

SHORT TAKES



The discussion also covered mechanisms for measuring the impact of government investment.

STATE COUNCIL
HOSTS MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, SQU

MUSCAT: The Education and Research Committee of the State Council on Wednesday hosted Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Shibli, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Higher Education, as part of the Committee’s deliberation on the proposed study entitled ‘Governance Efficiency of Non-Governmental Higher Education Institutions: Government Oversight and Self-Governance.’

During its eighth meeting of the third regular sitting of the eighth term under the chairmanship of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Sarimi, the Committee discussed with the under-secretary the current landscape of non-governmental higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, the diversity of their academic programmes and their alignment with development needs and labour market requirements, as well as policies supporting these institutions.

The discussion also covered mechanisms for measuring the impact of government investment in these institutions and the role of international partnerships in enhancing education quality and advancing the competitiveness of higher education institutions in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

In a separate session, the sub-committee emanating from the Education and Research Committee — tasked with deliberating the proposed study entitled ‘Research and Innovation: Priorities and Measuring the Return on Development in the Sultanate of Oman’ — hosted a number of officials from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to seek their observations and perspectives on the subject of the study.

The sub-committee, chaired by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Saqri, reviewed indicators of scientific output, funding, programmes and research trends over the past ten years, as well as mechanisms for aligning research and innovation with national priorities and sectoral needs, and the impact of incentive and promotion policies on enhancing applied research and innovation.

MoL urges petrol stations
to enhance summer break

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 1

THE Ministry of Labour has urged petrol stations operating across the Sultanate of Oman to implement necessary precautionary and relief measures for workers during the summer months, in line with the ongoing mid-day work break regulations from June 1 to August 31.

Although petrol station operations do not fall under the categories covered by the mid-day work ban (12:30 pm to 3:30 pm), authorities have emphasised that employers must ensure adequate protection for staff working in harsh outdoor conditions, where heat stress is intensified by vehicle emissions, fuel vapours, and continuous exposure to sunlight.

Officials noted that petrol station workers face a dual risk during the summer — severe heat exhaustion from prolonged exposure to high temperatures and an increased risk of fire hazards due to volatile fuel vapours. The ministry stressed that safety measures must be strengthened to safeguard workers during peak summer conditions.

A senior official from the Ministry of Labour said petrol stations are required to ensure essential welfare provisions for employees on duty, including proper heat management systems, routine maintenance of equipment, and strict adherence to fuel handling and safety protocols.

“Although work at petrol stations is not included under the mid-day break categories, companies are urged to provide basic necessities for workers, along with a rigorous heat management plan. This includes ensuring adequate shaded rest areas, sufficient drinking water, and structured work rotations, especially during peak afternoon hours,” the



There are about 650 to 680 active petrol stations across Oman.

Although petrol station operations do not fall under the categories covered by the mid-day work ban (12:30 pm to 3:30 pm), authorities have emphasised that employers must ensure adequate protection for staff working in harsh outdoor conditions, where heat stress is intensified by vehicle emissions, fuel vapours, and continuous exposure to sunlight.

official said. He further emphasised that stations must maintain adequate staffing levels to allow workers to take turns and minimise continuous exposure to extreme heat.

A comprehensive heat stress management plan, he added, should be in place at all stations to prevent heat-related illnesses and ensure worker well-being throughout the summer.

“Provision of rest shelters, hydration facilities, and proper nutrition support such as protein intake should be considered essential parts of workplace safety during this period,” he added.

Workers at petrol stations also expressed concern over challenging summer conditions.

“Working at petrol stations is strenuous, and summer makes it even more difficult during the day. Some of us are working overtime due to staff shortages and are exposed to harsh weather,” said a petrol station employee.

“We sincerely look forward to proper resting shelters, flexible working arrangements, and some relief during peak hours.

This instruction from the Ministry

of Labour will hopefully make a real difference,” another worker added.

