

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y

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HM gives audience to Iran’s Speaker

HM SUPPORTS AND HOPES FOR THE SUCCESS OF TALKS

PEACEFUL AND SETTLEMENT OF ALL OUTSTANDING ISSUES

RESTORATION OF SAFE NAVIGATION THROUGH STRAIT OF HORMUZ

IRAN APPRECIATES THE CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE OF OMAN

OMAN SUPPORTS DIALOGUE AND PROMOTION OF PEACE

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday to Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who was accompanied by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The guest conveyed the greetings of Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, President of Iran, and his good wishes to His Majesty and the Omani people for continuous progress and prosperity. He expressed his country’s appreciation — as a leadership, government and people — for the wise approach pursued by the Sultanate of Oman and its constructive role, under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, in supporting paths of dialogue, reducing tension, and promoting opportunities for peace and stability in the region.

His Majesty the Sultan asked the guest to convey his greetings to Mojtaba Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, and Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, President of of Iran. His Majesty also wished the Iranian leadership and people continued security, stability, and prosperity. During the audience, the latest developments in the Iran-US negotiations were reviewed. His Majesty the Sultan listened to the Iranian side’s clarifications across the various tracks of the talks. HM conveyed his support and expressed his earnest hopes for the success of these negotiations, leading to a peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues, foremost among them the restoration of safe and unhindered navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, the nuclear file and other related matters and challenges.

TURN TO P2



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday. — ONA

OMAN, IRAN TO SET UP JOINT WORKING GROUP ON HORMUZ

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran issued on Tuesday a joint statement reading as follows: “The Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran held talks in Muscat during the visit made by Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the visit, the Iranian delegation was granted an audience by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The delegation also held talks with Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

The Sultanate of Oman affirmed its support for the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding signed between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and emphasised the importance of continuing dialogue and coordination to support its successful implementation.

Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the two coastal states bordering the Strait of Hormuz, reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to ensuring safe passage through the Strait in full conformity with the relevant provisions of international law, while underscoring their sovereignty and sovereign rights over their respective territorial waters in the Strait.

The two sides also deliberated on matters relating to the Strait in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding.

TURN TO P2

IN BRIEF

ROYAL DECREE AMENDS SOME LAWS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 66/2026 on amending some laws.

Article (1) stipulates that the amendments attached to this decree shall be applied to the Penal Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 7/2018.

Article (2) annuls Article (146) of the Labour Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 53/2023. It also cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publishing. — ONA

HM SENDS MESSAGE TO MAURITANIA

NOUAKCHOTT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani of Mauritania. The message pertains to the bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to enhance them across various fields. The message was handed over by Jassim bin Eid al Saadi, Head of the Mission of Oman to Mauritania, when he was received by the Mauritanian President at the Presidential Palace in the capital, Nouakchott.

Ministers, Council discuss ties

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, accompanied by a number of members of the Council of Ministers, received on Tuesday at the Council’s building in Muscat, Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and members of the Council’s Office.

A joint meeting was convened with the aim of reinforcing cooperative frameworks and sustaining coordination between the Council of Ministers, the Council of Oman and all state institutions.

At the beginning of the joint meeting held between the two councils, HH Sayyid Theyazin lauded the endeavours undertaken by the State Council across diverse spheres, as well as the national responsibilities it carries in support of the comprehensive



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, with HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, at the meeting in Muscat on Tuesday.

development drive and the consolidation of institutional governance in the service of the public interest. He affirmed that the Council of Ministers consistently welcomes the proposals, insights and studies put forward by the State Council.

For their part, the Chairman of the State Council and the members of the Council’s Office expressed their deep appreciation for the

commitment shown by the Council of Ministers to fostering a culture of collective action and enhancing ongoing collaboration, which serves to unify and integrate efforts, elevate the standard of institutional effectiveness and reflect favourably on the service of the nation and the realisation of its developmental aspirations. — ONA

SEE ALSO P3

OMAN AND IRAN CHART A SHARED COURSE FOR HORMUZ

THE meeting in Muscat between Oman’s leadership and Iran’s senior delegation produced more than diplomatic courtesy. It began at the highest level, with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik receiving Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, and Dr Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

That audience set the tone. From the Palace to the Foreign Ministry, the message was consistent: treat the Strait of Hormuz not as a bargaining chip, but as a shared responsibility. By reaffirming support for the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Iran, and by agreeing to a joint working group on navigation, Oman and Iran are trying to move the Strait from a flashpoint to a regulated waterway.

SEE PAGE 8

OMAN

OMAN, IRAN SUPPORT PATHS OF DIALOGUE TO REDUCE TENSION



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday to Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who was accompanied by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs. — **ONA**

His Majesty expresses hopes for the success of talks



FROM PAGE 1

From the Omani side, the audience was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai,

Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry.

From the Iranian side, it was attended by Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials.

Oman, Iran to engage in discussions with littoral states of Hormuz

FROM PAGE 1

The two sides agreed to sustain dialogue on this matter through a joint working group established between their respective Foreign Ministries, with the aim of reaching an agreement on the future management of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, the services to be rendered in this regard, and the

associated costs, in line with internationally recognised standards. In this context, the two sides agreed to engage in discussions with littoral states of the region, as well as with any other related parties.

The two sides affirmed that all arrangements pertaining to the Strait of Hormuz must fully respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the two

Strait states.

The Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran renewed their commitment to preserving the Strait of Hormuz as a safe and open maritime passage for international navigation, and emphasised the imperative of continued cooperation to reinforce maritime safety, safeguard the freedom of navigation and uphold regional stability.” — **ONA**

Tawoos Group launches Numa Health following the acquisition of NMC Oman



From left to right; Mr. Mohammed Alshibli, Mr. Sameer Ul Haque, Mr. Samir J Fancy, HE Dr. Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti, HH Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said, Dr. Shinoop Raj

Muscat: Following the acquisition and integration of NMC's healthcare operations in Oman, Tawoos Group, one of the Sultanate's premier business groups, has launched Numa Health. The new identity brings the hospitals and clinics formerly operating as NMC Oman under a single Omani healthcare brand, positioning the business as a national healthcare platform with local ownership and long-term institutional backing.

The launch was marked at a private reception in Muscat, held in the presence of His Excellency Dr. Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti, Oman's Minister of Health, together with Samir J Fancy, Chairman of Tawoos Group, and His Highness Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said, Vice Chairman of Tawoos Group, alongside senior figures from across the country's public sector.

Tawoos entered Oman's private healthcare sector through the acquisition of NMC's Oman operations and Elegant Medical Center (EMC), with agreements signed in May 2025 and the transaction concluded in September 2025. Since then, the platform has expanded from 8 locations to 13 across the Sultanate. The hospitals and network of clinics now move forward under the Numa Health identity, while EMC is retained as the established sub-brand for dermatology and aesthetics.

Together, Numa Health and EMC form the largest private healthcare platform under Omani institutional ownership. The platform carries forward more than two decades of continuous care, now supported by new ownership, governance, capital and a long-term horizon for growth. Tawoos

has set out to grow it, giving it the scale and ambition to play a national role alongside the public health system. This comes at a time when Oman Vision 2040 identifies healthcare as a priority and demand continues to rise as the population grows and ages.

Samir J Fancy, Chairman of Tawoos Group, said, "The Government of Oman and the Ministry of Health have built an extraordinary universal healthcare platform to meet the needs of a growing nation. Numa Health is being launched with the intent of creating a trusted Omani brand that complements that progress. Beyond providing affordable, yet best-in-class care, the intent is to rapidly expand the footprint of our healthcare platform across Oman and beyond, and to introduce tertiary care at the next level. Tawoos' vision and financial strength support Numa's aspirations to be the trusted private sector partner for Oman's health services of tomorrow."

His Highness Sayyid Tarik bin Shabib Al Said, Vice Chairman of Tawoos Group, said, "Numa Health is much more than a new name. It represents a shift beyond traditional service delivery towards a more connected, patient-centered model of care, built on medical excellence, technology, and a human approach. That is the standard we intend to set, and the foundation on which we will grow."

With diversified business interests across multiple sectors over the past four decades, Tawoos Group has been recognised for its commitment to excellence, in-country value creation and its support for the Sultanate's broader economic development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

SHORT TAKES

FOREIGN MINISTER
RECEIVES QATARI
PRIME MINISTER



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Tuesday received Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al Thani, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the sisterly State of Qatar, and his accompanying delegation, upon their arrival at Muscat International Airport for an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The visit comes within the framework of the close fraternal relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the sisterly State of Qatar with the aim of discussing ways to enhance cooperation and coordination between the two countries in various fields of common interest. — ONA

OMAN, MOROCCO
SIGN MOU TO TRAIN
PROFESSIONALS



The memorandum includes the implementation of joint programmes in the field of training and qualifying lawyers. — ONA

RABAT: The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Justice in the Kingdom of Morocco to enhance and develop cooperation between the two sides in the field of training and qualifying lawyers, legal professionals, and experts, embodying the principle of mutual interests.

The memorandum was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, while it was signed on behalf of the Moroccan side by Abdellatif Ouahbi, Minister of Justice of Morocco. The signing took place in the city of Rabat in the Kingdom of Morocco, in the presence of Khalid bin Salim Bamakhalif, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Morocco, along with a number of officials from both sides.

The memorandum includes the implementation of joint programmes in the field of training and qualifying lawyers, legal professionals, and experts. This aims to contribute to raising the efficiency of national cadres and enhancing the quality of judicial and legal work through the exchange of professional expertise and experiences, as well as the organisation of training programmes, seminars, and specialised workshops.

The Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs stated that this memorandum represents a practical framework for enhancing cooperation between the two sides in the judicial and legal fields.

He added that it opens new horizons for the exchange of specialised expertise, experiences, and knowledge in the field of training and qualifying lawyers, legal professionals, and experts. — ONA

MINISTERS, STATE COUNCIL OFFICE TIE-UP TO FOSTER DEVELOPMENT



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, accompanied by a number of members of the Council of Ministers, received on Tuesday at the Council’s building in Muscat, Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and members of the Council’s Office. A joint meeting was convened with the aim of reinforcing cooperative frameworks and sustaining coordination between the Council of Ministers, the Council of Oman and all state institutions. — ONA



Not eligible to get pension
and salary together: SPF

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

THE old-age pension will only become payable after an insured person’s service has ended, even if they have already reached the statutory retirement age, after the Social Protection Fund (SPF) introduced a key amendment to pension regulations.

The clarification comes amid growing public interest following amendments to Article (61) governing the Elderly Pension, with the Fund emphasising that the entitlement itself remains unchanged.

Malik al Harthy, Director of Benefits at the SPF, said that insured individuals who attain the age of 60 while still employed are not eligible to receive a retirement pension concurrently with their salary.

“The requirement relates solely to the commencement of pension payments and does not affect the individual’s entitlement to the pension itself,” Al Harthy said.

Officials stressed that no changes have been introduced to the eligibility criteria for retirement pensions, nor have there been any amendments to pension calculation methods. Insured individuals will continue to receive the same benefits and rights guaranteed under the existing legal framework.

The SPF also moved to address concerns regarding individuals who had previously received a pension while remaining in employment. It confirmed that all payments made under the former provisions were lawful and valid at the time they were granted.

As a result, beneficiaries will not be required to repay any amounts



No changes have been introduced to the eligibility criteria for retirement pensions, nor have there been any amendments to pension calculation methods.



MALIK
AL HARTHY
Director of Benefits
at the SPF

already received, and no recovery measures will be pursued against them.

“The rights acquired under the previous regulations remain protected,” the SPF said.

With regard to applications that had been submitted but had not yet resulted in pension payments before the amendment entered into force, the SPF stated that such applications have been cancelled and will now be subject to the revised provisions. The measure, it explained, is intended to ensure the uniform application of the new rules across all pending cases.

Al Harthy further highlighted the distinction between retirement pensions and social protection benefits for senior citizens, noting that the two programmes operate under separate frameworks and eligibility requirements.

While retirement pensions are linked to insurance contributions and the termination of employment service, social protection benefits are granted according to their own criteria and remain fully unaffected by the recent amendment.

The Fund also clarified that the amendment does not prevent retirees from returning to the labour market after retirement. Individuals who have completed their service and begun receiving their retirement pension may subsequently take up employment in the private sector while continuing to receive their pension benefits.

Officials noted that this flexibility allows experienced professionals to remain economically active and enables employers to benefit from their expertise, while preserving retirees’ pension entitlements.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The event was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. — ONA

EA LAUNCHES SECOND VERSION OF WASHAQ SYSTEM

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) launched on Tuesday the second version of the “Washaq” supervisory system, which represents one of the digital solutions supporting the regulatory and inspection efforts at the Authority. This launch took place within the activities of the third edition of the Cyber Security Awareness Week.

The organisation of the week comes in cooperation with strategic partners, represented by the Cyber Defence Centre and the Advanced Cybersecurity Academy.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority.

This move comes within the framework of the Authority’s efforts aimed at enhancing information security, protecting environmental data, and securing modern and emerging technologies used in its inspection and supervisory systems. Additionally, it seeks to raise the level of cybersecurity awareness and enhance the digital readiness of employees and participating government institutions.

Ahmed bin Sulaiman al Hussaini, Director of the Digital Transformation Department and Head of the Information Security Section at the Environment Authority, stated in his speech that the Cyber Security Awareness Week, which was launched in 2022, started as an initiative to spread awareness and has today become one of the fundamental pillars of the Authority’s institutional culture and its digital readiness. He explained that electronic security has today become the first line of defence for business continuity, ensuring institutional resilience, and protecting their digital assets.

He added that this year’s edition is distinguished by the participation of academic institutions, government entities, and specialised companies, alongside the presence of a select group of cybersecurity leaders in the government sector. This reflects the concept of shared responsibility in protecting the national digital space, enhancing governance, and managing risks.

The activities of the week witnessed the holding of an accompanying exhibition with the participation of a number of specialised companies in the field of cybersecurity and digital technologies.

During the exhibition, these companies showcased the latest global solutions, technologies, and practices in the field of data protection and digital risk management.

Furthermore, the Environment Authority signed a consultancy agreement with ITHCA Group to implement the Environmental Data Bank project. This project aims to develop an integrated ecosystem for managing environmental data and enhancing its utilisation in supporting decision-making and future planning. — ONA

Oman at meeting of GCC Justice Under-Secretaries

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, participated in the annual meeting of GCC Under-Secretaries of Ministries of Justice, which was held on Tuesday at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat General in the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman at the meeting was chaired by Dr Yahya bin Nasser al Khusaibi,



Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs.

