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MARQUEZ HITS 100 CAREER WINS WITH HUNGARIAN GP TRIUMPH



IN BRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES DANISH PREMIER ON RE-ELECTION

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent congratulations to Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, on the occasion of her re-election to a new term. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to Mette Frederiksen in achieving further accomplishments and aspirations.

COME TO MUDHAIBI FOR GRAPES



The Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is hosting the annual Grape Festival in the Niyabat of Samad Al Shaan, within the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, on June 16 and 17. **REPORT ON P3**

HEATWAVE TO SWEEP NORTHERN OMAN TODAY

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

A heatwave is to begin on Monday and last until Wednesday, resulting in high temperatures moving towards the high 40s, and is expected to affect the northern parts of Oman. Forecasts by the Oman Met Office indicate a return of high temperatures to the coastal areas overlooking the Sea of Oman, where temperatures are expected to range in the mid-40s Celsius and may reach 50 degrees Celsius in some areas. The upper-level high-pressure system in recent times is considered one of the most prominent reasons for the increase in temperatures these days, in addition to the dry northwesterly winds and other factors. It is the north-easterly wind that generates humidity.

Yahya al Rawahi from the Oman Meteorology Department explained, “The northwesterly wind eliminates humidity, and so the next few days will be dry. This weather condition, however, will not have any impact on khareef in Dhofar. We will also be seeing dust rising in northern parts of Oman during this period.” As for the rest of the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, temperatures are expected to reach the mid-40s Celsius, while the weather will remain more moderate in the coastal areas of the Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

Net-Zero, key development issues discussed

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipal Council held a meeting on Sunday chaired by HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat.

At the outset of the meeting, the council received a presentation from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals on the Oman Net-Zero Centre, delivered by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The presentation, part of national efforts aligned with Oman Vision 2040 to build a green economy and enhance environmental sustainability, highlighted the centre’s role in leading the transition to Net-Zero emissions by 2050. This includes preparing and updating national plans, and coordinating with relevant authorities to implement initiatives and projects that cut carbon emissions and boost energy



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said at the meeting in Muscat on Sunday. — ONA

efficiency.

Mohsen bin Sulaiman al Jabri, Director-General of Oman Net-Zero Centre, outlined recent developments in the national Net-Zero plan, including sectoral emissions reduction pathways and the implementation road

map. He also highlighted expected economic and developmental outcomes, such as strengthening the competitiveness of the national economy, promoting green industries, attracting high-value investments, and creating new jobs in Net-Zero-related sectors.

The presentation also covered the centre’s efforts to regulate carbon markets and develop the “Meezan” national platform for emissions inventory and management. This supports evidence-based decision-making, enhances Oman’s readiness to meet its climate targets, and reinforces its position as an active partner in international efforts to combat climate change and achieve sustainable development.

The council approved the minutes of its previous meeting, including recommendations on the “Muscat Nights” events, stressing the importance of developing a well-planned events system and expanding programmes and activities to benefit all wilayats of the Governorate of Muscat.

— ONA

Cyber law ensures social media’s accountable use

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

THE most notable provisions of Cyber Crime Law, promulgated under Royal Decree No 61/2026, are Article 36, which addresses violations of digital privacy. The article criminalises a range of activities, including the unauthorised recording, interception, publication or disclosure of private conversations and communications, as well as the capture and dissemination of photographs or video recordings without consent.

The law also extends protection against the publication of news, images, comments, data or information intended to harm another person, even when the information itself may be factually accurate. Legal observers note that this provision highlights the distinction between public interest and deliberate harm, reinforcing the principle that digital platforms should not be used as tools for harassment or



Public awareness would remain a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the legislation

reputational damage.

“Many people share photos, videos and personal information without fully understanding the impact such actions can have on others. The new law helps define clear boundaries and encourages more responsible behaviour online,” Mohammed al Zadjali said.

Abdulla Rashid Ahikmani welcomed the provisions related to privacy and online abuse, noting that the speed at which content spreads online can often

magnify personal harm.

“Social media has created opportunities for communication and creativity, but it has also enabled harassment and reputational attacks. Stronger legal protection can help ensure that digital platforms remain safe spaces for constructive engagement.” The legislation further addresses the growing challenge posed by manipulated digital content. The unauthorised alteration

of images, audio recordings or videos for the purpose of ridicule, defamation or reputational harm attracts criminal penalties.

The law restricts the publication of content that promotes violence or excessive fear among children.

“The significance of the new law extends beyond penalties. It establishes a framework for responsible digital conduct and provides legal safeguards against emerging forms of online abuse. As artificial intelligence and content manipulation tools become more accessible, protecting privacy and personal dignity becomes increasingly important,” said Mariam bint Mahmood, a lawyer.

The expert added that public awareness would remain a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the legislation.

Observers view the new law as part of Oman’s broader efforts to strengthen cybersecurity, protect digital rights and foster a safe online environment that balances technological innovation with social responsibility.

Iran threatens retaliation against US, Israel as talks in deadlock

TEHRAN: Iran threatened to retaliate against the United States and Israel for fresh strikes in Beirut on Sunday, further dampening hopes for a lasting peace as the Middle East war reached its 100th day.

Efforts to turn a ceasefire into a settlement have repeatedly stalled, while the war has rattled global markets and increased domestic pressure on US President Donald Trump ahead of midterm elections.

Tehran has repeatedly insisted any deal to permanently end the war must also halt the parallel conflict

in Lebanon, where Israel is pursuing a campaign against the Iran-backed movement Hezbollah.

Iran had warned in recent days that any new attacks on Beirut would trigger a “full-scale resumption” of hostilities.

The spokesman for the Iranian parliament’s national security commission, Ebrahim Rezaei, also threatened “a decisive and painful response”.

Iran’s insistence that the conflicts are linked has complicated negotiations for Washington, and



A man in a wheelchair passes by as emergency personnel work at the site of an Israeli strike in Beirut, Lebanon, on Sunday. — Reuters

in a previously recorded interview aired Sunday, Trump had called for Israel to take a “more surgical” approach in Lebanon.

The threats of escalation on the war’s 100th day came as Iranians were already feeling the strain of weeks of uncertainty.

Fitness trainer Elaheh from Ahvaz told AFP: “I really have gone numb.”

“Daily life? It’s a joke. Everything is horrible. We only try to survive,” the 32-year-old added, pointing to rising prices.

There were some signs of ongoing

diplomatic efforts over the weekend, with Pakistan’s interior minister Mohsin Naqvi visiting Tehran.

Mohsen Rezaei, military adviser to Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, had told CNN negotiations with the US “are at a deadlock, and Trump must break this deadlock”, calling for the release of some \$24 billion in frozen Iranian assets. But Trump said in the same interview that he would not unfreeze Iranian assets before reaching an agreement with Tehran. — AFP

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SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Badr with Mohamad Arzan Johan.

Sayyid Badr bids farewell to Ambassadors of Indonesia, Switzerland, India



Sayyid Badr with Thomas Oertle.

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received, separately, on Sunday Mohamad Arzan Johan, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia; Thomas Oertle, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation; and Godavarthi Srinivas, Ambassador of the Republic of India, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duty.

During the meetings, the Foreign Minister expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the ambassadors during their tenure and their contributions to enhancing relations between the Sultanate of Oman and their respective countries, wishing them continued success in their future assignments.

The farewell meetings were attended by Najib bin Yahya al Balushi, Head of the Protocol Department at the Foreign Ministry, and Mundhir bin Mahfoudh al Mantheri, Head of the Europe Department at the Foreign Ministry, along with a number of officials from both sides. — ONA



Sayyid Badr with Godavarthi Srinivas.

FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF ETHIOPIA

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Sunday received Dr Muktar Kedir Abdu, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries and ways to enhance them in



The two sides discussed the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. — ONA

the economic, logistical and investment fields. They also discussed the two countries' intention to organise a joint business forum with the participation of both the public and private sectors to explore economic and commercial areas of mutual interest. On the regional level, the two sides reviewed a number of developments in the Horn of Africa. — ONA

14 stations seek to enhance rainfall across Oman

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

AS part of its efforts to strengthen water security and maximise the benefits of favourable weather conditions, the Sultanate of Oman has invested in artificial rain enhancement technology through a network of 14 stations distributed across several governorates.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the programme relies on environmentally friendly ionic technology and contributes to enhancing rainfall efficiency by up to 13.6 per cent. Unlike some conventional weather modification techniques, the system does not use harmful chemicals and is designed to work with naturally occurring cloud formations.

Providing insight into the programme, Khalid bin Salim al Hooti, Director of the Artificial Rain Enhancement Centre, said the stations help increase rainfall rates across areas within their coverage range, which extends up to 75 kilometres in length and 30 kilometres in width depending on geographical location and surrounding terrain.

Al Hooti explained that Oman's artificial rain enhancement journey began more than a decade ago, with the first two stations established in 2012 and activated in 2013. Located at Jabal Al Sarah in Ibri and Hail Al Roos in Al Jabal Akhdhar, the initial stations laid the foundation for a wider network that now extends across several mountainous regions of the Sultanate of Oman.



Cloud seeding through introducing specific nuclei into convective clouds to help enhance rainfall is a recognised scientific technique. However, dispersing tropical cyclones or altering their paths is not possible.

KHALID AL JAHWARI

Today, the stations are distributed across multiple governorates, including Al Batinah North, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Dhofar, Muscat, Al Dhahirah and Musandam. The system operates by generating negatively charged ions that are carried upward by air currents into cloud growth layers. Water droplets within the clouds gather around these ions, increasing in size until they become heavy enough to fall as rain.

Importantly, Al Hooti stressed that the technology does not create clouds, alter their movement or influence wind speed and direction. It is also not used during severe weather events, making it a safe and environmentally compatible tool for enhancing rainfall opportunities.

Khalid al Jahwari, meteorologist and lecturer, noted that cloud seeding is a recognised scientific technique used in several countries

to enhance precipitation. "Cloud seeding through introducing specific nuclei into convective clouds to help enhance rainfall is a recognised scientific technique. However, dispersing tropical cyclones or altering their paths is not possible," he said.

Public awareness of the technology has also grown in recent years.

Eithar al Shibli, a social media activist, highlighted the environmental safety of the system, noting that it does not rely on chemicals but instead depends on generating ions from ionic emitters and releasing them into the atmosphere.

While the technology cannot create clouds or control the weather, it helps increase rainfall from suitable cloud systems, supporting Oman's efforts to strengthen its water resources.

Oman participates in LIYSF 2026, strengthens scientific ties

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

Oman continues to strengthen its presence on international scientific platforms through its participation in the London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) 2026, one of the world's leading science events for high-achieving students and young researchers.

Bringing together more than 500 young scientists from nearly 90 countries, the annual forum serves as a global platform for scientific exchange, innovation



NASREEN
BINT YAHYA
AL BALUSHI

developments and gain exposure to best practices across a wide range of disciplines.

Nasreen bint Yahya al Balushi, Acting Director of the Research and Innovation Capacity Building Department at the Research

and international collaboration.

Participants are given opportunities to engage with leading researchers, explore emerging scientific

Council and Innovation Authority, said Oman's participation reflects Oman's commitment to investing in young scientific talent and strengthening research capabilities in line with national development priorities.

"Participation in the forum offers an exceptional opportunity for Omani students and young researchers to build international networks with peers and scientists from around the world," she said. "It enables them to exchange ideas, broaden perspectives and develop skills that contribute to their

academic and professional growth."

Al Balushi noted that LIYSF provides a rich scientific environment through lectures delivered by distinguished experts, visits to leading universities and research institutions, as well as interactive workshops designed to inspire innovation and scientific curiosity among participants.

She added that the forum's multicultural setting encourages dialogue and collaboration among young scientists, helping them establish long-term professional connections while fostering a deeper

understanding of global scientific challenges and opportunities.

Oman's continued participation in the annual forum forms part of broader national efforts to empower youth and strengthen engagement with the international scientific community. Such exposure contributes to nurturing future researchers and innovators capable of supporting knowledge-based development and advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The participation also reflects ongoing efforts by the Research Council and Innovation.

SHORT TAKES



The 3-hour operation was held with the latest global practices and minimally invasive norms.

ROYAL HOSPITAL PERFORMS 3D BREAST CANCER SURGERY

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital has successfully performed the Sultanate of Oman's first nipple-sparing mastectomy operation of its kind by using 3D endoscopy through a single surgical incision. The surgery was paired with immediate breast tissue reconstruction and sentinel lymph node biopsy. It was made for a 40-year-old woman who had been suffering left breast cancer. The operation, conducted in accordance with the latest global practices and minimally invasive norms, lasted about 3 hours, after which the patient was able to recover successfully. The accomplishment was in pursuance of Royal Hospital's ongoing efforts to adopt modern medical technologies and develop specialised services. It enhanced Oman's position as advanced healthcare hub and affirmed national talents' ability to localise the most advanced global medical and surgical practices. This unprecedented medical record serves as a milestone in the achievements of the health sector in Oman and adds momentum to the promotion of the country's status at regional and international levels. — **ONA**

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR FESTIVAL ENHANCES TOURISM



The festival stands as one of the premier tourism seasons in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

NIZWA: Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2026 in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate contributes to the enhancement of tourism and economic activity within the governorate. The festival's events will commence on July 15 and continue until the end of August, as part of ongoing efforts to leverage the natural and environmental assets that distinguish the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar during the summer season. The festival stands as one of the premier tourism seasons in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, building upon the reputation that the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar has earned as a leading tourist destination at both the local and regional levels. It also benefits from the ongoing developmental and investment projects that are helping to enhance the tourism offering. — **ONA**

RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHER HAILS OMAN'S ROLE IN GLOBAL PEACE EFFORTS

KABEER YOUSUF
ST PETERSBURG, JUNE 7

Russian political philosopher Alexander Dugin has praised Oman's balanced approach to international affairs and its continued efforts to promote peace and dialogue in global conflicts. Speaking to Observer on the sidelines of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), held in St Petersburg from June 3 to 6, Dugin said Oman's diplomatic and humanitarian stance stands as a model of neutrality and mediation. He noted that Oman's approach to global issues — avoiding



ALEXANDER DUGIN
Russian political philosopher

alignment with opposing blocs while actively promoting dialogue — reflects a consistent and principled foreign policy. "I always have regard for the Sultanate of Oman for its neutral stand on any issue. Oman doesn't take sides and instead works to

resolve issues without favouritism," Dugin said, adding that Oman's mediation initiatives and policy of neutrality align with efforts to de-escalate polarising global alignments. He further observed that Oman's independent foreign relations, including engagement with countries such as Iran and Russia, reflect a broader commitment to sovereignty and balanced diplomacy. Dugin also highlighted Oman's emphasis on cultural preservation and traditional identity, describing it as aligned with his own views on protecting national cultures in an increasingly globalised world.