According to available estimates, there are approximately 650 to 680 active petrol stations across Oman, including independent outlets and larger retail networks. These stations employ an average of two to five workers each.

The sector is primarily dominated by three major fuel marketing companies — Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company, Oman Oil Marketing Company, and Shell Oman Marketing Company — along with several smaller independent operators.

Muscat Governorate hosts the largest number of stations, estimated between 169 and 215, followed by Al Batinah North with around 169 stations and Dhofar with 63 to 73 stations. Smaller independent stations are also distributed across other governorates of Oman.

The ministry reiterated that employers must take extra precautions during the peak summer period to protect workers from heat-related risks and ensure safe, humane working conditions across all fuel stations.

EA HONOURS WINNERS OF
ENVIRONMENT COMPETITION

MOHAMMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

The Environment Authority on Wednesday marked the conclusion of an environment protection competition that saw the participation of more than 1,000 school students from different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The closing ceremony of the competition was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. The competition’s drawing contest attracted more than 300 students, while the environment video filming contest saw the participation of more than 500 students. More than 300 students took part in the environmental essay writing contest.

Eng Suleiman al Akhzami, Deputy Chairman of the Environment Authority, delivered the Authority’s address, confirming that the initiative was the result of a partnership between the Environment Authority and the Ministry of Education, driven by a belief in the importance of raising a generation that is aware of environmental issues and conscious of its responsibility to protect the country’s



The competition aims to foster a sense of responsibility towards the environment in young generations.

natural resources. He stressed that the ceremony was not simply an occasion to honour winners, but a celebration of the noble values that students had expressed through their creativity

Among the top winners, Turki al Hasani took first place in the drawing competition, Amal al Ajmi claimed first place in the environmental essay competition, and Saba al Aghbari won first place in the environmental film competition.

Nuzha al Balushi, Director of the Communication and Media Department at the Environment Authority and head of the ‘Khalik Haris’ initiative, explained that the initiative was launched in

its first phase as a national awareness campaign implemented by more than 30 government and private sector entities, reaching more than 10 million people across various platforms.

Ibrahim al Shamsi, Activities Supervisor at the Ministry of Education and Competitions Supervisor, confirmed that the initiative represented a successful model of collaboration between the Environment Authority and the Ministry of Education in using school activities to build environmental awareness. He noted that awareness visits helped connect environmental concepts with practical application.



كلية عُمان
OMAN COLLEGE
of Management and Technology

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tenders and Procurement Committee at Oman College of Management and Technology announces the following tenders

Tender Number	Tender Title
COMT-2026I1	Rent and operate the college Restaurant and grocery store
COMT-2026I2	Cleaning services of college premises
COMT-2026I3	Property All Risk Insurance
COMT-2026I4	Contract with clinic/hospital to provide nurse
COMT-2026I5	Medical insurance for college employees
COMT-2026I6	Workmen Compensation Insurance, Money insurance and Fidelity Guarantee Insurance
COMT-2026I7	Maintenance Firefighting and alarm systems
COMT-2026I8	Maintenance A/C & Chillers systems
COMT-2026I9	Elevators Maintenance

- Offers should be sent via email tender@ocmt.edu.om
- Non-Refundable fee for each tender OMR 25/-
- Starting date for Receiving Tender Booklet from 01-07-2026 to 11-07-2026 no later than.
- Any Query contact Telephone & WhatsApp No. (0968) 24051045

ملتزمون بجودة التعليم
Committed to the Quality of Education

 oman_college_om





مدينة السلطان هيثم
SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

تسناهل مرتين



اختر الشقة اليوم، وتوسّع بعدين

فرصتك تتجدد بعد 5 سنوات

من إقامتك في الشقة لتستفيد من الخيارات الإسكانية المتاحة.