The meeting discussed a number of topics related to enhancing judicial and legal cooperation, including an initiative to establish an electronic platform for the exchange of judicial notices and legal

assistance, presented by the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Furthermore, the discussions covered the draft of the unified rules for combating information technology crimes in the GCC countries, as well as the results of the meeting of the committee of directors and heads of judicial and legal training centres and institutes within the GCC states. — ONA

Journalism excellence award winners feted

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

OMANI JOURNALISTS, artistes and other media professionals were recognised for their excellence in their chosen fields at an event held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, and attended by Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and a number of honourees and Their Excellencies at a ceremony held at the Oman Journalists Association in Airport Heights on Monday.

Oman Arabic Daily, sister concern of Oman Observer Daily, bagged 8 awards in various categories of journalism as the young journalists made their presence felt at the 2025-2026 Journalism Excellence Competition.

Ghalia bint Saleh al Thakhri won first place in the field of investigative journalism for her report on ‘Bullying in classrooms’, while second place went to Yousef bin Salem al Habsi, and third place went to Mai bint Habib al Ghadani.

Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak al Araiimi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Journalists Association, stressed that “The Journalism and Media Excellence Awards represent an important milestone to celebrate professional creativity and honour journalists and media professionals who have presented distinguished works that have contributed to enriching the Omani press and media scene.”

The works that were submitted for awards varied in their fields to include written and digital journalism, journalistic investigations, specialised reports, photojournalism, media production, in addition to economic, social, cultural and environmental content.

Dr Al Araiimi added, “These journalism proficiency awards come in light of the rapid transformations witnessed by



An exhibition of selected photographs of Omani photographers was opened for the members of the Association.



Ghalia al Thakhri

the media and communication industry globally with the diversity of platforms, the multiplicity of information sources and the acceleration of events. The ability of Omani journalists to keep pace with professional and technical developments and provide honourable models based on credibility, objectivity and commitment to professional ethics are laudable.”

He emphasised, “adding that those awards were not limited to honouring the winners, but also reflect the belief in the importance of journalism and media as a national and humanitarian message, pointing out that supporting national media competencies represents a real investment in the future of the profession.”

In the newspaper article competition, Samiha bint Rashid al Hosani from Al Watan newspaper won the first place for an article: ‘So that the hotspots do not spread’, second place went to Mohammed bin Ahmed al



Yousef al Habsi

Shezawi, and third place went to Bashayer bint Hibras al Sulaimi.

In the press dialogue competition, Bashayer bint Hibras al Sulaimi won first place for ‘Dialogue: Diving into an oral history’, second place went to Yousef bin Salem al Habsi, and third place went to Ghalia bint Saleh al Thakhri. In the competition for the best photo, Said bin Salem al Hinai won first place, second place went to Nidaa bint Hafidh Bait Suwailam, and third place went to Abdulwahed bin Fadel al Hamdani.

In the written electronic report competition, Intisar bint Habib al Shibli won first place for the report ‘Poetic Inscriptions and Writings on Wooden Doors’, second place went to Hamed bin Saeed al Mashaikhi, and third place went to Mohammed bin Sabah al Balushi.

In the video investigation competition, Ali bin Jumaa al Riyami bagged first place, second place went to Abdulaziz bin Hamad al Ajmi, and third place went to Faris bin Jumaa



Mai al Ghadani

al Wahaibi. Ibrahim bin Nasser al Rawahi won first place in the video report competition.

In the competition for university and college students, the awards went to Salma bint Marhoon al Farsi for investigative journalism for ‘Brain Sepsis in the Child’; Najah bint Abdullah al Bahlani for press dialogue for ‘An Inspiring Humanitarian Biography’; Abrar bint Ahmed al Hadhrami for the video investigation ‘Diabetes is the untold pain’, and Fatima bint Khamis al Sulaimani for the newspaper article competition.

An exhibition of selected photographs of Omani photographers was opened for the members of the Association, in addition to the screening of a film that reviewed the most prominent activities and events carried out by the Association in the past years, followed by the presentation of an experience of one of the leading media figures who worked in the media field since the beginning of the seventies.

Al Wafa Centre celebrates its success stories of rehabilitation

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JUNE 23

Al Wafa Centre for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Nizwa celebrated its anniversary during a ceremony held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs, in the presence of officials, parents, partners and supporters.

The ceremony started with a speech by Salimah bint Marhoon al Zakwani, during which she highlighted the key achievements, programmes and activities implemented throughout the year, as well as ongoing efforts to enhance and develop rehabilitation services provided to beneficiaries.

The event also featured a special operetta showcasing the talents and creativity of the centre’s students, alongside a visual presentation



The event also featured a special operetta showcasing the talents and creativity of the centre’s students.

highlighting the success stories of Ahmed al Mundhiri and Iman al Hinai, who successfully got placement after getting training from the centre. Their journeys served as inspiring examples of determination, perseverance and achievement.

A documentary was also screened, highlighting the centre’s various services and programmes, and its role in developing the skills and capabilities of beneficiaries while supporting their empowerment and inclusion.

An exhibition of the centre’s protected productive workshops was held, featuring a range of products and handicrafts created by beneficiaries. The exhibition reflected the vocational and practical skills acquired during the rehabilitation year and underscored the centre’s efforts.

The ceremony concluded with the recognition of partners, supporters and contributors in appreciation of their role

Students explore AI and advanced tech



Students engaged in hands-on experiences across cutting-edge fields, including educational robotics and artificial intelligence.

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JUNE 23

WITH the participation of 1,000 male and female students, alongside dedicated teachers and educational supervisors from various wilayats of Al Dakhiliyah, the Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate successfully concluded its 2026 summer programme, “A Generation Building the Future.”

Over several weeks of the summer break, the programme transformed into a vibrant hub of ideas and scientific experimentation, offering an unconventional educational experience that broke away from traditional summer activities.

This year's journey immersed participants in the worlds of technology and innovation.

Students engaged in hands-on experiences across cutting-edge fields, including educational robotics, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, cybersecurity, nanotechnology, geographic information systems (GIS) and 3D printing. Additionally, the programme featured specialised tracks, including the “Young Innovator” programme and various STEM projects.

To maximise reach and provide interactive environments that spark curiosity and discovery, activities were strategically distributed across innovation centres, learning resource rooms, and specialised educational centres throughout the governorate's

wilayats.

The young innovators applied their knowledge by designing practical projects and innovative models.

This approach directly enhanced their skills in scientific research, design thinking and teamwork.

The programme's outcomes have yielded a promising wealth of student-led ideas and initiatives, paving the way for future participation in national and international scientific competitions.

This success underscores a vital truth: investing in the summer break goes far beyond merely filling time; it is about shaping a future and a ready generation equipped with the tools to lead in an ever-evolving world of science and technology.

MANGO
EXTRAVAGANZA
ACTIVITIES KICK
OFF IN SUHAR



SUHAR: *The activities of the Mango Extravaganza 2026 commenced on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate.*

The three-day event is organised by the Office of the Wali of Suhar in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North, with the participation of a number of farmers from various wilyayats of the governorate.

The launch of the extravaganza was held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North.

Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Hinai, Wali of Suhar, explained that organising the extravaganza comes within the framework of efforts aimed at supporting the agricultural sector, enhancing the status of the Omani mango crop, highlighting the quality and diversity of agricultural production in the governorate, encouraging farmers and productive families to market their products, and opening new horizons for promoting local products. — ONA



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development



Tender Announcement

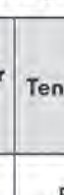
The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
577/ 2025	(re- tender) Supplying machines and equipment for a paper recycling workshop to the Al-Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Bidbid	Companies specialized in the field of Supply of office and educational tools, materials and supplies or supply of sports equipment, Electrical machinery and equipment registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree.	Monday 13-07-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 02-08-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Wednesday 24/06/2026**.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
18/2026	Building works - Seeb	First & Above	02 July 2026	03 Aug 2026	551/- R.O
19/2026	HVAC system works - Seeb	First & above - specialized in HVAC system	02 July 2026	03 Aug 2026	240/- R.O
20/2026	Civil maintenance works - Seeb	First & above - Civil maintenance works	02 July 2026	03 Aug 2026	158/- R.O
21/2026	Building works - Khasab	Excellent	02 July 2026	10 Aug 2026	693/- R.O
22/2026	Building works - Seeb	First & Above	02 July 2026	03 Aug 2026	527/- R.O
23/2026	Building works - Masirah	Excellent	02 July 2026	17 Aug 2026	1,575/- R.O
24/2026	Civil maintenance works - Salalah	First & above - Civil maintenance works	02 July 2026	03 Aug 2026	158/- R.O
25/2026	Building works - Salalah	Excellent	02 July 2026	17 Aug 2026	1,200/- R.O
26/2026	Building works - Seeb	First and above	02 July 2026	10 Aug 2026	245/- R.O
27/2026	Building works - Shafa	Excellent	02 July 2026	10 Aug 2026	1221/- R.O
28/2026	Civil maintenance works - Masirah	First & above - Civil maintenance works	02 July 2026	03 Aug 2026	289/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- Bidders shall present the omanization certificate issued by the ministry of labour prior to purchasing the tender documents provide that it meets the approved that it meets the approved minimum omanization percentage as stipulated by ministry of labour.
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 1. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 2. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 3. Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:

A. Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)

B. Technical files.
 4. Confirmation of site visit.
 5. All addendums and circulars.
 6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 7. List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.

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WORLD

SHORTTAKES



Students wait for permission to enter the school compound at the gate of San Jose High School in Tacloban City. — AFP

PHILIPPINE SCHOOL SHOOTING PLANNED, SAY POLICE

MANILA: Two teens who allegedly killed three fellow students in a rare Philippine school shooting planned the attack in advance, police said on Tuesday, revealing one had trained at a firing range. Determining a motive, however, remained a work in progress, with bullying cited as a factor but national police suggesting “online influences” had also played a role.

Classes were cancelled across the shaken city of Tacloban, where police said 15 students from San Jose National High School were being treated for gunshot wounds, more than double the number revealed after Monday’s shooting.

One was in critical condition due to severe wounds suffered in the attack. “His condition is under strict observation, but we were told he is fighting for his life,” Tacloban police spokeswoman Evalyn Diaz said.

Both alleged shooters, aged 15 and 14, are in custody after the mass shooting in central Leyte province that saw terrified students screaming and crying as they hid beneath desks.

“All indications point to the fact that it was planned,” national police spokesman Allen Rae Co told a Tuesday afternoon press briefing. — **AFP**

AFGHANISTAN’S DELEGATION MEETS WITH EU OFFICIALS

BRUSSELS: A delegation representing Afghanistan’s Taliban met on Tuesday with European Commission officials in Brussels where they started discussing consular issues, a spokesman for the Afghan Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

On the meeting’s agenda was the possible resumption of consular services for Afghans in the EU, consular presence as well as “the need for trust-building measures”, spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said in a statement.

The meeting raised “hope to build positive momentum to safeguard consular rights of Afghans residing abroad,” he added.

The Commission last month invited Taliban officials to Brussels to discuss deportations of Afghan migrants, despite warnings from human rights groups that such engagement could put Afghans at risk and undermine core EU values. The Commission said the meeting is technical and does not constitute recognition of Taliban rule.

“Member States are looking into ways to return persons who have committed serious crimes and who are possibly a security threat. So this is the initiative that the Commission is now following up on,” Commission spokesman Markus Lammert said.

According to a letter seen by Reuters and addressed to Abdul Qahar Balkhi, a Taliban foreign ministry spokesman, it will focus on “the return and readmission of Afghan nationals without a right to stay in the European Union”. — **Reuters**

KENYAN HEALTH MINISTRY HALTS US EBOLA FACILITY

NAIROBI: Kenya has ordered a halt to preparations for a US-run Ebola quarantine facility, the health minister told a court on Tuesday, after being held in contempt for ignoring a previous stop-work order. Kenyans have strongly opposed the plan and deadly protests have taken place since the facility was announced in May for potential US citizens evacuated from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is grappling with a major

Ebola outbreak.

The centre at Laikipia Air Base, about 200 kilometres from the capital, Nairobi, is largely completed, with some 50 isolation beds to be manned by US medical staff. Rights groups petitioned the high court, saying the facility was being developed secretly and without consultation, but Kenya’s government ignored a court order to pause work on the site.

On Monday, the court said Health

Minister Aden Duale was held in contempt for failing to respond to the order. Appearing in court on Tuesday, he expressed regret and was pardoned. “I have directed the immediate and complete cessation of any intended construction, site preparation, or related activities concerning the Laikipia Air Base facility pending the hearing and determination of the substantive petition or until further orders of this court,” he told the court. — **AFP**

Israel targeted Gaza kids resulting in genocide: UN

ISRAELI AUTHORITIES and security forces deliberately targeted Palestinian children, resulting in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza, and war crimes in the occupied West Bank, an independent UN inquiry said on Tuesday. The report by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel examined violations against Palestinian children since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas on October 7, 2023. Around 30% of those killed in the Gaza war were children, the report found.



Palestinians ride past the rubble of residential buildings destroyed during the Israeli offensive, in Gaza City. — Reuters

“the brutal tactics of Hamas”.

The UN commission said that Palestinian children were deliberately targeted and killed during the war, including after a ceasefire came into effect in October 2025. It said this was a key element establishing genocidal intent by Israeli authorities and security forces to destroy the Palestinian group, in whole or in part, in Gaza. “The evidence shows that Palestinian children have been deliberately targeted and killed by the Israeli security forces,” said Srinivasan Muralidhar, the commission’s chair, in a statement accompanying the report.

The report found that the proportion of children killed was higher than in previous

conflicts. Between October 7, 2023 and October 7, 2025, at least 20,179 children were killed, around 30% of the overall death toll. By comparison, in hostilities in Gaza in 2008-2009 and 2014, children made up approximately 24% of conflict-related fatalities, the report said.

Israeli forces continued to use high-payload munitions and weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated residential areas despite mounting child casualties, the commission said. “This indicates that such attacks, which killed children in such high numbers, were intentional,” it said.