Exam screening ensures fairness, protects students

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

AS students across the Sultanate of Oman prepare for examinations, the Ministry of Education has reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a fair, secure and transparent examination environment through student screening procedures before entry into examination halls. According to Mohammed bin Ali al Balushi, Head of the Data and Technical Operations Department at the Ministry of Education, the screening process serves as a preventive measure aimed at safeguarding students and ensuring compliance with examination regulations. The initiative is designed not only to uphold the integrity of the examination system but also to prevent students from unintentionally carrying prohibited items into examination venues. Al Balushi said the ministry places strong emphasis on creating an examination environment that guarantees equal opportunities for all candidates. By conducting screening procedures prior to entry, officials can identify and remove unauthorised materials before examinations begin, thereby reducing violations and ensuring that all students are assessed under the same conditions. He explained that any prohibited items discovered inside an examination hall will be reported to the Ministry's Central Committee, which reviews such cases and determines the necessary action in accordance with approved regulations. This process helps ensure consistency and fairness in the implementation of examination rules across educational institutions.



MOHAMMED BIN ALI AL BALUSHI

Ministry says pre-exam checks ensure transparency, prevent violations and create equal opportunities for students



Students are encouraged to review prohibited items carefully and avoid bringing unauthorised materials into examination venues.

One of the ministry's key concerns remains the presence of mobile phones inside examination halls. Al Balushi reiterated that strict regulations govern the use of electronic devices during examinations. Under current rules, any student found carrying a mobile phone inside an examination hall will have the grade for that subject cancelled and will be required to retake the examination during the second session, regardless of whether the device was used. The ministry stressed that these regulations are essential to preserving the credibility and reliability of public examinations. With rapid technological advances and growing access to electronic devices, education systems worldwide continue to face challenges in preventing academic misconduct. Screening procedures and strict enforcement measures are therefore intended to protect students who comply with examination rules and maintain academic integrity.

Officials have urged students to familiarise themselves with examination regulations before attending exams. Students are encouraged to review prohibited items carefully and avoid bringing unauthorised materials into examination venues, as awareness and compliance are crucial to preventing unintended violations that may affect academic outcomes. The ministry also highlighted the role of parents and guardians in supporting examination integrity. Families are encouraged to remind students of examination procedures, regulations and the consequences of rule violations. Officials believe cooperation between schools, students and families contributes significantly to maintaining a disciplined and orderly examination environment. In addition to safeguarding examination integrity, the screening process aims to reassure students that assessments are conducted fairly and transparently.

Al Sharqiyah North Grape Festival 2026 to feature 50 varieties

AL MUDHAIBI: The Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is preparing to launch the annual Grape Festival in the Niyabat of Samad Al Shaan, within the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, on June 16-17. The event seeks to attract over 10,000 visitors, including farmers and individuals interested in grape cultivation from within Oman and abroad. The festival is expected to feature a comprehensive exhibition showcasing more than 50 varieties of local and imported grapes, reflecting the significant diversity and the growing success of cultivating this crop locally. Dr Qais bin Saif al Maawali,

Director of Agricultural Development in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, stated that the grape harvest season across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman contributes to creating vital economic momentum. This momentum enhances food security and the diversity of the sustainable agricultural sector's supply chain. He noted that the grape farms project in the Wilayat of Ibra is expected to contribute to more than 35 per cent of the total cultivated area in Oman, reaching between 290 and 300 acres by the end of the current year. Al Maawali added that the



The Al Sharqiyah North annual Grape Festival is on from June 16-17.

expansion of grape cultivation in Oman, supported by national agricultural development initiatives, encourages more farmers to invest in commercial agriculture. It underscores the sector's growth and a broader transformation where Omani nature is no longer merely a source of beauty, but also a

foundation for a sustainable and diversified economy. He explained that the total cultivated area in the Sultanate of Oman currently exceeds 220 acres, with an expected annual production reaching 1,100 tonnes. This represents 4.6 per cent of domestic consumption and achieves an economic return estimated at approximately RO 1.7 million, based on 2025 statistics. Projections indicate that grape cultivation in Oman is continuously expanding and could reach 1,000 acres by 2040, with an estimated economic value exceeding RO 5 million. Al Maawali mentioned that

the festival works to enhance the grape cultivation sector in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate by serving as an investment and economic platform. It brings together farmers, investors and interested parties under one roof, contributing to the exchange of expertise in this field and the promotion of qualitative agricultural investments. He pointed out the existence of over 50 registered varieties in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, 21 varieties in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, and approximately 15 varieties in the Al Dhahirah Governorate. — **ONA**

SPOTLIGHT

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THE FUTURE SHAPE OF MUSCAT

55

KILOMETRES METRO TO CONNECT KEY HUBS

4

WADI PARKS AND EXPANDED GREEN SPACES

313,000

NEW HOMES PLANNED

90

PER CENT CUT IN CARBON EMISSIONS TARGETED

Greater Muscat Structure Plan - 2040

MUSCAT 100 VISION: Greater Muscat - a city of equality, prosperity and opportunity, with a rich heritage and dramatic beauty.

Key Concepts behind the Structure Plan:

- Containing Urban Sprawl
- 'The Missing Middle' - New Centre of Gravity
- A New Spine
- Historic Heart & Coastal Activation
- Towards a Knowledge Based Economy
- Green Lung & Food Basket
- Blue to Green
- Towards Net Zero

Greater Muscat's Economy:

- 2022: 55% of Oman's non-oil GDP
- 2040: 13.5 Billion OMR
- 2040: 4.1% Annual GDP Growth Rate
- 2040: 41.2% of GDP from Non-Oil
- 2040: 15% of Oman's non-oil GDP
- 2040: 34% of Overall Employment
- 2040: 41% of GDP from Non-Oil

Greater Muscat's Transportation:

- Mode Share: 80%
- Within Walking Distance: 92%
- Reduction in Car use: 60%
- Public Transport Routes: 225 km
- Stations: 240+
- Increase in Shared Transport: 4% to 20%

Greater Muscat's Environment:

- 13 km² Greened Walls
- 4 New Mangrove Clusters
- 250 km Stormwater Channels
- 98% Recycle Water Use

Greater Muscat's Vision 2040:

- Population: 2.7 Million People
- Jobs: 1.83 Million Jobs
- 31% / 69% Expatriate

SAUD AL ANSARI

A bold and comprehensive vision is taking shape for Greater Muscat — one that seeks to transform the capital into a sustainable, connected and future-ready city aligned with the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040.

At the centre of the Greater Muscat Structure Plan is an integrated approach to urban development aimed at improving quality of life, strengthening economic resilience and enhancing environmental sustainability.

Hanan al Jabri, Director-General of Urban Planning, said the plan represents the third level of the national urban planning framework and is designed to maximise Muscat's strengths while translating Oman Vision 2040 into a unified spatial strategy encompassing all sectors.

A GREENER CITY

Environmental sustainability forms a core pillar of the vision, with major plans to expand green spaces, develop parks and shaded

The structure plan is a key output of the National Spatial Strategy, examining spatial development and investment opportunities that support sustainability.

YAQOOB BIN AMIR AL HARTHY
Project Director, Greater Muscat Structure Plan

walkways, and rehabilitate wadis and coastlines.

Yaqoob bin Amir al Harthy, Project Director of the Greater Muscat Structure Plan, said the strategy seeks to “align spatial and developmental gaps to ensure Muscat becomes more productive, connected and vibrant, while strengthening infrastructure.”

Among the key proposals are four new parks along wadi corridors and an increase in per capita access to open spaces by nine square metres.

A MORE CONNECTED CITY

Mobility and accessibility are central to the future vision. The plan prioritises integrated public transport, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods, safe cycling networks and the adoption of the ‘15-minute city’ concept, enabling residents to access daily services within short distances.

Major infrastructure projects include four logistics hubs, 16 sub-centres and a 55-kilometre metro network linking major locations including Al Seeb, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, Burj Al Sahwa, Ghala, Al Khuwair, Al Qurum and Ruwi.

Al Harthy said, “The structure plan is a key outcome of the National Spatial Strategy, aimed at identifying spatial development opportunities and investments that support sustainability.”

A PRODUCTIVE AND VIBRANT CITY

The strategy also aims to strengthen Muscat's economic competitiveness by developing smart economic clusters, increasing productivity by 44 per cent and raising the capital's contribution to non-oil GDP to 45 per cent.

At the same time, the plan envisions integrated neighbourhoods, nine activated waterfronts and the delivery of around 313,000 housing units to accommodate future population growth.

Sustainability targets include generating 1.35 gigawatts of renewable energy, reducing energy demand by 18 per cent and increasing water storage capacity by 130 per cent.

A RESILIENT AND SAFE CITY

Climate resilience remains a key

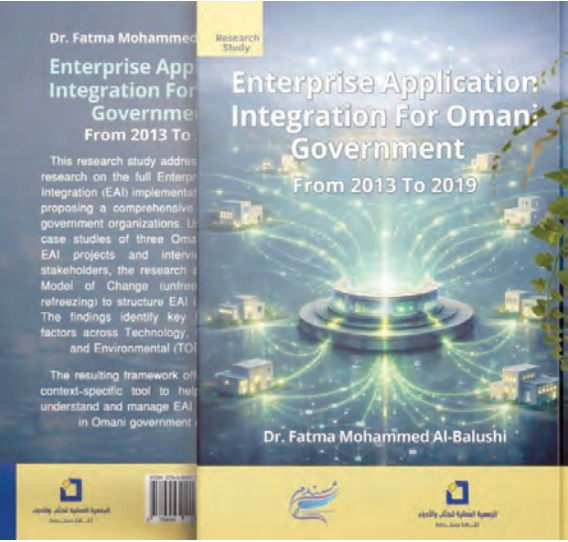
priority, with ambitious goals including a 90-per cent reduction in carbon emissions, the construction of 16 protection dams and increasing the use of treated water to 98 per cent.

Nasser bin Abdul Latif al Sayigh, Technical Director of the Greater Muscat Structure Plan, said the initiative forms part of a broader national programme covering all governorates and major cities, while helping strengthen investor confidence through a clear development road map and identified investment opportunities.

He added that the plan is built around five core pillars — a productive, connected, vibrant, resilient and safe city — supported by practical implementation projects.

Al Harthy noted that more than 90 entities from government, the private sector and civil society contributed to shaping the plan, which was aligned with previous strategies and supported through extensive workshops and consultations. “All of this reinforces the principle of partnership,” he said.

SHORTTAKES



OMANI AUTHOR RELEASES BOOK ON EAI IN GOVT SYSTEMS

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JUNE 7



DR FATMA BINT MOHAMMED AL BALUSHI

An Omani author has published a new book addressing the integration of government electronic systems in the Sultanate of Oman, highlighting its importance, implementation challenges, and factors contributing to long-

term success and sustainability.

The work offers a practical, context-specific framework to help stakeholders understand and manage Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) in Omani government settings.

Authored by Dr Fatma bint Mohammed al Balushi, Adviser to the Secretary-General for Museums Affairs at The National Museum of Oman, the book titled ‘Enterprise Application Integration for Omani Government during 2013 to 2019’ addresses the gap in research on full EAI implementation by proposing a comprehensive governance framework for public-sector organisations.

Published by Dar Musandam Publishing and Distribution, affiliated with the Omani Society for Writers and Literati, the study draws on qualitative case studies of three Omani government EAI projects and interviews with 18 stakeholders. It applies Lewin’s Change Management Model—unfreezing, moving, and refreezing—to structure the implementation process.

“The book is the result of years of research, analysis and study that encompassed many facets of EAI, and the findings identify key implementation factors across Technology, Organisational, and Environmental (TOE) dimensions,” Dr Fatma said.

Dr Fatma known for her contributions to Oman’s cultural heritage and digital transformation initiatives, is leading the Muttrah Souq Heritage Project aimed at digitising and conserving Oman’s historic marketplace, and oversees the repatriation of Omani cultural property.

She holds a PhD in Information Systems from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (2019), where she researched enterprise application integration frameworks for public sector digital transformation. She has been recognised by White Page International and WCRC Leaders as one of the Global 200 Women Power Leaders 2025 and among the 100 Influential Omani Women.

MoCSY’s ‘Future Stars’ student film competition launched

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), represented by the Cinema and Theatre Department, on Sunday announced the launch of the ‘Future Stars’ Student Film Competition and opened the door for participation by school students aged 11–17 years.

The first edition of the competition is held under the theme ‘My Summer, My Way’ and aims to discover promising cinematic talents among students while encouraging them to express their ideas and creativity through the production of short films.

Ibrahim bin Saif Bani Oraba, Assistant Director-General of Arts, MoCSY, stated that the launch of the



October 1 is the deadline for the students to submit their works.

competition is part of the ministry’s ongoing efforts to develop creative skills among young people, promote a culture of visual production and purposeful content creation, and

provide students with opportunities to engage in cinematic experiences that contribute to the development of their artistic and technical abilities.

He added that this competition is among the ministry’s programmes designed to support talent in the cinematic field, make constructive use of students’ summer vacation, and channel their energy toward artistic creativity and innovation.

Laura bint Said al Siyabi, Head of the Cinema Section, explained that this first-of-its-kind edition organised by the ministry underscores its commitment to supporting emerging talent in the field of purposeful visual content creation. She noted that the ministry has allocated five cash prizes for the competition, covering the categories of Best Creativity, Best Idea, Best Shot, Best Effect and Best Execution. — ONA

Summer season triggers rest vs work debate

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JUNE 7

AS TEMPERATURES rise across Oman and the pace of daily life slows, summer is often seen as a time for rest, travel and family gatherings. Yet for many, it is also becoming a season of opportunity — for learning, innovation and personal growth.

The question increasingly being asked is whether summer should be reserved purely for relaxation, or whether it can serve as a productive period of reinvention.

Many professionals believe the season offers a valuable window for self-development. With fewer work commitments and more flexible schedules, individuals often use the time to explore interests that are difficult to pursue during the rest of the year.

“Summer is the perfect time to learn something new,” said Badreya al Hosni, a human resources specialist. “Whether it is a short training course, improving language skills, or developing a hobby, people can use this period to grow both personally and professionally.”

Entrepreneur Mohammed al Harrasi echoed this view, saying the slower pace often encourages creativity and innovation.

“Some of my best business ideas came during summer,” he said. “The slower rhythm allows people to think creatively and focus on projects they don’t usually have time for.”

However, others argue that summer should not be defined by productivity alone, pointing instead to the importance of rest in an increasingly demanding world.

Summer season is sparking a growing debate on whether it should be dedicated to rest and recovery or used as an opportunity for productivity



During summer, developing a hobby can help grow both personally and professionally.

“People are constantly expected to achieve more,” said Fatma al Balushi, a mother of two. “Summer should be a time to slow down, reconnect with family, and enjoy simple moments without pressure.”

Ahmed al Rahma also stressed the importance of rest, particularly during periods of extreme heat.

“Taking a break is not wasting time,” he said. “Rest improves mental well-being and helps people return to work with renewed energy and motivation.”

Others advocate a balanced approach. Community volunteer Sumaya al Kumi believes summer can accommodate both rest and meaningful activity.

“You do not have to choose between achievement and relaxation,” she said. “People can spend time with family and travel while also learning or contributing to community activities. Even

small efforts can make a positive difference.”

Entrepreneur Ahmed Mustafa offered a different perspective, describing summer as a natural slowdown period for business activity. “People prefer to travel, spend on tourism and take time off,” he said. “So I choose to reduce operations and align with the seasonal pace.”