أصل عقاري يعزز
استثمارك للمستقبل



مجتمع متكامل
وخدمات قريبة



سعر تنافسي
مُخفض



بداية مثالية
لحياة مستقرة

تملك يمنحك استقرارًا طويل الأمد



تبيان
tibiaan
+968 24901202

YENAIER | Adrak
DEVELOPERS LLC
+968 79999207

ساروج
SARODJ
+968 79000997

AL SIYABI
AL SIYABI
+968 79260007

دريم فيلا
Dream Villa
+968 94770088

TMG
+968 80019691

Wadi Zaha
+968 71717282

يخضع سند ملكية الشقة لأحكام القرار الوزاري رقم (2026/75) وذلك وفقًا للأنظمة والضوابط المعمول بها.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



CDAA DEPLOYS FIRST CONTINGENT FOR KHAREEF DHOFAR

MUSCAT: The first reinforcement contingent of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) departed from the Authority’s headquarters in Muscat Governorate, heading to Dhofar Governorate as part of early preparedness measures for the 2026 Khareef Dhofar Season.

This deployment embodies the Authority’s role in strengthening field readiness and ensuring the safety of citizens, residents and visitors to the governorate during the season, which witnesses an increasing influx of tourists from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

Maj Gen Khalifa bin Ali al Siyabi, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Administrative and Financial Affairs, met with the personnel participating in the reinforcement mission before their departure.

He commended their readiness and preparedness to fulfil their national duty, urging them to exert their utmost efforts in serving Khareef Dhofar visitors, providing assistance and support to all with a spirit of responsibility and collaboration, and demonstrating patience and courteous conduct that reflects the honourable image of the Authority’s system and the humanitarian roles it undertakes.

The reinforcement contingent comprises specialised human resources in the fields of firefighting, land rescue, water rescue and emergency medical services, alongside the provision of specialised equipment, machinery and vehicles to the governorate to enhance operational capabilities and readiness for responding to various reports and emergency incidents.

These efforts are integrated with the forward deployment of points along the roads leading to Dhofar Governorate during periods of increased tourist movement, aimed at accelerating response times and delivering emergency and rescue services to road users.

This year, additional services have been introduced in Al Ashkharah in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, as well as the introduction of ambulance services in the Wilayat of Al Jazir in Al Wusta Governorate, Shahb As’eeb area, and civil defence services in Hariyt area in Dhofar Governorate, as part of the Authority’s plan to expand field coverage and elevate readiness levels. — ONA

MoC to enhance investigation in aviation incidents

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Wednesday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Oman Aviation Academy to expand cooperation in the investigation of aviation incidents and accidents.

The MoC aims to establish a sustainable institutional partnership between the two sides, develop national competencies,



The MoC embodies a keenness to unify efforts and enhance the position of Oman in applying the best practices in aviation safety. — ONA

enhance technical readiness, support rapid response and realise the highest levels of aviation safety in the Sultanate of Oman.

The MoC was signed by Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, and Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Abri, Chairman of the Board of Directors

of Oman Aviation Academy.

Areas of cooperation include the exchange of technical expertise, the implementation of specialised training programmes and the grooming of national personnel through emergency exercises and related events in a manner that enhances the readiness of investigation teams and improves the efficiency of institutional performance.

Oman Air expands to five new destinations

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 1

OMAN Air, the Sultanate of Oman’s national carrier, announced its addition of five new destinations, a landmark milestone in its rapid network expansion and the largest number of sectors in a month.

Starting on July 2, the airline will start direct flights to Singapore and Sochi, while Tashkent and its first direct Dubai-Salalah connection will begin on July 3. The airline also announced that its Abu Dhabi service will begin on July 9, which will bring its network up to 49 destinations.

Speaking to the Observer, Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, said that attracting more passengers would result in an increased volume of inbound tourism, supporting national growth.

“We expect that the addition of these five new destinations will help our guests to explore Oman in a more productive way and be the ambassadors of Oman Tourism abroad. They also support us in enhancing business relations and in bolstering better cultural relations with the rest of the world,” Al Busaidy said.

Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air, said, “The launch of five new routes in a single month marks a defining moment for Oman Air. It reflects not only the pace of our transformation but also



Starting on July 2, the airline will start direct flights to Singapore and Sochi, while Tashkent and its first direct Dubai-Salalah connection will begin on July 3.

“We expect that the addition of these five new destinations will help our guests to explore Oman in a more productive way and be the ambassadors of Oman Tourism abroad.”

AZZAN BIN QASIM
AL BUSAIDY

our ambition to connect Oman to more of the world than ever before. Every new destination we add not only strengthens our network but, most importantly, brings more people into Oman,” he said.

“From the total revamp two years ago, the airline has been on a steady growth trajectory, and we are ambitious to keep exploring newer destinations on the path to ‘the best airline’ in pursuance of Oman Vision 2040,” he added.

Over the past 18 months, Oman Air has steadily strengthened its international footprint through a combination of new destinations and strategic partnerships. From joining the oneworld Alliance in June 2025 and launching services to Amsterdam, Rome and Taif, as well as charter flights to Hanoi and Moscow, Oman Air has remained focused on developing a route network that responds to

changing travel demand while supporting Oman Vision 2040 by enhancing connectivity and facilitating tourism, trade and investment.

“We hope our guests enjoy discovering these incredible destinations with us, and they can look forward to many more exciting developments from Oman Air in the months ahead,” adds Korfiatis.

Guests will be able to choose from four weekly flights to Singapore, two weekly flights to Tashkent, one weekly flight to Sochi, three weekly flights between Dubai and Salalah, and daily flights to Abu Dhabi. Whether travelling for business or leisure, guests can look forward to a seamless and comfortable journey with the award-winning service and signature warm hospitality that has become synonymous with Oman Air.

Syed Nouredin Syed Hassim, Singapore Ambassador to Oman; Ramzbek Otabekjonov, First Secretary of the Uzbekistan Embassy to Oman; Oleg Vladimirovich Levin, Russia Ambassador to Oman; Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport; Masoud bin Obaid al Mazroue, First Secretary and Head of Economic Affairs at the UAE Embassy in Muscat; and Shireen bint Abdul Wahab al Zadjali, Chargé d’Affaires of the Sultanate of Oman’s Embassy to the Republic, were also present at the grand launch ceremony.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF E-AUCTION

The Ministry of Information announces an online auction for the sale of vehicles via the Mazad Oman platform (www.mazad.om), according to the following statement:

Statement	Inspection Location	Date and Timing of Inspection	Date of Commencing the Bidding Electronically
Vehicles	Madinat Al Ilam	Monday July 6, 2026	From Wednesday 08/07/2026 Until Thursday 09/07/2026
	Directorate General of Information in Dhofar Governorate	Tuesday July 7, 2026 From 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM	

- To view the terms and conditions and register, please visit the website www.mazad.om
- For further inquiries, please contact us via email: info@mazad.om

US EMBASSY MARKS 250TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

MUSCAT: The Embassy of the United States of America in Muscat on Wednesday hosted a reception to commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence and to celebrate the historic and future partnership between the United States and the Sultanate of Oman.

Ana Escrogima, US Ambassador accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, affirmed in her address that the partnership between the United States and the Sultanate of Oman constitutes an integral part of their shared history. She highlighted the celebration of the fruitful cooperation built over decades, reinforced by strong and mutually beneficial ties, which has contributed to enhancing security and prosperity in the region and across the globe.

The reception, held at the Diplomatic Club, showcased key milestones in the bilateral relations between the two friendly nations and featured a short film



The reception showcased key milestones in the bilateral relations between the two friendly nations. — ONA

entitled ‘From the Sea to the Stars’, which illuminated the evolution of US-Omani relations.

The event also included a companion exhibition titled ‘The Founders’, which recounts the story of America’s independence and traces the development of bilateral relations with the

Sultanate of Oman.

The reception was attended by a number of ministers, under-secretaries, dignitaries and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, along with several officials from the Foreign Ministry and the private sector.