It said it believed children were targeted collectively because the Israeli security

forces considered the civilian population as a whole to be associated with Hamas and other armed groups.

A rebuttal shared by Israel’s mission in Geneva said Israel “consistently strives to minimize harm to children even in situations of conflict” and that Israel rejected the suggestion it deliberately targets children “in the strongest terms”. Muralidhar said that by targeting children, Israel was undermining the capacity of the Palestinian people to exist and to determine their future. Conditions imposed by Israel in Gaza, including widespread attacks, repeated displacement and starvation caused by the blockade of aid, food and medicine, severely harmed children’s health and development, resulting in preventable deaths and trauma, the report said.

The inquiry found that attacks on healthcare and reproductive facilities impacted the survival of newborns and reported increases in miscarriages, and that nearly all children in Gaza were reported to require psychological support.

Israel said the report failed to mention Israel’s facilitating vaccinations and the entry of medics, and the establishment of hospitals. — **Reuters**



MORE VESSELS TRANSIT STRAIT OF HORMUZ

SINGAPORE: Three stranded supertankers passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday, while seven empty Qatar-linked liquefied natural gas tankers have entered in recent weeks in an early sign Gulf gas shipping may be resuming, ship-tracking data showed. Iranian-linked tankers also continued to transit the vital waterway, according to the data, with traffic picking up on Monday as US-Iran talks progressed.

More crude oil cargoes stranded in the Gulf since the start of the war are expected to make their way out now, analysts say, while a growing number of sanctioned tankers have been plying the strait to load and export Iranian oil after the US waived sanctions.

Two Trafigura-operated Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs), each carrying 2 million barrels of crude, exited the strait on Tuesday. One, Dubai Energy, was chartered by Taiwanese state energy firm CPC, and the second, Legio X Equestris, was chartered by TotalEnergies, LSEG and Kpler data showed. Another VLCC, Universal Glory, chartered by South Korean refiner GS Caltex, also left the strait on Tuesday with 2 million barrels of Saudi crude onboard, the data showed. — **Reuters**

SEASON SHORTAGES

India monsoon brings less rain than usual



Long-awaited monsoon rains arrived in India’s financial capital Mumbai, on Tuesday, cooling weeks of blazing heat despite persistent fears of water shortages, with total rainfall so far staying below the long-term average. As of Monday, India had received 60.6 millimetres of rainfall, 43 per cent less than the normal amount for this point in the season. But there was some relief for Mumbai on Tuesday when the first downpours finally swept in. — **AFP**

DECISION TO DEPART

Niger hands in formal request to quit ICC



Niger has officially submitted its request to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Hague-based tribunal said on Tuesday, nine months after announcing the move alongside allies Mali and Burkina Faso. “While joining or withdrawing from a treaty remains a sovereign right of States under international law, we regret any decision to depart from the collective effort to end impunity for the most serious international crimes,” the ICC said in its statement. — **AFP**

NUTRITIONAL PROBLEMS

Sri Lanka bans junk food in schools



Sri Lanka began enforcing a ban on fast food and sweets in schools. Health inspectors said they had started to implement guidelines issued by the education ministry, prohibiting schools from providing food containing high levels of sugar, salt and fat. “Poor eating habits among children directly contribute to the increase in nutritional problems and, later, to the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases,” the ministry said. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES



Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz (L) and German Minister for Labour and Social Affairs Baerbel Bas (R) speak after the 13-member pension reform commission in Berlin. — AFP

Germany eyes longer working lives in pension reform

BERLIN: Germany will raise its retirement age gradually beyond 67, abolish early retirement and expand compulsory pension contributions under a set of new recommendations backed by Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Tuesday. Presenting its findings on Tuesday, the commission said the retirement age should be linked to life expectancy and gradually raised beyond 67 now. It recommended abolishing a scheme that allows people to retire early at 63, and expanding compulsory pension contributions to include civil servants and self-employed workers.

“All elements of this reform package... must now be implemented swiftly,” Merz told a press conference, adding that “we cannot afford to remove or reject individual measures”. Merz added that the proposals aim to meet “two goals: pensions remain secure, and the burdens are distributed fairly across all segments of society and across all generations”.

Opposition parties and unions have voiced criticism of some of the proposals, which had previously been published in German media. The left-wing party Die Linke said that under the changes, people would be “working even longer, working even more”. — AFP

BELGIUM, JAPAN ROYALS MEET



(L-R) Empress Masako, Japanese Emperor Naruhito, Belgian King Philippe and Queen Mathilde wave from the balcony of Brussels City Hall at the Grand Place, in Brussels, Belgium. Later, Japan's Emperor and Empress signed the golden book during an official welcoming ceremony as part of a state visit to Belgium, at the Royal Palace in Brussels. Also, Belgium's Prime Minister Bart De Wever and Japan's Emperor Naruhito attend a meeting at the Lambermont Prime Minister's official residence. — AFP

London ‘disappointed’ as UK-EU summit delayed

LONDON: The UK's minister for European Union relations on Tuesday said he was “disappointed” that a UK-EU summit on post-Brexit ties planned for July 22 had been delayed after Keir Starmer resigned as Britain's prime minister. “Yes, of course, it's disappointing. I'm not going to insult your listeners by saying that I'm not disappointed that the EU summit has been delayed,” Nick Thomas-

Symonds said on Tuesday, the 10th anniversary of the UK's Brexit referendum.

The second summit aimed at repairing Britain's fractured ties with its neighbouring bloc was due to take place between Starmer and EU top officials Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa.

But after Starmer announced his decision to step down on Monday following months of domestic

pressure, the European Commission confirmed the summit would be delayed. “The summit with UK is postponed.

Postponed is not cancelled, so it means as soon as the possibilities are there, we will, of course, look into another date,” European Commission spokesperson Paula Pinho said.

A government spokesperson said on Tuesday the UK was “committed

to holding the next summit at the earliest opportunity” and was “committed to securing” deals agreed during Starmer's term. Starmer inched the country back closer to the EU during his almost two years in office, but ruled out rejoining the customs union — a thorny issue which would be seen as a reversal of the 2016 referendum in which the UK narrowly voted to leave the bloc. — AFP

Red Cross sounds European heatwave health alarm

THE INTENSE heat gripping Europe can quickly become a matter of life and death for the most vulnerable in society, the Red Cross warned on Tuesday. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the world's largest humanitarian network, said that besides the sweltering outdoor temperatures, indoor heat was also a serious health risk.

“The coming days pose serious health risks,” Mary Friel, the IFRC's senior climate policy officer, told a press conference in Geneva. “For thousands of people across Europe, extreme temperatures, without action, can quickly become a matter of life and death. “IFRC is urging people to take this heatwave seriously and to look out for those most at risk to save lives.”

The network urged people to stay connected to heat alerts, follow advice from local authorities and check in on those who may be at higher risk. Friel said the “most extreme impacts” were felt by vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children, pregnant women, people with chronic illnesses, outdoor workers and the homeless.

National Red Cross societies were carrying out house calls, setting up cooling stations in cities, providing first aid and sharing practical advice, she said. “Early action saves lives and we encourage everyone to act,” said Friel. “Indoor heat is often a hidden threat, especially for people with limited mobility and underlying health conditions,” she added.

Workers stewed at their posts and children stayed home from school on Tuesday as a choking early-summer heatwave smothered much of western Europe. Schools closed and railways advised against travel as Britain, France, Italy and Spain issued red alerts and health warnings for much of their territory in the record-breaking heat.

France sweated through its hottest night ever recorded and reported that 40 people had drowned in the past five days as citizens bathed to cool off. Scientists have shown that recurring heatwaves are a clear marker of global warming, and warn they are set to become more frequent, longer and



Tourists protect themselves from the sun under umbrellas while crossing a street in Paris. — AFP

more intense, driven by humans' burning of fossil fuels.

Nearly all of Spain was under a heat alert, with parts of the south and north of the country on the highest warning level. National weather agency AEMET issued red alerts for “extraordinary danger” in areas around the southern city of Cordoba, the northern city of Bilbao and parts of the northern region of Cantabria.

Authorities urged people to take extra care of vulnerable people, drink water and avoid exertion at the hottest hours — if possible. But Reinaldo Garcia, 35, had to go every day to the small air-conditioned kiosk where he sells lottery tickets in Madrid. “In the afternoon, when the sun hits full-strength on the kiosk, it's like there's no air-conditioning at all,” he said. “But I have to work all the same.” Italy's health ministry declared a red heatwave alert in 15 cities, including Milan and Rome.

During a red alert, the ministry advises people to eat light, stay indoors in the hottest parts of the day and sprinkle themselves with cool water. The city's transport authority told the daily that the batteries on its new electric buses were running out faster than usual because of more air

conditioning. “We are organising the service to face up to this unusual heatwave,” the Atac authority was quoted as saying.

Dozens of schools in England said they would close early on Tuesday and remain shut for two more days. “Most of our buildings cannot be cooled adequately and there is little shade outside,” one school in southeastern Buckinghamshire said. The UK's meteorological office issued a rare red heat warning — for only the second time — for parts of central and south England on Wednesday and Thursday.

The alert indicates a risk to life and the possibility of major infrastructure being closed. Temperatures could soar to 40C, unprecedented for the time of the year. “To see temperatures like this in the UK in June is sobering,” said Met Office chief scientist Stephen Belcher. “Human-induced climate change has made events like this more likely and more intense.”

In Germany, police said five people had died in fatal swimming accidents over the weekend. On Monday, two children aged two and four were found dead in a car, believed to be casualties of the heatwave, according to a local prosecutor in the southern town of Carpentras. — AFP

Russia says US no longer ‘objective mediator’ in Ukraine

MOSCOW: Russia on Tuesday said that the United States was no longer an “objective mediator” in its efforts to broker an end to the Ukraine war as it blasted Europe's plans to bolster defence spending. US-led talks on ending Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II remain effectively frozen as President Donald Trump has shifted his attention towards the Middle East after ordering strikes on Iran in late February. “As for the United States, judging by their actions, they appear to be abandoning any claim to the role of an objective mediator and are instead pursuing a course of escalating sanctions pressure on Russia,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told foreign envoys in Moscow on Tuesday.

At the G7 summit in France earlier this month, leaders — including Trump — agreed to increase pressure on the Russian “war economy” by strengthening

sanctions, including on energy. Since returning to the White House in 2025, Trump — who had pledged he would end the Ukraine war within a day of taking office — has been pushing both sides to engage in negotiations. There has been little progress in the US-brokered shuttle diplomacy, with Kyiv refusing to give in to Moscow's demands to cede territory, limit the size of its army and renounce Western support.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions in Ukraine forced from their homes since Russia launched its war in February 2022. In recent months, Moscow has grown increasingly critical of Europe's role in supporting Ukraine and trying to stop Trump from pushing Kyiv to accept a Russia-friendly peace.

Speaking separately on Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Europe was “openly” preparing for war through its massive



Russia's President Vladimir Putin gives a speech during a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow. — AFP

rearmament programme — which is being urged on by Trump. “Now in the West they openly say that they are preparing for war with us, and are increasing their military, offensive budgets,” the Kremlin chief told a ceremony of newly-qualified military and law enforcement officials.

In hawkish remarks, he repeated Russia's call for Ukraine to fully withdraw from the eastern Donbas region and said his troops were on the brink of capturing the key fortified town of Kostiantynivka. Putin also said an escalating wave of Ukrainian retaliatory hits on Russian infrastructure was designed to “shake-up society” and was being done with Western support — his first such comments since a massive attack on Moscow set an oil refinery ablaze last week, pouring black smoke over the Russian capital.

Meanwhile, the EU warned on Tuesday that a spiralling diplomatic

row between Ukraine and Poland over World War II memory risked benefiting the Kremlin. “There's only one happy observer in this type of situation, and that's the aggressor in Ukraine, and so we shouldn't be playing into their hands,” EU spokeswoman Paula Pinho said. “We have confidence in the ongoing discussions that are taking place between Poland and Ukraine and we are confident that indeed this will be solved.”

Ukraine announced that President Volodymyr Zelensky will skip the Ukraine Recovery Conference, to be hosted in Poland later this week, amid the spat. Zelensky infuriated neighbouring Poland this month by naming a military unit after the nationalist Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) that took part in massacres against Poles in WWII. Hard-right Polish President Karol Nawrocki stripped Zelensky of the Order of the White Eagle. — AFP

Oman and Iran chart a shared course for Hormuz



EDITORIAL

THE meeting in Muscat between Oman's leadership and Iran's senior delegation produced more than diplomatic courtesy. It began at the highest level, with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik receiving Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Dr Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs. That audience set the tone. From the Palace to the Foreign Ministry, the message was consistent: treat the Strait of Hormuz not as a bargaining chip, but as a shared responsibility. By reaffirming support for the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Iran, and by agreeing to a joint working group on navigation, Oman and Iran are trying to move the Strait from a flashpoint to a regulated waterway.

For years, the Strait has been discussed in terms of threats and red lines. This statement shifts the language toward administration, services, costs and international standards. It is the difference between asking "who controls it?" and asking "how do we run it safely for everyone?"

His Majesty's meeting with the Iranian officials reinforced Oman's long-standing approach: quiet mediation backed by legal principle. Oman backs dialogue between Washington and Tehran because instability in Hormuz hurts Oman first. Its coastline, ports and economy are directly exposed.

But Oman also insists on a core principle that His Majesty's audience underlined: any arrangement must fully respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Oman and Iran. That is not just legal language. It is Oman saying that solutions cannot be imposed from outside. If rules on pilotage, navigation support, or fees are set, they must be agreed by the states whose territorial waters the ships cross.

Iran's emphasis on the same point during talks with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and with Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, creates rare alignment. Both sides describe themselves as "Coastal States of the Strait of Hormuz" and tie their commitment to safe passage directly to international law. This pairing is important. "Safe passage" satisfies global shipping and energy markets. "Sovereignty and sovereign rights" satisfies domestic audiences in both countries. By putting the two together, the statement tries to close the gap between international expectations and national control.

The practical piece is the joint working group between the two foreign ministries that was agreed after discussions with Sayyid Badr. Its mandate is technical but consequential: reach agreement on future administration of navigation, the services provided, and the costs, all "in accordance with international standards." That wording opens the door for cooperation with the

Oman does not seek headlines in the talks themselves. It seeks an outcome where ships move, revenues flow, and sovereignty is not compromised

International Maritime Organization and for consultation with other littoral states. It also suggests Oman and Iran are thinking beyond crisis management. They are planning for the day-to-day: who guides ships, what safety services exist, how costs are shared, and how transparency is built in.

