues in housing, electricity, water and security.

Ferdinand Ma, Regional Partnerships Manager of DJI for the Middle East and North Africa, said choosing Oman for the Matrice 400’s

regional launch reflects DJI’s strong confidence in the Omani market. He confirmed that the partnership with the Ibn Firas Center will boost Oman’s position as a regional hub for drone technology. He added that this model is currently the leading drone in its category, capable of carrying payloads of over six kilogrammes, performing multiple tasks simultaneously and offering unprecedented stability and flight time.

Salim al Kindi, Director of the Survey Department at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, affirmed that the ministry has always been a pioneer in adopting modern equipment for urban planning. Recently, drones were introduced for map production, including 3D maps.



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SHORT TAKES



OMAN TO WITNESS TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE ON SEPT 7

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, AUG 18

The Sultanate of Oman will witness a total lunar eclipse on September 7, which is expected to last for more than one hour. The Oman Society for Astronomy and Space will provide facilities for observing the event at several key locations in Muscat on September 7.

According to [timeanddate.com](#), the partial lunar eclipse will start in Oman around 8.27 pm, the full eclipse around 9.30 pm, and the peak at 10.11 pm.

A lunar eclipse occurs when the Sun, Earth and the Moon are aligned in a straight line or with Earth blocking sunlight from reaching the Moon and creating a shadow across the lunar surface.

Light from the Sun illuminates the full disc of the Moon, but because Earth is in the way, that sunlight has to pass through Earth's atmosphere before hitting the Moon. According to [space.com](#), Skywatchers across Asia and Western Australia will get the best view of the September 7 total lunar eclipse from start to finish. People in Europe, Africa, eastern Australia and New Zealand may still catch a glimpse of the Moon during some of the eclipse phases. The best views of the total lunar eclipse will be in Asia and western Australia.

ROP ARRESTS THREE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations, in cooperation with the Special Taskforce Police Unit in Bausher, arrested three individuals, including a woman of Asian nationality, on charges of human trafficking.

The accused allegedly lured a woman of the same nationality with promises of work before depriving her of her freedom and exploiting her in acts contrary to public morals and ethics.

Legal procedures are currently underway against the suspects.

DHOFAR PLANS TO KEEP VISITORS COMING IN EVEN AFTER KHAREEF SEASON

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 18

Dhofar is celebrating the peak of the khareef season with nightly shows, family attractions and heritage programmes across Salalah. Officials and organisers are working on ways to extend visitor flows well into autumn and winter.

When the monsoon eases around September 20, the governorate transitions from misty hills to clear seas and cultural circuits. Diving and snorkelling

are typically best from October to April, the traditional sardine season ("Al Dawaghi") brings life back to beaches between Raysut and Mirbat, and migratory birdwatching peaks across lagoons such as Khor Rori from October to March.

Year-round attractions for international visitors include Al Baleed Archaeological Park and the Land of Frankincense Museum, as well as coastal promenades, souqs scented with frankincense and Salalah's beaches once the seas calm after khareef.

The logistics backbone continues to support the visitor economy, with the Port of Salalah being one of the world's most efficient transshipment hubs.

Recent capacity upgrades position the gateway for stronger trade flows. The curated season until September 20, reinforced safety measures, and a post-khareef playbook focused on seas, heritage and outdoor sports aim to broaden tourism beyond the monsoon window in alignment with Oman Vision 2040's diversification goals.

CAR-T cell therapy a big relief for cancer patients

THE University Medical City, represented by the National Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant Centre, has successfully implemented the first Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR-T) therapy in the Sultanate of Oman, utilising national medical personnel and international partnerships.

This achievement marks a pioneering medical milestone, positioning Oman among regional leaders in providing advanced and precision treatments for blood cancer patients. CAR-T cell therapy is one of the latest immunotherapies, where T-cells are extracted from the patient, genetically modified and then reinfused to precisely target cancer cells.

The treatment has shown remarkable response rates in patients with B-cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (B-ALL) and Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma (DLBCL), particularly for those unresponsive to conventional therapies.

Dr Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Nabhani, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University's College of Medicine and Health Sciences and Consultant Haematologist specialising in lymphoma and cellular therapy at the University Medical City, stated that this accomplishment reflects the rapid advancement of Oman's healthcare sector in biomedical innovation. He emphasised that this high-efficacy treatment, previously limited to select international centres, now offers hope to patients and their families at the University Medical City in Oman.

Dr Murtadha bin Khamis al Khabouri from Sultan Qaboos University's College



By introducing CAR-T cell therapy through the University Medical City, Oman takes a step towards medical self-sufficiency and cost reduction compared to overseas referrals.

of Medicine and Health Sciences, Senior Consultant in Haematology and Head of the Haematology Department at the University Medical City, explained that the therapy's implementation resulted from collaboration between the National Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant Centre, the Ministry of Health's Overseas Treatment Department, and academic partners from the Fortis Memorial Research Institute. The goal is to localise cutting-edge medical technologies, establish a national centre for advanced therapies and translate research into clinical applications.

Meanwhile, Dr Sultan bin Salim

al Harthy, Director of the Overseas Treatment Department at the Ministry of Health, highlighted that this treatment is part of key programmes to localise specialised care, easing patient burdens and delivering top-tier medical services within Oman. By introducing CAR-T therapy through the University Medical City, Oman takes a step towards medical self-sufficiency and cost reduction compared to overseas referrals, supported by substantial investments in national workforce training and global collaborations to ensure compliance with international standards. — ONA

Professional licensing: A guarantee of quality, workforce competence

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUG 18

The Ministry of Labour issued a public warning against the submission of forged professional classification and licensing certificates by individuals and companies.

This warning is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to protect Oman's labour market and promote professional practices based on competence, quality and transparency.

The professional classification and licensing system plays a crucial role in regulating Oman's labour market by ensuring that workers have the necessary skills and knowledge.

This system not only serves as an administrative step, but

also guarantees the quality and efficiency of work in all sectors. It fosters trust among employers and clients when hiring licensed professionals, protects professions from malpractice and unqualified practitioners, and creates more job opportunities for certified workers both locally and internationally.

According to the ministry, forgery is not only a violation of the law but also has broader consequences for the economy and society.

Unqualified labour can compromise project quality, lead to financial losses, and damage trust between employers and contractors. Socially, it can result in hidden unemployment and reduce opportunities for skilled Omanis.

Eng Ahmed al Hinai, the owner



Professional licensing is the foundation for a structured and efficient labour market.

of a construction company, emphasised the need for stronger enforcement of classification requirements. He believes that allowing unqualified individuals into the market harms the reputation of the entire sector and that true quality only comes from trained professionals with authentic and accredited certificates.

Salim al Mamari, a young Omani who recently obtained his professional licence, shared his perspective on the benefits of being licensed. He noticed an increase in job opportunities after receiving his certification, as employers trust licensed workers, which also builds confidence in clients. He believes that success comes from honesty and skills, not forgery.

Maryam Mohammed, a

parent with a child enrolled in a vocational institute, emphasised the importance of training providers in preparing children for their careers. She believes that any misconduct, such as issuing unaccredited certificates, directly impacts their future. She supports the ministry's efforts to ensure accountability in this regard.

The ministry reiterated that professional licensing is more than just a bureaucratic requirement — it is the foundation for a structured and efficient labour market. Employers and employees are encouraged to pursue proper training and recognised qualifications rather than taking shortcuts. A sustainable career path, the ministry emphasised, is built on integrity, knowledge and hands-on experience.

OMAN

The farm serves as a sanctuary for birds and features a historic agricultural jar dating back to the era of Sultan Said bin Taimour.

The farm also includes a dedicated banana ripening unit, which was visited by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in 2023.

RAZAT

Royal Farm, located in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, has opened a new tourist trail to visitors. This trail allows guests to explore the farm's diverse agricultural spaces, tropical and ancient trees, and various farm products, making it a comprehensive tourist destination managed with precise technical and scientific standards.

Guided by tour guides, visitors can journey through different stations introducing them to various crops and plants. The trail culminates in an integrated station that brings together all aspects of the farm in one location, complete with rest facilities and services.

The opening of this trail reflects a broader commitment to supporting agritourism and enhancing food security. The Royal Court Affairs has ensured that the tourist trail provides an enriching experience for visitors while highlighting agriculture's role as a pillar of sustainable development.

Razat Royal Farm, located on Sultan Qaboos Street in the eastern part of Salalah, spans approximately 1,085 acres, with 900 acres under cultivation. It is one of the most prominent sites under the Royal Court Affairs, combining agricultural production with ecological and historical diversity.

The farm boasts a wide variety of trees, including bananas such as the "Razat" banana, a banana gene bank, and a ripening unit. Additionally, it is home to coconut, papaya, grape, fig, custard apple and Omani lemon trees, as well as various tropical and subtropical fruits and vegetables.

Indigenous trees like frankincense and fig, as well as ancient species like baobab, giant ficus and tamarind, can also be found on the farm. Medicinal and aromatic plants like turmeric, ginger and basil are present as well.

The farm serves as a sanctuary



ENJOY NATURE’S DELIGHTFUL TREAT



RAZAT ROYAL FARM

Located on Sultan Qaboos Street in the eastern part of Salalah, spans approximately 1,085 ACRES, with 900 ACRES under cultivation.

for birds and features a historic agricultural jar dating back to the era of Sultan Said bin Taimour. Irrigation is provided by the Razat spring through a network of traditional and modern aflaj (irrigation channels).

The farm's commitment to agricultural diversification is evident in its cultivation of various types of trees, with bananas being the most prominent, followed by coconut trees, papaya trees, figs, grapes, musta'fal, and other fruits. The Razat banana variety, a result of a natural mutation discovered on the farm, has been developed after over seven years of study.

To preserve diverse banana genes and showcase different varieties to visitors, the farm specialists have created an agricultural site with 11 banana seedlings, including the William banana, Razat banana, Clicuto banana, Dwarf Cavendish banana, Balbosiana banana and the local Salalah banana.

The farm also includes a dedicated banana ripening unit, which was visited by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in 2023.



SHORT TAKES



Dar Al Atta’a receives ISO 26000 for social responsibility

MUSCAT: Dar Al Atta’a Association has been awarded the ISO 26000 certification for social responsibility, in recognition of its commitment to institutional development, adherence to governance best practices, and compliance with operational and regulatory standards.

The certification follows a rigorous review and auditing process of the association’s systems, along with specialised training programmes to enhance staff capabilities in applying global principles of social responsibility.

The accreditation serves as international recognition of the association’s adherence to humanitarian values, transparency, and its active contribution to sustainable development through charitable and social programmes that address the needs of diverse community segments.

The qualification process involved a detailed review of operational procedures to ensure alignment with the ISO 26000 framework, which focuses on key pillars such as non-profit governance, human rights and equality, fair labour practices, and community engagement and development.

In recent years, Dar Al Atta’a Association has trained its employees to implement ISO standards within daily operations, ensuring social responsibility is embedded in institutional planning and execution. — ONA

Coral reef conservation campaign launched

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, AUG 18

IN a significant step towards preserving Oman’s rich marine biodiversity, the Environment Authority, in collaboration with multiple partners, has recently concluded a comprehensive campaign to protect coral reefs and ensure the sustainability of marine life. The initiative brought together the Royal Navy of Oman, Al Suwaiq Municipality Department, the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North (Inspection Division), Al Suwaiq Divers Team, Sohar Diving Team, the Divers of the Amateur Fishing Network and Al Suwaiq News Platform.

The campaign is part of the operational objectives approved for the 2025 coastal marine ecosystem survey activities. Among its key goals is the cleaning and monitoring of coral reef sites. Several diving operations were carried out in areas identified as having significant coral coverage, focusing on removing waste entangled within the reefs and assessing their overall condition.

Volunteers and participating entities highlighted the urgent need to strengthen environmental



The initiative reflects Oman’s broader commitment to environmental sustainability and marine conservation.

The campaign is part of the operational objectives approved for the 2025 coastal marine ecosystem survey activities. Among its key goals is the cleaning and monitoring of coral reef sites

awareness regarding coral reef protection. They emphasised that marine debris, particularly abandoned fishing nets, plastic waste and other pollutants trapped in the reefs, present severe risks. Such waste not only damages fragile coral structures, but also leads to fish mortality and disrupts the broader marine ecosystem.

Shaikh Hamoud al Harrasi, Director of the Environment Authority in Al Suwaiq and Al Khabourah, shed light on the importance of the campaign, saying: “Protecting coral reefs is a national priority that reflects Oman’s

commitment to environmental stewardship. These ecosystems are vital not only for marine biodiversity, but also for supporting fisheries and ensuring ecological balance. Our joint efforts with government bodies, naval forces and local diving teams send a clear message that environmental protection requires collective responsibility and action.”

Adding to these efforts, Oman recently signed an innovative agreement to create artificial coral reefs using 3D concrete printing technology, funded by Vale. This pioneering project aims to enhance sustainability in the fisheries sector while ensuring the long-term preservation of the marine environment.

The initiative reflects Oman’s broader commitment to environmental sustainability and marine conservation, aligning with national strategies to protect natural resources for future generations. As the campaign continues, organisers stress the importance of ongoing community engagement and public awareness to reduce pollution at its source. They declare that preserving coral reefs is a shared responsibility that requires consistent efforts to ensure these ecosystems thrive for years to come.

Art expo marks Oman-India ties

KABEEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Thirty artists came together to mark the 70th anniversary of Oman-India diplomatic relations at the Bait Al Zubair under the auspices of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, on Sunday.

The week-long Rooh Aur Rang exhibition was also attended by GV Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman.

Mohammed al Zubair, Dr Saud al Hunaini, Dr Hiba, Abdul Majeed Karooh, Babu Rajendran, Chairman of the Indian Social Club Muscat, Shalini Kartik, Convenor of Rangrez, Shalini Varma, Co-Convenor of Rangrez, Khurshed Raja, Poornima Vijay Kumar, Lata Guru and Preethi Tiwari, Akanksha Kartik, Siddharth Poojari, and members of Rangrez,



The exhibition highlights the rich cultural and artistic ties between Oman and India.

the artist group of the Indian Social Club Muscat, were also present at the opening ceremony.

The exhibition is an attempt to help the spectators embark on a journey not just across the Arabian Sea, but through time, culture and creativity. The voyage begins on the vibrant coast of Gujarat, where the scent of spices mingles with the salty breeze, and the sails of wooden dhows catch the wind like ancient whispers.