SHORT TAKES



The initiative aims to nurture inspiring and positive role models among the youth. — ONA

INFORMATION
MINISTRY CONCLUDES
YOUTH TRAINING
PROGRAMMES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information (MoI), through its Media Training Centre and in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), has concluded four specialised training programmes targeting young people, as part of its efforts to empower youth, promote positive and responsible social media use, and cultivate a generation of conscious digital content creators.

The programmes are part of a broader development initiative launched by the Ministry in 2025 under the title “Towards a National Framework for Engaging with Social Media,” in collaboration with government, private and civil society partners.

The initiative aims to nurture inspiring and positive role models among the youth, providing peers with examples to follow, reinforcing responsible digital behaviours, and strengthening digital identity and citizenship through the optimal use of digital platforms. It also seeks to guide young people towards developing intellectual skills and building knowledge, transforming digital influence from a tool of entertainment into a means of learning and intellectual growth.

Eight school students from across the Sultanate of Oman took part in the two-week programmes, which focused on responsible digital content creation, managing negative content and social media risks, fact-checking, and distinguishing between authentic and AI-generated content.

The programmes aimed to build youth role models on social media, develop skills in crafting impactful media messages, and enhance critical thinking, contributing to media literacy and improving content quality on digital platforms.

The training combined theoretical modules with practical applications, covering digital content creation, impactful messaging and safely handling negative content on social media.

Interactive activities, practical exercises and applied projects were also included to enable students to produce purposeful and responsible digital content. — ONA



JOINT
COMMAND
COLLEGE
GRADUATES
ITS 39TH
COHORT

MUSCAT: The Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies celebrated the graduation of the 39th cohort of the Joint Command and Staff College. The event took place at its headquarters in Bait Al Falaj, under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, and in the presence of Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

Brigadier Mohammed bin Ahmed al Mashikhi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College, stated in his address that the College continues to implement its development and modernisation plans in line with the requirements of the present and the anticipated



The specialised academic programmes were designed to qualify officers for operational-level roles. — ONA

challenges of the future. This is achieved through the advancement of the education and training system, the enhancement of quality programmes and various excellence initiatives, all aligned with the rapid transformations in military

sciences and modern technologies. Subsequently, the Minister of Interior, the patron of the ceremony, presented awards to the top-ranking participants of the cohort and conferred certificates upon the graduates. — ONA

Cancer survivors point
up role of early detection

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

THE Oman Cancer Association (OCA) marked its Cancer Survivor Programme on Tuesday, bringing together cancer survivors, healthcare professionals, volunteers and community members to celebrate resilience while reinforcing the importance of early detection, prevention and long-term support.

The programme featured a welcome address, a special video highlighting the association’s 25-year journey, keynote speeches, a health awareness session, a panel discussion with cancer survivors and medical experts, and an open discussion that encouraged participants to share their experiences.

The OCA Jubilee video reflected on the association’s achievements over the past quarter century, describing its journey as one “led by one woman’s courage and embraced by a nation.” It highlighted initiatives ranging from nationwide awareness campaigns and mobile screening units to paediatric family support, palliative care, the annual walkathon and new projects aimed at strengthening patient care and community engagement.

Addressing the gathering, OCA President Dr Wahid al Kharousi described cancer survivors as “cancer warriors,” saying every person diagnosed with the disease makes a conscious decision to fight.

“This association was built for you, cancer survivors,” he said. He stressed that survivors have a unique role in raising public awareness because “you are talking from experience, and experience gives you respectability,” while urging patients to continue regular follow-up examinations even after



The programme featured open discussion that encouraged participants to share their experiences.

“You should never take life for granted. Cancer is not a death sentence

**YUTHAR
AL RAWAHI**

recovery, noting that early diagnosis remains the key to successful treatment.

Dr Manal al Zadjali, OCA Secretary-General, outlined the association’s vision to reduce the burden of cancer locally and internationally by focusing on prevention, improving patients’ quality of life, and supporting families. She highlighted flagship initiatives including mobile screening units, Dar Al Hanan, palliative care training and the annual walkathon, alongside partnerships that continue to expand the association’s impact.