There are challenges ahead. "International standards" will mean different things to different capitals. Other Gulf states with coastlines near Hormuz will want a voice. Shipping companies will want predictability, not new fees without clarity. And the broader US-Iran context will still shape how fast technical talks move. But the decision to start with a bilateral working group, then expand to "littoral States in the region and any other relevant parties," is a sensible sequence. Solve the basics between the two states most directly responsible, then widen the circle.

For Oman, the Palace audience with Ghalibaf and Araghchi followed by ministerial talks fits a long pattern: high-level political cover, then technical follow-up. Muscat does not seek headlines in the talks themselves. It seeks an outcome where ships move, revenues flow, and sovereignty is not compromised.

For Iran, the statement offers a way to assert control over its waters while still committing to an open Strait. For the world, it offers a path where Hormuz is discussed in meeting rooms with charts and cost models, not only in security briefings.

UN URGES AI FIRMS TO ‘COME CLEAN’ OVER ENVIRONMENT

LAURENT THOMET

UN chief Antonio Guterres challenged AI firms to disclose their growing environmental footprint as part of a push for faster global action to curb climate change. As Europe bakes under a second heatwave in as many months, Guterres delivered a speech in London that painted a stark picture of a planet that has just endured its 11 hottest years on record.

"Climate chaos is accelerating before our eyes," Guterres said, while the energy crisis, fuelled by war in the Middle East, is "exposing the folly of a world hooked on hydrocarbons". "It is clear that our world is facing a Tale of Two Crises," Guterres said, referencing the 19th century British writer Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities". "On the surface, these crises may seem separate. But they share the same destructive origin: Fossil fuels," he said at London Climate Action Week, an annual gathering of policymakers, company executives and NGOs. Guterres pushed for a rapid transition to renewable energy while announcing new initiatives to combat methane emissions and address concerns over the environmental impact of energy-hungry data centres. The growing energy, water and land use of data centres — vast server warehouses powering AI and other digital services — is putting pressure on local communities and the environment. "It is time to come clean," Guterres said. "If AI is to help build a better future, it must be honest about what it costs us now."

Guterres launched an AI Environmental Transparency Initiative, urging every major artificial intelligence company to measure and publicly disclose their environmental impact as well as commit to powering every data centre with renewable energy by 2030. A UN study earlier this month found that the facilities consumed more electricity than all but 10 countries in 2025. By 2030, they could use more power than all but five countries, the study found. About 30 per cent of the electricity consumed by data centres comes from coal, followed by renewables at 27 per cent, natural gas at 26 per cent and nuclear at 15 per cent, according to the International Energy Agency. A coalition of dozens of cities announced on Tuesday a "Global Urban Data Centres Pact" aiming to ensure that the facilities are built in a way that minimises their environmental impact. — AFP

What football shows us about ourselves

THERE is something fascinating about World Cup season. Living rooms turn into stadiums, families and friends gather around screens, emotions run high as people shout, celebrate, argue and analyse as though their nervous system is being controlled by eleven people running after a ball. I am not exactly the person waiting for every match, yet there is something powerful about watching the world so invested in a game. Football has a way of revealing who we are, not just our loyalty to a team, but our relationship with pressure, disappointment, control, belonging and hope.

A football team can have the most talented players in the world, yet if they cannot regulate under pressure, talent alone will not save them. One missed pass, one bad decision, one unexpected goal, and the whole energy can shift in seconds. The real test is not whether they play well when everything is going their way. It is what happens when the game turns against them, when the noise gets louder, the crowd gets impatient, and they have to make a decision under pressure. Isn't life the same? It is easy to be calm when everyone is listening, the children are behaving, the house is quiet and life is cooperating. Emotional maturity is measured when the plan collapses, when your child melts down in public, when someone misunderstands you, or when life scores a goal you did not see coming.

Footballers do not rise to the occasion by accident, they will fall back on their training. Their body remembers the repetition, their mind remembers the strategy, and their nervous system remembers whether it has practiced staying present under



Jordanians stand above a national flag at Amman's 2nd-century Roman amphitheatre early on Tuesday. — AFP



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

pressure. This is where many of us misunderstand growth. We think we will suddenly become calm in the heat of the moment simply because we know better; yet knowledge is not the same as practice. Reading about regulation is not the same as building the capacity to pause when your body wants to react.

Parenting shows us this every day. We may know that shouting does not help, we may understand that our child needs connection before correction, and we may wholeheartedly believe in conscious parenting. Then the whining starts, the siblings fight erupts, the disrespect ensues, the nervous system feels threatened, and suddenly the version of us that takes over is not the wise adult we imagined. It is the player who panics under pressure and forgets that one difficult moment does not have to become the whole match. This is why self-work matters. Not seeking perfection, but because we are learning how to return back to ourselves. Footballers miss goals, and

they do not leave the pitch because they made a mistake. They reset, adjust and return. Imagine if we brought that into our homes. Imagine if instead of drowning in guilt after we reacted, we repaired. Imagine is instead of making our children responsible for our emotional state, we became the steady presence they could borrow from.

A good coach does not scream a player into confidence. A good coach observes, guides and believes in the player's ability to grow. We need to become that inner coach for ourselves, and that emotional coach for our children. The World Cup reminds us that everyone loves the final score, yet the real story is the training, the recovery, the missed chances and the comeback. Life is no different, parenting is no different, healing is no different. The aim is not to never fall apart. The aim is to notice sooner, repair quicker and return wiser, because the way we play under pressure is the clearest reflection of who we are becoming.

A ‘monsoon treat’ during the scorching summer sun



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

TO as the “Arabian Switzerland,” the Dhofar region in the Sultanate of Oman boasts one of the oldest cultures in Arabia, largely due to the frankincense trade and its status as a resting place for several figures revered in Islamic, Christian, and Jewish traditions.

In addition, it offers an enchanting blend of breathtaking scenery, dramatic cliffs, pristine beaches, majestic waterfalls and unique natural wonders for visitors.

Ancient trade routes connected this region to other empires, ensuring it remained an important global trading hub throughout history. The customs and traditions of the peoples in the Islamic East received significant attention from travellers during the Islamic era.

“Dhofar’s strategic location overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, combined with its natural resources such as frankincense, myrrh, and ambergris, played a major role in its prestigious commercial and economic relations and status throughout the ages,” states a research report in the Journal of Strategic and Military Studies.

Dhofar boasts many attractions that appeal to both locals and visitors. The dunes of the Rub al Khali desert, also known as The Empty Quarter, are located in the northern part of the governorate, while the Dhofar Mountains arc through the central region.

The expansive, unspoiled coastline of Dhofar, along with the museums at the Al

Baleed Archaeological Site, Sumhuram Ancient City, and the legendary city of Ubar, are also significant. Additionally, there are numerous unidentified ruins scattered throughout the region.

What makes Dhofar truly unique is the Khareef, the monsoon season. Although Khareef means “autumn” in Arabic, in Dhofar it refers to summer monsoon that brings drizzle, low clouds, and mist across the Dhofar mountains. While temperatures exceed 40 °C in other parts of the Gulf region, they typically range between 20 °C and 27 °C in Dhofar.

This natural phenomenon attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to the area annually, boosting tourism and supporting local businesses. Data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information in Oman indicates that 1,027,255 tourists visited Dhofar during the 2025 Khareef season, representing a 2.1 per cent increase compared to 2024. According to reports, visitor spending during the 2025 season reached approximately RO125 million, compared to RO121 million in 2024 and RO103 million in 2023.

During the period of the festival, Salalah hosts a diverse programme of cultural, tourist, and entertainment events, establishing itself as one of the region’s premier summer destinations.

This year’s programmes include performances of Arabic music, traditional dances such as the Al Bar’ah, craft exhibitions, and a diverse culinary selection featuring Omani cuisine.

Shopping enthusiasts delight in the Khareef Festival, where markets overflow with souvenirs, frankincense, crafts, and regional goods. Many visitors combine this experience with a frankincense tour in Salalah or a heritage exploration of the Khareef Festival

The main event will be the Khareef Dhofar Festival, scheduled from mid-July to late August. It will feature live concerts, cultural performances, traditional markets and activities for the entire family.

Shopping enthusiasts delight in the Khareef Festival, where markets overflow with souvenirs, frankincense, crafts, and regional goods. Many visitors combine this experience with a frankincense tour in Salalah or a heritage exploration of the Khareef Festival to better understand Oman’s history.

For nature lovers, the season offers opportunities such as excursions to the green mountains of Salalah, wildlife expeditions, visits to the rose gardens, and garden explorations during Khareef. Adventure enthusiasts organise trekking expeditions in the Dhofar Mountains, Salalah, during the Khareef season or embark on a scenic journey from Muscat to Salalah. This route passes through deserts, wadis, and coastal areas.

Salalah offers excellent connections to modern transportation networks, accessible by road from various locations across Oman or by air through Salalah International Airport. Accommodations, vacation resorts, shopping centres, and entertainment facilities are just a few of the many integrated tourism services available.

Featuring a distinctive blend of climate, culture, and entertainment, Khareef 2026 reinforces Salalah’s status as a premier highlight of Oman’s tourism agenda, attracting thousands of local and international visitors annually.

EFFECTIVE REPORTING OF CYBERCRIMES CRUCIAL



LT. MOHAMMED SAUD AL MADASARI

The author works for Royal Oman Police

Cybercrimes are increasing in both scale and sophistication as a result of rapid digital transformation and the growing reliance on information technology across various aspects of life. This development has necessitated the intervention of the Omani legislator to establish a comprehensive legal framework that

safeguards the rights and interests of individuals and institutions in the digital sphere.

In line with this approach, the Cybercrime Law was promulgated under Royal Decree No 61/2026, reflecting contemporary technological developments and providing the necessary legal mechanisms to address, criminalise and penalise unlawful acts in the digital environment. The law represents a significant step toward strengthening cybersecurity, as its provisions have been expanded to include 62 legal articles addressing artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. The law also places particular emphasis on protecting personal data and digital evidence from tampering, alteration, or destruction, given their growing importance in electronic transactions and judicial proceedings. In addition, it addresses crimes related to digital identity theft, the creation and use of fake accounts for fraud, defamation and deception. Moreover, it criminalises certain forms of unlawful online content that threaten security or public order or incite hatred and violence.

The effectiveness of the law ultimately depends on a high level of public awareness in dealing with emerging cybercrimes, which continue to evolve alongside advancements in technology and artificial intelligence. Therefore, individuals should exercise caution and avoid excessive sharing of personal information, voice recordings, and images on social media platforms.

It is essential to remain vigilant against investment fraud and fraudulent digital currencies that are promoted through online platforms, where victims are often lured by promises of unrealistic returns. This underscores the importance of distinguishing between legitimate investment opportunities and fraudulent schemes. At the same time, effective community cooperation through the prompt reporting of cybercrimes is crucial, as delays may enable offenders to conceal evidence. Such cooperation is particularly important in cases involving cyber extortion and online defamation, where perpetrators rely on psychological pressure and manipulation of their victims.

Making service cool again

FOR MANY young people, military service, Khidmat Al Alam, is often associated with hardship, rigid routines, and long days far from the comforts of modern life. It is therefore unsurprising that when our youth are asked what they want to become when they grow up, relatively few answer: “A soldier.”

Yet history suggests that societies thrive when they succeed in making service, discipline, and national contribution a source of pride rather than obligation. The challenge facing the GCC today is not whether every citizen should become a professional soldier. Rather, it is whether the region can afford to overlook one of the most effective tools for developing disciplined, resilient, technologically capable citizens in an age increasingly defined by artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, and geopolitical uncertainty.

The future of military service may have less to do with marching boots and more to do with algorithms, drones, and cybersecurity.

Recent research has repeatedly demonstrated that self-discipline is among the strongest predictors of long-term success. Studies by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and elsewhere have shown that discipline often predicts academic achievement more accurately than raw intelligence. Similar findings in workforce development suggest that individuals with strong self-regulation skills enjoy higher employability, better career progression, stronger mental resilience, and greater financial stability. In an era dominated by distraction, instant gratification, and social media addiction, discipline is becoming a strategic asset, not only for individuals but for nations.

History offers a compelling lesson. I enjoyed visiting The Egyptian Grand Museum recently where I learned that around 1550 BCE, the Egyptian Pharaoh Ahmose I inherited a kingdom weakened by decades of foreign domination under the Hyksos.

Rather than simply defeating



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The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

The most successful nations of the AI age may not be those with the largest populations or even the strongest militaries. There may be those who succeed in turning discipline into a national competitive advantage

his adversaries, Ahmose and his successors studied and adopted many of the military innovations introduced by their rivals, including horse-drawn chariots, composite bows, and more professional military organisation. The result was not merely a military victory. It was the birth of Egypt’s New Kingdom, one of the most prosperous and influential periods in ancient history. Military modernisation became the foundation for centuries of stability, trade, technological advancement, and cultural achievement. The lesson remains relevant today: nations prosper when they transform security challenges into opportunities for innovation.

The wars of the future are unlikely to be won solely by those with the largest armies. They will be won by societies capable of adapting faster than their competitors. This is where the GCC has a unique opportunity. Instead of viewing national service primarily as military preparation, governments could reimagine it as an AI-Age National Service Program, a platform that combines traditional military values with future-oriented skills.

Another might specialise in cyber defence. A third could develop AI applications for logistics, disaster management, or critical infrastructure protection. All would leave with stronger discipline, practical experience, and a deeper sense of responsibility toward their nation and community. Such a model would align naturally with the GCC’s economic ambitions.

Across the region, governments are investing billions of dollars in AI, advanced manufacturing, digital infrastructure, semiconductors, space technologies, and knowledge-based industries. Yet technology alone does not create competitive advantage.

Human capital does. The World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report continues to identify analytical thinking, resilience, technological literacy, leadership, and lifelong learning among the most important skills of the future. National service can become a powerful mechanism for cultivating

precisely these capabilities at scale.

Indeed, some of the world’s most innovative economies have long recognised this connection. Countries such as Singapore, South Korea, and Israel have leveraged national service not only to strengthen defence capabilities but also to develop leadership pipelines, technical expertise, and innovation ecosystems.