Across Oman, summer continues to mean different things to different people — a time for rest, reflection, travel or transformation. Ultimately, the most meaningful summer may not be defined by productivity alone, but by how balanced and fulfilled people feel when the season ends. Whether spent resting, learning, creating or reconnecting, summer remains a reminder that rest and growth are not opposing ideas, but often interconnected parts of the same journey.

SQU, Turkish University explore academic and research collaboration

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) welcomed a delegation from Yildiz Technical University in the Republic of Türkiye, headed by Prof Eyüp Debik, Rector of the university, as part of efforts to strengthen academic and research cooperation between the two institutions.

The delegation was received by HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, in the presence of a number of university officials and academics.

During the meeting, His Highness the Vice-Chancellor welcomed the visiting delegation and presented an

overview of SQU’s colleges, research centres, facilities and major achievements over the four decades since its establishment. He highlighted the university’s contributions to national development and its growing regional and international recognition in higher education, research and innovation.

Prof Eyüp Debik provided an overview of Yildiz Technical University, noting that it serves around 40,000 undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students. He said the university is recognised among Türkiye’s leading research-intensive



SQU welcomes delegation from Yildiz Technical University.

institutions, particularly in engineering, applied sciences and technology, while emphasising its interdisciplinary approach to education and research.

The Rector also highlighted

the role of the university’s technopark — one of Türkiye’s largest university-affiliated technology parks — in supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and start-up development.

He noted that the institution ranks among the country’s leading entrepreneurial universities, providing support and opportunities for emerging enterprises.

His Highness the Vice-Chancellor said SQU is progressing towards becoming an entrepreneurial university and expressed confidence in the ability of its graduates to create economic value, establish successful ventures and contribute to the national economy. He stressed that SQU offers more than academic instruction, equipping students with life skills, critical thinking and practical learning opportunities through

its diverse educational and research environment.

Discussions also focused on the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and its implications for higher education. Both sides underscored the growing importance of critical thinking in an era where knowledge is increasingly accessible and explored ways to balance traditional educational approaches with emerging AI-driven learning models.

The meeting concluded with discussions on potential areas of cooperation between the two universities in education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

WAR REACHES 100TH DAY

U S S A Y S S H O T D O W N I R A N D R O N E S

ISRAELI STRIKE HITS TWO BUILDINGS IN BEIRUT

An Israeli attack on Beirut's southern suburbs hit two buildings in the area, Lebanese state media reported on Sunday after Israel said it struck the Hezbollah stronghold.

PENTAGON RAISES THREAT OF ISRAELI SPYING

The Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) said Israel's "ability to conduct human espionage and technical collection is at a 'critical level,'" NBC News said.

OPEC+ INCREASES PRODUCTION QUOTAS

OPEC+ ministers decided to increase oil quotas by a total 188,000 barrels per day for July, in a move to have an impact on prices sent higher by the Mideast war.

TRUMP WOULD NOT UNFREEZE IRAN'S ASSETS

US President Donald Trump said in an interview with NBC News that he would not unfreeze Iranian assets or lift any sanctions before a peace deal is reached.

ISRAEL ISSUES EVACUATION WARNING IN LEBANON

The Israeli military issued an evacuation warning to the residents of the southern Lebanese city of Tyre and its surrounding areas on Sunday ahead of strikes.

THE UNITED STATES said it shot down a pair of Iranian drones threatening the Strait of Hormuz, the latest escalation of violence as the war reached its 100th day on Sunday with no end in sight. It came as mediator Pakistan delivered a message to Iran's supreme leader, following weeks of indirect talks marked by tit-for-tat threats and sporadic exchanges of fire. Efforts to turn a ceasefire into a lasting settlement have repeatedly stalled, while the war has rattled global markets and increased pressure on US President Donald Trump at home ahead of midterm elections.

But there were signs of fresh diplomatic efforts over the weekend with Pakistan's interior minister Mohsin Naqvi visiting Tehran. Naqvi said upon his arrival on Saturday that he would deliver a "special letter" from Pakistan's army chief to Iran's Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, and a message from the prime minister "regarding the current situation", according to Iranian state television.

Pakistan's military leader Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has played a key role in mediating talks between Iran and the US, following a single round of direct negotiations in Islamabad. "I think it's a very important message," said Naqvi, a frequent visitor to Iran. His trip came as US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it destroyed two Iranian drones "that threatened international maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz", hours after announcing it struck four other drones and coastal surveillance radar sites.

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US RESOLUTION DRAFT AT IAEA DEMANDS IRAN OPEN UP ON SITES, URANIUM STOCKS

VIENNA: The United States is lobbying other countries on the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors to back a draft resolution ordering Iran to inform the agency of the fate of its bombed nuclear sites and the enriched uranium that was stored there.

The text of the US draft resolution on Sunday and circulated ahead of this week's quarterly meeting of the

35-nation board risks further complicating current talks between the US and Iran because Iran bristles at resolutions against it at the International Atomic Energy Agency.

While previous IAEA board resolutions against Iran have passed by a clear margin, this text could meet stiffer resistance since it is the US that, along with Israel, bombed Iran's nuclear sites last June, since when

the agency has been unable to return to those sites. Iran must "provide the Agency with precise information on nuclear material accountability and safeguarded nuclear facilities in Iran" and "grant the Agency all access it requires to verify this information," the text seen by Reuters said, saying both must happen "without delay" and are "essential and urgent".

The text refrains, however,

from reporting Iran to the UN Security Council, as some diplomats had said was being considered, which would have been a follow-up to a resolution the board passed on June 12, 2025, declaring Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations. Israel started bombing Iran's nuclear sites on June 13. The US mission to the IAEA has declined to comment on its pursuit of a resolution this time. — Agencies

Tehran on Saturday fired a salvo of missiles at US allies Bahrain and Kuwait, drawing a furious response from the Gulf monarchies and piling pressure on the shaky ceasefire agreed on April 8. Iran's foreign ministry denounced the latest US strikes as "flagrant" violations while condemning Washington's "hostile and provocative behaviour".

Mohsen Rezaei, military adviser to Iran's supreme leader, had earlier told CNN that negotiations with the US "are at a deadlock, and Trump must break this deadlock", as he called for the release of some \$24 billion in frozen Iranian assets. But Washington instead may seek to use those funds to pay for damage wrought by Iranian strikes on Gulf allies. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has directed a team to assess costs for damage inflicted on Gulf allies by Iran, the source said on Saturday, adding the US will consider

using Iranian assets for repairs of any future destruction as well. The disclosure came a day after Mohsen Rezaei, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader, told CNN that a peace deal to end the three-month-old war hinged on the release of \$24 billion in Iranian assets frozen by the United States.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said in an interview with NBC News "Meet the Press" that he would not unfreeze Iranian assets or lift any sanctions before a peace deal is reached. Trump said he would consider those steps after an agreement is done. "Comes after," he said. "Yeah. If they behave, if they do a good job, we start talking. Yeah." Trump also said that he was not demanding that Lebanon be a part of a short-term deal with Tehran. "I think they'd like to see it, but I'm not demanding," Trump said in the interview

RUSSIAN STRIKES KILL FOUR, DAMAGE NUCLEAR STORAGE FACILITY



Servicemen of the Ukrainian Armed Forces observe the sky for Russian drones near the frontline town of Kostiantynivka. — Reuters

KYIV: Russia fired waves of drones and other munitions at Ukraine on Sunday, killing at least four people and damaging a nuclear storage facility in the Chernobyl exclusion zone, Ukrainian officials said. Radiation levels at the facility remained within normal limits following the attack, although the building's reception was "partially destroyed", according to Ukraine's Energoatom nuclear energy operator.

Moscow and Kyiv have intensified drone strikes on each other in recent months as US-led diplomatic efforts to end the war, now in its fifth year, remain stalled and sidetracked by the conflict in the Middle East. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is set to meet his allies in London

later on Sunday for talks on how to pressure Russia to end the fighting, after Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected direct peace talks with the Ukrainian leader. "A 'shahed' hit one of the buildings of the Centralised Spent Fuel Storage Facility," Zelensky said in a post on X, referring to the Iranian-designed "Shahed" drones that Russia fires at Ukraine on a nightly basis. "As of now, there are no readings exceeding normal background radiation levels. But there is certainly an increase in Russia's brazenness, which long ago went off the charts," he added.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said it was dispatching a team to inspect the damage, calling the incident "deeply concerning". The facility is located

in a remote area of forest around a dozen kilometres from the site of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, and is designed to house spent nuclear fuel from Ukraine's three active nuclear plants.

Russian strikes killed and wounded multiple civilians on Sunday, Ukrainian officials said. A Russian bombardment of a public transport stop in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region left at least two people dead, while a nearby drone strike killed a 56-year-old minibus driver, authorities said.

A separate attack on the central Dnipropetrovsk region killed a 59-year old man, governor Oleksandr Gansha posted on Telegram. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and millions forced to flee their home since Russia launched attacks. — AFP

Israeli military strikes Beirut's Dahiyeh

BEIRUT: The Israeli military said it has struck Hezbollah infrastructure in the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital Beirut, known as Dahiyeh, the first strike on the militant group's stronghold since an April 16 ceasefire was brokered. The ceasefire has not halted the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, with Israel saying it is working to dismantle Hezbollah's infrastructure on its borders. Hezbollah has rejected proposals linking a ceasefire to its disarmament, saying Israel must first halt its attacks and withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon.

In a joint statement with his defence minister, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the strike on Dahiyeh was ordered in response to Hezbollah firing toward Israeli territory. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The military said earlier it had intercepted two projectiles that crossed into Israeli territory from Lebanon, after sirens sounded in the areas of Yiftah and Ramot Naftali. Hezbollah has not claimed responsibility for the launches.

Iran has long said any peace deal with the United States would depend on a ceasefire also holding in Lebanon, which Israel invaded in March in pursuit of Hezbollah fighters who fired across the border in solidarity with Tehran. There was no immediate formal response from Tehran to Sunday's Israeli strikes on the southern outskirts of Beirut, but influential hardline Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Rezaei posted on X that Iran would deliver a "decisive and painful response". "Look at the sky of the occupied territories tonight," wrote Rezaei, who serves as the spokesperson for parliament's national security committee.

Israel's military also issued an evacuation warning to the residents of the southern Lebanese city of Tyre and its surrounding areas on Sunday ahead of possible strikes. Iran has made a ceasefire in Lebanon between its close ally and Israel a condition for



Mourners attend the funeral of four people, who were killed in an Israeli strike in Zebdine, in Haret Saïda. — Reuters

any peace deal with the United States. Hezbollah entered the war on March 2, saying it was retaliating for the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader at the start of a conflict that has since killed thousands in Lebanon and displaced more than a million people.

Clashes between Israel and Hezbollah have not halted with the Lebanese group rejecting proposals linking a ceasefire to its disarmament, saying Israel must first halt its attacks and withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon. Iran has made a ceasefire in Lebanon between its close ally, Hezbollah and Israel a condition for any peace deal with the United States. Israel continued to carry out strikes in Lebanon even before March 2, despite a US-brokered ceasefire that took effect in November 2024. It said its attacks are aimed at Hezbollah members and infrastructure.

Two Lebanese army officers and a

soldier were killed in an Israeli strike on a military vehicle in south Lebanon on Saturday, the Lebanese army said, while the Israeli military said it was investigating the incident. The Israeli military said it targeted the vehicle after identifying what it described as a threat to its forces and receiving indications that Hezbollah was preparing to fire on Israeli troops from the area. Israel's military said an initial inquiry indicated that two officers and a soldier in the Lebanese army were inside the vehicle when it was struck. Lebanon's army said the strike happened on the Khardali-Nabatieh road, some 70 km south of Beirut.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun condemned the Israeli strike, calling it a flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and international law that threatened stability in south Lebanon despite ongoing efforts to halt hostilities. — Reuters

Israel kills five in Gaza as Egypt hosts new ceasefire talks

CAIRO: An Israeli air strike on a police station in the Gaza Strip killed five Palestinians and wounded at least 16 others on Sunday, health officials said, as mediators began new efforts to salvage a fragile US-brokered ceasefire deal. Medics did not say how many of the casualties were police. The strike hit a police post adjacent to a large tent encampment of displaced families in Khan Younis in the south of the enclave. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the incident.

Israel has stepped up attacks against police headquarters and personnel in the past several months, killing dozens of them,

according to Hamas security officials. Major fighting has been paused since October under a ceasefire after two years of war, but no agreement has been reached to implement a further US-backed plan for Israeli troops to withdraw, Hamas to disarm and Gaza to be rebuilt.

Israeli troops still control more than half of Gaza's territory, where they have ordered residents out and destroyed remaining buildings. Nearly the entire population of 2 million now lives in a tiny strip of land along the coast, mainly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings. Nearly 10,000 police officers have emerged as a sticking point in talks to



A Palestinian girl sits at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Khan Younis. — Reuters

advance US President Donald Trump's plan for Gaza. Hamas wants them included in a new police force; Israel rejects a role for any Hamas-affiliated personnel.

Egypt began hosting a new round of truce talks with leaders from Hamas and other Palestinian factions, sources from Hamas and other sources close to the negotiations said. The talks are expected to last for a few days. Israel and Hamas have repeatedly accused each other of violating the truce. Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 950 Palestinians since the start of the truce, while Palestinian militant attacks have killed four Israeli soldiers.

Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, said on Sunday the group was open to ideas that would lead to ending Israeli attacks in Gaza and reaching common ground over issues of the second phase of the Trump plan. But he said the Board of Peace should stop being "biased" towards Israel. Nearly 73,000 people in Gaza have been killed since the war started, most of them civilians, according to Gaza health authorities.

Israel launched its assault after Hamas-led militants broke across the border, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 Israeli and foreign hostages on October 7, 2023. — Reuters

OPINION

Climate action cannot just be a buzz word anymore



**SANDHYA
RAO MEHTA**

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WORLD ENVIRONMENT Day was observed this year on one of the hottest days in the northern hemisphere. Europe sweltered, as did much of Asia and the Middle East. This is not irony but a fact that will be increasingly common in the coming years.

For years, climate change has been debated, accepted and subsequently denied by a host of stakeholders. The direct connection of climate change to rapid environmental degradation is undeniable today, except for a few for whom this knowledge is not profitable.

Unesco even focused on the impact of climate change on history when it noted that “Climate change is no longer a distant threat for World Heritage sites – its impacts are already visible across some of the world’s most iconic places”.

The evidence for climate change is all around us: in the increasing temperatures, the rising mounts of garbage in semi-urban centres, severe droughts and even more severe floods.

Nor is there any doubt that all this is human-made. The endless construction that leads to fragile mountainscapes crumbling, the icecaps that melt as multi-storeyed cruise ships prance through pristine waterways are only two examples that strike at the root of environmental degradation: an insatiable human need for objects and experiences.

This is why climate action cannot just be an annual buzz word anymore. It needs to be part of everyday vocabulary, an essential core of daily life. It is easy to be cynical about climate action when small individual actions do not seem to make an impact. Why, we often ask, are we left to recycle our old clothes when forests are grazed and minerals extracted from the earth without accountability?