The exhibition highlights the rich cultural and artistic ties between Oman and India. Culture is a bridge of communication that unites people, while the arts convey emotions and ideas that transcend borders.

The free-entry exhibition is open from August 18 to 3. There will be a free workshop and live demo on Indian folk and tribal art.

Musical event marks Indian Independence Day



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 18

To celebrate Indian Independence Day, Talent Hunters Oman organised “Saare Jahan Se Achha - 2” at the College of Banking and Financial Studies. Two Omani singers – Mohd. Rafi and Basim, plus 6 Indians - Varsha, Sneha, Joshika, Neha, Shekar and Sanjay poured their heart out singing Choicest Indian Patriotic songs.

GV Srinivas, Indian Ambassador to Oman, and Redha bin Juma al Saleh, former chairman, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, were the Guests of Honour.

The show began with all chanting the Indian National Anthem, followed by an emotional song, remembering those who sacrificed their life to win independence for India.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

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Participation	• Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. • The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. • The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). • To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Enquiries	• Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. • Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.				
Tender Submission	• Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Guarantee	• The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMNT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. • The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. • Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.				
Terms and Conditions	• The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. • If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. • NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. • A certificate confirming a minimum Omanization level of 60% within the organization is obligatory , bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. • Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization • NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. • Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.				
Incentives and exemptions	• Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees • Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. • Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.				

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian waves as he boards a plane at Mehrabad Airport. — AFP

IRAN’S PRESIDENT HEADS TO ARMENIA FOR CORRIDOR TALKS

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian headed to Armenia on Monday for talks on a planned corridor linking Azerbaijan with its exclave near the border with Iran, part of a peace deal signed at the White House. “The (possible) presence of American companies in the region is worrying,” Pezeshkian said before departing on a pre-planned trip that also includes a visit to Belarus. “We will discuss it (with Armenian officials) and express our concerns,” he added.

The land corridor, dubbed the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP), is part of a deal signed earlier this month in Washington between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Under the agreement, the United States will hold development rights for the proposed route, which would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhchivan exclave, passing near the Iranian border.

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described it as a “sensitive” issue, saying Tehran’s main concern is that it could “lead to geopolitical changes in the region.” “They (Armenian officials) have assured us that no American forces ... or American security companies will be present in Armenia under the pretext of this route,” he told the official IRNA news agency. — AFP

CHINA’S TOP DIPLOMAT WANG ARRIVES IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: China’s top diplomat landed in neighbouring India on Monday, seeking to bolster long-fraught relations in the face of intense pressure and tariffs from the United States. Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with his counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, and is also expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his three-day visit to New Delhi. Modi, according to Indian media, might also visit China this month.

India’s foreign ministry said in a social media post that “important engagements of the India-China Special Representatives and on bilateral relations” were scheduled over the next two days. Caught in global trade and geopolitical turbulence triggered by US President Donald Trump’s tariff war, the countries have moved to mend ties.

Restarting border trade across their icy and high-altitude Himalayan border is expected to feature high on Wang’s agenda.

Its resumption would be significant for its symbolism, and follows agreements to return direct flights and issue tourist visas.

India is also part of the Quad security alliance with the United States, Australia and Japan, which is seen as a counter to China. — AFP

UNWAVERING COMMITMENT

Nepal eliminates rubella, says WHO



Nepal has eliminated rubella as a public health problem, the World Health Organization said on Monday, citing the success of its immunisation campaigns and disease-surveillance programme. By 2024, Nepal had achieved over 95 per cent coverage for at least one dose of the rubella vaccine. Catharina Boehme, head of the WHO’s 10-country South-East Asia regional division, hailed the “unwavering commitment” of Nepal’s leadership and the work of its healthcare professionals in tackling rubella. — AFP

MYANMAR TO HOLD FIRST PHASE OF GENERAL ELECTION ON DECEMBER 28

YANGON: Myanmar will hold the initial phase of its general election on December 28, state television said on Monday, outlining a road map for the first polls in the war-torn country in nearly five years that have already been derided by critics as a sham. The dates for the subsequent phases of the elections, which authorities plan to hold over December and January for security reasons, will be announced later, Myanmar’s Union Election Commission said, according to an

announcement on MRTV.

Myanmar has been roiled by violence since a 2021 coup that unseated an elected civilian government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, and the ruling generals, led by military chief Min Aung Hlaing, have faced fierce resistance from armed groups. A total of 55 political parties have been registered for the polls, of which nine plan to compete nationwide, according to state media. “Six parties are

under review for approval and registration,” The Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported earlier this month.

But with anti-junta opposition groups either barred from running or refusing to take part, the election has been dismissed. A newly-formed interim administration has announced it plans to hold voting in more than 300 constituencies nationwide, including areas currently held by armed groups opposed to the military. — AFP

Palestinians leave Gaza City fearing Israeli strikes

FEARING

an imminent Israeli ground offensive, thousands of Palestinians have left their homes in eastern areas of Gaza City, now under constant Israeli bombardment, for points to the west and south of the shattered territory. Israel’s plan to seize control of Gaza City has stirred alarm abroad and at home, where tens of thousands of Israelis held some of the largest protests seen since the war began, urging a deal to end the fighting and free the remaining 50 hostages held by Palestinian groups in Gaza. The planned offensive has spurred Egyptian and Qatari ceasefire mediators to step up efforts in what a source familiar, with the talks with Hamas in Cairo said could be “the last-ditch attempt.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described Gaza City as Hamas’ last big urban bastion. But, with Israel already holding 75% of Gaza, the military has warned that expanding the offensive could endanger hostages still alive and draw troops into protracted and deadly guerrilla warfare.

In Gaza City, many Palestinians have also been calling for protests soon to demand an end to a war that has demolished much of the territory and wrought a humanitarian disaster, and for Hamas to intensify talks to avert the Israeli ground offensive. An Israeli armoured incursion into Gaza City could see the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have been uprooted multiple times earlier in the war.



A displaced Palestinian man fleeing northern Gaza gestures atop a vehicle in Gaza City, on Monday. — Reuters

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Ahmed Mheisen, Palestinian shelter manager in Beit Lahiya, a war-devastated suburb abutting eastern Gaza City, said 995 families had departed the area in recent days for the south. With the Israeli offensive looming, Mheisen put the number of tents needed for emergency shelter at 1.5 million, saying Israel had allowed only 120,000 tents into the territory during a January-March ceasefire.

The UN humanitarian office said last week 1.35 million people were already in need of emergency shelter items in Gaza. “The people of Gaza City are like someone who

received a death sentence and is awaiting execution,” said Tamer Burai, a Gaza City businessman. “I am moving my parents and my family to the south today or tomorrow. I can’t risk losing any of them should there be a surprising invasion,” he said.

The last round of indirect ceasefire talks ended in late July in deadlock with the sides trading blame for its collapse. Sources close to the Cairo talks said Egyptian and Qatari mediators had met with leaders of Hamas and other factions with little progress reported. Talks will continue on Monday. — Reuters

FRESH PAKISTAN RAINS HALT RESCUE EFFORTS

BUNER: Fresh torrential rains in northern Pakistan killed at least 20 people on Monday, local officials said, as the region is ravaged by an unusually intense monsoon season that has left more than 300 people dead in recent days. Torrential rains across the country’s north have caused flooding and landslides that have swept away entire villages, leaving many residents trapped in the rubble and around 200 still missing.

“A cloudburst in Swabi completely destroyed several houses, killing more than 20 people,” an official in the district, located in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said on Monday. Several villages were wiped out by the huge amount of rain falling in a short period of time, a second local official said, confirming the death toll. — AFP

TORRENTIAL MONSOON

Heavy rain disrupts traffic in Mumbai



Incessant heavy rain lashed India’s financial capital of Mumbai, disrupting flights, flooding roads and prompting shutdowns of schools. Some parts of Mumbai recorded more than 140 mm of rain from Monday morning, causing traffic snarls as cars stalled on inundated roads. Three people were injured when the staircase of a building collapsed in a southern district of the city. The weather department warned of heavy rain, issuing a red alert. — Reuters

FALSE STATEMENT

UN official ‘persona non grata’ in Burkina



Burkina Faso’s junta on Monday declared the top resident UN official “persona non grata” for a United Nations report which found that armed groups were recruiting children to fight in the country’s conflict. The military government said in a statement that UN resident humanitarian coordinator Carol Flore-Smrecznia must leave because of her “responsibility” in drafting the March report, which it charged conveyed “serious and false information”. — AFP

POLITICALRACE



Bolivian presidential candidate Senator Rodrigo Paz reacts with supporters, in La Paz. — Reuters

Bolivia’s left in historic defeat as vote set for runoff

LA PAZ: Centrist senator Rodrigo Paz was leading Bolivia’s presidential election, according to early official results, which showed the ruling Movement for Socialism (MAS) on track for its worst election defeat in a generation. Paz, of the Christian Democratic Party, had secured 32.18% of the vote, while Eduardo del Castillo of MAS had just 3.16%, according to initial results released by the electoral tribunal on Sunday night.

Conservative former president Jorge “Tuto” Quiroga of the Alianza coalition was second with 26.94%, with over 92% of the ballots counted.

“Bolivia is not just asking for a change in government, it’s asking for a change in the political system”, Paz said in a speech broadcast on Sunday night.

“This is the beginning of a great victory, of a great transformation”, he added, as his supporters chanted “renewal”.

Quiroga acknowledged the results, confirming his place in the runoff and congratulated Paz. Outgoing President Luis Arce released an upbeat statement recognising the results.

“Democracy has triumphed”, the statement read. If no candidate obtains more than 40% of the vote with a 10-point lead, there will be a runoff on October 19. Full official results will be announced within seven days.

Paz’s strong performance surprised analysts. Opinion polls had suggested that the senator was far behind Quiroga and centre-right candidate Samuel Doria Medina of the Unidad Alliance coalition.

Businessman Medina conceded defeat and said he would support Paz in any runoff.

Sunday’s vote has been overshadowed by inflation at a four-decade high and the absence of former leftist president Evo Morales, who was barred from running. But Morales’ calls to boycott the election appeared to fall short.

Voter turnout was steady, authorities said. Despite earlier concerns that the electoral process could be obstructed by supporters of Morales, international observers said there were no major disruptions. Null and blank ballots totalled 21.5%, results showed, likely reflecting some support for Morales, who had urged voters to cast null ballots in protest. Usually the share of blank and null votes does not exceed 6%.

Several minor incidents took place at polling stations in the central region of Cochabamba, Morales’ political stronghold. — Reuters

MILITARY COURT FINDS NEW ZEALAND SOLDIER GUILTY OF ATTEMPTED ESPIONAGE

PALMERSTON NORTH: A military court found a New Zealand soldier guilty of attempted espionage for a foreign power on Monday — the first spying conviction in the country’s history. The soldier was caught offering to pass military base maps and photographs to an undercover officer posing as an agent for the foreign nation, the court martial heard.

The man’s name, the country he attempted to spy for and the name of the undercover officer who snared

him were all suppressed by the court. The serviceman wiped away tears as evidence was recounted against him, with close relatives present in court to give support.

The soldier was the first person to be convicted of spying by a New Zealand court and only the second to be tried after a former public servant was acquitted of espionage in 1975. He admitted to attempted espionage, accessing a computer system for a dishonest purpose and knowingly possessing an

objectionable publication.

While monitoring him, the New Zealand government became aware he had “made contact with a third party, indicating that he was a soldier who was wanting to defect”, according to an agreed summary read out by the prosecution. An undercover officer then made contact with the would-be spy, claiming to be from that foreign nation. He provided telephone directories of several military camps. — AFP

Ahead of talks, Zelensky against rewarding Russia

UKRAINIAN

President Volodymyr Zelensky said ahead of talks with Donald Trump that Russia should not be “rewarded” for its attack, after the US leader pressed Ukraine to make concessions in exchange for peace. The talks, in which European leaders will also take part, follows a summit between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska that failed to produce a ceasefire in the nearly three-and-a-half-year war. Trump, who dropped his insistence on a ceasefire in favour of a final peace deal after meeting Putin, said that Zelensky could end the war “almost immediately, if he wants to” but that, for Ukraine, there was “no getting back” Crimea and “NO GOING INTO NATO”.

Kyiv and European leaders have warned against making political and territorial concessions to Russia, whose assault on Ukraine since February 2022 has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths. “Russia should not be rewarded for its participation in this war. And it is Moscow that must hear the word: Stop”, Zelensky said in a Facebook post early on Monday.

Trump and Zelensky are expected to meet one-on-one before being joined by the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Finland, as well as Nato chief Mark Rutte and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, according to the White House. The European leaders will also hold a preparatory meeting with Zelensky ahead of talks with Trump, the European Union said. Ahead of the meeting, China called for “all parties” to agree to peace “as soon as possible”. It will be the first visit by Zelensky to Washington since a February bust-up with Trump and Vice President JD Vance, when the two men berated the Ukrainian leader for being “ungrateful”.

Russia kept up its attacks on Ukraine ahead of the new talks, firing at least 140 drones and four ballistic missiles at the country between late Sunday and early Monday, the Ukrainian air force said. A Russian drone attack on a five-storey apartment block in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv just before dawn killed at least seven



Ukrainian rescuers work inside a destroyed residential building after an air attack in Kharkiv. — AFP

people, including a one-and-a-half year old girl, authorities said. Zelensky called the strikes an attempt to “humiliate diplomatic efforts”. Ukrainian shelling attacks in the Russian-occupied parts of the Kherson and Donetsk regions meanwhile killed two people, Moscow-installed authorities said.

Russia currently occupies a fifth of Ukraine. It annexed Crimea in 2014 following a referendum denounced as a sham by Kyiv and the West; and did the same in 2022 in four Ukrainian regions — Donetsk, Kherson, Lugansk and Zaporizhzhia — even though its forces have not fully captured them. Russia controls Crimea and is largely in control of the Lugansk region, but not the other three regions.

Russia has suggested it might “freeze” the front line in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in exchange for getting control of land not already captured in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

A source briefed on a phone call between Trump and European leaders on Saturday said that the US leader was “inclined to support” this proposal. But Zelensky has repeatedly shot down the notion of ceding territory to Moscow and says he is

constitutionally bound not to give away Crimea. Yevgeniy Sosnovsky, a photographer from the captured Ukrainian city of Mariupol, said he “cannot understand” how Ukraine would cede land already under its control. “Ukraine cannot give up any territories, not even those occupied by Russia”, he said.