While the GCC should develop a model suited to its own culture and priorities, the broader lesson remains clear: Service can become a launchpad for innovation.

Most importantly, this approach would help bridge one of the region’s most pressing challenges: Ensuring that young citizens remain competitive in a rapidly changing labour market. Employers increasingly seek candidates who can lead teams, solve problems under pressure, communicate effectively, and adapt to technological change. These are precisely the qualities that a well-designed national service programme can cultivate.

The ideal graduate of such a programme would not simply know how to carry a rifle. They would know how to operate a drone, secure a network, analyse data, manage a crisis, collaborate with artificial intelligence, and lead a team toward a common objective. In other words, they would be prepared for the future.

The GCC has already demonstrated its ability to transform deserts into smart cities, build globally connected economies, and compete in emerging industries. The next great transformation may be to reinvent national service itself, not as a relic of the past, but as a gateway to the future. The most successful nations of the AI age may not be those with the largest populations or even the strongest militaries. There may be those who succeed in turning discipline into a national competitive advantage. In Surat Al Anfal, the Holy Quran says “Develop every source of power available to you.”

And perhaps the challenge before us is not convincing young people to serve. It is making service cool enough that they aspire to.



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



MEXICO YOUNGSTERS AGAINST OCHOA MAKING CEREMONIAL APPEARANCE

THE YOUNGER members of the Mexico national team are opposing the possibility of iconic goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa making a ceremonial appearance in the final group stage match at the World Cup, according to reports.

The reports said that the group believes that decisions should be made solely on the basis of current performance and sporting strategy - especially at a World Cup, where every detail can influence a team's path to the knock-out stage. World Cup co-hosts Mexico were the first nation to qualify for the knock-outs.

They play their final group stage match against the Czech Republic on Wednesday. Ochoa is considered a Mexican football great. He played in 153 matches for the national team over a span of more than 20 years. He hasn't played yet at this World Cup as coach Javier Aguirre opted to have Raul Rangel as a starter for matches against South Africa and South Korea.

Ochoa could join Argentina's Lionel Messi and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo as the only players to have appeared in six World Cups. — **dpa**



Mexico's goalkeeper #13 Guillermo Ochoa takes part in a training session at Sports Arena in Zapopan. — **AFP**



Belgium’s Doku becomes father after World Cup controversy



JEREMY Doku has become a father, the Belgian football association announced on Monday, days after the player’s plans to leave the World Cup to be there for the birth sparked controversy.

After consultations with medical staff, Doku was allowed to temporarily leave the Red Devils before last Sunday’s game with Iran to join his wife in London where the couple welcomed a baby boy, Praise, it said.

“Jeremy received the news before yesterday’s match that the birth was imminent,” the team’s doctor Brahim Hacene said.

Doku had already been ruled out of Sunday’s match due to illness.

“As he had already been receiving the appropriate medical treatment for several days, he was able to fly

without any medical risk to be with his family during this very special moment,” the doctor said.

“Mother, father, and baby are all doing wonderfully,” he added.

The 24-year-old had made it clear before the Red Devils’ first match that he would have

wanted to be there for the birth of his first child - drawing criticism from some quarters.

A presenter on L’Equipe TV, the TV channel of the historic French sports newspaper, questioned the decision, saying fathers were “useless” at childbirth, whereas hundreds of footballers would have killed to play in a World Cup. Doku started in Belgium’s first match against Egypt but struggled to make an impact before being replaced.

The lacklustre scoreless draw against Iran in Los Angeles drew scorn from Belgian media, which lambasted the team’s performance.

Belgium, who are rebuilding after their “golden generation” showed age had caught up with them in exiting at the group stage in the 2022 World Cup, can assure themselves of progressing to the last 32 with a win over New Zealand in their final group match on Friday. — AFP



Belgium's Jeremy Doku in action with Egypt's Ahmed Fatouh. — Reuters



Argentina's Lionel Messi in action with Austria's Xaver Schlager. — Reuters

LAST ONE THE BEST ONE?

HOW MESSI KEEPS DOING IT AT WORLD CUP

HE knew what Lionel Messi was going to do and had a plan to stop it, and then the Argentina captain struck twice anyway in becoming the leading scorer in World Cup history.

Austria coach Ralf Rangnick may not be all that fondly remembered by Manchester United fans, where he pitched up in 2021-2022.

But at 67, the German coach is vastly experienced and also widely admired in football.

Talking ahead of his side's group match on Monday against reigning champions Argentina in Texas, Rangnick spoke about the latest iteration of Messi, who turns 39 on Wednesday.

"Lionel Messi maybe doesn't put in the same legwork as in the past," said Rangnick.

"He likes to stay on the side, and sometimes he likes to stop in front of the goal, in the offside position.

"That doesn't mean that they have one man less, but they have one man less that works in the counter-pressing.

"But that makes him so dangerous, because he might be in a position, free in a position, and we need to be prepared for that.

"We shouldn't have too many transition moments, and not allow transition moments, and not allow him to be free to accept the ball."

'VERY ANGRY'

That notion unravelled in front of a frenzied crowd of 70,000 dominated by Argentina fans decked out in light blue and white.

Messi, the best player of all time, pulled an early penalty wide to pass up the chance to move clear of Miroslav Klose for the most World Cup goals.

Messi said afterwards that he was "very angry" with himself and he twice came close after that to scoring, only for Austria captain David Alaba to twice deny him.

And then came the big moment, Messi sweeping in on 38 minutes after being set up by Facundo Medina.

Just like Rangnick had warned, Messi had ambled into space and was all alone to score with a trademark swing of his left foot. It was his 17th World Cup goal and 18 arrived when Messi pounced again in the fifth minute of injury time.

This time, the veteran squeezed home as several defenders threw themselves desperately at the ball.

Messi, at his sixth World Cup, was still going strong in the 95th minute.

It took the maestro five goals at this edition, having hit a hat-trick in a 3-0 win over Algeria.

That was Messi's first treble at a World Cup.

LAST MESSI THE BEST ONE?

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, Messi's team-mate at the 2006 World Cup, has built an ecosystem

around Messi to allow his captain to do his thing.

That means letting others do the running around him.

Not that Messi is totally exempt from the dirty work.

"Today, when the team was struggling without possession, he put in the work," said Scaloni.

"You could see his commitment, that speaks volumes about him."

Renowned Spanish journalist Guillem Balague, who wrote an authoritative biography of Messi, said before the World Cup that this version of the player was "very different" to the one that burst onto the scene with Barcelona in the early 2000s.

"Messi has reinvented himself at least five times to evolve into the player he is now for Argentina and Inter Miami," Balague wrote.

"He has adapted so he can dominate and stay ahead of a game that has always been chasing him," he added.

He noted how Pablo Aimar, Messi's childhood idol, once said: "The last Messi is always the best Messi."

That version is a player that walks more than he runs, said Balague, but "still sees everything first".

"Critics once used this (lack of running) against him. Now it reads as mastery," he wrote.

"He is reading the game, conserving energy for the moments that matter." — AFP

MUSCAT
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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$69.91
BRENT \$77.91
LIGHT \$73.91



SHORT TAKES



Oman has been working to strengthen public financial management and reduce payment cycles.

OMAN CLEARS OVER 1.7 BILLION IN PAYMENTS TO PRIVATE SECTOR

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

Oman paid more than RO 1.7 billion to the private sector by the end of 2025, covering vouchers processed through the government’s e-financial system after completing the full documentary cycle, according to the State’s Final Account for Fiscal Year 2025.

For anyone running a business that depends on public contracts — and thousands of Omani companies do — that figure matters more than the headline budget balance. Government payments are not simply a line in an account. They are the difference between a contractor meeting payroll, a supplier extending credit, or a small firm bidding for its next job.

For many SMEs, delayed government payments do not just create inconvenience. They create crisis. Regular settlement of dues is one of the most direct forms of private-sector support the state can provide.

The RO 1.7 billion figure needs to be read alongside the sharp rise in development expenditure — up 38 per cent to RO 1.577 billion in 2025 — as faster project execution generates more vouchers and more claims. When projects move, payments move.

The connection runs through the whole economy. Contractors pay subcontractors. Subcontractors buy materials from suppliers. Suppliers pay their own workers and transport costs. A delay at any stage creates pressure through the chain.

Oman has been working to strengthen public financial management and reduce payment cycles. The 2025 figure is consistent with that effort. But the final account does not break down payments by sector, company size or governorate — information that would give a clearer sense of how broadly the benefit was distributed.

Nama PWP launches RFQ for 400m Solar IPPs

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

NAMA Power and Water Procurement (PWP), the sole buyer of power and water capacity in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of the Request for Qualification (RFQ) process for the development of two major utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) projects: the Adam Solar Independent Power Project (IPP) and the Sinaw Solar Independent Power Project (IPP). Total investment in the two projects is estimated at RO 400 million.

These projects form part of PWP’s ongoing efforts to secure a reliable, sustainable and diversified energy future for the Sultanate of Oman, while supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the national energy transition strategy.

Adam Solar IPP and Sinaw Solar IPP are designated as Projects Number 11 and 12 under PWP’s renewable energy roadmap, underscoring their strategic importance within the PWP’s energy transition programme.

The projects are expected to contribute significantly to carbon footprint reduction efforts by increasing the share of renewable energy in the national generation mix.

The projects are also expected to support the issuance of environmental attributes, including International Renewable Energy Certificates (I-RECs), by enabling transparent tracking and verification of clean energy generation.

The RFQ invites experienced local and international developers to participate in the competitive qualification process for the development of: Adam Solar IPP — A 1,000 MW Solar PV plant integrated with a Battery Energy



The solar IPPs are designated as Projects Number 11 and 12 under PWP’s renewable energy roadmap.

These projects form part of PWP’s ongoing efforts to secure a reliable, sustainable and diversified energy future for the Sultanate of Oman, while supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the national energy transition strategy.

Storage System (BESS), to be located in the Wilayat of Adam, with a project cost estimated at RO 287 million (\$746 million); Sinaw Solar IPP — A 500 MW Solar PV plant, to be located in the Wilayat of Sinaw, with a project cost of RO 111 million (\$288 million).

Together, the projects will collectively add 1,500 MW of renewable energy generation capacity to the national grid, representing a significant milestone in the Sultanate of Oman’s energy transition programme.

Adam Solar IPP will be among the first large-scale solar projects in the country to incorporate battery energy storage, enhancing grid flexibility, supporting system stability and enabling greater integration of renewable energy resources.

The project is expected to play a key role in strengthening energy security and ensuring reliable electricity supply during periods of peak demand.

Sinaw Solar IPP will further contribute to increasing the share of renewable energy in the Sultanate of Oman’s energy

mix and support the country’s ambition to reduce carbon footprint.

Commenting on the launch, Ahmed bin Salim al Abri, CEO of Nama Power and Water Procurement, said: “These projects reflect the company’s commitment to delivering cost-effective, sustainable and reliable electricity generation solutions while creating opportunities for private sector participation and foreign investment in the Sultanate of Oman’s growing clean energy sector”.

The RFQ process marks the first stage of a competitive procurement programme through which qualified developers will be shortlisted and invited to participate in the subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP) stage.

The development of the Adam Solar IPP and Sinaw Solar IPP reinforces Oman’s position as a leading destination for renewable energy investment in the region and demonstrates the country’s continued progress towards achieving its long-term sustainability and net-zero ambitions.

Duqm Port gains strategic importance in global trade routes: CEO

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

At a time when the global trade landscape is rapidly evolving and the need for secure, flexible logistics corridors is becoming increasingly critical, the Port of Duqm is emerging as one of the most strategically important projects reshaping Oman’s role in international supply chains, according to Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of the Port of Duqm.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Vermeulen said Al Duqm’s growing significance comes amidst a global shift towards supply chain diversification and reduced dependence on traditional maritime routes.

This trend is enhancing the port’s competitive advantage, thanks to its location on the Arabian Sea outside the Strait of Hormuz, positioning it as a safer and more flexible gateway for regional and international trade.

The Port of Duqm forms a key pillar of Oman’s logistics ecosystem, operating within an integrated network that links ports, industrial zones,



Port of Duqm occupies a specialised niche within the wider GCC logistics ecosystem.



REGGY VERMEULEN
CEO, Port of Duqm

warehousing facilities and distribution channels. This connectivity helps reduce shipping times, lower operating costs and improve the efficiency of cargo flows to global markets, he noted.

According to Vermeulen,

logistics networks in the Gulf have historically been highly centralised around a limited number of hubs, notably Jebel Ali and Abu Dhabi, which have long served as the primary gateways for cargo distribution across the GCC.

However, ongoing geopolitical tensions and operational disruptions are prompting what he described as a “complete rerouting” of supply chains, with cargo flows increasingly shifting away from the inner Gulf towards alternative entry points along its periphery.

Several ports across the region are benefitting from this realignment, including Fujairah and Khor Fakkan in the UAE, ports in Saudi Arabia and Oman’s expanding maritime network. Within this changing landscape, Oman is emerging as one of the region’s most resilient logistics locations, capable of supporting and sustaining GCC trade flows, he said.

While logistics patterns may gradually return to more traditional routes as current disruptions ease, Vermeulen argued that the case for maintaining diversified supply chain corridors remains compelling.

“There needs to be a permanent element of logistics flowing through more secure and stable ports like Oman”, he said, noting that future disruptions are a question of when, not if. He stressed that supply chain resilience depends on preparedness and redundancy.

By keeping Omani logistics routes active and well-tested during normal operating conditions, they can be scaled

up rapidly during periods of disruption to safeguard regional trade and industrial activity.

Turning to the Port of Duqm’s specific role, Vermeulen said the facility occupies a specialised niche within the wider GCC logistics ecosystem, focusing on high-volume industrial cargo segments. These include project cargo, oil and gas-related shipments, vehicles and industrial raw materials.

He noted that Al Duqm is increasingly serving as both an entry and exit point for regional industrial supply chains, with companies importing raw materials through the port for processing and subsequent re-export. This positions Al Duqm as a strategic industrial logistics hub rather than a conventional gateway serving consumer markets.

“Every port has its own specifications”, Vermeulen said, adding that Al Duqm’s competitive strength lies in its ability to handle industrial-scale cargo volumes and support heavy industries integrated into regional and global value chains.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The 2026 Infiniti QX60 is the brand’s latest expression of modern Japanese luxury.