And yet, individuals do make a difference. We know what to do: choose local products, be minimalist, avoid plastic and excessive shopping. It may sound like a drop in the ocean, and yet, it is perhaps all that can be done, given the enormity of the situation. Perhaps the largest culprit is accountability. There is a tendency to push the ball down

Implementing small habits as a way to solve the climate crisis may seem futile. But in the long run, it is these habits that will remain sustainable and scalable

the road. Targets keep shifting. The Paris Agreement of 2015 aimed to keep the rise of temperature below 2 degrees. By all accounts, that is becoming almost impossible.

An important reason for the general malaise around climate action is that its benefits do not seem concrete and immediate enough. The idea of a stable global temperature seems to be too delayed to mean anything now. But it is what we do now that will impact the future.

The everyday impact of climate action is obvious to all: improved health devoid of air and water pollution, long-term savings resulting from good health, better infrastructure which takes into account seasonal flooding and even green neighbourhoods. Surely, these are not small aspirations.

Implementing small habits as a way to solve the climate crisis may seem futile. But in the long run, it is these habits that will remain sustainable and scalable.

Most importantly, it is based on the belief that we as individuals can make a difference to the planet through our everyday practices.

FLYOVER SCHOOL OFFERS LIFELINE TO STREET CHILDREN

ANUJ SRIVAS

Beneath a busy flyover in India’s financial capital Mumbai, a row of pastel-coloured shipping containers houses an unlikely school serving some of the city’s most marginalised children.

Despite laws guaranteeing free schooling for children aged six to 14, poverty and migration continue to keep many out of classrooms, particularly in sprawling cities like Mumbai where many families survive through low-paying informal work.

Crippling urban poverty also means young children selling knick-knacks on streets are still a fairly common sight at crowded traffic intersections in big Indian cities.

But the non-profit that runs the free school is determined to educate its underprivileged cohort, many of whom come from homeless families that barely eke out a living.

Wedged between gleaming skyscrapers and busy roads, the ‘Signal Shala,’ or traffic signal school, caters to several dozen children who have been left out of the formal education system, according to Bhatu Sawant, founder of the initiative.

“These children can’t go to (a regular) school. So (I thought) let’s do this. Let’s bring the school to them,” Sawant, 45, said.

India runs one of the world’s largest public school systems, but government data for 2024-25 still identified nearly 1.2 million children as ‘out of school,’ a catch-all categorisation that covers both those who have never been to school or dropped out.

For Sawant, India’s government-run schools are simply “not flexible enough for these children”, while private ones charging exorbitant fees are out of the question.

The signal school operates from repurposed AC containers placed on a narrow strip of land beneath a flyover, where classes and play unfold amid the constant rumble of traffic overhead.

Its approach is tailored to the realities of street life. Every morning, the school bus drives through the cramped lanes of Mumbai’s slums, picking up students - a lifeline for parents who can’t afford transportation.

When the children file in, the first order of business is a shower, as many have no easy access to bathing facilities.

Lockers are provided for books and uniforms that otherwise cannot be kept safe or clean while living in slums or on the streets.

Three meals are provided free, with school hours longer than normal. Classes are split by ability rather than age, with teachers adapting lessons for children who may never have held a pencil before. Older students are also taught basic skills like sitting still, speaking clearly and staying focused. — AFP

Experts warn poor sleep cycle linked to disorders

THE TERM ‘circadian’ means ‘around’ and ‘day’, respectively.

The circadian cycle in humans, also known as the circadian rhythm or internal clock, is a natural process in the body that regulates various physiological functions such as the secretion of hormones (eg, cortisol and growth hormones), body temperature, feeding behaviour, digestion, energy metabolism, change in insulin sensitivity and the sleep-wake cycle.

A part of the brain, known as the hypothalamus, contains a suprachiasmatic nucleus that regulates the body’s circadian rhythm over 24 hours.

Many factors influence circadian rhythm. These factors include light-dark cycles, temperature and food intake. The peripheral clock is located in various organs, including the organs such as pancreas, liver, gastrointestinal tract, muscle and body fat.

Both internal and peripheral clocks regulate metabolic homeostasis. Circadian rhythm plays an important role in various metabolic processes, including the production of glucose, secretion, and sensitivity of insulin.

During sleep, the circadian rhythm may help the liver to break down glycogen in order to produce glucose. In the morning, when we wake up, the internal clock also helps produce cortisol and growth hormones. These hormones help boost the glucose output, which is needed for energy immediately after we wake up.

The sensitivity of insulin is at its peak in the morning and gradually decreases in the evening. The peripheral clock and the glucokinase enzymes are responsible for the fluctuation in the blood sugar levels.

Hence, the meal timings are very important for glucose metabolism. Heavy meals should only be taken during the day when



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Disruption of the circadian rhythm leads to disturbances in the sleep-wake cycle, jet lag and sleep disorders in shift workers, and altered glucose metabolism



insulin sensitivity is better. Binge eating at night should be avoided. Heavy meals at night alter the glucose metabolism, cause insulin resistance, and may be detrimental to health. Hence, it has been rightly said by many that ‘Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper.’

The suprachiasmatic nucleus is sensitive to light. Light affects the circadian rhythm, sleep regulation and the waking mechanisms. After entering the eye, light sends a signal to the brain to stop the production of melatonin. The melatonin hormone is secreted at night, and exposure to light suppresses its secretion.

Disruption of the circadian rhythm leads to disturbances in the sleep-wake cycle, jet lag and sleep disorders in shift workers, and altered glucose metabolism.

When we consume meals at night, glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity are reduced, and the level of the circulating hormone melatonin is higher; postprandial glucose and insulin responses can increase.

Disturbed sleep also affects insulin sensitivity. The function of pancreatic beta cells is impaired, resulting in hyperglycemia. A hyperglycemic state is the initial step that leads to type-2 diabetes mellitus.

Hormones such as leptin and ghrelin are related to hunger

and satiety. Sleep reduction and circadian rhythm disturbance result in altered levels of leptin and ghrelin. These disturbances give rise to increased appetite and overeating.

A longer circadian rhythm duration leads to obesity and metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome refers to a condition characterised by the triad of obesity, hyperglycemia and hypertension.

Gastric emptying decreases at night. There is also delayed gastric motility, which means the nutrients delivered to the intestine also decrease, and there is a likelihood of metabolic disturbances in the body.

The glycemic response is altered.

In conclusion, it is important for everyone to set a 24-hour schedule that is helpful for the body. We should lead a disciplined life according to a fixed routine.

Adequate physical activity should be performed during the day. Light exposure should be higher during the daytime than at night. We should have good sleep and not stay awake late at night.

Before going to bed, exposure to TV, mobile phones and electronic gadgets, which increase the light screen time, should be avoided. It is always advisable to eat less at night and have adequate sleep, or else there are high chances of developing type-2 diabetes mellitus.

What happens when we think in two languages?



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and a
communications
professional

LANGUAGE RARELY changes overnight. It shifts gradually, almost slowly, until one day we realise the conversations around us sound different from those of a generation ago.

Sit in a café, scroll through social media, or listen to a group of young professionals discussing their latest project, and a familiar pattern emerges. Arabic flows naturally through the conversation, interrupted by English phrases, technical terms and expressions that seem to slip effortlessly between sentences. A thought begins in Arabic, finds accuracy in English and returns to Arabic for emphasis or emotion. The transition is so smooth that it often goes unnoticed.

This linguistic dance, commonly referred to as “Arabizi” or code-switching, has become more than a communication habit. It is a reflection of a generation shaped by two worlds at once: deeply connected to its cultural roots while simultaneously immersed in a globalised environment where English often serves as the language of education, technology, business, and innovation.

To some, this blending may appear to signal a weakening of Arabic. Yet language has never been a fixed monument. It is a living organism, constantly adapting to the realities of the people who speak it. Arabic itself bears the marks of centuries of exchange through trade routes, scientific

discovery, cultural encounters, and intellectual movements that expanded its vocabulary and enriched its expression.

Digital platforms, international education, and global workplaces have accelerated linguistic exchange to a degree that previous generations never experienced. A university lecture may be delivered in English, a family conversation conducted in Arabic, and a social media post written in a combination of both — all within the span of a single day.

The concern is not the borrowing of words. Languages have always borrowed from one another. The deeper concern is confidence. When certain ideas, ambitions, or professional concepts feel easier to express in English than in Arabic, it suggests a shift that is cultural as much as linguistic. Language is not simply a medium of communication; it is a source of identity. It shapes how communities tell their stories, understand their past, and imagine their future.

At the same time, framing the conversation as a competition between Arabic and English misses the reality of how people communicate today. For many young Arabs, moving between languages is not a sign of confusion, but of capability. It reflects an ability to operate across cultures, participate in global conversations, and access opportunities that exceed borders while remaining connected to local traditions and values.

The challenge, therefore, is not choosing

Preserving Arabic does not require rejecting English, just as embracing English does not require sidelining Arabic.

one language over the other. It is ensuring that the rise of one does not come at the expense of the other.

Preserving Arabic does not require rejecting English, just as embracing English does not require sidelining Arabic. What it requires is intention. Arabic must be taught and presented not only as the language of heritage and history, but also as a language of innovation, entrepreneurship, science, and contemporary thought. It must continue to evolve alongside the societies it serves.

This responsibility extends beyond classrooms. Media, cultural institutions, businesses, and content developers all play a role in shaping how language is perceived and used. Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this phenomenon is not the presence of English in Arabic speech, but the remarkable ease with which people navigate both. It speaks to a generation comfortable with complexity, one that refuses to be defined by a single cultural reference point. They are local and global, traditional and modern, rooted and connected.

Languages survive because people continue to find meaning in them. As long as Arabic remains a language through which people dream, create, innovate, and connect, it will continue to thrive. The real question is not whether Arabic will change — it always has. The question is whether we will remain conscious of the stories, values, and identity it carries with it as it moves into the future.

ISRAEL’S PERMANENT STATE OF WAR COMES WITH ECONOMIC, SOCIAL COSTS

YAELE IFRAH

The enormous costs of Israel’s multi-front war and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s determination to turn his country into a “super-Sparta” of the Middle East are driving up the defence budget and raising fears of cutbacks in education and healthcare.

The total cost of the series of interconnected regional conflicts that began with Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 stood at 405 billion shekels (\$138 billion) as of late April, according to the governor of the Bank of Israel, Amir Yaron.

“That’s a huge figure, more than 17 per cent of GDP,” he said during a recent economic conference in Herzliya, north of Tel Aviv.

Just the military campaign against Iran, which began with a wave of US-Israeli strikes on February 28, incurred an additional cost of 35 billion shekels (\$12 billion) for the state up until a ceasefire took effect on April 8, according to an initial estimate by the finance ministry.

Following the adoption of the 2026 budget in late March, the government noted the defence ministry’s budget had more than doubled since October 2023.

To support the war effort, the government borrowed heavily from international markets in 2024 and 2025.

It has reached the point where public debt now accounts for more than 69 per cent of GDP, compared to 60 per cent before the war, according to the Treasury.

Taxes and social security contributions have also increased.

Israelis are “paying twice” for the war, said Esteban Klor, an economics professor at Jerusalem’s Hebrew University.

The first cost, he said, is via the decline in government social spending and reduced investment in public services resulting from several successive “across-the-board” budget cuts, even as “we are... increasing the debt”.

The second cost is to economic growth, though this has been less visible as the Israeli economy quickly overcame the initial shock of the war. GDP had returned to its 2022 level by 2024 and is continuing to grow at an enviable rate.

But the ongoing mobilisation of tens of thousands of reservists since October 2023 is also taking a toll.

“Since... many of our workers are in the army rather than at their jobs, this affects production,” Klor explained.

At the Herzliya conference, the deputy head of budgets at the finance ministry, Tamar Levy-Boneh, warned against a “trauma economy”.

“The security establishment must learn to meet its needs in a way that does not undermine the standard of living and must assume its share of responsibility,” Levy-Boneh said. — AFP

When is it wrong to use AI?

WHEN Is It Wrong to Use AI? Related Gallery Photos Of all the reactions to Pope Leo XIV’s manifesto on artificial intelligence, from its liberal humanist appreciators to its digital-consciousness-believing critics, one of the most notable is the disappointment of the AI skeptics who think the pope didn’t go nearly far enough.

Writing in Compact magazine, Princeton University’s Greg Conti responds to the pope’s description of the perils of the age of artificial intelligence by asking, “Must we have such an age declared already?” Could a pope not, instead, call for “an age of resistance to AI?” In The Hedgehog Review, cultural critic Anton Barba-Kay comments that approaching AI as a “valuable tool that requires vigilance,” in Leo’s words. My own reaction to the papal intervention had something in common with these critics. I thought Leo could have gone deeper into the sheer strangeness of artificial intelligence, the nature of its challenge to human exceptionalism, the reason it breeds so many messianic impulses and apocalyptic fears.

But I do not think a papal call for massive resistance to an AI epoch would have been suited to the conditions of 2026. It seems both too late and too early for that message.

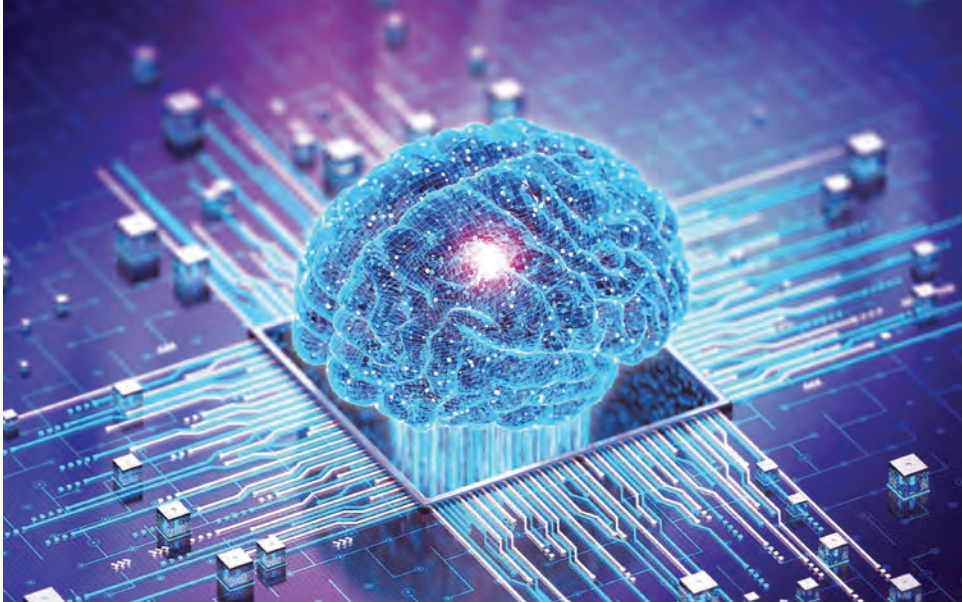
Too late, in the sense that the technology has swept through too much of society already, building too much wealth and infrastructure, promising too many near-term benefits and implicating too many institutions for anyone to imagine that the AI revolution can be (as Conti suggests) “extirpated or repressed.”

Then too early, in the sense that the nature of humans is to react against a technology only once its harms become undeniable; we respond best to dangers made manifest, not threats hypothesised. The regulations that tamed industrialisation were fitted to the abuses of the age; the movements to restrain nuclear proliferation would have looked very different absent the object lesson of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the recent backlash against smartphone use by kids couldn’t have been ginned up in 2010.