Trump envoy Steve Witkoff said Moscow had made “some concessions” on territory and that there was an “important discussion with regard to Donetsk and what would happen there”. “That discussion is going to specifically be detailed on Monday”, he said, without giving details. Washington has not placed extra sanctions on Moscow and the lavish welcome offered to Putin in Alaska on his first visit to the West since he attacked Ukraine in 2022 was seen as a diplomatic coup for Russia.

But Trump has raised the possibility of a collective defence guarantee for Ukraine similar to the one in place for Nato members, once the war is over.

The promise would be outside of the framework of the Western military alliance that Ukraine wants to join and which is seen as an existential threat by Russia. — AFP

Spain and Portugal battle wildfires as death toll mounts

MADRID: Thousands of firefighters backed by the military and water-bombing aircraft on Monday battled dozens of wildfires across Spain and Portugal, as the death toll increased to six since the outbreaks began. The Iberian peninsula has been particularly affected by forest fires fuelled by heatwaves and drought blamed on climate change that have hit southern Europe.

More than 343,000 hectares of land — the equivalent of nearly half a million football pitches — have been destroyed this year in Spain, setting a new national record, according to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). The previous record of 306,000 hectares was set in the same period three years ago.

Two firefighters were killed on Sunday — one in each country, both in road accidents — taking the death toll to two in Portugal and four in Spain.

The head of Spain’s Civil Protection and Emergencies, Virginia Barcones, said there were currently 23 “active fires” that pose a serious and direct threat to the population.

The fires, now in their second week, were concentrated in the northwest regions of Galicia, Castile and Leon; and Extremadura.

In Ourense province of Galicia, signs of the fires were everywhere, from ashen forests and blackened soil to destroyed homes, with thick smoke forcing people to wear facemasks.

Firefighters battled to put out fires, as locals in just shorts and T-shirts used water from hoses and buckets to try to stop the spread. Spain’s meteorological agency said the heatwave, which has seen temperatures hit 45°C in parts of the country, was coming to an end.

Spain is being helped with firefighting aircraft from France,



A wildfire burns near the village of Esposende, in Spain. — AFP

Italy, Slovakia and the Netherlands, while Portugal is receiving air support from Sweden and Morocco. “It’s a very difficult, very complicated situation”, Spanish

Defence Minister Margarita Robles said. The size and severity of the fires and the intensity of the smoke — visible from space — were making “airborne action difficult”, she

added.

Officials in Castile and Leon said a firefighter died on Sunday night when the water truck he was driving flipped over on a steep forest road and down a slope. Two other volunteer firefighters have died in Castile and Leon, while a Romanian employee of a riding school north of Madrid lost his life trying to protect horses from the fire.

In Portugal, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa said a firefighter died on Sunday in a traffic accident that left two colleagues seriously injured.

A former mayor in the eastern town of Guarda died on Friday while trying to tackle a fire. Some 2,000 firefighters were deployed across northern and central Portugal on Monday, with about half of them concentrated in the town of Arbanil. Some 216,000 hectares of land have been destroyed across Portugal since the start of the year. — AFP

Oman taps tourism as world economies pivot from fuel



THE global shift away from a fossil-fuel-dependent economy is an irreversible reality, and for the Sultanate of Oman, a nation whose general budget remains heavily reliant on oil revenues, this shift represents both a challenge and an extraordinary opportunity.

Wisely, Oman has anticipated this future and is now in the midst of a masterful pivot, rightly identifying its tourism sector as the primary engine for future growth. Oman is not merely adapting to a new world economy; it is embracing it with foresight and purpose.

One new addition to boost Oman’s tourism is the Razat Royal Farm in the Wilayat of Salalah, which has begun welcoming visitors to its newly inaugurated tourist trail. This trail offers an opportunity to explore the farm’s diverse agricultural spaces, tropical and ancient trees, and various farm products, establishing it as a comprehensive tourist destination managed with precise technical and scientific standards.

The Royal Cars Museum at Al Barakah Palace in Seeb is another attraction. The exhibits include vehicles used by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the late Sultan Said bin Taimour, and the late Sayyid Tarik bin Taimour, besides cars belonging to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The museum’s collection includes a range of classic, rare and limited-edition cars, many of which have significant historical value.

Among the highlights is a 130-year-old

steam-powered car, as well as vintage armoured and some of the earliest models of electric vehicles. The collection also features sports cars and exclusive models sourced from around the world, representing various automotive eras.

The travel and tourism sector has emerged as a powerhouse across the GCC, and Oman’s tourism sector’s contribution to the economy rose to RO 2.12 billion in 2024, up from RO 1.75 billion in 2018. This growth rate of 3.2 per cent is further evidenced by the sector’s GDP contribution, which climbed to RO 2.7 billion in 2024.

What makes Oman’s approach so compelling is its understanding that tourism is about more than just numbers. It is about displaying the very soul of the nation.

The government has realised that Oman has far more to offer. The data on visitor numbers confirms this, with 3.8 million visitors arriving in 2024, drawn by recreational pursuits, visiting relatives and friends.

A closer look at specific destinations reveals the depth of this appeal. The Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar welcomed 89,780 visitors in the first part of this year, a noticeable increase from the 84,869 visitors in the same period of 2024.

Similarly, Wakan Village, famous for its fruit cultivation, saw visitor numbers rise from 24,093 to 27,428 between January and July of 2024 and 2025 respectively. These figures prove, beyond any doubt, that Oman

Wisely, Oman has anticipated this future and is now in the midst of a masterful pivot, rightly identifying its tourism sector as the primary engine for future growth.

possesses a charm that captivates both beach lovers and non-trekkers alike.

However, the most powerful and unique asset in Oman’s arsenal is its people. Unlike many of its counterparts in the GCC, half of Oman’s five million population are citizens, and their readiness to welcome tourists into their homes to share local culture, especially the cuisine, is an unparalleled draw. This spirit of genuine hospitality transforms a simple trip into an authentic cultural exchange.

This promising reality is underpinned by an ambitious vision for the future. The pipeline of projects is a testament to the nation’s commitment to this new path.

The upcoming Oman Botanic Garden, set to be one of the largest in the world, is a project of both scale and substance. Located just a few kilometres from the capital’s airport, it will feature diverse natural environments and native flora, emphasising a profound commitment to environmental conservation and education.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has empowered local governorates to spearhead their own tourism projects, a move that ensures development is sensitive to local culture and environment. Some projects are already underway in governorates such as Al Dakhiliyah, Musandam and Dhofar. In the capital, Muscat, the eagerly awaited Muttrah Cable Car, expected to be ready within the next 12 months, will offer a breathtaking panoramic view.

Iranians struggle with GPS disruption after Israel’s 12-day war

RAMIN KHANIZADEH AND MENNA ZAKI

The streets of Tehran have become a confusing maze for driver Farshad Fooladi amid widespread GPS disruption, still ongoing nearly two months after the end of Iran and Israel’s unprecedented 12-day war.

“For weeks I have been unable to work,” said Fooladi, who uses Iran’s homegrown ride-hailing app Snapp to find customers. “Most of the time was wasted wandering around aimlessly.”

Unprecedented disruption has plagued users of GPS, which stands for Global Positioning System, in Iran since Israel’s surprise attack in mid-June which triggered a deadly 12-day war.

Iran’s communications ministry has said the disruptions were necessary for “security and military purposes”, without giving further explanation.

Missiles, drones and rockets often use GPS or other similar technologies, which involve triangulating signals from multiple satellites, to find their targets. Iran has long employed GPS jamming and spoofing around sensitive military sites but the recent disruptions have been the most sustained and widespread.

It remains unclear how long the measures will last or how much damage they have caused to Iranian businesses.

Ride-hailing apps, delivery platforms and even basic mapping services like Google Maps and its Iranian equivalent Neshan have buckled under the interference.

In many areas, especially around Tehran, users often spot themselves on the maps hundreds of kilometres away from their actual locations.

“To get around, you either need a sharp memory for routes or already know the city well,” Fooladi said.

But the driver, originally from the western Lorestan province and less familiar with the capital’s winding backstreets, frequently finds himself running into dead ends.

“I only pick up passengers who know the directions,” he said.

In early August, the chief executive of the Neshan mapping app, Javad Amel, said in a video interview that daily disruptions through GPS spoofing had been ongoing for years, especially in Tehran. — AFP

Nine lessons learned from books and experience

OVER the years, through spiritual and self-development books, higher-self programmes, research in intercultural communication and—most profoundly—through personal experience, I’ve come to internalise several lessons that continue to guide my life. These reflections are shared offer light on the path towards mastering The Secret, and perhaps something deeper.

ALLAH MUST COME FIRST
This is the foundation of every spiritual path. In Islam, praying (talking to Allah) and meditating (listening to Him) are essential. If you feel too busy to do either, then it is even more important that you make time. When you put Allah first, everything else begins to fall into place. Begin and end your day with Him. Check in often. A strong connection with Allah brings clarity and ease, even in chaos.

WORDS ARE ACTIONS
What you say matters. Words carry energy. Once spoken, they ripple out and return. Don’t speak in anger or judgment, even when you feel justified. Speak with care and act with compassion. Be kind not only to others but to yourself. The way you speak to yourself shapes your reality. A gentle inner voice is a powerful tool for healing and growth.

BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE (MAHATMA GANDHI)
If you want peace, be peaceful. If you want love, give love. If you want respect, offer it. You can’t demand from others what you don’t practice yourself. Your actions speak louder



A gentle inner voice is a powerful tool for healing and growth

than your ideals. Live the values you wish the world would uphold. Real change starts within.

PRACTICE THE FOUR AGREEMENTS (DON MIGUEL RUIZ)
This simple framework can transform your life: Be impeccable with your word. Don’t take things personally. Don’t make assumptions. Always do your best. These agreements sound easy, but living them fully requires daily awareness. When you do, relationships improve and inner peace becomes more accessible.

GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD
When you stay stuck in overthinking, you block growth. The best way to break free is to serve something bigger than yourself. Give your energy to people, causes, or projects that uplift others. Purpose doesn’t have to be grand — it just has to be meaningful. In giving, you receive. In serving, you become lighter.

ASK, AND IT IS GIVEN (ESTHER HICKS)
Nothing changes without intention.



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

Ask for what you want, clearly and with faith. Write your goals down. Read them daily. Practice gratitude — for what you have and what’s on the way. When you combine sincere asking with belief and action, things start to shift. What you seek begins seeking you.

NO ONE IS COMING TO SAVE YOU
This is a hard truth — but also the most liberating one. No one is coming to fix your life. Not your parents, your partner, your children, or the system. You are your own turning point. Allah is always with you — but He does not change your condition until you change what is within yourself (Quran 13:11). You are not powerless. Take ownership. That is where freedom begins.

EVERYONE DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE
We are all works in progress. None of us gets everything right the first time — or even the second. Just as you have needed grace, so will others. Offer it. People grow, change and surprise us when given room to rise. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting; it means choosing compassion over final judgment. Extend the second chance you hope to receive. Sometimes, that is all someone needs to begin again.

HAVE A LITTLE FAITH
Even when nothing makes sense, keep going. Keep praying. Keep believing. What is meant for you is already written. Trust the process, even when you do not understand it. Faith does not remove the struggle, but it gives it meaning. Surrender the timing, but never doubt the outcome.

How to face the empty nest syndrome



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

ONE day, the nestlings have to fly away. The animal kingdom keeps this as one of the objectives and would find it the most successful once their cubs show the spirit of independence.

It is a different experience for humans. Many parents are so involved in their children's schooling and extracurricular activities that once their offspring move on for higher education, they are left with emptiness.

A friend said she feels unwell on most days and has this nervous energy of not knowing what to do, and there is the self-doubt factor too. Both her children are abroad pursuing their higher studies. Her son consoled her, saying it could be all the free time she has on her hands.

Maybe he is right.

The mind, however, is another level altogether. Being with two teenagers would have meant that her mind might have been busy with the happenings in their lives. And now is there a vacuum? According to findmykids.org, the three main stages that empty nesters experience are grief, followed by a refreshing sense of relief, and finally, the person is likely to feel joy as they settle

into the freedoms of their new life. But the fact remains that between these stages the journey can be rough.

Add to the fact that age is a different game at this point. Building a career, bringing up children, and preparing them to face the world, and the day dawns when you realise the energy is not the same anymore, and the reasons for anxiety are not even identifiable anymore. There could be a change in the career path too, as individuals fall in a different age bracket at the same time. So there is another ordeal parents are working on.

It's not about kids' exams anymore, and they are far away from knowing what exactly is going on in their lives on a daily basis. They are young adults, but can a parent ever stop worrying? So how can I encourage my friend? Apparently, there could be sadness, depression, and most significantly, loneliness. The house is empty and quiet. The active parenting years are almost over. There is a difficulty in accepting, but accepting is the only way to move forward.

What do parents do with empty spaces and silences? "Get busy": pick up the hobbies you had pushed aside.

It is a new identity for both parents. No

So I suppose it is a period when parents have to find a new purpose while they continue to recover from their change in roles.

parent-teacher meetings or school functions to attend. Suddenly, the pressing issues are not the same anymore.

Could all this have an impact on the middle-aged crisis? It can probably cause a shift in lifestyle for both mother and father. So it is not just a stressful period for mothers, but fathers are also believed to go through the feeling of being lost.

So I suppose it is a period when parents have to find a new purpose while they continue to recover from their change in roles. Every generation goes through it. So it has only been a few years since the families have been able to get together. And life goes on as children, who are young adults, move on to find their direction in life.

So how do we find our purpose in life?

Now this is a very personal journey of self-discovery to find out and explore your passions, values, and what gives you fulfilment.

Really? Is there more to discover about ourselves at this point in our lives, you might ask yourself.

The truth is there is so much because over the years, you have been evolving too.

Maybe a lot has to do with letting go and finding and embracing the new you.

ZELENSKY RETURNS TO SITE OF STUNNING OVAL OFFICE SHOUTING MATCH

ASAD HASHIM

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky returns to the Oval Office on Monday for the first time since a spectacularly tense exchange with Donald Trump saw their talks cut short and question marks raised over future US support.

At the February 28 meeting, Trump and Vice-President JD Vance berated Zelensky on live television, accusing him of being ungrateful for US aid provided since Russia's attack three years prior, and pressing for quick negotiations to end the war.

The hostile confrontation marked a turning point in Kyiv-Washington relations, which had been warm under former president Joe Biden, and raised fears that Trump would cut off US military support.