INFINITI PRESENTS
REFRESHED 2026
QX60 AND FIRST-EVER
QX60 SPORT GRADE

MUSCAT: The 2026 Infiniti QX60 is the brand’s latest expression of modern Japanese luxury. The model comes with a renewed sense of presence, shaped by the brand’s Artistry in Motion design direction and brought to life through fresher details that elevate both style and performance.

EVOLVED EXTERIOR DESIGN
The QX60 features a refined grille inspired by the intersecting shapes of a tranquil bamboo forest, complemented by an illuminated three-dimensional Infiniti emblem. A redesigned lower bumper creates a floating effect around the grille, enhancing visual lightness.
The daytime running lights now reference the digital piano key signature seen on the QX80, while the rear looks lower and wider thanks to cleaner contours on the liftgate and rear fascia. Stylish 20-inch wheels come standard and the colour palette is highlighted by the introduction of Deep Emerald, a nature-inspired shade that adds a sophisticated depth to the exterior.

FIRST-EVER QX60 SPORT GRADE
Making its first-ever appearance, the QX60 SPORT grade delivers the model’s most expressive look to date. It features a unique front fascia, a sharpened grille mesh, gloss black 20-inch wheels in a signature 5-spoke design and dark exterior accents. The design is completed by a new lower front bumper protector and a distinctive “S” badge on the liftgate.

A CABIN DESIGNED AROUND COMFORT AND CONNECTION
Inside, the QX60 offers a spacious three-row cabin crafted for comfort and intuitive use.
The latest evolution introduces available Google built-in for seamless navigation and connectivity, alongside an upgraded Klipsch Premium Audio system with 16 speakers, including headrest speakers for the driver.
Key technologies include the AroundView Monitor with Moving Object Detection, the Smart Rear View Mirror and ProPILOT Assist. A large touchscreen display, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto; and customisable drive settings enhance convenience for everyday driving.

CONFIDENT PERFORMANCE
The 3.5-litre direct-injected V6 engine delivers 279 horsepower and 350 Nm of torque, offering smooth and responsive performance. Paired with a 9-speed automatic transmission and a maximum top speed of 190 km/h, the model includes standard paddle shifters for added control.
With one of the top four segment shares across the Middle East, the QX60 remains a cornerstone for Infiniti in the region.

New urban adventure
BYD
Ti 7 launches in Oman

WORLD Auto Business, the official distributor for BYD in Oman, successfully launched the all-new BYD Ti 7 — the New Urban Adventure SUV, at an exclusive event held at Sheraton Oman Hotel, Muscat.

The evening brought together automotive enthusiasts, technology followers and distinguished guests who witnessed the arrival of a vehicle that redefines what an urban adventure SUV can truly be.
The event opened with a welcome address by Rakesh Dheep, Business Head, who spoke about the growing momentum of BYD in Oman and the significance of the Ti 7 as the latest addition to the brand’s expanding lineup.

He highlighted the Ti 7 as a vehicle that goes beyond conventional SUV expectations — delivering a driving experience built around boldness, versatility and joy. The BYD Ti 7 arrives in Oman with a clear identity — boxy, bold and built for every journey.

From city streets to open terrain, it is a vehicle designed to adapt to every lifestyle and every kind of adventure.
Carrying the spirit of its theme — Experience. Infinite Possibilities. Endless Joy — the Ti 7 is engineered to exceed its segment across three defining pillars: appearance, interior comfort and everyday fun.
At the core of its design is space: the ‘Interstellar Ark’ aesthetic blends futuristic technology with a luxurious and comfortable



The BYD Ti 7 arrives in Oman with a clear identity — boxy, bold and built for every journey.

cabin.
Its strong, structured silhouette commands immediate attention, while inside, the cabin delivers reclining ventilated and massage seats, a 15.6-inch display, a 14-speaker sound system, ambient lighting, 47 storage compartments and 9 airbags — featuring an additional far-side front airbag in addition to the standard 8.
The spacious interior offers over 3.3 square metres of passenger space and 1,813 litres of cargo space with the rear seats folded.
Powered by a combined 480 hp and BYD’s proven Blade Battery technology, the Ti 7 offers up to 735 km WLTP combined range,

105 km pure electric range and 0-100 km/h in just 5.3 seconds. Multiple drive modes — including Sport, Eco, Normal, Tank Turn, Crawl and multi-terrain settings for mud, sand, snow and mountain — ensure the Ti 7 is equally capable on any surface. Safety is equally comprehensive, with a full suite of driver assistance technologies.
Guests at the event experienced the BYD Ti 7 up close, exploring its bold design, versatile cabin and advanced features firsthand — leaving with a clear sense of what makes this vehicle a genuinely exciting new chapter for BYD in Oman.
The all-new BYD Ti 7 is now available for viewing and booking at the BYD Showroom.

Sohar International wins global platinum award

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its position as a leader in digital transformation and banking innovation, Sohar International has been awarded the Platinum Award in the Corporate Banking Innovation category at the Infosys Finacle Innovation Awards 2026 for its Treasury Single Account Ecosystem Transformation.
The recognition highlights the bank’s success in leveraging technology to modernise treasury operations, enhance financial transparency and deliver greater operational efficiency through an integrated ecosystem approach.
Commenting on the achievement, Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Acting Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at Sohar International, said: “This recognition reflects our commitment to delivering innovative solutions that



The recognition highlights the bank’s success in leveraging technology to modernise treasury operations.

address the evolving needs of our institutional and corporate clients.
The Treasury Single Account Ecosystem Transformation is more than a technology initiative; it represents a strategic advancement in how organisations manage liquidity, strengthen financial governance

and enhance operational efficiency.
By creating a more connected and transparent treasury ecosystem, we are enabling our clients to make better-informed decisions, optimise resource utilisation and achieve greater financial agility.
At Sohar International, we remain focused on developing solutions that create long-term value for our clients while supporting the broader modernisation and digital transformation agenda of the Sultanate of Oman”.
Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Technology & Digital Officer at Sohar International, also said: “This recognition reflects our commitment to leveraging innovation and technology to create meaningful impact for our clients and stakeholders. The Treasury Single Account Ecosystem

Transformation represents a significant milestone in our digital transformation journey, demonstrating how technology can simplify complex financial operations, improve transparency and enable greater efficiency at scale.
At Sohar International, we remain focused on building future-ready banking solutions that not only enhance customer experiences but also contribute to broader national development objectives and support Oman Vision 2040”.
Recognised as one of the banking industry’s most respected global platforms, the Infosys Finacle Innovation Awards celebrate financial institutions that are redefining the future of banking through transformative initiatives, customer-centric innovation and next-generation technologies.

Kanadevia and BEC sign pact for green hydrogen projects in Oman

MUSCAT: Kanadevia Corporation (Kanadevia) has entered into a partnership agreement with Bahwan Engineering Company LLC (hereinafter BEC), a leading engineering company in Oman, to establish a framework for cooperation in the development of green hydrogen-related projects in Oman.
This agreement aims to strengthen cooperation between the two companies across all stages of project development, including from the bid preparation phase through to engineering, procurement, manufacturing and sales for low-carbon fuel projects such as green hydrogen and e-methane in Oman.
By combining Kanadevia’s core water electrolysis stack technology, which forms the heart of its hydrogen production systems, with



The agreement aims to strengthen cooperation between the two companies across all stages of project development.

BEC’s extensive local experience in construction and engineering and its strong customer base, the two companies will establish a structure to deliver higher-quality solutions for the rapidly growing low-carbon fuel projects in Oman.
The background to this collaboration lies in Oman’s national policies, such as Oman Vision 2040 and Oman Green Hydrogen Strategy, which aim to position the country as a hub for the production and export of low-carbon fuels using renewable energy, while also promoting local employment and strengthening the industrial base.
In addition, Hydrom, the government entity responsible for developing and implementing Oman’s hydrogen strategy, has set a target of producing approximately 7.5–8.5 million tonnes of green

hydrogen by 2050, which is expected to require 95–100 GW of hydrogen production capacity.
To achieve this target, large-scale low-carbon fuel projects are currently being tendered in phases and further project development is anticipated in the future.
Furthermore, Japan’s Basic Hydrogen Strategy also identifies the international deployment of low-carbon fuel-related technologies and equipment, as well as the acquisition of global market share, as key policy priorities.
Through this partnership, Kanadevia will respond to the policies and societal expectations of both countries, steadily expand its business in decarbonisation fields including green hydrogen and contribute to the realisation of a sustainable energy society.

SHORTTAKES



The largest package covers the completion of remaining works on the Sultan Turki bin Said road.

Oman awards 73.4 million in development works

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

Oman has completed award procedures for 35 development-related projects and service contracts worth RO 73.37 million, led by road, health, housing and utilities works, the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority said.

The largest package, valued at RO 15.6 million, covers the completion of remaining works on the Sultan Turki bin Said road, including the first phase, second part and the second phase, first part.

The list also includes RO 6.99 million for the Al Qawri-Qurayat-Wadi Mistal road in the Wilayat of Nakhal in Al Batinah South Governorate and RO 4.84 million for the design and construction of a road linking Ibra and Dima W'attayeen in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Health sector contracts formed a major part of the awards. These include RO 4.56 million for operation and maintenance of equipment at Sultan Qaboos Hospital and affiliated health units in Dhofar Governorate, RO 3.89 million for similar services at Sur Hospital and related health units in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and more than RO 2.05 million for periodic maintenance of X-ray equipment at Ministry of Health facilities.

Housing and public services were also covered. The authority completed award procedures for a RO 4.33 million project to build 240 housing units for citizens in Sahl Hamran in the Wilayat of Salalah.

It also awarded RO 4.31 million for the maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of aflaj and supporting wells across several governorates.

OQEP inks pact with Pertamina Hulu Energi

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

OQEP Exploration & Production (OQEP) — the upstream arm of Oman's integrated energy group OQ — has announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pertamina Hulu Energi, the upstream subsidiary of Indonesian state-owned energy corporation Pertamina.

In a post, publicly traded OQEP said the pact will enable the two sides to explore joint investment opportunities in the oil and gas sector across Oman, Indonesia and international markets, thereby supporting the Omani firm's objectives of increasing reserves and production.

"This collaboration opens new opportunities to explore joint investments across Oman, Indonesia and other international markets, supporting our ambitions to grow reserves, increase production and create long-term value for our shareholders", said Hamoud al Hashmi, Chief Executive Officer of OQEP.

"I look forward to working closely with our partners at Pertamina to translate this agreement into tangible opportunities and successful outcomes", he added.

Pertamina Hulu Energi (PHE) oversees the exploration, development and production of Indonesia's hydrocarbon resources both domestically and internationally.



Representatives of OQEP and Pertamina Hulu Energi at the MoU signing.

Established to consolidate Pertamina's upstream operations, PHE manages a diverse portfolio of producing assets, exploration blocks and strategic investments across Indonesia and overseas markets.

The company plays a central role in Indonesia's energy security agenda, contributing the majority of the nation's crude oil and natural gas output while pursuing enhanced recovery, digitalisation, emissions reduction and technological innovation initiatives. With operations spanning mature fields, frontier exploration

areas and unconventional resources, the company has emerged as one of Southeast Asia's leading upstream energy corporations, focused on sustaining production growth and supporting Indonesia's long-term energy needs.

Importantly, the agreement builds on OQEP's steadily expanding network of relationships with international energy companies.

The company currently participates in joint ventures across 14 concession areas in the Sultanate of Oman alongside partners including BP, Shell, Eni, Petronas, Occidental and Medco, reflecting its ability to add value

across the full exploration and production lifecycle.

More recently, OQEP has forged new partnerships with Genel Energy, Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and CNPC, while successfully converting its memorandum of understanding with Malaysia's Petronas into a concession agreement for offshore Block 18.

Through these partnerships with international oil companies (IOCs), OQEP is expanding into strategic markets, pursuing low-risk minority interests that generate stable cash flows and deploying its operational expertise in new regions.

Oman's accreditation centre eyes international recognition by year-end

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

The Oman Accreditation Centre expects to secure international recognition before the end of this year, starting with calibration and testing laboratories, in a move designed to strengthen the credibility of locally issued test results and certificates in global markets, its director has said.

Dr Said al Busaidy said the Centre, which operates under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), had submitted its application for international recognition to the Arab Accreditation Cooperation (ARAC) and was awaiting a peer evaluation, the key stage in the process.

Speaking to the Observer, he stated: "The Oman Accreditation Centre has submitted its application for international recognition to the Arab Accreditation Cooperation and we are currently awaiting the peer evaluation".



DR SAID AL BUSAIDY
Director, Oman Accreditation Centre

The evaluation stage takes roughly three months, after which a specialised team from the cooperation carries out the assessment.

Any corrective actions identified during the peer-evaluation visit would then be addressed before recognition is granted.

"God willing, we are hopeful of obtaining international recognition from the Arab Accreditation Cooperation before the end of this

year", the Director added.

Recognition would be rolled out in phases, beginning with calibration and testing laboratories and followed by inspection bodies, Al Busaidy added.

As the national accreditation body, the centre is responsible for assessing the competence of conformity assessment bodies operating in the Sultanate of Oman — laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies — against international standards.

Securing global recognition would allow the test reports, calibration certificates and inspection results they issue to be accepted across other member economies without the need for re-testing, reducing costs and technical barriers for Omani exporters.

The objective aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals of economic diversification and expanding non-oil trade.

Membership of ARAC is the essential first step in that process.

Once the centre is recognised by the regional cooperation, its status is elevated to the global level through the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the two worldwide associations of accreditation bodies, after which mutual recognition agreements are signed.

ARAC itself has been recognised internationally by the IAF and ILAC as a regional accreditation group since 2017.

The remarks came during celebrations marking World Accreditation Day, observed globally on June 9. This year's theme, "Innovation, Trust and Sustainability: The Power of Accreditation", highlights the role of accreditation in underpinning quality infrastructure and supporting conformity assessment bodies, whether laboratories, inspection bodies or certification bodies.

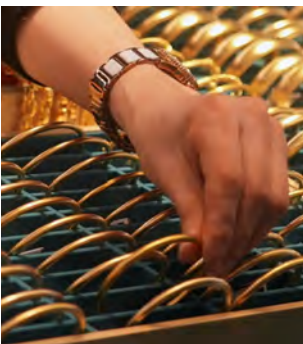
Accreditation provides independent assurance that such bodies are competent, impartial and reliable, enabling regulators, businesses and consumers to rely on test reports, certificates and inspections without having to question them.