During the health awareness session, OCA Board Member Dr Zahid al Mandhari emphasised that many cancers can be prevented through healthier lifestyles and regular screening. He noted that smoking, obesity and poor

lifestyle choices remain among the leading preventable risk factors, encouraging the public to adopt healthy habits and prioritise early detection.

Yuthar al Rawahi, founder and Honorary Life President of OCA, delivered a keynote address via a video presentation shown during the programme. Reflecting on her own cancer journey, she described it as the inspiration behind establishing the association.

“You should never take life for granted,” she said. “Cancer is not a death sentence.” She encouraged survivors to maintain lifelong follow-up appointments, adding that “early diagnosis is the most important thing,” while calling on the wider community and private sector to continue supporting initiatives that improve the lives of cancer patients and their families.

Civil Aviation Authority launches ‘Sharaka’

SALALAH: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in Dhofar Governorate on Wednesday launched the ‘Sharaka’ initiative, aimed at strengthening knowledge integration between government and private sector institutions through training and developmental programmes based on the exchange of national expertise. This initiative contributes to the development of national competencies and the enhancement of human resource efficiency across various administrative and



The initiative comprises four specialised workshops to be conducted throughout the current year. — ONA

technical fields.

The initiative comprises four specialised workshops to be conducted throughout the current

year, addressing a range of themes aligned with institutional development needs. This reflects the Authority’s commitment to investing in human capital and entrenching a culture of continuous learning, facilitated by expert lectures delivered by a cadre of national professionals from various government, civilian, military and security institutions, alongside private sector entities in Dhofar Governorate.

The initiative commenced its programme with a workshop

entitled ‘Strategic Communication Planning’, which covered the concepts of institutional communication, media planning tools and the role of strategic communication in supporting institutional and developmental objectives.

The programme also included an orientation tour of the Meteorology Exhibition, during which participants were acquainted with the latest monitoring and analytical technologies employed to support aviation safety and prepare weather forecasts.

Request for Proposals (RFP): Office Lease

Project Brief:

BGP Oil & Gas Services LLC is currently seeking to lease a office facility. We are looking for a space that offers both accessibility and professional utility.

Requirements at a Glance:

Location: 18th November Street or Azailba.
Size: Approximately 700 sqm.
Type: Villa or Open plan commercial space.

Timeline:

Announcement Date: July 02, 2026
Deadline for Submission: July 13, 2026

Jumabgp@gmail.com

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Mohammed Taha al Ahmad, chairman of Syria's Higher Committee for People's Assembly Elections, reacts as they announce the names of 70 lawmakers, in Damascus. — Reuters

SYRIA'S PRESIDENT FINALISES FORMATION OF PARLIAMENT

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Ahmed al Sharaa finalised on Wednesday the list of the country's first parliament in the post-Assad era, which authorities said will hold its first session next week. The declaration stated that the parliament, whose mandate is two and a half years, would exercise legislative powers until a permanent constitution was adopted and new elections were held.

The parliament will hold its first session on July 6, according to Mohammad Taha al Ahmad, head of the higher electoral committee. In a process that began in October 2025, local committees appointed by the electoral commission selected most of the 210-member parliament.

The electoral commission had announced in October the names of 119 members of the new legislature, out of the 140 due to be chosen under this process. At that time, seats remained vacant for parts of then Kurdish-held Raqa and Hasakeh provinces in the north and northeast, and Druze-majority Sweida province in the south, due to "security" reasons.

The Kurdish areas designated their representatives in May, following the conclusion of an agreement on integrating the areas into the central authorities. Sweida has still not designated its members, but Sharaa has appointed two people from this region. — AFP

MYANMAR MOURNS AS CONFLICT DEATH TOLL HITS 100,000

YANGON: More than 100,000 people have been killed across all sides in Myanmar since a military coup five years ago triggered civil war, a conflict monitor said on Wednesday. Anti-putsch protests were put down by security forces but activists quit cities to form pro-democracy guerrilla groups, fighting alongside ethnic minority armies that have long resisted central rule.