The scene quickly devolved at the end of a long question-and-answer session with the press.

Vance accused Zelensky of being "disrespectful" and displaying ingratitude for Trump's diplomatic efforts, after the Ukrainian leader expressed scepticism that Russian President Vladimir Putin could be trusted given his repeated violations of earlier agreements.

As Zelensky defended his position in his non-native English, Trump was enraged by the Ukrainian leader's suggestion that while the US was currently far from the fighting, "you will feel it in the future" if they appeased Putin.

"You don't know that. You don't know that. Don't tell us what we're going to feel. We're trying to solve a problem. Don't tell us what we're going to feel," railed Trump, before adding: "You're not in a good position. You don't have the cards right now."

As tempers flared, Vance demanded Zelensky thank the US for the billions provided to Kyiv in military aid.

"Have you said 'thank you' once?" he asked. When Zelensky attempted to respond, he was silenced by Trump.

The Ukrainian leader left the White House shortly after, without signing a mineral rights deal that was a key reason for his visit.

In the ensuing days, the United States temporarily cut off military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine, heightening European fears that Trump would side with Putin in trying to end the conflict.

Much water has since flowed under the bridge, however.

Trump, who has in the past expressed his admiration for Putin, began to lose patience with the Russian leader, as Moscow kept up its military offensive even as US special envoy Steve Witkoff engaged in feverish diplomacy to achieve a ceasefire.

In April, Trump met with Zelensky at the Vatican and accused Putin of "tapping me along" without delivering on promises.

Days later, Ukraine and the US finally signed a minerals deal, which Trump had earlier referred to as compensation for US aid. — AFP

Future-proofing: Skills for the AI, climate economy

IN lectures on history and culture at the German University of Technology in Oman, I often return to one enduring lesson: societies rise or fall not simply by their wealth or ideology, but by how well they adapt to change.

Today, the twin forces of artificial intelligence (AI) and the climate transition are transforming the global economy at an unprecedented pace. For Oman, this moment is both a challenge and an opportunity to reimagine how we prepare our young people for a future defined not by certainty, but by transformation.

The headlines tell a clear story. Globally, millions of jobs are being disrupted or redefined by automation, machine learning, and decarbonisation efforts. At the same time, new employment frontiers are emerging in renewable energy, green infrastructure, logistics, creative industries, AI deployment, and cybersecurity. But while countries invest in reskilling and education-to-employment pathways, Oman continues to struggle with a growing number of young people leaving school or graduating into a job market ill-equipped to absorb them. The challenge is not one of ambition. Oman Vision 2040 boldly outlines a shift toward a knowledge-based, diversified, and sustainable economy. The green hydrogen strategy, digital economy initiatives, and smart logistics corridors are all commendable. Yet without a workforce ready to power these sectors, our ambitions may stall on the tarmac. Higher education alone cannot absorb or employ the thousands of students entering the job market each year — let alone those who dropout. The solution lies in recalibrating our national skills system to serve both high school and university graduates through flexible, stackable, and practical learning tracks.

Crucially, the original promise of AI must be remembered: AI was not built to replace humans, but to expand our cognitive capacities to solve humanity's greatest challenges. At its inception, the AI movement emerged in tandem with climate concerns — from modelling atmospheric behaviour to optimising energy systems and agricultural yields. AI's power lies in its ability to process complex



We need to train a generation not just to use AI but to guide it ethically and strategically toward the public good.



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

systems, visualise future scenarios, and propose efficient pathways forward. In this sense, AI is not just a disruptor of labour markets but a tool to elevate human capacity to act decisively in a warming world. We need to train a generation not just to use AI but to guide it ethically and strategically toward the public good.

This requires a national push for vocational education, apprenticeships, and certification schemes. Accounting, auditing, engineering technicians, AI application developers, solar panel installers, and logistics specialists — all are critical professions for which we can provide credible vocational and professional training. These pathways should not be viewed as inferior to academic degrees but as complementary tracks that are modular, mobile and recognised across industries.

More importantly, we must institutionalise a system of multi-track mobility. A student should be able to shift from a vocational course into a university programme and vice versa. A young person in Sur who starts with a solar technician certificate should later be able to join a renewable energy engineering programme in Muscat, or start a green enterprise of their own. This fluidity is what will allow Oman to truly democratise opportunity. Countries like Germany and Singapore offer valuable lessons. Germany's dual vocational system integrates in-company training with

classroom education, producing highly employable graduates. Singapore's SkillsFuture initiative offers all citizens credits and pathways to reskill at any stage of life.

Moreover, any skills transformation must be tied to employer demand. Public-private partnerships must co-design curricula, co-finance apprenticeships, and co-own success. Incentives for firms to host trainees, offer mentorships, or co-certify professional programmes will be essential. And beyond young job seekers, mid-career Omanis also deserve access to reskilling opportunities as the economy evolves.

Finally, we must do more than reform education — we must shift mindsets. Social prestige, parental pressure, and outdated ideas about success still funnel too many into narrow academic channels. A cultural campaign that celebrates technical mastery, creative skills, and entrepreneurial spirit is needed to expand the definition of achievement.

The future will not wait. Every year that passes without bold reform deepens the risk of alienation and structural unemployment. But the solution is within reach. Oman has the vision. What we now need is a robust, flexible, and future-oriented skills ecosystem that places people — not just policies — at the heart of development.

SPORTS

U23 ASIAN CUP



After the Thailand camp, the team will head directly to Cambodia on August 28.

OMAN OLYMPIC TEAM ALL SET FOR THAILAND CAMP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 18

The Oman Under-23 Olympic football team is undergoing their domestic preparations for the AFC U23 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026 qualifiers, with the squad set to travel to Bangkok, Thailand, on Wednesday for a seven-day training external camp.

The camp, which is under the watchful eyes of experienced head coach Badar al Maimani and his technical staff, will aim to enhance the team's physical readiness and technical sharpness ahead of their crucial continental assignment.

The upcoming external camp in Bangkok will provide the players with an intensive programme combining tactical sessions, fitness development, and competitive training matches to ensure full readiness before the qualifiers.

Upon the conclusion of the Thailand camp, the team will head directly to Cambodia on August 28, where they will compete in Group F of the qualifiers.

Oman will face three decisive matches in their quest to secure a spot at the finals of the Asian Cup, including the opening match against hosts Cambodia on September 3 while they will meet Iraq on September 6.

They will conclude the matches against Pakistan on September 9. Only the group winners and the four best second-placed teams across all groups will progress to the finals in Saudi Arabia, joining the host nation.

The qualifiers represent the culmination of months of preparation for the Olympic squad, which recently participated in the four-nation international friendly tournament in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Oman finished as runners-up in that event, collecting four points from three matches, defeating Bahrain 1-0, drawing 1-1 with Kyrgyzstan, and falling 2-0 to eventual champions Syria.

The Bishkek experience offered valuable international exposure and highlighted the team's strengths and areas of improvement as they approach the qualifiers. Also, the Olympic team ended as runners up in the local tournament, which ended in Salalah last month, after they suffered a loss against Al Nahda in the final match on penalties.

The Thailand camp will be a key stage in Oman's preparation road map, giving the coaching staff the opportunity to further build team chemistry, refine tactical approaches, and assess player performance ahead of the high-stakes competition.

With a balanced squad of promising young talents and experienced names, Oman will enter the qualifiers with ambition and determination to secure qualification to the AFC U23 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026, a tournament that will act as a pathway to the Olympic Games.

Hamed claims debut win at Hungarian Baja 2025

OMANI champion Hamed al Wahaibi has achieved a remarkable victory in his debut at the Hungarian Baja 2025, a round of the FIA European Cup for Cross-Country Bajas. Driving a BRP Can-Am Maverick R for the RX Sport team, managed by Emirati champion Rashid al Ketbi, Al Wahaibi secured first place in the Side-by-Side 'SSV' category and an impressive fourth place overall.

Al Wahaibi chose to compete in this event to gain more experience and prepare for future challenges, despite it being part of the European Cup and not the World Cup. In the early stages, Al Wahaibi took a cautious approach, not pushing too hard during the qualifying stage and the first special stage. As a result, he finished the first two legs in second place within his class.

However, Al Wahaibi then unleashed the car's full potential, showing his true speed. He overcame a 20-second deficit to win the second special stage and narrow the gap to just 19 seconds. He then took the lead in the third special stage and advanced to fifth place in the overall standings.

Al Wahaibi maintained his strong pace, winning the final stage and extending his lead over home favourite Balazs Molnar to 17 minutes and 30.2 seconds. This victory secured his win in the Side-by-Side class and a fourth-place finish in the overall standings.

Following the race, Al Wahaibi stated, "I am very happy with this result. We didn't face any problems, and I must thank the team, champion Rashid al Ketbi, and everyone involved for their exceptional and tireless efforts."

He added, "The next rally will be in Portugal. Our goal is to continue gaining experience in this type of rallying and keep achieving strong results."



Oman Club stun Dhofar, Al Nasr blank Sur

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 18

Oman Club secured a valuable 2-1 victory over Dhofar on Sunday evening at Seeb Stadium in the first round of the Oman Elite Football League.

The match began with strong attacking pressure from Oman Club, who launched forward from the early minutes. Despite the danger they posed to goalkeeper Mazen al Kasbi's net, their attempts failed to find the target. Gradually, Dhofar improved their performance, with Fahad al Hajri, Ammar Bait Sabei and Mohammed al Habsi creating several chances, though none were converted.

In the 25th minute, Oman Club took the lead after an unexpected mistake, when Dhofar defender Omar bin Adel mistakenly sent the ball into his own net. Dhofar responded in the 38th minute through striker Abdullah al Mughni, who capitalised on a defensive error by Saud al Habsi to level the score. The first half ended 1-1.

At the start of the second half, Dhofar coach Musbah al Saadi made an attacking change, bringing



An Oman Club player tries to defend a Dhofar move.

on Mohammed al Areebi for Fahad al Hajri, as the fast-paced, evenly matched play continued. Oman Club coach Idriss al Murabiti also introduced several substitutes to try and change the outcome, but the back-and-forth attacks produced no goals.

When the match seemed destined for a draw, Omar al Hasani struck the winner in the 90th minute, receiving a fine pass and sending the ball beautifully over Mazen al Kasbi to secure the win. Dhofar pressed hard in stoppage time, forcing goalkeeper Abdulaziz al

Hasani and the Oman defence into action, but the score remained unchanged.

With this victory, Oman Club collected their first three points of the season, while Dhofar were left empty-handed at the close of the opening round.

AL NASR POST AWAY-WIN

In the other match, Al Nasr started their Elite League campaign with an important win, defeating Sur 2-0 at the Sur Sports Complex.

The match kicked off with an early chance for Al Nasr in the second minute when Abdullah

al Musharrafi received a cross inside the box, but his shot deflected off defender Mani' al Mukhaini and went for a corner. Abdel Fadel Yousof al Shiyadi Sur responded with several attempts, but they were thwarted by Al Nasr's defence and resulted only in corners. Despite their control, Al Nasr had to wait until the 44th minute to break the deadlock, when Abdullah al Musharrafi capitalised on a loose ball in the box to score the opener, ending the first half 1-0.

In the 49th minute, Yousuf Nasser delivered a dangerous ball that went unconverted. Just two minutes later, in the 51st minute, Al Nasr doubled their lead when Hussein al Shahri delivered a perfect cross that Abdullah al Musharrafi headed into the net for his second goal of the night.

The score remained unchanged until the final whistle, sealing a deserved 2-0 win for Al Nasr, who dominated the match and confirmed their superiority in both performance and threat on goal.

SHORTTAKES



The programme was led by ICC educators, Rahul Asher and Vinod Babu, and saw an encouraging participation of 31 aspiring umpires.

ICC LEVEL 1 BASIC UMPIRING COURSE CONCLUDES IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The ICC Level 1 Basic Umpiring Course took place at the Oman Cricket Academy in Al Amerat from August 6 to 10. The programme was led by ICC educators, Rahul Asher and Vinod Babu, and saw an encouraging participation of 31 aspiring umpires, including four female participants, reflecting the growing interest in cricket officiating across Oman.

The five-day training focused on the fundamental Laws of Cricket, providing participants with a solid foundation in the principles of umpiring. Through a combination of classroom sessions, interactive discussions and practical assessments, attendees were introduced to best practices that will enable them to officiate matches at the grassroots and domestic level.

The Oman Cricket Academy has been committed to building capacity in all areas of the game, and this initiative highlights the board's efforts to enhance the standard of umpiring and to provide opportunities for participation in cricket.

The successful completion of the course marks another important step in strengthening Oman's cricketing ecosystem and preparing new qualified umpires to support the continued growth of the game.



Oman School Team

OMAN PARTICIPATE IN ARAB SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP IN JORDAN

MUSCAT: The Oman School Team will participate in the Arab School Championship, which will be held in Jordan. The official opening ceremony of the championship will be held on Tuesday.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation is headed by Abdullah bin Ali al Foori, Director-General of Education in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

Oman's school teams will compete in two categories, including boys' futsal (5-a-side indoor football) and girls' 3x3 basketball. Both teams have completed their preparations through intensive training camps organised in the lead-up to the tournament.

Nidhal al Mughairi, coach of the girls' national 3x3 basketball team, expressed confidence in the players' readiness.

"The team is fully prepared to compete after a comprehensive training programme that included physical and technical drills, as well as a dedicated camp aimed at raising readiness and sharpening skills. The players and technical staff have shown great commitment and fighting spirit throughout the preparation stage, reflecting our ambition to achieve positive results," she said.

"We are confident in our players' ability to deliver a performance that honours the name of our nation. We hope this participation will serve as another step forward in strengthening women's basketball both regionally and internationally," she added.

Meanwhile, the futsal team, led by coach Salman al Madiouli and his assistant Sultan al Balushi, has also finalised its preparations through two training camps held in Muscat.

PSG begin title defence with close win over Nantes

PARIS Saint-Germain got their defence of the Ligue 1 title off to a winning start on Sunday as Vitinha's deflected strike proved enough to earn the European champions a 1-0 win away to Nantes.

The Portuguese midfielder's effort midway through the second half beat goalkeeper Anthony Lopes with the aid of a wicked deflection off Nantes defender Chidozie Awaziem to break the deadlock.

PSG were made to work hard for their victory as coach Luis Enrique made seven changes to his starting line-up following the Uefa Super Cup win on penalties against Tottenham Hotspur in midweek.