ROSS DOUTHAT

The writer is an
American author
and New York
Times columnist



If you fear the cultural dangers of AI, then your goal should be to moralise in concrete terms, to identify particular uses of the technology that seem particularly shameful, to tell your readers how not to use AI.

No doubt in an ideal world, the response would precede the bitter lesson. But in this world, for the humanist sceptic of AI no less than Skynet-fearing safety-ist, some version of the Bad Thing probably needs to be not just visible but undeniable before the world will act.

And if the humanist is Christian, like the pope, they have good reason to trust that God will allow us whatever time is necessary to tame and regulate or even extirpate the Bad Thing, rather than simply giving us over to destruction. (Unless this is the last technological temptation of all, in which case, neither encyclicals nor newspaper columns will avail us much.) This does not mean, however, that skeptics and critics just need to sit and wait for their darkest fears to be fulfilled. If you are convinced of the existential dangers of AI, then you should favour incremental regulation and increased political awareness, even if what you really desire is a sweeping moratorium.

Similarly, if you fear the cultural dangers of AI, then your goal should be to moralise in concrete terms, to identify particular uses of the technology that seem particularly shameful, to tell your readers how not to use AI.

Writing in The Atlantic, Tyler Austin Harper argues that some secular AI skeptics have been drawn to religious thinkers like the pope for exactly this reason — because

a secular language of harm seems inadequate to the perils AI creates for humans, which are better identified by the language of sin.

If that’s the case, though, the goal of the critic should be to identify the sin directly, not merely to lament the general advance of the technology nor to make excuses for individuals caught up in disruption.

Do not offer vague laments for the fate of higher education; say that students who use AI to cheat are doing something gravely wrong.

Do not merely bemoan the proliferation of Claude-inflected prose; say that the novelist or essayist who outsources a chapter to AI has committed what should be a career-ending literary crime.

Do not merely fret, as the pope’s encyclical does, that receiving “words of advice, empathy, friendship and even love” from a chatbot can be “misleading” for “less discerning users.” Tell Catholics and other Christians that treating an AI bot like your girlfriend or your boyfriend is a sin.

The point of this kind of condemnation is not to prevent the great AI disruption. It’s to lay the foundation for whatever structures we build on the other side. The necessary contribution of the critic is not to magically convince everyone that it’s wrong to use AI. It’s to convince some people, and then more people, and eventually almost everyone, that it might be wrong to use AI that way.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



The draw ceremony for the 2026 “Cheer for Your Team” Amateur Football League in Al Kamil W’al Wafi. — **Said al Rashdi**

AL KAMIL W’AL WAFI AMATEUR LEAGUE KICKS OFF ON JUNE 11

KHALID AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

The stage is set for another season of grassroots football excitement after the draw for the 2026 edition of the “Cheer for Your Team” Amateur Football League was conducted at Al Nujoom Hall of Al Kamil W’al Wafi Club.

The draw ceremony was held under the patronage of Eng Sulaiman bin Hamad al Sinaidy, Director General of Al Dakhiliyah Municipality, in the presence of Dr Abdulmohsin al Marhoobi, Chairman of Al Kamil W’al Wafi Club, alongside representatives of participating teams and sports enthusiasts from across the wilayat.

nine teams were divided into two groups ahead of the tournament’s official kick-off on June 11. Group A features Tahwa, Al Shabab, Al Jazeera, Al Ittihad and Al Mansour, while Group B comprises Al Hilal, Hadri Bilad, Al Maamoura and Shabab Al Wafi.

Widely regarded as one of the most anticipated sporting events in the wilayat, the competition continues to serve as an important platform for nurturing football talent, encouraging community engagement and strengthening ties among young athletes.

Organisers expect another competitive edition as teams intensify preparations in pursuit of the title. The tournament has consistently attracted strong public interest, with local supporters eager to rally behind their teams and witness emerging talents showcase their abilities on the pitch.



The draw ceremony for the 2026 “Cheer for Your Team” Amateur Football League in Al Kamil W’al Wafi. — **Said al Rashdi**

Oman go down to favourites Nepal in Asian Games qualifier semi-final

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

Oman’s youthful side saw their hopes of reaching the final of the Men’s T20I Asian Games Qualifier ended by tournament favourites Nepal, who secured a comprehensive eight-wicket victory in the semi-final at the Singapore National Cricket Ground in Singapore on Sunday.

Nepal, boasting a squad packed players who have featured at the last edition of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup, proved too strong for an Omani side in which captain Sufyan Mehmood was the lone experienced campaigner, with the rest of the squad making their tournament debuts.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, Oman struggled to build momentum and were bowled out for 94 in 19.4 overs.

The innings got off to a disastrous start as Shuaib al Balushi and Nawed al Balushi



Oman celebrating wicket vs Nepal.

were dismissed without scoring, while Mohammed al Balushi fell for nine to leave Oman reeling at 9 for 3 inside four overs.

up programme in Jakarta.

Striker Issam al Subhi was the standout performer for Oman, scoring a hat-trick to put the Red Warriors in control. He opened the scoring in the 32nd minute, before doubling Oman’s lead from the penalty spot in the 53rd minute. Al Subhi completed his hat-trick in the 60th minute, underlining his attacking value for the national team.

Mozambique reduced the deficit in the second half, but Oman restored their three-goal advantage near the end when Abdul Salam al Shukaili struck in the 88th minute to seal a morale-boosting win.

The Jakarta camp is being held from May 29 to June 9, with Oman using the two friendly matches against Indonesia and Mozambique to assess the squad’s readiness. The camp is part of the team’s preparations for Khaleeji 27, scheduled

to be hosted by Saudi Arabia in September and the AFC Asian Cup 2027, also set to take place in Saudi Arabia early next year.

The technical staff had earlier focused on physical, technical and tactical work during the first sessions of the camp, with Sektioui aiming to evaluate all called-up players and give them a chance to compete for places in the squad during the coming stage.

Oman’s performance against Mozambique offered a positive reaction after the Indonesia setback, especially in attack, where the team showed better sharpness and efficiency in front of goal. The win also gives the coaching staff valuable indicators before the squad concludes its external camp and returns to Muscat to continue its longer-term preparation programme.

Oman thrash Mozambique 4-1 in Jakarta friendly



Issam al Subhi starred with a hat-trick as Oman defeated Mozambique 4-1.

SHORTTAKES



The result ensured Oman finished second in Group B behind the UAE and advanced to the quarterfinals for the first time in the tournament's history.

OMAN WOMEN
MARCH INTO ACC
QUARTERS

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

Oman women scripted a landmark chapter in their cricket history on Sunday, securing a maiden place in the knockout stage of the ACC Women's Premier Cup after a commanding 44-run victory over the Philippines in their final Group B match in Bangi, Malaysia. In the four previous editions of the tournament, starting from 2018, Oman had failed to advance to the knockout rounds.

The result ensured Oman finished second in Group B behind the UAE and advanced to the quarterfinals for the first time in the tournament's history. While the UAE still have a match in hand, their superior net run rate guarantees top spot in the group.

After being put into bat, Oman posted a competitive 141 for six from their 20 overs, built around another assured contribution from the in-form Jayadhanyha Gunasekar and a fluent top-score from Fiza Javed.

Jayadhanyha continued her impressive run in the tournament with 37 off 38 balls, striking five boundaries. She first added 31 runs for the opening wicket with Nitya Joshi (13) before combining with Fiza in a crucial 46-run second-wicket partnership that laid the platform for a challenging total.

Fiza then took charge of the innings, scoring a brisk 43 off 35 deliveries, including four boundaries. Her innings helped Oman maintain momentum through the middle overs and she was also involved in a valuable 30-run stand with captain Priyanka Mendonsa (7). With wickets falling towards the end, Amanda D Costa provided the finishing touches with an unbeaten 16 from 14 balls as Oman crossed the 140-mark. The innings was further boosted by 20 extras conceded by the Philippines.

Defending 141, Oman's bowlers produced one of their most disciplined displays of the competition. The Philippines struggled to keep pace with the required rate as Oman tightened their grip throughout the chase.

Amanda D Costa led the charge, completing an outstanding all-round performance by claiming four wickets for just 21 to derail the Philippines batting line-up. Her incisive spell ensured Oman remained firmly in control as the opposition fell well short of the target. The comprehensive victory not only sealed qualification but also underlined the growing progress of Oman's women's programme on the continental stage.

With confidence high and momentum on their side, Oman will now look to carry their impressive form into the knockout rounds as they seek to extend their memorable ACC Women's Premier Cup campaign.

Al Kharusi makes history
with Genoa move



Al Kharousi marks a new milestone for Omani football.

— Pictures by Abdulwahid al Hamadani

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

ITALIAN club Genoa CFC have announced the signing of Omani midfielder Suhaib al Kharusi on a three-year professional contract, making him the first Omani footballer to secure a professional deal with a club competing in Italy's Serie A system.

The agreement marks a significant milestone for Omani football and crowns Al Kharusi's steady rise through Genoa's youth ranks after joining the club's development pathway and progressing to the Primavera squad.

The 20-year-old enjoyed a breakthrough 2024-25 season after moving from the Under-18 side to Genoa's Primavera team, competing in Campionato Primavera 1, Italy's top youth league. During the season, he made 28 appearances and accumulated more than 1,000 competitive minutes against the youth teams of leading Serie A clubs.

Al Kharusi established himself as a key figure in midfield through his technical quality, progressive passing, attacking contributions and ability to create opportunities for teammates. His performances placed him among the standout young players in his position within the club's academy structure.

His physical statistics were equally impressive. The Omani midfielder recorded the fastest sprint speed in the squad at 33.5 km/h and registered the highest high-speed running distance in a single match at 1,631 metres. He also ranked among the team's



Genoa CFC officials with Suhaib al Kharusi during the signing ceremony.

top performers in energy output while maintaining low fatigue levels, highlighting his endurance and athletic development.

Combining pace, stamina, creativity and tactical awareness, Al Kharusi has emerged as one of Oman's most promising young football talents and a representative of a new generation of Omani players seeking opportunities in elite European football environments.

Commenting on the announcement, Andres Blazquez, CEO of Genoa CFC, praised the player's development and commitment throughout his time at the club.

"We are proud to confirm a three-year commitment with Suhayb. Since joining our youth structure, he has demonstrated professionalism, focus and humility. His

progress this season has validated the confidence we placed in him, and we look forward to supporting his continued development," Blazquez said.

For his part, Al Kharusi described the contract as one of the proudest moments of his career.

"Signing this agreement with Genoa is a special moment for me, my family and Oman. The club believed in me from the beginning and provided everything I needed to develop both as a footballer and as a person. I am grateful to my coaches, teammates and everyone who supported me throughout this journey. My focus now is to keep improving and contribute to the team," he said.

GENOA ACADEMY OMAN

Alongside the player's announcement, Genoa also confirmed plans to launch Genoa Academy Oman, the club's first official academy in the Sultanate of Oman.

The project aims to provide young Omani players with access to professional training programmes based on Genoa's technical methodology, with Italian coaching expertise working closely with the club's football department in Italy.

Yaqoub al Sawafi, Head Coach of Genoa Academy Oman, said the academy's mission is to develop Omani talent according to international standards and help prepare players for opportunities at both local and international levels.

"Our goal is to create a professional environment that supports the long-term development of Omani players and contributes positively to the future of football in Oman," he said.

Omani skaters impress at Belarus sports festival

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

Omani skating talents delivered an impressive performance during their participation in a sports and cultural festival organised by the Belarusian Olympic Committee in Belarus.

The event was held under the patronage of Viktor Lukashenko, President of the National Olympic Committee of Belarus, and was attended by the Belarusian Minister of Sport and Tourism, senior government officials and representatives of several sports bodies.

The festival also marked the opening of a new sports square in Svetlogorsk district, Gomel Governorate, as part of a programme

aimed at promoting youth participation in sport and showcasing different disciplines under the Belarusian Olympic Committee.

The Oman skating team presented a series of displays that reflected the growing abilities of young Omani athletes in skating sports, which continue to attract increasing interest among youth in the Sultanate of Oman.

The participation also allowed the Omani athletes to interact with Belarusian skaters, exchange experiences, and learn more about skating disciplines connected to the Olympic pathway.

Hani al Yaqoubi, a player from the Ibri skating team, said the participation was a special experience, especially as it was his



Oman's skating team showcases its talent during the sports and cultural festival in Belarus.

first appearance outside Oman.

"We are very happy with the warm welcome and the chance to take part in this event. It allowed us to learn about Belarusian culture while also presenting Omani culture through sport," he said.

"The interaction from the community was an unforgettable feeling. We thank the Oman Skating Sports Committee for this opportunity," he added.

Alexander Katiliev, President of the Belarusian Skating Federation, praised the Omani team's performance and engagement with Belarusian athletes.

He said the participation strengthened sporting cooperation between Oman and Belarus and opened new opportunities to develop

skating disciplines, including speed skating and roller hockey.

Saud bin Nasser al Aufi, Chairman of the Oman Skating Sports Committee, said the participation represented an important step for skating sports in Oman.

"This event gave us a valuable opportunity to learn more about the different skating disciplines and shape a clearer vision for developing the sport in line with international standards," he said.

He added that the committee's first phase will focus on speed skating and roller hockey, with plans to organise specialised training camps and hold further discussions with the Oman Olympic Committee and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to support this direction.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Portugal’s Cristiano Ronaldo shoots at goal. — Reuters

PORTUGAL, BELGIUM PREPARE FOR WORLD CUP WITH WINS

PARIS, France: Portugal and Belgium both won in front of their home fans on Saturday ahead of their latest attempts at World Cup breakthroughs.

Portugal beat Chile, who are not going to the World Cup, 2-1 in Oeiras, near Lisbon.

Belgium cruised to a 5-0 victory over fellow World Cup qualifiers Tunisia in Brussels.

Although the games were notionally friendlies, there were red cards in both.

Portugal started Cristiano Ronaldo.

The star had a strike ruled offside just before half-time before he went off amid a raft of half-time substitutions.

By then both teams were down to ten men after Rafael Leao and Ivan Roman were sent off following a mass scuffle just before the break.

Goncalo Guedes gave Portugal a 58th-minute lead.

Premier League player of the year, Bruno Fernandes, who played the full game added the second from long range.

Lucas Cepeda replied in added time.

Portugal have a home friendly against Nigeria in Leiria on June 10 before setting off to play DR Congo, Uzbekistan and Colombia in Group K.

In Brussels Leandro Trossard, Charles De Ketelaere, Kevin De Bruyne, Dodi Lukebakio and Nicolas Raskin scored for Belgium.

The last three came after Tunisia’s Ismael Gharbi was sent off for a second yellow card.

At the World Cup, Belgium will face Egypt, Iran and New Zealand in Group G.

Tunisia, managed by Sabri Lamouchi, are in Group F alongside the Netherlands, Japan and Sweden. — AFP



Belgium’s Leandro Trossard in action. — Reuters

MARQUEZ HITS 100 CAREER WINS WITH HUNGARIAN GP TRIUMPH



MARC Marquez claimed his 100th victory across all classes with a commanding win at the Hungarian Grand Prix on Sunday at Balaton Park, less than a month after undergoing surgery on his shoulder and foot.