The mechanism has taken on growing importance as markets become more complex and as sustainability claims and new technologies face greater scrutiny. World Accreditation Day was established by the IAF and ILAC in 2007 and is marked on June 9 each year.

For Oman, full international recognition of its accreditation system is expected to support efforts to localise testing and certification, raise confidence in domestically produced goods and services; and ease access to export markets — priorities that have featured prominently in the country's broader economic diversification agenda.

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold slides on strong dollar



Gold prices fell in the international market by more than 2 per cent as a stronger US dollar and expectations of higher US interest rates reduced demand for the precious metal. Spot gold dropped 2.2 per cent to \$4,099.84 an ounce, while US futures declined 2 per cent.

Other precious metals also weakened, with silver, platinum and palladium recording losses amidst broader market caution. — Reuters

TRADE POLICY

Seoul secures steel quota deal



South Korea has reached an agreement with the European Union that will help preserve its duty-free steel export quota despite tighter EU safeguards on imports. South Korea's quota of about 2.06 million tonnes would not face the same proportional reduction applied to global quotas.

The government is preparing additional support measures for domestic steel producers. — Reuters

CURRENCY MARKETS

Dollar advances on rate outlook



The US dollar strengthened as investors increased bets on a Federal Reserve interest rate hike later this year. The dollar index rose to 101.01, near a one-year high, supported by elevated Treasury yields and a rebound in oil prices.

The yen weakened to 161.6 per dollar, close to multi-decade lows, while the euro and other major currencies remained under pressure. — Reuters

When algorithms decide what matters



DR SUAAD JASSEM

The writer is Associate Professor of Accounting and Auditing, CBFS

FOR decades, determining what matters in corporate reporting was largely a human exercise. Accountants, auditors, boards of directors and regulators applied professional judgement to decide which risks, opportunities and impacts deserved attention and disclosure. Today, however, a new actor is entering that process: artificial intelligence.

As organisations increasingly adopt AI-powered tools to support sustainability reporting, a fundamental question emerges: What happens when algorithms start deciding what matters?

This question has become particularly important as sustainability reporting evolves from a voluntary exercise into a strategic and regulatory necessity. Investors, regulators, employees and society are demanding greater transparency about how companies affect the environment and society and how environmental and social challenges affect business performance.

In Europe, the concept of Double Materiality has become central to this transformation. Companies are no longer expected to report only on how sustainability issues influence their profits and risks.

They must also explain how their operations affect people, communities and the environment. In other words, organisations are now accountable not only for financial outcomes but also for their broader societal impact.

While the objective is admirable, the reality is challenging. Modern organisations

generate enormous amounts of data.

Carbon emissions, supply chain practices, labour conditions, customer behaviour, climate risks, governance indicators, stakeholder concerns and regulatory developments all contribute to the sustainability picture. Processing such vast volumes of information is increasingly beyond the capacity of traditional reporting systems.

This is where artificial intelligence promises to make a difference. AI can analyse large datasets in seconds, identify patterns that humans might overlook, monitor risks in real time and transform unstructured information into meaningful insights.

It can help organisations move beyond static annual reports towards continuous monitoring of sustainability performance. It can also support the identification of emerging environmental and social risks before they become financial problems.

For many organisations, this sounds like the perfect solution. But every solution introduces a new challenge.

The same technology that promises to improve transparency can also create a new layer of opacity. Many advanced AI systems operate as “black boxes”, producing recommendations and classifications without clearly explaining how those conclusions were reached.

This creates a critical accountability dilemma. If an AI system determines that a climate-related risk is not significant and the company later suffers substantial losses, who is responsible? If an algorithm fails to identify

Investors, regulators, employees and society are demanding greater transparency about how companies affect the environment and society and how environmental and social challenges affect business performance.

human rights concerns within a supply chain, who answers to stakeholders?

If AI-generated sustainability reports present an overly optimistic picture of corporate performance, who bears the consequences?

The algorithm does not sign the annual report. The algorithm does not appear before regulators. The algorithm does not answer shareholders’ questions. People do.

This is why the growing use of AI in sustainability reporting should not be viewed merely as a technological issue. It is fundamentally a governance issue.

There is also another risk that deserves attention. Artificial intelligence may help detect greenwashing, but it can also unintentionally facilitate it. Companies may use sophisticated AI tools to generate polished sustainability narratives that appear convincing while masking underlying weaknesses in performance.

The result could be a new generation of greenwashing that is more difficult to detect because it is supported by advanced technology.

Ironically, AI itself also raises sustainability concerns. Training large-scale AI models requires significant computing power and energy consumption. As organisations increasingly rely on AI to support sustainability objectives, they may eventually need to explain the environmental footprint of the technology they are using to improve sustainability reporting.

None of this means organisations should avoid AI.

Global insurance models and industry development: A comparative analysis

MURTADHA M J IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI

Insurance is considered one of the fundamental pillars of economic stability and risk management in any country, as it is closely linked to protecting individuals and institutions from potential losses arising from accidents, disasters and operational risks.

Over decades of development, different intellectual and regulatory frameworks have emerged, shaping distinct models in governance, regulation, pricing and risk distribution.

First: The American insurance regulatory model is characterised by high flexibility and strong reliance on free-market mechanisms and competition. It is based on extensive product diversification, continuous development of pricing models and advanced use of Big Data analytics and risk prediction models.

This model enhances innovation and responsiveness to market needs; however, it requires strong regulatory systems to ensure financial stability and consumer protection.

Second: The European regulatory framework represents a more conservative and disciplined model, relying on strict regulatory oversight and precise financial standards aimed at protecting policyholders and ensuring the solvency of insurance companies.

The Solvency II framework is one of its most prominent features, imposing high capital requirements and rigorous risk management standards. This model strengthens stability and trust, but may relatively limit the speed of innovation compared to the American model.

Third: The Indian insurance model combines strong governmental regulation with gradual market liberalisation.

It emerged in a developing economic environment characterised by high population density and significant social diversity, which led to inclusive insurance policies and the expansion of the insured base.

This model features relatively flexible market expansion, with a clear governmental role in regulating and guiding the market in line with development objectives.

However, this model faces several structural challenges, most notably the heavy reliance on international reinsurance, where a limited portion of insurance premiums is retained domestically while a significant share of business is ceded to international reinsurance companies in exchange for commissions or reinsurance arrangements.

This limits the accumulation of insurance surplus within the domestic market and affects the ability to build strong and sustainable national underwriting capacity.

Local content drives Oman Manufacturing 2040 goals

OMAN'S Manufacturing Strategy 2040 provides a comprehensive roadmap for transforming the manufacturing sector into a key pillar of economic diversification, export growth, investment attraction, technological advancement and sustainable employment generation.

Central to this transformation is local content, which has evolved from a procurement-related concept into a strategic instrument for maximising the economic and social returns generated by industrial investments.

Local content extends far beyond the purchase of locally produced goods and services. It encompasses the development of domestic supply chains, increased participation of Omani enterprises in industrial value chains, workforce development, technology transfer, innovation, research and development; and the localisation of industrial capabilities.

Consequently, local content serves as a critical enabler for achieving both Oman's Manufacturing Strategy 2040 and the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040.



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

The writer is Director of the Technical Office of the Under-Secretary of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

Local content extends far beyond the purchase of locally produced goods and services. It encompasses the development of domestic supply chains, increased participation of Omani enterprises in industrial value chains, workforce development, technology transfer, innovation, research and development; and the localisation of industrial capabilities.

capabilities, encouraging innovation and fostering stronger industrial linkages, Omani manufacturers become better positioned to integrate into regional and global value chains.

International experience consistently demonstrates that highly competitive manufacturing economies are built upon strong networks of local suppliers, specialised industrial clusters and advanced innovation ecosystems.

Several successful examples in Oman illustrate the growing contribution of local content to industrial development.

In the food manufacturing sector, Oman Flour Mills Company has established a leading model by encouraging Omani farmers to cultivate wheat and purchasing their harvests at preferential prices.

This initiative strengthens food security, supports agricultural livelihoods and enhances local value creation.

Similarly, agricultural projects in the Najd region of Dhofar provide a growing range of agricultural inputs that support food processing industries and animal feed production, strengthening integration between the agricultural and industrial sectors.

In the plastics industry, Ladayn Park represents a successful example of industrial clustering. Companies operating within the cluster benefit from integrated supply chains, shared infrastructure, knowledge exchange, advanced technologies and collaborative innovation.

Such industrial ecosystems improve productivity, reduce operational costs and strengthen the competitiveness of Omani plastic products in regional and international markets.

The metals sector provides another compelling example of local content development.

Oman has successfully established an integrated aluminium ecosystem in Suhar, where downstream manufacturers

utilise locally produced aluminium to create higher-value products for both domestic and export markets.

Likewise, the steel industry continues to strengthen industrial linkages that create opportunities for greater value addition, increased localisation and expanded downstream manufacturing activities.

In the renewable energy sector, polysilicon manufacturing represents a strategic opportunity to deepen local content across the solar energy value chain.

As a critical raw material used in solar panel production, polysilicon can serve as the foundation for the development of downstream solar manufacturing industries, supporting Oman's ambition to become a regional hub for clean energy technologies and advanced manufacturing.

More recently, Voltamp Energy launched its localisation initiative, “Watenha”, aimed at developing and localising ten high-demand components used in its products.

The initiative seeks to strengthen local supply chains, empower domestic manufacturers, reduce import dependency; and create new industrial and investment opportunities serving both local and regional markets.

These examples demonstrate that local content is no longer merely a policy aspiration; it has become a practical driver of industrial transformation.

By promoting supplier development, encouraging innovation, strengthening industrial integration and expanding domestic manufacturing capabilities, local content contributes directly to achieving the strategic objectives of Oman's Manufacturing Strategy 2040.

Looking ahead, maximising the impact of local content will require stronger collaboration between government institutions, industrial investors, SMEs, educational institutions, research centres and financial entities.

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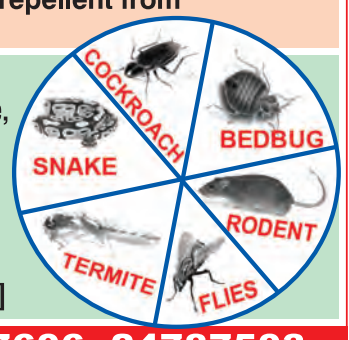
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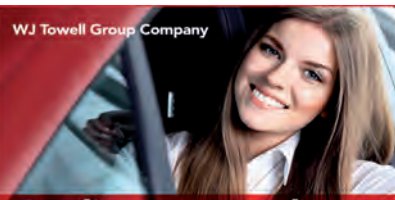
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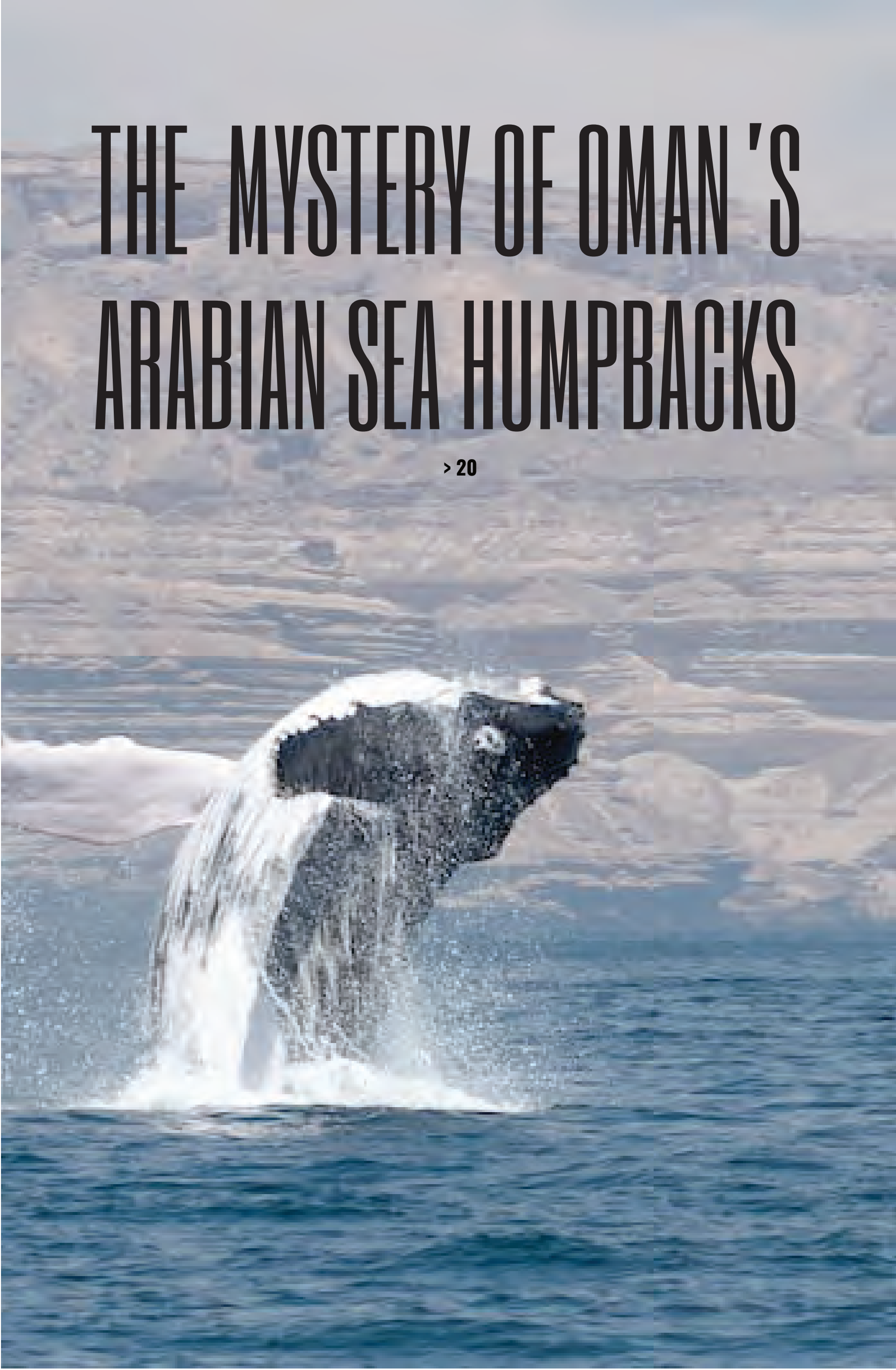
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THE MYSTERY OF OMAN'S ARABIAN SEA HUMPBACKS

> 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

IS IT FINALLY TIME TO GO ELECTRIC?