That was the first game of the new campaign for last season's Champions League winners, who only began pre-season training on August 6, having gone all the way to the Club World Cup final in the United States in mid-July.

They did not play any friendly matches prior to that and are therefore likely to require several weeks before getting close to the level at which they performed last season.

However, they still had enough against a hard-working but punchless Nantes side, playing a first competitive match under new Portuguese coach Luis Castro. "I am very happy because the first objective in these matches is the victory and I think we deserved the three points," Luis Enrique said.

"We were in control throughout, playing away from home. In the first half, we didn't create much but that is normal because it is difficult against a team defending so deep."

Asked about his team's lack of preparation for the start of the new season, the Spanish coach added, "Today we saw that our players are ready and wanted to show the level they can perform at. They all need time which I think is normal, but we will look more comfortable with the ball once we have a few more games under our belts."

Ukraine defender Illia Zabarnyi played 90 minutes on his PSG debut after arriving at the start of the week from Bournemouth in a reported 66 million-euro (£57m, \$76.7m) deal. Lucas Chevalier also started with the new arrival from Lille, having immediately taken over from Gianluigi Donnarumma as PSG's first-choice goalkeeper.

ZABARNYI DEBUT, GIROUD GOAL

"The physical and technical abilities of Zabarnyi are perfect for the style of football I like," Luis Enrique said. "He is comfortable on the ball which is important for us, and without the ball he usually wins his duels. I think he played very well."

The likes of Ousmane Dembele, Achraf Hakimi, Desire Doue, Nuno Mendes and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia all started the game on the bench but the substitutes played a part in the goal which came on 67 minutes.

Dembele played a corner from the PSG left short to Mendes and his square pass was controlled by Vitinha before the playmaker fired in. Goncalo Ramos, who hit the bar in the first half, had an effort disallowed for offside late on, before Bradley Barcola clipped a shot



Nantes' French midfielder #17 Dehmaine Tabibou Assoumani (L) and Paris Saint-Germain's Ukrainian defender #06 Illia Zabarnyi (R) fight for the ball during the French L1 match in Nantes, western France. — AFP

just wide as one goal proved enough. PSG's next game will be at home to Angers next Friday.

Elsewhere on Sunday, France's 2018 World Cup-winning striker Olivier Giroud scored his first goal for Lille in their 3-3 draw at Brest.

"It is a real pleasure to be back in Ligue 1," said Giroud, who left Montpellier after helping them win the title in 2012 and has spent the last 13 years abroad.

Angers beat newly-promoted Paris FC 1-0

with Esteban Lepaul scoring the only goal early on and the hosts holding on despite playing most of the second half down to 10 men.

Strasbourg were 1-0 winners at Metz thanks to a late strike by Argentine summer signing Joaquin Panichelli.

Auxerre beat Lorient 1-0, and it is Monaco who are the first league leaders in France this season thanks to their 3-1 win over Le Havre on Saturday. — AFP

Thompson out of sprint showdown with Lyles

LAUSANNE: Olympic silver medallist Kishane Thompson will not run in the 100 metres at the Lausanne Diamond League on Wednesday, with media reports citing shin discomfort as the reason for the Jamaican's absence.

Thompson won the much-anticipated rematch with Noah Lyles at Saturday's Diamond League meeting in Silesia, after the American beat Thompson by five thousandths of a second at last year's Olympic final, but there will be no repeat showdown in Switzerland.

Saturday's race was the pair's first meeting since the Paris final, with Lyles' season delayed by an ankle injury. Thompson came out on top in a time of 9.87 seconds, with the American posting his best time of the



Jamaica's Kishane Thompson celebrates after setting a new Meeting Record to win the men's 100m Final at Diamond League in Silesia at Silesian Stadium, Chorzow, Poland. — Reuters

season, coming second in 9.90.

Thompson is unlikely to run again before the world championships in Tokyo in September. He is currently the man to beat after clocking 9.75 at the Jamaican championships in June.

Lyles will have another Jamaican rival to contend with in Lausanne, facing Oblique Seville who beat the American when Lyles made his first 100m appearance of the season at the London Diamond League meet in July.

Another Jamaican, world champion Shericka Jackson, is also absent from the women's 200 metres starting list in Lausanne. Jackson posted a season's best time of 22.17 seconds in Silesia on Saturday to win the 200m. — Reuters



SWIATEK

SWAMPS RYBAKINA, TO FACE PAOLINI IN CINCINNATI FINAL

IGA SWIATEK reached the final of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open for the first time on Sunday, surging past Elena Rybakina 7-5, 6-3 to book a title clash with Jasmine Paolini.

The six-time Grand Slam champion earned a Monday evening final against an opponent with nothing to lose after Paolini managed to “forget” a patch of bad form to claim a 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-3 win over Russian Veronika Kudermetova.

The 29-year-old, who was a two-time Grand Slam finalist in 2024, will bid for the fourth title of her career when she faces Swiatek, who is set to compete in her 13th final at the 1000 level as she closes in on a return to world number two.

Swiatek, the reigning Wimbledon champion, recovered an early break in the opening set and powered away to beat 2022 All England winner Rybakina — who had swept past world number one and defending champion Aryna Sabalenka in the quarterfinals.

The former world number one from Poland had twice stalled at the semifinal stage at the pre-US Open event, but booked her title chance on her third opportunity.

“It was a great match, and at the beginning, I was even surprised that I’m able to keep up with the pace, because we played so fast,” Swiatek said.

“I wanted to be there when Elena starts making mistakes. It’s impossible to play



Jasmine Paolini (ITA) reacts after defeating Veronika Kudermetova (RUS) during the Cincinnati Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center. — **Imagn Images**

such a good level throughout the whole match.”

Swiatek recovered from 3-5 down in the opening set, sweeping the last four games. She jumped to a 4-1 lead in the second, sandwiching a pair of love service games around a break of Rybakina’s serve.

But Kazakhstan’s Rybakina made her work for it, fending off three break points in the sixth game and saving a pair of match points in the eighth before Swiatek closed it out a game later.

“I was playing with intensity and quality,” Swiatek said. “I feel good about my game right now and would not change anything.”

Swiatek has beaten Paolini in all five of their prior meetings with the Italian winning just one set.

But Swiatek said she was prepared for a tough final against a player who beat world number two Coco Gauff in the quarterfinals. “Anyone who is there would have been playing well,” she said.

‘KEEP FIGHTING’

Before her 6-0, 6-0 Wimbledon final win over Amanda Anisimova last month, Swiatek had been in a trophy drought with her last prior title coming in June 2024 at Roland Garros.

Another victory on Monday would be a strong springboard into the US Open, where first-round play starts on August 24.

Paolini looked headed to a straight-set victory but failed to serve out her match at 5-4 in the second set and admitted the lapse left her nervous.

“The key was to not forget, get back into the fight and stay in the present,” Paolini said after wrapping up the win in two and a quarter hours.

“I was fighting in the second set and all was fine. But I got nervous and thought I would lose the tiebreaker.

“I came back onto court in the third set, trying not to think about what had happened. You have to keep going.” — **AFP**



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SHORT TAKES

OMAN LAUNCHES PROMOTIONAL TOURISM WORKSHOPS IN JAIPUR, INDIA



YUSUF BIN
KHALAF AL MAJIZI

Assistant Director of
Market Development
at the Ministry of Her-
itage and Tourism

JAIPUR: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman launched a series of promotional tourism workshops in Jaipur, India, with participation from Omani tourism institutions, establishments and airlines. The workshops will run until August 21. The three-day event features bilateral meetings between Omani tourism representatives and their Indian counterparts, alongside comprehensive

presentations on Oman's tourism offerings and opportunities for collaboration.

The initiative is part of Oman's ongoing efforts to strengthen its presence in the Indian market and highlight the diverse tourism assets. It aims to foster partnerships with Indian tourism stakeholders and promote Oman as a preferred destination for families and travellers seeking cultural, natural and wellness experiences.

A total of 25 Omani tourism institutions are meeting with 150 Indian tourism companies to enhance cooperation and attract key tourist segments. The workshops come amid a continued increase in Indian visitors to Oman, which reached approximately 623,623 in 2024.

These numbers underscore the importance of India as a priority market in Oman's tourism strategy, reinforced by strong historical, cultural and commercial ties between the two countries. Oman's tourism sector also recorded strong performance in 2024, welcoming 3.9 million visitors from January to December.

Yusuf bin Khalaf al Majizi, Assistant Director of Market Development at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said the Indian market is central to Oman's promotional plans due to its large and diverse traveller base. — ONA

Asyad Shipping adds new VLCC Awabi to fleet

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 18

ASYAD

Shipping – the majority Omani state-owned maritime transportation company – has bolstered its crude shipping capability with the acquisition of a new Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC), raising its VLCC fleet strength to 18 vessels.

MT Awabi is the second of two VLCCs acquired by Asyad Shipping under a deal first announced by the publicly listed company on April 30, 2025. MT Qurayyat, the first of the pair, was delivered on July 11, 2025.

Announcing the arrival of the latest VLCC, Asyad Shipping said in a filing to the Muscat Stock Exchange: “The vessel has been named ‘Awabi’, in a gesture that reflects the company's pride in the national identity and the landmarks of Oman.”

Both Qurayyat and Awabi are second-hand sister ships built by China's Dalian Shipbuilding yard and delivered in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Each measures around 333 metres in length, with a maximum deadweight capacity of 308,000 tonnes, and features energy-saving and desulfurization systems.

Other acquisitions made by Asyad Shipping during the first half of this year include two newly built Product Tankers, lifting the company's total fleet strength to around 85 vessels spanning diverse cargo segments and categories.

According to company officials, Asyad Shipping plans



Both Qurayyat and Awabi are sister ships each measuring around 333 metres in length, with a maximum deadweight capacity of 308,000 tonnes. **(Picture for illustration only)**

MT Awabi is the second of two VLCCs acquired by Asyad Shipping under a deal first announced by the publicly listed company on April 30, 2025.

to invest between \$2.3 billion and \$2.7 billion as part of its fleet expansion strategy, of which more than \$1 billion has already been committed. New investments are planned in additional tankers scheduled to enter service in 2026 and 2027, including two LNG carriers, four crude oil carriers and two product tankers.

Meanwhile, Asyad Shipping's total asset value climbed to RO 1.184 billion as of June 30, 2025, compared with RO 1.085 billion on December 31, 2024. The increase was attributed mainly to higher values of property, vessels and equipment, right-of-use assets and trade receivables.

For the six-month period ended on June 30, 2025, Asyad Shipping

reported gross revenue of RO 164.6 million, down from RO 180.5 million in the corresponding period of 2024. “This performance aligns with cyclic patterns of the shipping industry and prevailing market conditions,” noted Abdulrahman bin Salim al Hatmi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, in the Directors' Report.

Net profit declined to RO 20.2 million, compared with RO 27.7 million a year earlier. Operating profit for the period stood at RO 32.3 million, down from RO 43.0 million in the first half of 2024.

Asyad Group – the integrated ports and logistics arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – holds an 80-per cent stake in Asyad Shipping.

Duqm Airport-Ras Markaz dual carriageway project launched

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 18

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm has inaugurated traffic on the dual carriageway project linking Duqm Airport roundabout with the crude oil storage tanks of Oman Tank Terminal Company in Ras Markaz. The project constitutes a vital new artery that strengthens Duqm's position as a global hub for investment and logistics.

The dual carriageway extends 42.9 kilometres with two lanes in each direction, supported by a secondary road network measuring 11.5 kilometres, including side roundabout entrances and airport access roads.

The project connects the oil tanks in Ras Markaz with Duqm Airport, running alongside the Green Industries Zone and several major projects under



The project, valued at RO 57.6 million, contributes to strengthening the SEZ's investment appeal

development. It also links to the road leading to Dhahr village and the strategic road to Salalah.

This integration enhances the connectivity of vital facilities and serves various strategic projects

in the southern part of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Eng Abdullah bin Salem al Hakamani, Director of the Technical Affairs Department at the Special Economic Zone at

Duqm, said the opening of the RO 57.6 million project represents a qualitative leap in Duqm's infrastructure development, as it facilitates movement between key facilities, connects the airport with energy and industrial projects, and enhances the zone's attractiveness to investors. Al Hakamani noted that the dual carriageway will contribute to strengthening the competitiveness of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm regionally and internationally, thanks to infrastructure capable of accommodating rapid investment growth and supporting logistics supply chains, which are a cornerstone for attracting investments in the energy, petrochemical and support service sectors.

Meanwhile, Eng Saif bin Said al Amri, Project Engineer at Oman Company for the Development of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer), stated that

the project scope included the installation of a modern lighting network equipped with an intelligent control and management system, connected to advanced electrical grids.

It also involved constructing culverts for rainwater drainage along the road, ensuring the sustainability of the infrastructure and the safety of traffic under various weather conditions.

A portion of the project's value was also allocated to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), enhancing the participation of national companies in major projects, and supporting the local economy, in addition to creating direct and indirect job opportunities for national talent.

Thus, the project is not merely strategic infrastructure but also a developmental driver contributing to advancing economic and social development.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



This partnership underscores National Finance’s enduring commitment to impactful community engagement and the empowerment of Omani youth.

NATIONAL FINANCE EMPOWERS YOUTH THROUGH KHAREEF PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to empowering youth and nurturing their passions, aspirations and well-being, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, proudly supported Adventures Box’s Khareef Dhofar Adventure Programme 2025.

This dynamic five-day initiative offered young participants an immersive journey through the breathtaking landscapes of Dhofar Governorate during the Khareef Dhofar Season.

By blending physical adventure with cultural exploration, the programme created a powerful platform for engagement, personal growth and community connection, while inspiring a deeper appreciation for Oman’s natural heritage.

Organised by Adventures Box, the country’s leading adventure bike and accessories retailer, the programme brought together cycling and adventure enthusiasts for a unique experience across three major trails, passing through iconic landmarks including Ain Razat, Samharam and Mirbat.

With expert guidance, participants embarked on a memorable journey designed to encourage Omani youth to embrace an active lifestyle, adopt healthier habits and contribute to sustainable tourism through respect for the natural environment.

Commenting on the initiative, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, said: “Khareef Dhofar Season is a truly enchanting season in Oman’s tourism calendar, drawing visitors to its lush green landscapes.

The Khareef Dhofar Adventure Programme provided Omani youth with an invaluable opportunity to explore the nation’s natural treasures, connect with peers from diverse backgrounds and take on challenges that enriched their personal experiences.