The 33-year-old Spaniard beat KTM’s Pedro Acosta to the chequered flag for his first win since the San Marino Grand Prix last year and his 74th in MotoGP.

The seven, times MotoGP champion’s triumph was particularly sweet as it also marked Ducati’s 100th victory while his team mate Francesco Bagnaia finished third.

“Super happy. Expensive win because after last year it changed everything,” said Marquez, who had also won Saturday’s sprint from pole position.

“But the sport is like this. From one day to the other, one can change everything. I learned this in 2020 (after a season-ending crash).”



Ducati Lenovo Team’s Marc Marquez in action during the MotoGP race. — Reuters

NIGHTMARE FOR APRILIA IN MULTI-RIDER CRASH

It became a nightmare race for Aprilia when Jorge Martin lost his balance on the first lap at turn one and crashed into three riders, including his teammate and championship leader Marco Bezzecchi.

The crash also took out Gresini Racing’s Fermin Aldeguer and Trackhouse rider Raul Fernandez, as three Aprilia bikes were taken out of contention.

“I didn’t do a good start and when I started to brake, I just saw something arriving so fast,” Bagnaia said.

“It was Martin arriving (at) double the speed, so maybe it was two (riders) on the inside and locked the front, because the new tarmac on corner one was very slippery.”

Both Martin and Bezzecchi were taken to the medical centre, with Aprilia later confirming Martin had bruising on his back and right foot while Bezzecchi

suffered contusions on his right leg and hand, though neither rider showed visible fractures.

MARQUEZ AND ACOSTA BATTLE FOR WIN

Up front, Acosta seized the initiative on lap two, diving inside to take the lead in a thrilling battle that saw the KTM rider and Marquez trade fastest laps while leaving Bagnaia far behind in third.

The decisive moment came on lap 14 when Marquez made his move, only for Acosta to respond immediately, with the KTM rider even nudging aside his compatriot near the final turn, but Marquez was not to be denied.

Taking the lead at the chicane on the next lap, Marquez then streaked away, building a commanding advantage before cruising to victory as Acosta seemed to struggle with tyre wear.

In a moment of pure joy, he stood on his bike as he crossed the finish line, before celebrating with a red flag emblazoned with the number 100.

The milestone puts Marquez in exclusive company as only the third rider to reach a century of wins, joining motorcycling greats Giacomo Agostini (122) and Valentino Rossi (115).

“We come back and we work hard. Some difficulties this first part of the season but I knew that here was a big chance to win,” Marquez added.

“I want to say thanks to the people that believed in me - the doctors, the physios, a lot of hours at home working. The prize was expensive but I’m happy to (make) another comeback.”

Trackhouse rider Ai Ogura finished fourth while Honda’s Luca Marini completed the top five. — Reuters

Argentina stroll to pre-World Cup win over Honduras

COLLEGE STATION, United States: Argentina eased to a 2-0 victory against a lacklustre Honduras in the reigning champions’ penultimate World Cup warm-up game in Texas on Saturday.

Lautaro Martinez and Giuliano Simeone scored the goals in a game dominated by Argentina in College Station.

Lionel Messi was on the bench but not used by coach Lionel Scaloni as he nurses the superstar back to fitness for the World Cup group games after he suffered a hamstring injury on May 24.

A lethargic game burst into life on 37 minutes when Nicolas Tagliafico was fouled in the penalty area by Cristopher Melendez and Inter Milan forward Martinez drove

home the spot kick low to his left to make it 1-0 on 37 minutes.

The lively Martinez was the creator when Argentina doubled their lead on 54 minutes as his intelligent backheel set up Atletico Madrid’s Simeone to fire past Honduras goalkeeper Edrick Menjivar.

In other highlights, Giovani Lo Celso hit the crossbar with a superb curling shot from outside the area in the first half and Tomas Aranda’s second-half attempt was well saved by the Honduras ‘keeper.

Honduras barely crossed the halfway line in the second half as Argentina exerted their dominance.

Scaloni said that despite playing some of his younger squad



Honduras’ Rigoberto Rivas in action with Argentina’s Agustin Giay and Giuliano Simeone. — IMAGN IMAGES

members, his team showed they have a solid identity as the defence of their crown approaches.

“Maybe it could have been done better, but as for the team’s hallmark, its identity, I think it remains intact, and that’s the most important thing. That’s what we’re looking for, in the end, not to break that identity,” he said.

Argentina face Iceland in their final friendly match in Auburn, Alabama on Tuesday before the three-time winners begin their World Cup group games against Algeria on June 16 in Kansas City.

Scaloni has indicated that Messi could play a small part in one of the friendlies, meaning an appearance against Iceland is likely. — AFP

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BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



Discussions will focus on recent economic performance and outlook for growth.

IMF mission reviews Oman’s economy

MUSCAT: An International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission has begun its 2026 Article IV consultation with the Sultanate of Oman, marking the start of a comprehensive review of the country’s economic, financial and monetary developments.

The mission, which will continue until mid-June, forms part of the IMF’s regular surveillance process conducted under Article IV of its Articles of Agreement.

The consultations are a key component of the long-standing cooperation between Oman and the IMF, supporting efforts to strengthen economic resilience, promote sustainable growth and safeguard financial stability.

During the visit, IMF officials will hold a series of meetings with representatives from the Central Bank of Oman, the Ministry of Finance, government institutions and private sector organisations. Discussions will focus on recent economic performance, the outlook for growth, financial sector developments and the broader macroeconomic environment.

The consultations will also examine the potential implications of regional and global economic trends on Oman’s economy, while reviewing the effectiveness of current fiscal and monetary policies.

Additional topics on the agenda include labour market developments, social protection programmes, economic and financial stimulus measures and policy priorities for the next phase of Oman’s economic transformation.

The Article IV consultations provide an important platform for policy dialogue and the exchange of views on measures aimed at enhancing economic competitiveness, maintaining financial stability and supporting long-term sustainable development. — ONA

Gas output in Oman reaches 18.7 billion cubic metres

MUSCAT: Oman’s natural gas production, including domestic output and imports, rose by 4.6 per cent to 18.77 billion cubic metres by the end of April 2026, compared with 17.94 billion cubic metres during the corresponding period of 2025, reflecting continued growth in demand from key economic sectors.

According to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), associated gas production increased by 1.3 per cent to 4.13 billion cubic metres, up from 4.08 billion cubic metres a year earlier.

Non-associated gas production, including imports, recorded stronger growth of 5.6 per cent, reaching 14.64 billion cubic metres compared with 13.86 billion cubic metres during the same period last year.

Natural gas consumption continued to rise across major sectors of the economy. Consumption by industrial projects increased by 5.8 per cent to 9.87 billion cubic metres, compared with 9.32 billion cubic metres by the end of April 2025.



Associated gas production increased by 1.3% to 4.13 billion cubic metres.

Demand from electricity generation plants posted the strongest growth, rising by 12.7 per cent to 4.91 billion cubic metres, up from 4.36 billion cubic metres in the corresponding period of last year, reflecting higher power requirements across the Sultanate of Oman.

Meanwhile, gas consumption in oil fields, including losses, meter discrepancies and shrinkage factors, declined by 5.7 per cent to 3.93 billion cubic metres, compared with 4.17 billion cubic metres a year earlier.

Gas usage in industrial

areas, including industrial estates as well as operations linked to Oman Mining Company and Oman Cement Company, fell sharply by 30.7 per cent to 63 million cubic metres from 90.9 million cubic metres recorded during the same period in 2025.

The latest figures from the NCSI underscore the growing role of natural gas in supporting Oman’s industrial expansion and electricity generation requirements while highlighting shifts in consumption patterns across different sectors of the economy. — ONA

Oman launches Kafa’a for industrial transformation

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by the Directorate General of Industry, launched the first phase of the “Kafa’a” National Manufacturing Programme on Sunday, June 7, as part of Oman Industry Day 2026.

This initiative aims to advance the industrial sector, preparing it for smart manufacturing and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, while advancing operational and production efficiency and enhancing the competitiveness of Omani industry in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the national industrial strategy.

The launch ceremony was attended by Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, alongside officials from both government and private sectors.

The programme is the product of a strategic partnership between the MoCIIP, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

Its goal is to empower national factories to adopt global best practices in operational efficiency and ongoing improvement.

During the launch, participating industrial establishments signed project documents, marking the involvement of nine factories: Voltamp Energy, Oman Fiber Optic Company, Oman Cables Industry,



The Kafa'a programme is the product of a strategic partnership between the MoCIIP, PDO and Madayn.

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Oman Cement Company, Al Waqia Shoes, Modern Dairy Factory “Al Khamayil”, Reem Batteries and Alternative Energy, Muna Noor Trading and Manufacturing; and Intaj Suhar for Advanced Manufacturing.

Each factory is required to implement a practical project based on the “Lean Six Sigma” methodology, a prerequisite for attending the qualifying workshop and earning the Green Belt certification.

The programme focuses on reducing waste, lowering operational costs and improving product quality by minimising delays and errors in production lines. It also aims to develop national competencies, empower them with continuous improvement skills and enhance local value by optimising supply chains and localising manufacturing operations.

A presentation introduced the programme’s objectives, targeting eligible factories in promising

industrial sectors. Projects under the programme are expected to generate annual savings exceeding RO 350,000 for participating factories, through specialised improvement initiatives supervised by certified experts.

In his speech, Eng Khalid bin Salim al Qasabi, Director General of Industry, emphasised that “Kafa’a” is a cornerstone in the journey towards smart manufacturing, aligning with Oman Vision 2040.

He explained that the programme leverages the global “Lean Six Sigma” methodology to enhance industrial processes by reducing waste in time and resources, improving workflow and eliminating non-value-added activities.

The programme extends beyond operational development, nurturing a culture of continuous improvement and industrial innovation; and equipping national talent to meet future demands.



Pre-Qualification Notice

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) invites for pre-qualification for the following:-

Prequalification Number	Description	Date of Submission
01/2026	Manufacturing Reverse Osmosis (RO) Membranes for Water Desalination Plants of Nama Water Services	02/07/2026

Project Overview:

This opportunity arises as part of the Oman Investment Authority's Labs for the **localization of business opportunities** and represents a high-value industrial project aimed at strengthening local manufacturing capabilities within the Sultanate of Oman.

The project also forms part of Nama Water Services Company's ongoing efforts to enhance **In-Country Value (ICV)**, support **industrial development**, and promote **sustainability in the water sector**.

- Eligibility: all Local/International Companies, Specialized Factories. Manufacturers, Suppliers, and all interested parties can obtain the prequalification documents and requirements through the following email address: **icv@owwsc.nama.om**
- Pre-Qualification Documents Must Be Submitted not later than 10:00 Am on the Final Submission Date.
- For any technical support, please contact us through the email address: **icv@owwsc.nama.om**
- “Nama Water Services Company invites and wishes all companies/institutions register in the Tawteen Platform.”



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The pact was formalised by Ahmed al Mawali, Head of Retail & SME at National Finance, and Abdullah al Saidi, Founder & CEO of AB Energy.

NATIONAL FINANCE, AB ENERGY SIGN FINANCING PACT

MUSCAT: Committed to empowering businesses that play a pivotal role in the nation’s energy transition, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AB Energy during Oman Sustainability Week 2026.

The agreement was formalised by Ahmed al Mawali, Head of Retail & SME at National Finance and Abdullah al Saidi, Founder & CEO of AB Energy. This partnership underscores the company’s continued commitment to advancing sustainable financing solutions while supporting environmentally responsible enterprises and innovative clean energy initiatives that contribute to the nation’s long-term sustainable development goals.

As part of the partnership, National Finance will extend strategic support to AB Energy to facilitate the expansion of its business operations, reflecting a shared commitment to accelerating the adoption of renewable energy technologies across the nation.

In addition, the company will offer exclusive rates on sustainability-linked Consumer Durables Financing to AB Energy’s clientele, enhancing access to financing solutions that enable sustainable growth and environmentally conscious investments.

This strategic collaboration further reflects National Finance’s steadfast commitment to advancing the nation’s sustainability agenda by improving access to responsible financing solutions that drive meaningful impact, innovation and long-term progress.

Speaking in this context, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, stated, “Sustainability remains a fundamental pillar of our long-term strategy and financing approach, as we recognise its vital role in shaping a prosperous and resilient future for the nation.

Our collaboration with AB Energy reflects our commitment to supporting forward-looking enterprises that are advancing innovation in renewable energy and contributing to the Sultanate of Oman’s broader sustainable development ambitions. Through this partnership, we aim to empower businesses and individuals with accessible financing solutions that accelerate the transition towards cleaner, more efficient and sustainable energy practices”.

Chery Oman launches ‘The Big Chill’ campaign

CHERY Oman is turning up the value as temperatures rise with the launch of The Big Chill summer campaign. Headlined by an exclusive 0% interest finance scheme on Tiggo models, this grand savings event is designed to make vehicle ownership both extraordinary and highly affordable from June 1 to July 30.

Prospective buyers can also take advantage of exceptional starting prices, with the sleek Arrizo sedan range starting from RO 4,199 and the dynamic Tiggo SUV lineup starting from RO 8,199, offering a strategic opportunity to drive home a vehicle that combines advanced technology with muscular design.

For those eyeing the premium SUV segment, Chery is offering an exclusive 0% interest finance scheme specifically for the Tiggo 8 and Tiggo 9 models, providing a sophisticated path to luxury without the burden of added interest.

In addition to this financing offer, every qualifying purchase across the lineup comes with an all-inclusive suite of seasonal benefits. Customers will receive one year of free insurance (Oman only), free registration, a complimentary 3-year or 30,000 km service package and free 3M window tinting to combat the heat.

To make the summer drive even more rewarding, a complimentary fuel card worth RO 50 (equivalent to 200 litres of petrol) is



The campaign is designed to make vehicle ownership both extraordinary and affordable from June 1 to July 30.

also included (Terms & Conditions Apply).

The 2026 Chery lineup provides a versatile range of options tailored to every lifestyle. Sedan enthusiasts can choose from the efficient Arrizo 5, the sophisticated Arrizo 6 with its refined safety systems. The SUV family is equally diverse, featuring the connected Tiggo 7.

For families seeking superior comfort, the Tiggo 8 offers impressive efficiency and subtle ambient lighting, while the top-tier Tiggo 9 stands out with its bold silhouette

and advanced driving assistance technology, all backed by an outstanding 6-year/200,000 km manufacturer warranty.

New World Autos invites customers to escape the summer heat by visiting any Chery showroom in Oman to explore these “Big Chill” super deals.

In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by New World Autos. For stock availability and further details, visit Chery showrooms at Al Wattayah, Al Hail (Al Seeb), Suhar, Salalah and Barka.

Bank Muscat launches summer travel loan offer

MUSCAT: As part of its strategy to deliver innovative banking solutions that cater to customers’ aspirations and evolving lifestyles, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to enhance its portfolio of services and products by launching unique offers that combine added value with an integrated banking experience.

Reflecting its commitment to providing exclusive benefits during the summer season, the bank has announced the launch of its travel loan offer, featuring competitive interest rates and additional benefits designed to make customers’ travel experiences more comfortable and flexible.

The new offer aims to meet the needs of Omani nationals and residents planning their summer holidays, providing a reduced interest rate of 3.75%, in addition to a waiver of the first-year annual fee on the Oman Air Credit Card, subject to the bank’s approved credit policy.