Yeru Ebuon
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

A few years ago, I was invited to the launch of a new electric vehicle in Oman. At the time, EVs still felt like something for the future rather than the present. The conversation was largely driven by Tesla, although Chinese manufacturers and established luxury brands were already beginning to enter the space with serious intent.

Around the same time, a friend bought his first electric vehicle. From his perspective, it made perfect sense. Most of his driving was around Muscat. He charged at home, occasionally topped up at shopping malls or hotels and rarely worried about range. For him, the savings on fuel and

maintenance alone made the switch worthwhile.

As electric vehicles become more practical and widespread, growing fuel costs, improving infrastructure and advancing technology are prompting more drivers to reconsider whether now is the time to make the switch.

I could never quite see it the same way.

I enjoy driving long distances. A weekend run to Sur is one thing. Sometimes I find myself continuing further to Jaalan Bani Bu Ali or beyond.

The thought of having to constantly think about charging stops felt inconvenient. That concern, often called “range anxiety”, remains one of the biggest barriers for many

potential buyers.

Yet the conversation around electric vehicles is changing rapidly.

As fuel prices fluctuate amidst geopolitical tensions, more people are beginning to revisit the idea. Friends who once dismissed EVs outright are now comparing models, calculating fuel savings and asking practical questions about ownership.

The numbers suggest momentum is building. Oman now has around 2,200 electric vehicles on its roads, supported by approximately 160 charging stations. Government plans aim to expand that network to more than 350 charging stations by 2027.

Still, there are blind spots worth considering. The debate often focuses on fuel savings, but less attention is paid to battery replacement costs, resale values, charging times and the impact of extreme temperatures on battery performance. Oman has made progress in urban areas, yet highway charging infrastructure remains limited compared to traditional petrol stations.

Then there is the question many people quietly ask: what happens when everyone plugs in? As adoption grows, electricity demand and grid capacity will become increasingly important discussions.

Even so, I find myself leaning more towards electric vehicles than I did a few years ago. The technology has improved, charging networks are expanding and the economics are becoming harder to ignore.

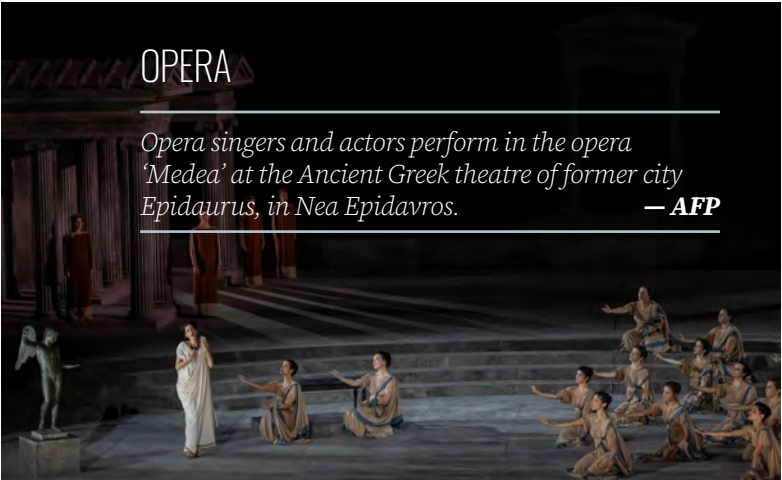
I am not ready to make the switch just yet. But for the first time, I am no longer ruling it out. Would you consider an electric vehicle for your next car, or is range anxiety still holding you back?

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



COMPASSION

A man feeds pigeons in front of the National Centre of Art and Culture Georges Pompidou (Beaubourg) in Paris. — **AFP**



OPERA

Opera singers and actors perform in the opera 'Medea' at the Ancient Greek theatre of former city Epidaurus, in Nea Epidavros. — **AFP**



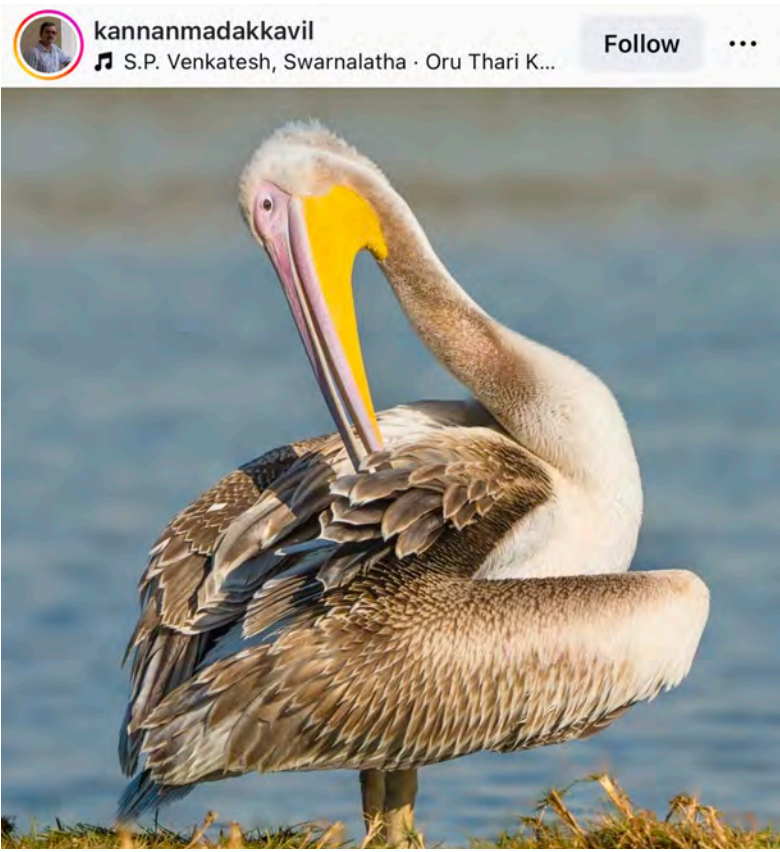
HOLLYWOOD

Spanish actor Javier Bardem poses during his hand and footprint ceremony at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



“Light-painted Junipers beneath the Milky Way....”



“Great White Pelican in Salalah, Oman”

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‘TOY STORY 5’ RAKES IN \$160M IN OPENING WEEKEND



‘Toy Story 5’, in which US actor Tom Hanks voices cartoon character Woody, had the year’s best opening weekend so far, estimates showed. — AFP

Disney’s “Toy Story 5” romped to the best opening weekend of the year, earning an estimated \$160 million in North America, according to industry estimates released on Sunday. The figure marks a record debut for the beloved Pixar franchise.

Released over Father’s Day weekend, the sequel sees Woody, Buzz Lightyear and their fellow toys facing a new challenge as technology, particularly tablets, competes for children’s attention.

“This is prime family moviegoing season and ‘Toy Story’ is delivering”, said industry analyst David A Gross, who described the film’s launch as “another sensational opening for a Pixar series sequel”.

Gross noted that “Toy Story 5” achieved the biggest opening weekend in the franchise’s history, surpassing “Toy Story 4” by an estimated 37 per cent. The film is also expected to rank as the second-largest animated

movie opening ever, behind Pixar’s “Incredibles 2”, which debuted with \$182.7 million in June 2018.

“Family moviegoing has been leading the industry since it came roaring back from the pandemic in 2023”, Gross added, pointing to sequels, live-action remakes and hybrid productions as key drivers of the genre’s success.

Featuring the return of voice stars Tom Hanks, Tim Allen and Joan Cusack, “Toy Story 5” opened on 4,425 screens across the United States and Canada.

Second place at the box office went to Steven Spielberg’s sci-fi thriller “Disclosure Day”, which earned \$17 million in its second weekend for a domestic total of \$78.2 million.

Focus Features’ horror hit “Obsession” placed third with \$14 million, followed by A24’s “Backrooms” with \$7.3 million and Paramount’s “Scary Movie” reboot with \$6.7 million. — AFP



A statue of a coelacanth, an ancient fish often called a “living fossil”, as the second known living species, is seen by the sea in Manado, North Sulawesi. — AFP

Fossils challenge land evolution theory

SCIENTISTS have long believed that the earliest aquatic animals to move onto land passed through a tadpole-like stage, undergoing metamorphosis similar to modern frogs. However, new research published on Thursday in the journal Science challenges that long-standing assumption.

The study examines rare fossils from the renowned Mazon Creek fossil beds in northern Illinois, a site known for exceptionally preserved specimens dating back around 309 million years. The fossils were preserved inside iron carbonate concretions that formed in ancient swamps, shallow seas and river deltas.

Researchers analysed dozens of fossils to investigate the evolutionary transition between fish and tetrapods — the four-limbed animals that eventually gave rise to land-dwelling vertebrates.

Central to the study was a tiny fossil believed to be the juvenile form of an embolomere, a crocodile-like creature that lived primarily in water but possessed small limbs. Scientists had expected such a young specimen to display tadpole-like features, including external gills.

Instead, the fossil showed evidence of direct development. According to the researchers, the juvenile — roughly the size of a short piece of macaroni — was already built much like its adult form, lacking signs of a dramatic metamorphic stage.

“We now actually have some direct fossil record evidence”, study co-lead author Jason Pardo of Chicago’s Field Museum said, “that this metamorphosis, this amphibian-like life cycle that we’ve for 150 years assumed was part of our history, turns out that it wasn’t part of that at all”.

The findings suggest that the amphibian-style life cycle familiar today may not have been a feature



The research highlights amphibians as evolutionary innovations rather than primitive holdovers. — AFP

of the earliest tetrapod ancestors.

Australian paleontologist John Long, who was not involved in the research, described the study as “quite outstanding”.

“Not much was known about their early life stages”, he said. “This detailed work on a bunch of simply glorious fossils nails it that they went straight into a juvenile phase so didn’t need to go through the tadpole stage”.

Jason Anderson of the University of Calgary said the paper demonstrates “the power of fossils to address questions we thought impossible” because such developmental stages occur over brief periods and involve soft tissues that are rarely preserved.

Both Anderson and Pardo noted that the research highlights amphibians as evolutionary innovations rather than primitive holdovers.

“Our amphibians, instead of being relicts of earlier stages in the evolutionary history of tetrapods, are themselves highly evolved

creatures”, Anderson said.

The key fossil had sat in the Field Museum’s collections for years before attracting the attention of co-author Arjan Mann. Mann and Pardo began studying it while doctoral students in Canada and spent years trying to understand its significance.

Using scanning electron microscopy at the Canadian Museum of Nature, researchers eventually confirmed it was likely a juvenile embolomere. They compared it with another young embolomere specimen and several other fossilised tetrapod relatives.

Mann said the discoveries were made possible by generations of amateur fossil collectors who searched the Mazon Creek site and uncovered many of the specimens examined in the study.

“This paper, in a way, is kind of a love letter to them”, Mann said, highlighting the value of collaboration between professional researchers and the fossil-collecting community. — AFP

FEATURES



At a time when climate change is reshaping marine ecosystems worldwide, Oman finds itself as the guardian of a species unlike any other.

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

OFF the coast of Oman lives one of the world's greatest marine mysteries.

Unlike humpback whales found elsewhere on Earth, which are known for their epic seasonal migrations spanning thousands of kilometres, Oman's Arabian Sea humpback whales have chosen a different way of life. They stay home.

A new international study led by researchers from the University of Exeter and published in *Frontiers in Marine Science* has shed new light on this extraordinary population, revealing both their remarkable resilience and new surprises about their movements.

Found primarily along Oman's coastline, this critically endangered population consists of just over 80 individuals and is considered one of the most isolated whale populations in the world. Unlike every other humpback whale population, these whales do not undertake predictable long-distance migrations between feeding and breeding grounds.

For scientists, this has long been a biological puzzle.

The Arabian Sea's unique oceanographic conditions help explain the phenomenon. Seasonal monsoon-driven upwellings create nutrient-rich waters that provide abundant food throughout the year, eliminating the need for whales to travel elsewhere in search of prey.

Oman effectively offers everything they need in one place; food, warm waters for calving and suitable habitats for breeding.

Yet the new study has revealed that home is not always where every

For Oman, protecting this population extends beyond biodiversity conservation. The Arabian Sea humpback whale has become one of the country's most important marine conservation symbols

THE MYSTERY OF OMAN 'S ARABIAN SEA HUMPBCKS

whale remains.

Using 14 satellite tags attached to individual whales over several years, researchers documented the first-ever long-distance journey by an Arabian Sea humpback whale.

A female named Luban travelled more than 7,000 kilometres across the Arabian Sea to India's west coast before returning to Oman after spending about a month near Goa.

The discovery challenges long-held assumptions about the population's complete isolation and raises new questions about how these animals adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Scientists believe the journey may have been linked to feeding opportunities, breeding behaviour or broader ecological changes that are yet to be fully understood.

The findings also arrive at an important moment for marine conservation in Oman.

These whales face numerous pressures, including ship strikes, entanglement in fishing gear and increasing underwater noise pollution.

Researchers have also highlighted concerns about growing military activity linked to regional conflicts occurring near the northern boundaries of their

range.

For Oman, protecting this population extends beyond biodiversity conservation.

The Arabian Sea humpback whale has become one of the country's most important marine conservation symbols, reflecting decades of research undertaken in partnership with local organisations such as the Environment Society of Oman.

There is also a deeper story unfolding beneath the surface.

Scientists estimate these whales have been genetically isolated for around 70,000 years, evolving separately from other humpback populations around the globe.

Their continued survival offers researchers a rare opportunity to understand how species adapt over thousands of years to unique environmental conditions.

At a time when climate change is reshaping marine ecosystems worldwide, Oman finds itself as the guardian of a species unlike any other.

Perhaps that is what makes these whales so extraordinary. In a world defined by movement, they chose to stay. And in doing so, they have become one of the ocean's rarest stories — one that Oman now carries the responsibility of protecting for generations to come.