Through our partnership with Adventures Box, we highlight the importance of fitness and adventure as key elements in shaping a generation of leaders who are bold, resilient and forward-thinking, dedicated to building a brighter future for Oman”. This collaboration underscores National Finance’s ongoing commitment to impactful community engagement and the empowerment of young Omanis.

The company continues to champion initiatives that promote health, wellness and active living, recognising them as vital pathways to personal growth and leadership development.

NBO LAUNCHES BADEEL PREPAID TRAVEL CARD WITH 9 CURRENCIES

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has introduced the Badeel Prepaid Multicurrency Travel Card, offering customers a secure and flexible way to manage finances across nine currencies on a single card.

Designed for travellers, students and online shoppers, the card provides a cashless payment solution accepted worldwide.

With advanced security features and global acceptance, users can transact in local currency, ensuring convenience



and peace of mind while abroad. Maha bint Saud al Raisiyah, Assistant General Manager and Head of Products at NBO, said: “At NBO, we aim to transform

how people manage their money. The growing demand for prepaid solutions like Badeel highlights the shift towards greater flexibility and control.

Our goal is to empower customers to spend smarter and with confidence through innovative, customer-centric tools.”

The card supports nine currencies — OMR, USD, EUR, GBP, AED, INR, PHP, THB and TRY — and allows easy top-ups and currency conversions through the NBO app.

Lexus unveils hybrid with luxury and performance

LEXUS has launched the UXH, a next-generation hybrid that combines luxury, performance and efficiency in one bold design. Built to enhance everyday driving, the UXH delivers a refined yet sustainable experience powered by Lexus’ advanced hybrid technology.

Equipped with a 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine paired with a high-torque electric motor, the UXH offers strong performance with optimised fuel efficiency. Its auto-regenerative braking system allows the vehicle to self-charge in hybrid mode, extending range while reducing fuel costs.

Inside, the UXH blends Japanese craftsmanship with modern comfort. Features include ventilated leather seats, a 12.3-inch high-resolution touchscreen, dynamic voice recognition, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, wireless charging and multiple USB ports.

The model also comes with Lexus Safety System+ 3, which includes a Pre-Collision System with motorcycle and pedestrian



Meet the Lexus UXH — a masterpiece that blends elegance, performance and efficiency. Powered by an advanced hybrid system, it offers an unforgettable yet sustainable drive.

detection, Full-Speed Range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist, Lane Tracing Assist and Road Sign Assist,

providing drivers with advanced safety and convenience.

The UXH is available at Lexus Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms, supported by

genuine spare parts and after-sales service. Customers can book a test drive to experience Lexus’ craftsmanship and hybrid innovation first-hand.

RO 50.15 million treasury bills allocated this week

MUSCAT: The total value of government treasury bills allocated this week reached RO 50.15 million. All bills, with a 91-day maturity, amounted to RO 50.15 million at an average accepted price of RO 98.953 per RO 100 face value.

The lowest accepted price was RO 98.940, with an average discount rate of 4.19856% and an average yield of 4.24298%.

According to a statement from the Central Bank of Oman,



The interest rate on repurchase (repo) operations with the bank for these bills is 5.00%, while the discount rate for treasury bill facilities with the Central Bank is 5.50%.

the interest rate on repurchase (repo) operations with the bank for these bills is 5.00%, while the discount rate for treasury bill facilities with the Central Bank is 5.50%. Treasury bills are short-term, secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance to provide investment opportunities for licensed commercial banks, with the Central Bank of Oman acting as the issuing manager. These bills offer high liquidity,

as they can be discounted with the Central Bank or used in repo transactions.

Licensed commercial banks may also conduct inter-bank repo operations on these bills in the inter-bank market.

In addition, treasury bills help establish a benchmark for short-term interest rates in the local financial market and can be used by the government to finance expenditures efficiently and flexibly. — ONA

Dollar firms heading into busy week of geopolitics & Fed speak

SINGAPORE: The dollar gained against the euro and sterling on Monday ahead of a meeting between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian and European counterparts, while focus also turned to the Federal Reserve’s Jackson Hole symposium for policy cues.

The euro was down 0.2% against the dollar at \$1.1683, while the British pound slipped 0.1% to \$1.3546. The paring of wagers on a rate cut by the Fed next month helped the dollar find some support amidst otherwise muted moves in foreign exchange markets.

Money markets are now pricing in an 85% chance the Fed will ease rates by a quarter point next month,



Fed Chair Jerome Powell is due to speak on the economic outlook and the central bank’s policy framework at the Jackson Hole symposium. — Reuters

as traders pulled back wagers on the certainty of a cut after a jump in US wholesale prices and a solid increase in July’s retail sales.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell is due to speak on the economic outlook and the central bank’s policy framework at the Jackson Hole symposium between August 21 and 23. MUFG expects the US central bank to cut rates in September as well, but it’s unlikely that the Fed chair will give a clear signal towards that later this week, said Lee Hardman, senior currency analyst at MUFG Bank.

The main event for investors on Monday is a White House meeting between Trump and Zelensky, joined by European leaders, as Washington presses Ukraine to accept a quick

peace deal.

Trump had met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Friday and agreed that a peace deal should be worked upon without a ceasefire.

“Financial markets are continuing to trade like there could be some — still undetermined — path to peace”, an ING analyst note said.

In other currencies, the dollar rose 0.1% against the Japanese yen to 147.38, while the Swiss franc slipped 0.1% to 0.8069.

The Australian dollar rose 0.1% to \$0.6515 and the New Zealand dollar rose 0.3% to \$0.5941 after falling last week. Cryptocurrency bitcoin eased 2% to \$115,362.46, while ether slid 4.3% to \$4,275.85. — Reuters

EXPORTDECLINE



The total grind from the start of the 2024/25 season in October until the end of July stood at 515,055 tonnes of beans, down 4% from the same period last season. — Reuters

IVORY COAST COCOA GRIND DOWN 31.2% YEAR-ON-YEAR IN JULY

ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast's cocoa grind dropped 31.2% year-on-year in July to 39,301 metric tonnes, data from exporters' association GEPEX showed on Monday, with grinders citing poor bean quality and low volumes of the mid-crop.

The total grind from the start of the 2024/25 season in October until the end of July stood at 515,055 tonnes of beans, down 4% from the same period last season.

"July's grinding has fallen dramatically this year compared to last year, mainly due to the quality of the beans", the director of an international grinding company based in San Pedro said. "They are mediocre this year, so we are rejecting a large quantity due to a lack of fat and a high acidity level".Between April 1 and August 17, cocoa bean arrivals at Ivory Coast's two main ports of Abidjan and San Pedro reached only 350,000 tonnes, down 30% from around 500,000 tonnes during the same period last year. Exporters also said grinders have no stocks left and will need to rebuild them to return to the average grinding rate during the main harvest.

"We are waiting for October to get good beans to rebuild all our stocks and return to the grinding level for the period, ie, just over 58,000 tonnes per month", the director of a grinding company based in Abidjan said.

"This will require us to be aggressive in our purchasing from the start of the season". The GEPEX data covers six of the largest grinding companies, including Barry Callebaut, Olam and Cargill Inc.

Ivory Coast has a total grinding capacity of around 750,000 tonnes. It is the world's top cocoa producer and vies with the Netherlands for the leading spot in grinding. — Reuters

OMAN ISSUES COMMEMORATIVE COIN TO CELEBRATE OMAN VISION 2040

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman has released a silver commemorative coin to mark "Oman Vision 2040", showcasing the Sultanate of Oman's aspirations for comprehensive development and a sustainable economy under wise leadership and a forward-looking vision.

The coin features a distinctive design reflecting Oman's national identity. Its obverse bears the emblem of the Sultanate of Oman (the Khanjar), the country's name, the Central Bank of Oman, the denomination in both Arabic and English; and the year of issue.

The reverse displays the



"Oman Vision 2040" logo in colour, along with elements inspired by the vision's visual identity.

This initiative is part of the Central Bank's efforts to commemorate key national milestones and promote awareness of the goals of "Oman Vision 2040", which serves as a framework for sustainable progress and prosperity.

The commemorative coins are legal tender at their face value and will be available for purchase from the Central Bank of Oman branches in Ruwi, Salalah and Suhar, as well as through Oman Post's sales window at Opera Galleria, starting August 18, 2025. — ONA

Oil prices await Zelensky-Trump meeting

OIL prices held steady on Monday as traders awaited clues from a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as they attempt to reach a peace deal to end Europe's deadliest war in 80 years.

Brent crude futures stood at \$65.87 a barrel at 08:47 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was up 9 cents, or 0.14%, to \$62.89 a barrel. Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Saturday and emerged more aligned with Moscow on seeking a peace deal instead of a ceasefire first.

"Market focus now shifts to today's Washington meeting for signs of a deal that could eventually boost crude and gas supply. Meanwhile, in the week to August 12, speculators held the first-ever combined net short position in WTI (CME & ICE), leaving prices exposed to any upside surprises", said Saxo Bank's head of commodity strategy, Ole Hansen.

"I don't believe the oil market has priced in a full peace dividend that potentially could see prices of crude and EU gas suffer further setbacks", Hansen added. White House trade adviser Peter Navarro's



Brent crude futures stood at \$65.87 a barrel at 08:47 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was up 9 cents, or 0.14%, to \$62.89 a barrel. — Reuters

comments around India's purchases of Russian crude funding Moscow's war in Ukraine led to crude ticking up earlier in the session.

"India acts as a global clearinghouse for Russian oil, converting embargoed crude into high-value exports while giving Moscow the dollars it

needs", Navarro said.

"The US adviser's sharp words on India's Russian crude imports, paired with postponed trade talks, revive concerns that energy flows remain hostage to trade and diplomatic frictions, even as peace prospects in Ukraine brighten", said Priyanka Sachdeva, senior market analyst

at brokerage Phillip Nova.

On Saturday, Trump said he did not immediately need to consider retaliatory tariffs on countries such as China for buying Russian oil but might have to "in two or three weeks", cooling initial concerns about a disruption in Russian supply. — Reuters

European stocks drift as traders eye Ukraine talks, Jackson Hole

LONDON: European shares wobbled on Monday ahead of what is likely to be an eventful week for US interest rate policy, as investor attention turned to Washington where Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky and European leaders will meet Donald Trump.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index was down about 0.2% after hitting its highest level since March on Friday, while the MSCI All Country World Index hovered close to the record high touched last week. Earlier in the Asian session, indices in Japan and Taiwan notched record peaks, while a gauge of Chinese stocks reached its highest level



In bond markets, the chance of Fed easing is keeping short-term Treasury yields low. — Reuters

in a decade. Investors were bracing for US President Trump's meeting with Ukrainian President Zelensky and European leaders later on Monday to discuss the next steps to end the war in Ukraine, after Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday.

While the summit did not result in an agreement, Trump appeared more aligned with Moscow on seeking a full peace deal with Ukraine instead of a ceasefire first.

Skovgaard added that whether or not a deal is reached, focus was already turning to the Kansas City Federal

Reserve's August 21-23 Jackson Hole symposium, where Chair Jerome Powell is due to speak on the economic outlook and the central bank's policy framework.

Markets imply around an 85% chance of a quarter-point rate cut at the Fed's meeting on September 17 and are priced for a further cut by December.

In Europe, Germany's DAX eased 0.3%, while Britain's FTSE was down 0.1%. S&P 500 and Nasdaq futures eased 0.1%, though both were near all-time highs.

Valuations have been underpinned by a solid earnings season, as S&P 500 EPS grew 11% on the year and 58%

of companies raised their full-year guidance. In bond markets, the chance of Fed easing is keeping short-term Treasury yields low, while the longer end is pressured by the risk of stagflation and large budget deficits.

Wagers on more Fed easing have weighed on the dollar, which dropped 0.4% against a basket of currencies last week.

The dollar was up 0.2% on the yen at 147.42, while the euro slipped to \$1.1682. Gold bounced 0.4% to \$3,349 an ounce. Brent was up 0.4% at \$66.08 a barrel, while US crude rose 0.5% to \$63.11 per barrel. — Reuters

TECH INNOVATION

OpenAI's CEO wins Axel Springer Award



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman will receive the Axel Springer Award on September 24 in Berlin for his contributions to digital transformation and belief that technology should serve humans. The award honours market-transforming entrepreneurs; past recipients include Zuckerberg, Bezos, Musk and Tim Berners-Lee. ChatGPT now has nearly 700 million weekly users. — dpa

TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Germany advocates for lower car tariffs



Germany said the US must implement agreed lower tariffs on Europe-made cars before a wider EU-US trade deal can be finalised in writing. A German government spokesman emphasised support for the European Commission, noting the burden on Europe's export-oriented economy. Many details of the framework deal struck in July remain unclear. — Reuters

HOUSING CRISIS

Rent affordability worsens in England



Average renters in England spent 36.3% of their income on homes in 2024, up from 33.1% in 2023, the ONS reported.

London, Bristol and Brighton were the least affordable, with London renters paying 41.6% of their income.

Rents in Wales and Northern Ireland remained below the 30% affordability threshold. — dpa

OPINION

Is everyone becoming smarter or just better at copying?



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman.

HAVE you noticed that your colleagues at work have recently started writing well-polished emails? Have you also noticed that employees are suddenly sharing creative PowerPoint presentations? And have you noticed that social media networks today are flooded with articles and posts from people who, in the past, did nothing more than click “like” or “re-share” someone else’s content?

Has everyone suddenly become smarter or are they just better at copying whatever is generated by artificial intelligence apps? Welcome to a not-so-intelligent society that may eventually become even less intelligent, thanks to the AI revolution.

Last week, my article revolved around the future of our kids and, in particular, the negative impact on their thinking due to their utter reliance on artificial intelligence generative applications (eg, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity, DeepSeek, etc). I shared some concerns as well as suggestions to help avoid the catastrophe that may result from inefficient use of AI in schools.

This week, let me focus on working adults, who have suddenly become “superstars” because of their use of AI.

As a start, take a look at the professional social media network LinkedIn today. You will notice that your feed is full of deep

reflections from people who had never posted such articles before (let alone posted anything at all). Clearly, much of this content is generated by apps like ChatGPT. Too many words, too little originality.

Everyone sounds smart online now, but at the same time, robotic and alike. For someone with experience like myself, it is often possible to tell whether a post is original or simply a copy-cat creation.