The offer will be available from May



The new offer aims to meet the needs of nationals and residents planning their summer holidays.

15 until July 15, 2026, as part of the bank’s efforts to further enhance customer experience and provide flexible financing solutions tailored to customers’ seasonal needs.

On this occasion, Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani, General Manager Products at Bank Muscat, said: “We continue to introduce banking solutions that align with our customers’ evolving lifestyle aspirations and seasonal needs.

Through the travel loan offer, we aim to provide customers with greater financial flexibility and added value, enabling them to plan and enjoy their travel experience with convenience and peace of mind.

We invite everyone to take advantage of this exclusive offer as we reaffirm our continued focus on delivering flexible solutions that enhance customer experience and support their lifestyle aspirations”.

Customers can apply for the offer by visiting the nearest Bank Muscat branch. For more information, customers can send “LOAN” to 90090.

Sohar Aluminium marks graduation of Tamkeen leadership programme

SUHAR: Sohar Aluminium recently celebrated the graduation of 13 Process Technicians from its various operational areas, as part of Tamkeen Leadership Programme. Tamkeen Leadership Programme is one of the key development initiatives under Sohar Aluminium’s Qadat Al Mustaqbal (Future Leaders) programme, reaffirming the company’s commitment to nurturing national talent and strengthening leadership capabilities across its workforce.

As part of the programme participants were awarded the CMI Level 3 Certificate in Principles of Management and Leadership, accredited by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

Tamkeen Leadership Programme adopted a comprehensive blended learning approach, combining classroom-based leadership modules, e-learning components, experiential development through Outward Bound Oman and action learning projects supported by coaching.



Tamkeen Leadership Programme is one of the key development initiatives under Sohar Aluminium’s Qadat Al Mustaqbal (Future Leaders) programme.

Tamkeen Leadership Programme adopted a comprehensive blended learning approach, combining classroom-based leadership modules, e-learning components, experiential development through Outward Bound Oman, and action learning projects supported by coaching.

Approximately 70% of the programme focused on practical workplace projects, enabling participants to apply leadership and problem-solving skills to real operational challenges.

The combined development approach of Tamkeen Leadership Programme included three leadership classroom modules, e-learning components, experiential learning through Outward Bound

Oman, as well as action learning projects with coaching support.

As part of their development journey, participants successfully delivered three impactful projects; Heat Recovery System for Aluminium Casting Furnace, Paste Plant Gas Consumption Optimisation During Shutdown and Tap Hole Condition Improvement.

These projects focused on improving efficiency, safety and reliability across operations. They included recovering exhaust heat from furnaces to significantly reduce gas consumption — by up to 40% during active use and 60% when idle — along with optimising shutdown procedures and boiler standby conditions to lower energy use and costs.

Additional efforts enhanced operational safety, minimised material losses and improved process reliability in critical production areas. These projects reflect the programme’s strong emphasis on continuous

improvement, operational excellence and sustainability, while delivering tangible value to the company.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kharusi, General Manager of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium, said, “Tamkeen Leadership Programme reflects our ongoing commitment to developing capable leaders from within our workforce.”

“By combining structured learning with real-world application, we empower our employees to contribute meaningfully to operational excellence, innovation and sustainability.

We are proud of the achievements of this group and their positive impact on our operations”, Al Kharusi added.

Sohar Aluminium continues to invest in structured development programmes that align with its long-term strategy, supporting employee growth while reinforcing its commitment to excellence, safety and sustainable operations.

SHORTTAKES



The package will comprise seven projects and direct investments spanning a number of priority sectors.

FUTURE FUND OMAN TO UNVEIL 570 MILLION PROJECTS

MUSCAT: Future Fund Oman (FFO), the Oman Investment Authority’s RO 2 billion investment vehicle, is set to announce a new package of strategic investments and projects on Tuesday (June 9) with a combined value exceeding RO 570 million.

The package will comprise seven projects and direct investments spanning a number of priority sectors, including renewable energy, industry, technology, healthcare, tourism, adventure tourism and food security. These investments form part of the fund’s strategic projects portfolio, which accounts for 90 per cent of its total capital allocation.

In addition, the fund’s investment managers will present four investments focused on small and medium enterprises and start-ups. This portfolio represents the remaining 10 per cent of the fund’s capital and is designed to strengthen Oman’s entrepreneurship ecosystem while supporting the growth of innovative and high-potential businesses.

The investments are expected to contribute to economic growth, stimulate private-sector activity and attract additional foreign capital into the Sultanate of Oman, reinforcing the fund’s role as a catalyst for strategic investment across targeted sectors.

Since its establishment in early 2024, Future Fund Oman has continued to expand its investment footprint.

By the end of 2025, the fund had approved 186 projects with a combined value of approximately RO 1.7 billion, covering strategic investments, direct project financing and initiatives aimed at SMEs and start-ups.

The fund’s contribution to these projects reached around RO 640 million, helping to attract an estimated RO 743 million in foreign investment. Since its launch, Future Fund Oman has received 986 investment applications, reflecting strong interest from local and international investors.

The latest investment package is expected to further advance the fund’s mandate of supporting economic diversification, attracting quality investments and creating long-term value for Oman’s economy. — ONA

Oman oil exports rise despite lower prices

MUSCAT: Oman’s crude oil exports increased by 2.7 per cent during the first four months of 2026, reaching 102.73 million barrels by the end of April, compared with 100.03 million barrels during the same period last year, according to recent preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The increase in exports came despite a significant decline in global oil prices. The average realised oil price fell by 15.4 per cent to \$64.2 per barrel by the end



Oman’s average daily oil output rose by 7.5 per cent to 1.06 million barrels per day.

INVESTMENT FLOWS

Swiss investment in US rises



Swiss companies invested \$27 billion in the United States during the first four months of 2026 as part of a broader commitment to expand US investment following a bilateral tariff agreement. Major projects include new facilities by pharmaceutical firms and industrial manufacturers. Switzerland has pledged to invest \$200 billion in the US over five years under a deal that reduced tariffs on Swiss goods. — Reuters

AVIATION TRADE

Boeing backs China jet deal



Boeing said it can provide aftermarket parts and support services for China’s planned purchase of 200 aircraft, with executives noting that parts can be supplied through existing global channels. The order is expected to be finalised later this year. Chinese officials have stressed the need for long-term guarantees on aircraft components and engine supplies. — Reuters

FOREX RESERVES

China reserves increase further



China’s foreign exchange reserves rose by \$31.7 billion in May to reach \$3.4422 trillion. The increase was attributed to currency valuation effects, rising global financial asset prices and shifts in the US dollar index. Authorities said the country’s stable economic growth and progress in high-quality development continue to support the resilience of its foreign exchange reserves. — ONA

Oman Minerals Trading gears up for launch

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 7

AHEAD of the planned operationalisation of its centralised trading platform, Oman Minerals Trading Company’s (OMTC) newly appointed Chairman has affirmed that the state-owned commercial entity will specialise in the marketing and export of gypsum and chromite ores.

Hussain bin Ali al Lawati, who recently announced his appointment as head of OMTC’s Board, said in a post over the weekend that the company’s principal mandate is to boost the global reach of Omani mineral exports.

“Oman Minerals Trading Company will become the sole entity authorised to export gypsum and chromite ores from the Sultanate of Oman. This step aligns with broader efforts to enhance the efficiency of the mining sector’s value chain and strengthen the presence of Omani mineral resources in global markets”, Al Lawati stated.

Established pursuant to Ministerial Decision 18/2025, issued by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, in May 2025, OMTC will operate as a wholly owned subsidiary of Minerals Development Oman (MDO) — the Sultanate of Oman’s mining sector investment flagship owned by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA).



The state-owned commercial entity will specialise in the marketing and export of gypsum and chromite ores.

The ministerial decision also introduces a new regulatory framework to tighten oversight of Oman’s gypsum and chromite ore exports, prioritising domestic demand and imposing stricter quality and approval requirements, including a minimum 36% chromium content for exported chromite ore.

The measures aim to strengthen pricing transparency, improve marketing discipline and enhance Oman’s bargaining power in global mineral markets.

To address long-standing structural inefficiencies such as intermediaries and fragmented marketing, OMTC’s primary mandate is to centralise mineral

exports and standardise international contracting.

The reforms are expected to improve pricing, increase national revenues, boost in-country value and stimulate downstream industries, SMEs and job creation, while reinforcing integrated value-chain development under the Ministry’s “Majd” initiative.

Significantly, the imminent official go-live of Oman Minerals Trading Company’s trading platform marks the culmination of a one-year transition period announced by the Ministry last June.

It was introduced to allow companies to complete existing contracts, adapt to the new mineral marketing system and benefit from training and

capacity-building for future sales and negotiations.

MDO, for its part, had committed to developing an integrated system for registration, contracting, global pricing and logistics to ensure reliable supply, prioritise local market needs and prepare the private sector for the new centralised trading model.

Oman’s gypsum sector recorded production of around 14 million tonnes in 2024, with exports estimated at about 12 million tonnes, making it one of the world’s largest gypsum exporters, while chromite output is significantly smaller at roughly 300,000 tonnes in 2024, with most production directed towards export markets for metallurgical use.

LONDON: Opec+ is expected to approve a fourth consecutive increase in oil production targets on Sunday, despite ongoing disruptions to crude flows through the Strait of Hormuz that continue to constrain supply from several member states, according to sources familiar with the discussions.

Three Opec+ sources said the alliance is likely to raise output



targets by around 188,000 barrels per day from July. The proposed increase would follow similar adjustments made in recent months,

although a final decision has yet to be reached.

The latest move comes as the producer group grapples with a severe supply crisis triggered by the disruption of oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz.

The situation has prevented several Gulf producers from fully meeting customer demand since late February. — Reuters

OPINION

Every day is Environment Day in Oman



DR AISHA AL SARIHI

The writer is an economic expert at the Ministry of Economy

AS the world marks World Environment Day, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms a principle that has guided its development journey for decades: economic growth and environmental stewardship are not competing priorities, but complementary pillars of sustainable prosperity.

Oman's commitment to protecting its natural environment is deeply rooted in its national development approach. As early as 1974, Oman established the Office of the Advisor for Conservation of the Environment, reflecting a national recognition that environmental stewardship must accompany development.

Over the decades, the country's environmental governance continued to evolve, with institutions expanding their mandates to include pollution control, water resource conservation, climate affairs and biodiversity protection.

Oman's environmental commitment is further demonstrated through its active participation in international climate action. The Sultanate of Oman joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and ratifying the Paris Agreement, reinforcing its determination to contribute to global efforts addressing climate change while advancing sustainable development at home.

At the heart of this commitment lies Oman Vision 2040, which recognises the environment and natural resources as strategic national assets, where environmental protection and natural resource management are essential enablers of economic diversification, competitiveness

and long-term prosperity. It emphasises the sustainable use of resources, environmental resilience and balanced economic growth are fundamental pillars to safeguard the wellbeing of current and future generations.

This year, building on Oman Vision 2040, Oman celebrated the launch of the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030), which places environmental sustainability at the centre of economic planning. The plan demonstrates how climate action, natural resource management and economic diversification can work together to create long-term prosperity.

Under the priority of Economic Diversification and Fiscal Sustainability, the plan includes programmes to empower the renewable energy sector and support the development of green economic clusters. These initiatives will help accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon economy while creating new investment opportunities and quality jobs.

The priority of Governorate Development and Sustainable Cities promotes sustainable development across all governorates, strengthens integrated solid waste management systems and supports the establishment of future-ready cities designed around sustainability, efficiency and resilience.

Through the Sustainable Environment priority, Oman is advancing sustainable fisheries management, agricultural development, water security, food security, ecotourism, climate adaptation and the gradual transition towards a low-carbon economy. These programmes seek to protect natural resources while enhancing economic

At the heart of this commitment lies Oman Vision 2040, which recognises the environment and natural resources as strategic national assets, where environmental protection and natural resource management are essential enablers of economic diversification, competitiveness, and long-term prosperity.

productivity and community wellbeing.

The plan also recognises emerging opportunities through the Economy and Development priority, which includes initiatives to enable the blue economy and maximise the returns of the circular economy.

By promoting sustainable use of marine resources and extending the lifecycle of materials and products, Oman is creating new pathways for growth while reducing environmental pressures.

Meanwhile, under the Environment and Natural Resources priority, programmes focus on sustainable waste management, recycling, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting the ozone layer.

Together, these initiatives contribute to a cleaner environment and support national climate objectives. This integrated approach ensures a balance between environmental protection and economic development, strengthens economic diversification and generates sustainable employment opportunities for Omani citizens.

On World Environment Day, Oman celebrates not only its environmental achievements but also a development model that recognises the environment as an asset to be protected, invested in and preserved.

In Oman, environmental sustainability is not limited to a single day of recognition, but it is also a reminder of a national commitment that extends throughout the year. Environmental sustainability is a guiding principle embedded in national planning, economic policy and the vision for a prosperous and resilient future.

In Oman, every day is Environment Day.

A NEW GATEWAY: WHAT THE CEPA MEANS FOR OMAN



FARIS NASSER AL FARSI

The writer is an economic expert

This month, with little fanfare, Oman opened a new door onto the world's largest emerging economy. On June 1, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between Oman and India came into force — the first bilateral trade pact the Sultanate of Oman has signed since its accord with the United States in 2006.

Concluded in Muscat last December before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it deserves more attention than it has received, for it speaks directly to the future the Sultanate of Oman is trying to build.

Much commentary has dwelt on what India gains — and the figures are real, with nearly 99 per cent of Indian goods now entering Oman duty-free. Yet the agreement is reciprocal and the openings for Oman are no less significant.

India has agreed to scrap the bulk of its tariffs, with immediate elimination on close to 98 per cent of tariff lines. The products that benefit most are the backbone of Omani industry: methanol, fertilisers, liquefied natural gas, crude oil and other industrial raw materials. A predictable, tariff-light route into India gives our producers fresh incentive to scale up and add value at home.

Equally important is investment. Indian firms may now hold full ownership in a wide range of Omani service sectors — some 127 sub-sectors in all. That promises inward capital, expertise and enterprise of precisely the kind Oman Vision 2040 envisions: new jobs, knowledge transfer and a deeper services economy.

Then there is geography, Oman's quiet advantage. Increasingly the Sultanate of Oman is seen as India's dependable gateway to West Asia and East Africa, a role made more valuable by tensions around the Strait of Hormuz.

As Indian exporters use our ports and free zones as a springboard to wider markets, Oman strengthens its standing as a regional logistics hub — a corridor, not merely a destination.

None of this is abstract. Bilateral trade has already climbed past \$11 billion and the bond beneath it is centuries old: nearly 700,000 Indians live here, including merchant families settled for generations. The gateway, then, is open. The harder work now falls to us — equipping exporters, free-zone operators and entrepreneurs to seize what the agreement offers. The opportunity is genuine. The question, as ever, is how widely Oman chooses to walk through it.

From oil dependence to hybrid energy systems

IN the last 100 years, economic growth and oil consumption have moved closely together. When economies grow, production increases, more people travel within and across countries and more goods are shipped across the ocean.

Over the years, oil has become the invisible driver behind every percentage point of GDP.

The US-Israel war with Iran has weakened the foundations of this rule. The Financial Times has recently described how the oil industry now faces a "gruesome demand shock" as traffic through the Strait of Hormuz is disrupted and oil prices swing wildly.

Now the question to ponder is: in an era of digital transformation and shifts in consumer behaviour, does every increase in output still require more barrels of oil?

Is this link weakening, or is this a temporary reaction? Does this structural shift mean that production, consumption and travel are going to become more dependent on electrons rather than liquid fuels?

The recent disruptions to the global oil supply and escalations around the Strait of Hormuz are widely viewed as another episode of energy price volatility. However, indications and experts suggest otherwise.

A closer look reveals an unfolding pattern with substantial global impact. The transport sector is the hardest hit by this crisis. Transport accounts for the largest share of global oil consumption at around 50-55 per cent, including road, aviation and shipping.

About 10 per cent of the global oil supply and nearly 20 per cent of seaborne crude flows have been disrupted.

Economists warn that a sustained move towards 150 dollars a barrel could push the world into recession. The impact of this crisis has gone beyond transport, spreading to



Today, one out of every five cars sold globally is electric.

the food supply, affecting access to services and disrupting everyday life worldwide.

There are two major reasons the old link between oil and GDP is weakening. The first factor is electrification and efficiency. Global energy reports indicate that CO₂ emissions rose by only 0.8 per cent in 2024, while the global economy grew by 3.2 per cent, suggesting that more output now comes from non-fossil, more efficient energy sources.

Today, one out of every five cars sold globally is electric. Oil's share in the global energy mix has fallen to below 30 per cent. Around fifty years ago, it accounted for close to half of global energy use, even though the world economy has continued to grow since then.

The second factor is the decoupling trend in many advanced economies. In these countries, emissions and oil use have stabilised or fallen even as GDP has grown, showing that economic expansion no longer has to be tied as tightly to a barrel of oil. People are moving faster towards fuel-efficient options, teleworking and localised consumption due to rising prices.

Oil prices and the economic situation could lock in lower oil intensity per unit of GDP. Global oil

demand is expected to decline in 2026 due to the war.

Still, oil will continue to play a major role for decades, especially in sectors such as transport, petrochemicals and heavy industry. Yet the emerging trend is that the world is moving into a hybrid phase of energy consumption, with over 90 per cent of new power capacity added worldwide in 2024 coming from clean energy, mainly from solar and wind, not coal or gas.

Worries about climate targets are driving investment in renewable, non-fossil energy sources. Geopolitical escalations, technological disruptions and armed conflict are testing the fundamental historical link between oil and GDP.

These unexpected global shocks are slowly accelerating a hybrid phase of energy dependency, in which growth will be driven by electricity, mostly from non-fossil energy sources; oil demand may plateau and decline, but will not disappear and will have to share the spotlight with non-fossil energy sources.

This pattern, if sustained, will gradually weaken the historic link between oil consumption and economic growth and accelerate the adoption of cleaner energy sources.

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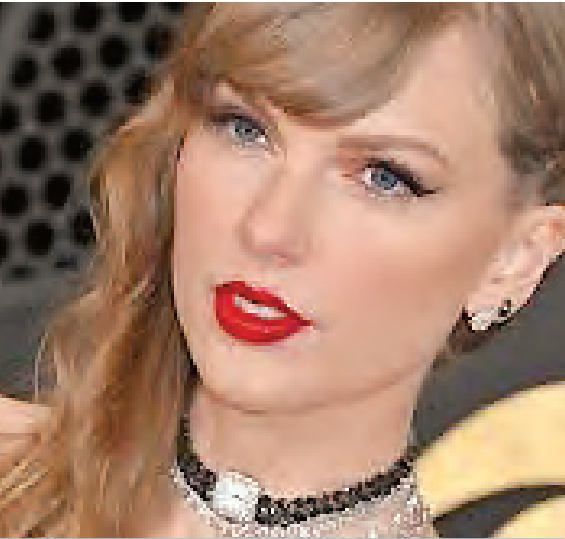
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FILMANIMATION

TAYLOR CONFIRMS ORIGINAL SONG FOR ‘TOY STORY 5’



American singer Taylor Swift arrives at the 2024 Grammy Awards. — AFP

Taylor Swift has confirmed she wrote an original song for the upcoming film *Toy Story 5*. The American popstar, 36, said she always “dreamed” of writing for the beloved Disney and Pixar film animation, which she has “adored” since she was five when the first film came out.

She revealed on Monday that her new original song, “I Knew It, I Knew You”, will be out on June 5 and feature on the official *Toy Story 5* soundtrack when the film releases on June 19.

Swift told her 273 million followers that they were right after fans began speculating that she would feature on the soundtrack following a number of teasers from Pixar and Swift’s team.

Among the evidence that sparked the rumours was a series of “TS” billboards — a play on “Toy Story” and Swift’s shared initials — appearing in various cities including London, Mexico City and Los Angeles, along with social media posts and mysterious countdowns hinting at the collab.

Referencing her hit song “Love Story”, Swift shared a post on Instagram on Monday and said: “It’s a ‘Toy’ Story. You knew it!”

“I’ve always dreamed of getting to write for these characters who I’ve adored since I was a five-year-old kid watching the first *Toy Story* movie.

“I fell instantly in love with *Toy Story 5* when I was lucky enough to see it in its early stages and I wrote this song as soon as I got home from the screening. Sometimes you just know, right?”

Written and produced by Swift and Jack Antonoff, the new song was inspired by the beloved cowgirl Jessie and marks a return to Swift’s country roots, blending styles that have defined her record-breaking career as a songwriter and artist.

“*Toy Story 5*” director and screenwriter Andrew Stanton said having Swift write and perform the song has been really “meaningful” and that the track “instantly” felt like it belonged with the film, as if it was a “long-lost family member”.

“The song is so deeply connected to *Toy Story*. So much so that on first listen, it instantly felt like it had always belonged there, like a long-lost family member. It was kismet”.

The latest instalment of the hit film franchise sees Woody, a pull-string cowboy doll, reunite with superhero action figure Buzz Lightyear, Cowgirl Jessie and the rest of the gang as they prepare to face off with technology.

The film animation features a star-studded cast which includes Tom Hanks, Tim Allen and Joan Cusack.

Swift’s new track will be available to stream from June 5, with *Toy Story 5* hitting UK cinemas on June 19. — dpa

QUICK FEATURES



CULTURE

A musician enjoys a “raspado” during a cultural event in Panama City. — AFP



HOLLYWOOD

US actor and musician Cameron Scott Roberts attends Paramount’s “Scary Movie” premiere at the Paramount theatre in Los Angeles. — AFP



ART

An Iranian woman walks past a piece of street art in Tehran. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



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HOLLYWOOD UNIONS FIND COMMON GROUND ON AI



Actor Kevin Bacon joined SAG-AFTRA members and supporters during the 2023 strike in front of Paramount Studios in New York City. — AFP

As Hollywood performers vote on a newly negotiated contract, union leaders say talks with studios have improved since the 2023 strikes, particularly on artificial intelligence concerns. SAG-AFTRA chief negotiator Duncan Crabtree-Ireland said the tone of discussions has shifted as studios and streamers approached bargaining with a more collaborative mindset. With about 160,000 members working across film, television and video games, SAG-AFTRA remains the largest performers' union globally. Members are voting on a contract approved by the national board earlier this month, ahead of the current deal's expiration at the end of June. Approval would help avoid a repeat of the 118-day strike in 2023 that halted productions and cost the industry billions. Crabtree-Ireland said the 2023 strikes created a "reset" in relations between studios and

unions, even if tensions over AI remain. He noted that while performers feel somewhat more secure than in 2023, concerns persist as generative AI tools advance rapidly. The new agreement introduces protections requiring informed consent and fair compensation for the use of digital replicas of performers, whether living or deceased. It also allows limited use of synthetic characters under strict conditions when they are not based on real individuals and when studios demonstrate added creative value. "There is now a process requiring companies to consult the union before using synthetics", Crabtree-Ireland said, adding that it acts as a strong deterrent. The agreement reflects a broader global effort to regulate AI use in creative industries, as studios balance innovation with performer protections. — AFP

Museum in Nigeria lets visitors touch artefacts



Since the renovated gallery opened to the public in April, it has been drawing more visitors than before. — AFP

GAZING at two large engraved 16th-century elephant tusks on display at Nigeria's National Museum Lagos, a guide surprised visitors by telling them: "You can touch them gently". One of the three galleries at the museum in Nigeria's cultural and entertainment hub has been remodelled to allow visitors to interact with some artefacts, reversing the typical ban on touching exhibits, as well as take unrestricted photographs in an effort to engage younger audiences, curator Nkechi Adedeji said.

As the group felt the texture of the elephant tusks to the tune of Afrobeats softly playing on overhead speakers, a young photographer was busy snapping away, likely for a social media post. According to Tinuke Odunfa, the interior designer of the gallery, the plan was to modernise the space and present Nigerian history in an "intentional" and "immersive" environment. "Everything was intentional in terms of how the space should be experienced, in terms of the colours, how the space leads you", Odunfa said. The gallery holds one of the country's most extensive collections, including major archaeological and ethnographic artefacts such as 5th-century terracotta by indigenous Nok people. Its white walls are lined with artefacts encased in glass, arranged chronologically from the oldest to the newest, each accompanied by brief notes. A few other items of the permanent exhibition, "Echoes of the Past", especially those made of wood and metal, are laid out in such a way that



The installation sends a message to foreign museums that Nigeria is ready to pursue the repatriation of its looted artefacts. — AFP

The gallery holds one of the country's most extensive collections, including major archaeological and ethnographic artefacts such as 5th-century terracotta by indigenous Nok people



Tinuke Odunfa, the interior designer of the gallery, aimed to modernise the space and present Nigerian history in an 'immersive' environment. — AFP

visitors can touch and "feel them", the museum's head of exhibition Olusegun Adeleye, 51, said. Low ambient lighting casts a soft glow across the gallery, giving the space a quiet, reflective atmosphere. Lagos, the vibrant mega city of more than 20 million people and often described as Nigeria's melting pot,

inspired Odunfa's design. Since the renovated gallery opened to the public in April, it has been drawing more visitors than before, Adedeji said, without giving figures. Its Instagram-ready spaces are drawing more schoolchildren and young adults, with pictures and videos increasingly shared online, making it a popular destination among "content creators". "They come here, do content and before you know it, it is all over the place", Adedeji said. "Youths are coming in droves now". "I love the way the artefacts are displayed", Oyin Isioye, a 25-year-old photographer, visiting the museum for the first time, said. "I learned a lot of things... where the artefacts are from, what they represent". In one corner of the gallery, three empty cases contain a sheet of paper bearing the inscription "British Museum, how far??" (meaning "what's up?" in Nigerian Pidgin). The installation sends a message to foreign museums that Nigeria is ready to pursue the repatriation of its looted artefacts. Western museums, including those in Britain, the Netherlands and Germany, have in recent years returned several hundred artefacts, but countless more remain in galleries in Europe and America. "This renovation shows that we can protect and preserve our objects ourselves, we do not need any other country to do it for us", said Adedeji. Nigerian authorities are seeking partners to support future upgrades in preparation for more repatriated artefacts. — AFP

FEATURES



PASSION FOR PLANTS

HIBBA AL KINDI

DURING the Covid-19 lockdown, then 25-year-old Ghada al Harthy found herself paying attention to something she had long taken for granted: the trees and plants surrounding her family home. Today, that curiosity has grown into a community of more than 13,000 followers. Since then, the now 30-year-old has delivered educational gardening workshops to more than 700 participants across Oman, using her platform to promote gardening, sustainability and organic growing.

“My interest in plants began during the Covid-19 lockdown”, she said. “Growing up, our family home had a garden full of trees, but I never paid much attention to them. During the lockdown, I started appreciating nature more and developed a passion for plants”.

Eager to learn more, Al Harthy, who is an electronics engineer by profession, turned to online resources and began teaching herself the fundamentals of gardening.

“I taught myself. I never studied agriculture”, she said. “I spent my time watching gardening videos on YouTube and Instagram”.

What began as a personal hobby soon developed into something much larger. To document her journey, Al Harthy launched a dedicated Instagram account, @PlantwithGhada.

“Initially, it was simply a way to keep gardening content separate from my personal account”, she said. “I documented everything I planted and followed gardening accounts online”.

Over time, the account grew into a community.

“Through Instagram, I have built a strong gardening community. People regularly contact me with questions, share their successes and ask for advice. Many tell me they have tried techniques I recommended and achieved positive results”.

The growing interest eventually led Al Harthy to launch gardening workshops, beginning with a small session for children during the pandemic.

The first workshop attracted just over a dozen participants, but demand grew quickly through word of mouth.

As participation increased, so did interest from adults. Today, Al Harthy offers gardening workshops for adults and children;



Children take part in a hands-on gardening workshop led by Al Harthy



“I encourage everyone to learn gardening, especially families. It is a valuable activity that parents and children can enjoy together. Summer is the perfect time to learn the basics before the planting season begins in September.”

GHADA AL HARTHY



Al Harthy demonstrates planting methods as part of her efforts to promote gardening and sustainability

and corporate team-building sessions The workshops are highly educational, covering topics ranging from planting schedules and soil preparation to watering techniques, plant diseases and diagnosing plant health through leaf symptoms.

“Gardening is an interconnected subject. You cannot understand



Through her platform @PlantwithGhada, Al Harthy has built a community of more than 13,000 followers.

planting without understanding soil and you cannot understand soil without understanding watering and maintenance”.

Beyond teaching gardening, Al Harthy also focuses on ecosystems and biodiversity.

“I don’t only teach gardening”, she said. “I teach people about insects and ecosystems”.

Using tomatoes as an example, she explains how pollinators such as bees and butterflies play a critical role in food production.

“You need pollinators. You need to attract them by planting flowers. Most people don’t realise their value until they’re gone”.

Rather than relying on chemical pesticides, Al Harthy encourages gardeners to work with nature.

“There are beneficial insects and harmful insects. Many people immediately use chemicals, but nature

already has a balance”.

That philosophy extends to Al Harthy’s approach to gardening, with organic growing forming a central part of her message.

“All of my gardening methods are organic”, she said. “Organic gardening isn’t difficult. It just requires patience”.

Her advocacy for gardening, however, goes beyond plants and ecosystems, “When I first started, many people questioned why anyone would grow vegetables when they could buy them cheaply”, she said.

“My response was always that gardening is about much more than cost. It is about health, sustainability and knowing where your food comes from”.

She believes growing even a small amount of food can change the way people think about what they consume.

“Even growing a single tomato can make a difference”.

Looking ahead, Al Harthy hopes to establish a dedicated gardening education centre in Oman, bringing together workshops, training programmes and a plant nursery under one roof.

“I encourage everyone to learn gardening, especially families”, she said.

“It is a valuable activity that parents and children can enjoy together. Summer is the perfect time to learn the basics before the planting season begins in September. Learning in advance allows people to start planting with confidence when the season arrives”.

For now, she remains focused on helping more people discover the benefits of planting.

“We weren’t created only to consume, eat, drink and sleep”, she said. “We are meant to cultivate the earth and contribute something”.