Is AI creating an intelligent society? In short, not for those who highly depend on it and use it blindly. Why? The simple answer: AI makes them think less and, worse, become more addicted to it.

Just as social media became addictive like a drug, AI generative apps will, if they have not already, become addictive for working adults. Look around in offices and you will see this firsthand. Almost everyone, from clerks to CEOs, is using ChatGPT to draft emails and presentations, sometimes without even knowing the meaning of the content or checking whether the generated information is factual and accurate. A prominent study I recently read reported that more than 53 per cent of employees admit to using AI apps at work. Tasks include, but are not limited to, writing reports, responding to emails, summarising documents and more. Furthermore, over 24 per cent of

Has everyone suddenly become smarter or are they just better at copying whatever is generated by artificial intelligence apps? Welcome to a not-so-intelligent society that may eventually become even less intelligent, thanks to the AI revolution.

employees said they no longer felt confident performing those tasks without AI. Last week, I highlighted the same concern in education, where students openly admit to using AI tools to write assignments. Teachers struggle to detect it and some do not even try. The result, in both cases, is an unintelligent society that depends entirely on AI.

The World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025 highlights that critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving remain among the top in-demand skills. Unfortunately, those are exactly the skills that AI-dependent workers risk losing because of their reliance on AI apps.

To conclude, let me confess and be clear about one thing: I am a technologist and I definitely support AI as a technology. It is an incredible advancement and can be highly efficient. My concern, however, is the complete dependence on it, without applying one’s own effort or thought.

AI is undeniably a powerful tool. It can write, research, analyse, code, design and more. Nevertheless, the danger lies in dependence. The ability to think critically, write creatively, or solve complex problems will inevitably weaken. My personal worry is that tomorrow’s generation, as it enters the workforce, will struggle with critical thinking and decision-making.

RIDING THE TIDES: UNDERWATER KITES CAN TRANSFORM RENEWABLE ENERGY



NAJAH
AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate.

Off the coast of the Faroe Islands, a new kind of power plant is taking flight — beneath the waves. Known as tidal kites, these innovative devices “fly” underwater in graceful figure-eight patterns, their onboard turbines spinning as they slice through ocean currents.

Unlike conventional tidal turbines, which require strong, fast-flowing waters, tidal kites can generate electricity even in gentler currents by moving

much faster than the tide itself. First conceived in Sweden in the early 2000s and patented in 2007, the technology has only recently reached commercial scale.

The latest breakthrough comes from Minesto’s Dragon 12, a megawatt-class tidal kite with a 12-metre wingspan and a rated capacity of 1.2 MW. Anchored to the seabed and tethered to the shore by a power cable, the kite is guided by rudders and elevators, capturing energy with remarkable efficiency.

Installed in the Faroe Islands in early 2025, the Dragon 12 is already feeding electricity into the grid. If all goes to plan, an array of 20–40 units could generate up to 40 MW — meeting as much as 40 per cent of the islands’ electricity demand by 2030 and significantly reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels.

The concept is as elegant as it is ambitious. Tides, driven by the moon’s gravitational pull, are predictable years in advance, offering a stable source of renewable power. This reliability is a key advantage over solar and wind, which fluctuate with weather and daylight.

While solar farms can achieve higher peak capacities — often hundreds of megawatts — they require vast land areas and face night-time intermittency. Wind turbines, onshore or offshore, can also produce larger outputs, but are less predictable and face higher maintenance in storm-prone regions.

Tidal kites, by contrast, can operate day and night, year-round, with consistent generation profiles — making them an ideal complement in a diversified renewable mix.

For the Faroe Islands, the LUNA 12 project — developed in partnership with Swedish bearing giant SKF and local utility SEV — is more than an engineering milestone.

It’s proof that cutting-edge marine technology can work in the real world, even in challenging environments. The first deployment has already delivered a tenfold increase in capacity compared to earlier prototypes.

A new era of sovereign investment



The OIA’s strategy is carefully guided by Oman Vision 2040.



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

today’s fast-moving global economy, Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) have become more than just financial investors. These state-owned investment vehicles are now key tools for a nation’s economic development, helping to build strong economies and secure a prosperous future for their people.

SWFs serve three vital roles: stabilising the economy, saving for future generations and supporting national development. For countries like Oman that rely on oil and gas, SWFs are a vital safeguard against unpredictable price swings, ensuring the government has a steady budget. They also act as a savings account, turning wealth from non-renewable resources into a diverse, long-term portfolio of assets that will benefit future generations. By following international standards for good governance and transparency, SWFs can operate with the confidence needed to make a real impact.

Globally, these funds manage assets exceeding \$13 trillion. They are major players in global markets, directing investments towards sectors that align with their countries’ strategic goals, like technology and renewable energy. This shows a smart shift away from just seeking financial returns to building national resilience and local supply chains. In the GCC, SWFs are crucial for driving national change. Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF), for example, is a central force behind its Vision 2030, funding huge projects in new cities and future industries. Similarly, in Oman, this role is perfectly fulfilled by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

Since its creation in 2020, the OIA has acted as a guardian of Oman’s wealth, with a clear mission to support the national economy and foster an investment environment aligned with Oman Vision 2040. The OIA isn’t just an investor; it is a primary driver of the

nation’s development plan.

The OIA’s impact has been both significant and widespread. Since 2016, it has provided more than RO 7 billion to the state budget, acting as a financial partner and a buffer against economic shocks. Its efforts to reduce debt for its companies and lower government guarantees have been key to improving Oman’s credit rating and returning it to an investment-grade status.

The OIA’s strategy is carefully guided by Oman Vision 2040. Its investment portfolios — the National Development Fund, the Future Generation Fund and the new Future Fund Oman (FFO) — each have a specific purpose. The FFO, with its RO 2 billion capital, is a clear sign of Oman’s commitment to boosting the private sector and speeding up economic diversification in key areas like logistics, mining, tourism and clean energy.

One of the OIA’s most

impressive strategies is the “Omani Angle”. This approach ensures that every international investment — particularly through the Future Generation Fund — delivers tangible benefits back to Oman.

This could mean attracting foreign capital, bringing new technology to local companies, or setting up regional offices in the Sultanate of Oman.

For instance, the OIA’s investments in US companies like Sense Lab and Gradiant have directly helped bring smart energy and water treatment technologies to Oman, building local expertise and addressing national challenges.

The OIA is also a leader in developing human talent, which is vital for any knowledge-based economy. In 2024 alone, it created 1,393 new jobs for Omanis, bringing the Omanisation rate across its companies to an impressive 77.7%. Programmes like “Nomou” and “Mutamad” are designed to equip young Omanis with the skills needed for a diverse economy. This shows that the OIA is not just managing money, but also building the workforce of the future. Its support for local businesses is equally important, with spending on SMEs reaching RO 265.5 million in 2024. The authority’s programme of selling assets has successfully attracted over RO 1.5 billion, invigorating the private sector and attracting foreign investors by reinvesting capital into new projects.

For Oman to achieve even greater things in the next decade, we must build on these strong foundations. The path forward for the OIA calls for continued momentum and even tighter alignment with Oman Vision 2040, focusing on five key priorities. First, keep governance world-class.

Transparent reporting, clear risk limits and arm’s-length decision-making are not just technical requirements; they are the foundation of public trust and lower the cost of capital

with international partners. Oman should continue to align its disclosures with the Santiago Principles and global ESG norms, reinforcing its reputation as a credible and reliable investment partner.

Second, scale what works. The Future Fund Oman should continue to favour export-earning, high-productivity projects with strong local content. This includes advanced manufacturing, green hydrogen, downstream metals, logistics and digital infrastructure.

By using rigorous project preparation and independent investment committees, the fund can ensure every investment creates maximum value. As assets mature, the OIA can recycle capital faster through structured sales and listings, broadening local ownership and deepening the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Third, pull in global partners. The OIA’s credibility can be used to invite top-tier international firms to base their regional operations in Oman. This “platform builder” model, where the OIA co-invests and provides long-term support, reduces risk for first-movers and builds pipelines of technology, talent and trade, directly linking Oman to global value chains.

Fourth, put people and SMEs at the centre. To ensure that diversification benefits everyone, annual targets for quality jobs, Omanisation, SME spending and supplier development should be set for every company in the OIA’s portfolio. Publicly reporting on this progress will keep the diversification journey people-first and measurable, reinforcing the social contract that underpins the fund’s work.

Finally, treat economic diplomacy as a portfolio strategy. By expanding sovereign-to-sovereign partnerships, co-investment memorandums and specialised funds with like-minded investors, Oman can amplify its voice and open new markets for Omani firms.

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SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in “MEP” counstruction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN female BSC graduate and Internship Python. Presently in family visa. Seeks suitable placement as admin. Contact: 94942510

SIT. WANTED

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582. Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

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

SIT. WANTED

SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

EXPERIENCED Indian Female dentist with strong clinical and administrative background. Actively seeking any suitable role in the medical, dental or healthcare field, including insurance coordination and medical scribing. Holding a valid Oman Resident Card. Available for immediate joining. Ph:79424264, Email: nancydas055@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

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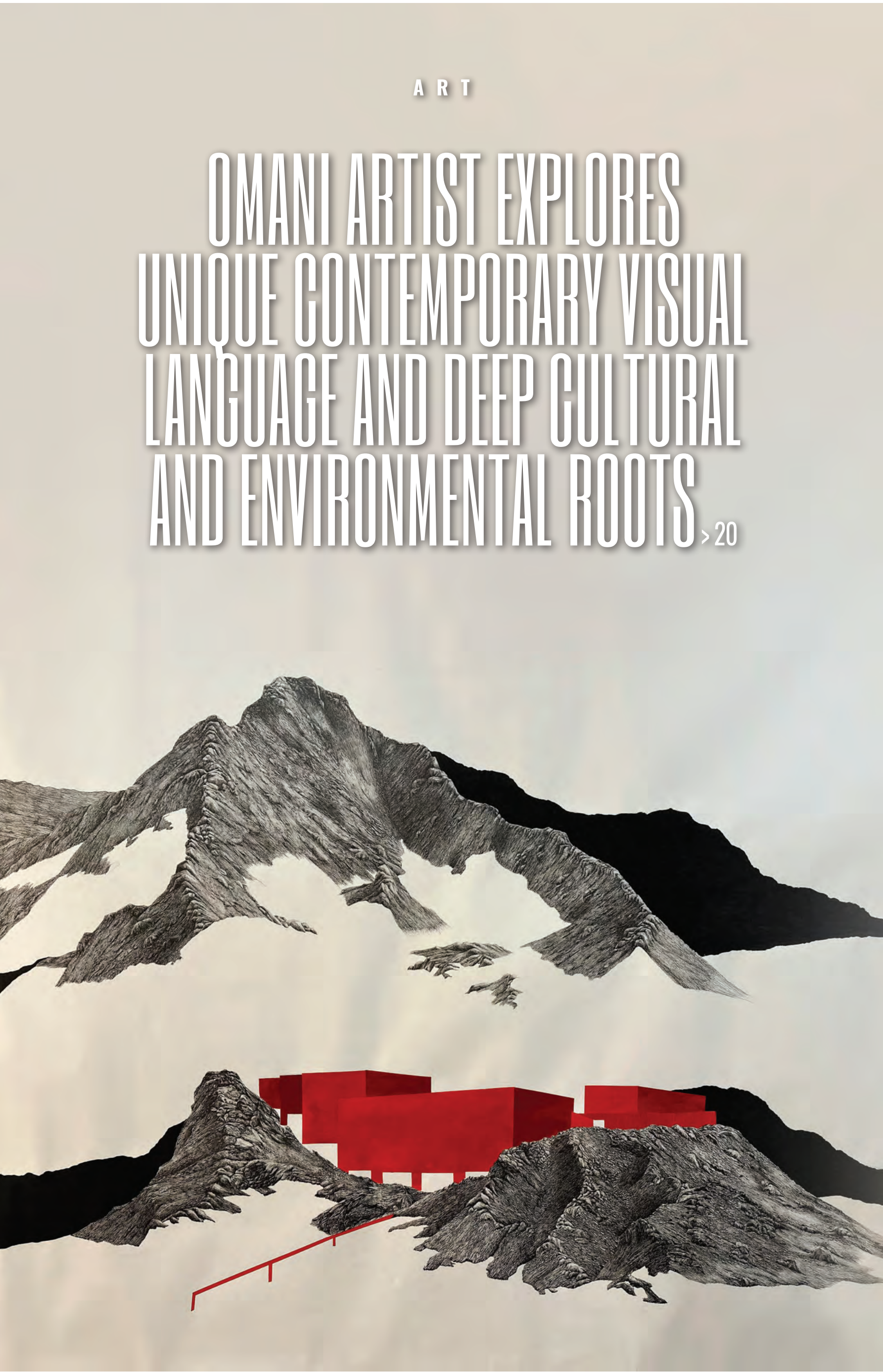
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ART/LIFE



ENTERTAINMENT

Helen Mirren: I am such a feminist, but James Bond has to be a guy



British actress Helen Mirren has said that while she is a feminist, the next James Bond “has to be a bloke”. It comes after Amazon MGM Studios, which has taken creative control over the 007 character, revealed last month that “Peaky Blinders” creator Steven Knight would be writing the script for the next film.

The Oscar-winning actress told *Saga Magazine*: “I’m such a feminist, but James Bond has to be a bloke. You can’t have a woman. It just doesn’t work.

“James Bond has to be James Bond, otherwise it becomes something else”. Mirren, 80, stars alongside former 007 actor Pierce Brosnan in the new “Thursday Murder Club” film, a cosy crime drama adapted from the best-selling book by game show host Richard Osman.

Pierce, 72, agreed with the actress about the next portrayal of Bond and told the magazine: “Oh, I think it has to be a man”. He added: “I wish [Amazon] them well. I’m so excited to see the next man come on the stage and to see a whole new exuberance and life for this character.

“I adore the world of James Bond. It’s been very good to me. It’s the gift that keeps on giving”. “And I’m just a member of the audience now, sitting back, saying: ‘Show us what you’re going to do’”. Mirren previously told the *Standard* that “the whole concept of James Bond is drenched and born out of profound inequality” and added: “Women have always been a major and incredibly important part of the Secret Service, they always have been”. In the forthcoming “Thursday Murder Club” film, the veteran actress plays a retired spy, who is also the founder and leader of the club.

Speaking about her character Elizabeth, she told *Saga*: “So many women have worked in that world. She’s a manifestation of a reality, that’s for sure”. Asked if she is a better portrayal of a spy than Bond, she responded: “More realistic. But not so much fun as Bond!”

She added: “The great thing about a film like this is that it reminds everyone, as an older person I have a brain. I have agency, energy, commitment, passion and intellect. It doesn’t all stop when you’re 40”. — *PA Media/dpa*

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model presents a traditional Armenian outfit by Armenian fashion designer Lilit Melikyan during ‘Tarazfest 2025’ fashion show. — AFP



PERFORMANCE

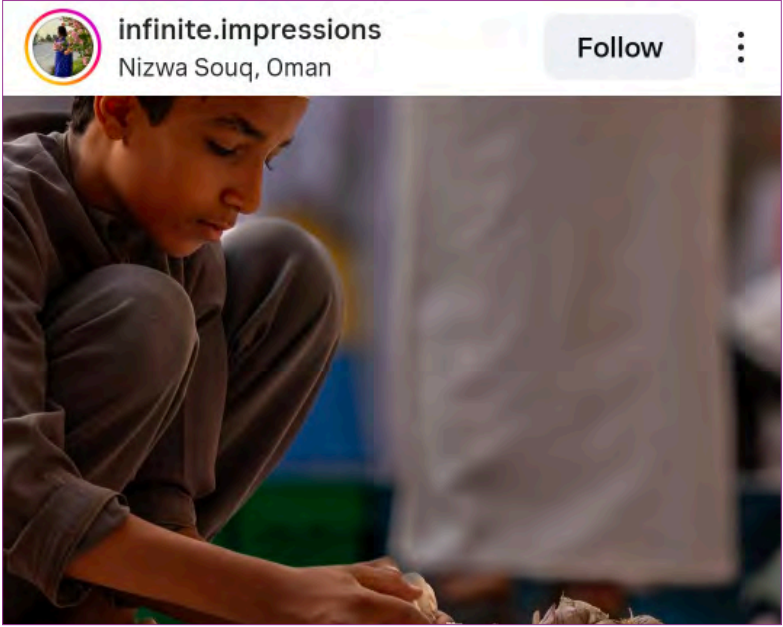
Emma Von Enck, principal dancer with New York City Ballet and David Gabriel, soloist with the company, perform “Four Bagatelles” during a dress rehearsal. — AFP



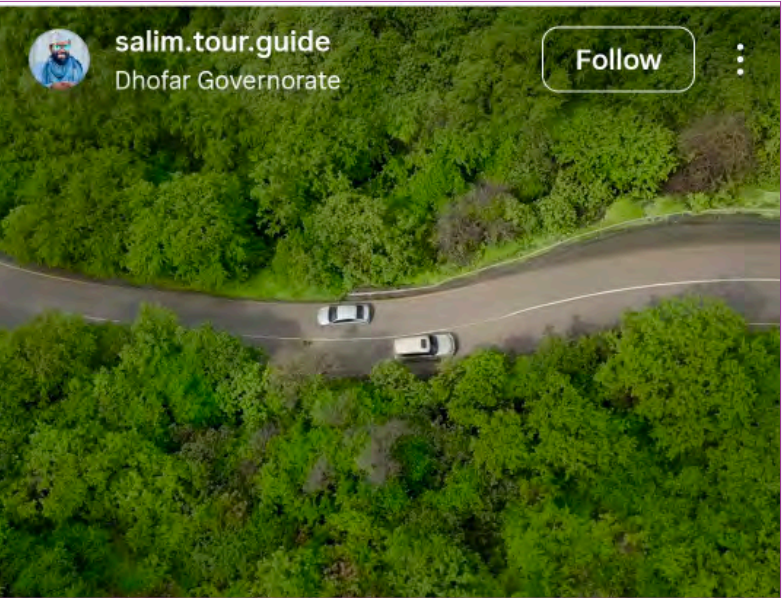
MUSIC

American actor and rapper Will Smith performs on stage during the “Cabaret Vert” festival in Charleville. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



At the Side of the Road

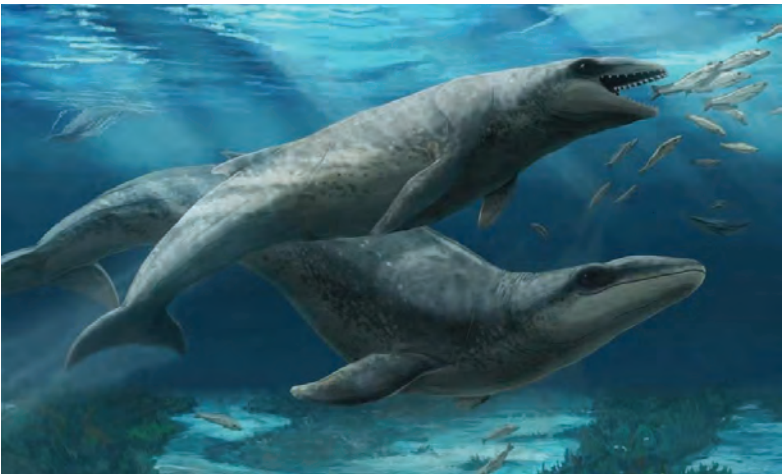


Beauty of Remote Places

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Scientists unearth ‘cute’ but fearsome ancient whale



AUSTRALIAN scientists have discovered a razor-toothed whale that prowled the seas 26 million years ago, saying on Wednesday the species was “deceptively cute” but a fearsome predator. Museums Victoria pieced together the species from an unusually well-preserved skull fossil found on Victoria’s Surf Coast in 2019. Scientists discovered a “fast, sharp-toothed predator” that would have been about the size of a dolphin. “It’s essentially a little whale with big eyes and a mouth full of sharp, slicing teeth”, said researcher Ruairidh Duncan. “Imagine the shark-like version of a baleen whale — small and deceptively cute, but definitely not harmless”. The skull belonged to a group of prehistoric whales known as the mammalodontids, distant smaller relatives of today’s filter-feeding whales. It is the fourth mammalodontid species ever

discovered, Museums Victoria said. “This fossil opens a window into how ancient whales grew and changed; and how evolution shaped their bodies as they adapted to life in the sea”, said palaeontologist Erich Fitzgerald, who co-authored the study. Victoria’s Surf Coast lies on the Jan Juc Formation — a geological feature dating to the Oligocene epoch between 23 and 30 million years ago. A string of rare fossils have been unearthed along the scenic stretch of beach, a renowned site for the study of early whale evolution. “This region was once a cradle for some of the most unusual whales in history and we’re only just beginning to uncover their stories”, said Fitzgerald. “We’re entering a new phase of discovery”. “This region is rewriting the story of how whales came to rule the oceans, with some surprising plot twists”. — AFP



In heatwave, Romans turn to vintage snow cones to stay cool



FORGET ice cream, sorbet or even the beloved Italian gelato — when Romans swelter in a heatwave, they turn to the traditional “grattachecca”. It may be difficult for non-Italians to pronounce — think “gratta-kekka” — but the Roman-style shaved ice is colourful, cheap and refreshing like no other. In a turn-of-the-century kiosk near the Tiber River, Massimo Crescenzi, 72, was in constant motion one recent weekday in front of a patiently waiting line of clients, whose numbers rarely flag with 37°C temperatures scorching the capital. His wife Rosanna Mariani was behind the scenes at the “Golden Fountain” as the business is named, pulling large blocks of ice out of a freezer, cracking them with a pick into small chunks and feeding them into a machine. Her husband then poured the crushed ice into a glass, adding fresh fruit and colourful syrups, according to each customer’s preferences. He cautioned that the treat loved by generations of Romans was not Sicilian granita — in which water is combined with fruit and sugar from the outset and frozen together.

A debate lingers in Rome over the merits of using the more hygienic machine, which is Crescenzi’s choice, or the old-fashioned way of shaving the ice by hand. “It’s delicious! Especially on such a hot day, it’s very refreshing”, said Andrea Alvarado, a 55-year-old Californian, who opted for the exotically flavoured tamarind, mint and black cherry grattachecca on offer. While on vacation in Rome, she learned about the four-euro treat on social media: a modern way to discover an old tradition. With increasingly frequent heatwaves in Rome, demand is growing, the owners said, with various kiosks across the city offering the frozen desserts. “The season used to begin in June through September. Now, we’re May to October and probably in the next few years it will be even longer”, Crescenzi said. **FOUR GENERATIONS** Boasting that theirs is “the oldest kiosk in Rome”, Mariani showed off black-and-white photos taken in 1913 of the family business. “It’s a kiosk that was opened by my grandfather 112 years ago”, said Crescenzi.

That means the business has so far lasted four generations, now that his youngest son helps him during the summer rush. Sitting in the shade, US tourist Victoria Kiser was enjoying her treat: “There’s a reason it’s been in business since 1913”, she agreed. Crescenzi knows the history of grattachecca like the back of his hand. Back in the day, “ice came from the Abruzzo mountains and was transported to Rome by carts”, he said. Those were the days before factories began to produce ice, making things more efficient. The treat’s name probably derives from the story of a nobleman whose servants would prepare food and drink for him, he said. “When he went to ask for a very refreshing drink, one with ice, he had around him various people including the famous Francesca, whose diminutive in Roman dialect is ‘checca”. Grattachecca was born. French tourist Fabien Torcol was enjoying a coconut-lemon grattachecca. He said he loved the dessert, but... “It’s not easy to pronounce”, he laughed. — AFP

FEATURES



OMANI ARTIST
EXPLORES UNIQUE
CONTEMPORARY
VISUAL LANGUAGE AND
DEEP CULTURAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ROOTS

BY BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

AS VISITORS step into the vast hall of Sultan Qaboos University’s recent art installation, they were immediately drawn into a compelling narrative that transcends mere aesthetics.

The spacious venue, designed to accommodate immersive works of art, is dominated at its centre by a striking black-and-white piece. This artwork captures a mountain landscape, with jagged peaks rendered in stark monochrome, interrupted sporadically by scattered crimson blocks.

The scene is both familiar and perplexing, prompting viewers to look beyond the visual composition and contemplate its deeper symbolism. It’s not just an image of natural grandeur, but an invitation to explore the complex relationship between humans and their environment — an ongoing dialogue woven into the very fabric of our existence.

This installation, created by Omani artist and educator Majda al Habsi, serves as a powerful visual testament to her personal connection with nature and her cultural roots. Her work is rooted in the mountains that shaped her childhood — a landscape that



remains a central motif in her artistic expression.

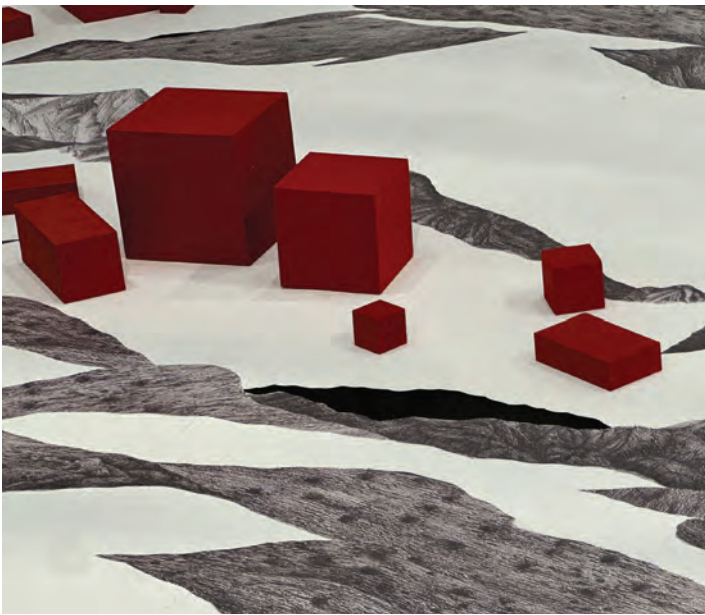
Growing up amidst Oman’s rugged terrains fostered a profound bond, one that she now articulates through her art, especially her master’s thesis and recent installation at Sultan Qaboos University. For Majda, these landscapes are more than scenic backdrops; they are living entities that teach, challenge and reflect aspects of the human condition.

Majda’s artistic journey underscores the valuable opportunities available for young Omani artists today. While the country’s rising cultural scene is still finding its voice, platforms like university exhibitions and regional arts festivals are becoming crucial arenas for emerging talent. These spaces enable young artists not only to showcase their work but also to participate in a broader narrative that champions local identity.

In Oman and across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a new generation of artists is gaining prominence by reinterpreting traditional themes through fresh lenses. They are blending contemporary practice with cultural heritage, carving out distinctive niches that challenge Western-defined art standards.

In the wider GCC context, emerging artists are making significant waves by exploring issues of identity, rapid urban development and social change. These developments are vital, especially considering the historical underrepresentation of the Gulf region in the global art arena.

Historically, Gulf art was primarily orientated around traditional crafts and classical forms; however, contemporary artists now challenge this narrative. They push boundaries by incorporating modern



techniques and storytelling, fostering a regional identity rooted in history while embracing innovation.

In this climate of originality and cultural pride, Majda’s work holds promising potential. Her focus on the mountains and landscapes of Oman aligns seamlessly with regional trends, yet her perspective remains deeply personal and rooted in her own cultural narrative.

Her installation’s geometric forms, underpinned by organic, irregular textures, evoke the natural undulations of the terrain — symbolising the ongoing dialogue between humanity and landscape. Her use of colour, particularly crimson to represent the geography’s vibrant life force and black ink echo the textures of the natural world, creating a visual language that speaks to shared history and collective memory.

Majda’s ability to translate her environment into evocative art sets her apart, positioning her to carve out a unique space in the regional art landscape. Her work embodies a sense of belonging, resilience and cultural pride — elements that are crucial as Oman seeks to elevate its cultural voice on the world stage.

She is poised to develop her own niche, one that weaves Omani cultural specificities into contemporary art discourse, much like those emerging voices in the GCC whose innovative approaches redefine regional identity.

Looking ahead, Majda’s potential lies not just in her technical skill but in her capacity to encapsulate the essence of Oman’s landscape and soul through her art. As she continues to explore these themes, her voice will be vital in shaping a broader narrative — one that champions authenticity and cultural depth.

In a region where artistic innovation is increasingly recognised as a powerful form of cultural diplomacy, Majda’s work embodies the future of Gulf art: rooted in tradition yet boldly forward-looking. As regional platforms expand and the global art community begins to pay closer attention, her story is one of promise — a testament to what the next chapter of Gulf art can truly be.