There have been 100,114 conflict-related fatalities since the coup, according to the latest data from monitoring group Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), which tallies media reports of violence.

Myanmar was ruled by diktat by military chief Min Aung Hlaing for five years after the coup. He retired from the armed forces to take office as civilian president in April after deeply restricted elections blocked by rebels from their territory, and in which Suu Kyi's party was sidelined.

More than 3.7 million people are internally displaced in Myanmar, according to the United Nations, and more than one in five face acute food insecurity as the country slides back into poverty. In the largest city, Yangon, violence can take the form of occasional assassinations.

Myanmar was the second-most conflict-hit area in the world last year, according to ACLED, behind only the Palestinian territories. ACLED has registered more than 1,200 distinct armed groups in the civil war, calling it "the most fragmented conflict in the world". "It's deadly, it's dangerous to civilians, the conflict has spread across the whole country," said ACLED analyst Su Mon. — AFP

AMNESTY SAYS RSF COMMITTED ETHNIC CLEANSING IN SUDAN

NAIROBI: The Sudanese paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing during their attack on El Fasher city between 2024 and 2025. Amnesty's wide-ranging report found that the RSF "committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing during its campaign to seize El Fasher". The NGO interviewed 247 victims or witnesses between early 2024 and October 2025 in North Darfur. It said the RSF

systematically attacked settlements around El Fasher which housed the Zaghawa people, an ethnic group in western Darfur.

The report alleged widespread and deliberate violence against children. "It is a stain on the conscience of humanity," said Amnesty chief Agnes Callamard in a statement. Speaking in Nairobi, she was blunt on the actions of the RSF: "They exterminated, they persecuted on the basis of ethnicity and gender. They ethnically

cleansed." "The RSF will repeat those crimes again and again until they are stopped," she warned.

The report said that RSF fighters burned homes long after residents had fled, "suggesting an intent to render the areas uninhabitable", consistent with "ethnic cleansing". During the final RSF offensive on El Fasher in October 2025, Amnesty said "hundreds were executed, and many others were tortured or detained" as they attempted to flee. — AFP

Israel vows 'indefinite' stay in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza

ISRAEL'S DEFENCE MINISTER said on Wednesday that Israeli forces would remain in self-proclaimed "security zones" established in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza, without any timeline for withdrawal. "The IDF will remain in the security zones in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza indefinitely in order to protect our residents and communities from jihadist elements," Israel Katz said. "We will not withdraw from the security zones," Katz said.



Israeli army tanks positioned along the Israel-Lebanon border. — AFP

Katz reiterated an earlier warning, saying Iran would be struck with "full force" if it attacked Israel over its operations in Lebanon. Israel and Lebanon signed a US-sponsored framework agreement under US sponsorship on Friday to pave the way for peace between the two countries and disarm Hezbollah.

Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have repeatedly ruled out withdrawing troops from southern Lebanon, where Israeli forces continue to clash with Hezbollah fighters. They maintain that any troop withdrawal would happen only after Hezbollah has been disarmed across Lebanon. Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war in early March with rocket fire aimed at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes. Israel responded with massive air strikes and a ground

invasion of southern Lebanon.

According to Lebanon's health ministry, nearly 4,300 people have been killed in Israeli attacks since the war erupted. The Israeli military says it has lost 38 soldiers and one civilian contractor in Lebanon since fighting began in early March. Israel has also carried out repeated incursions and bombings in Syria since the overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar al Assad, saying it seeks to establish a demilitarised zone in the country's south. In Gaza, Israeli forces occupy nearly 70 per cent of the territory. Both Hamas and the Israeli military accuse each other of violating the ceasefire, which has been in effect since October last year.

Meanwhile, Iran and the United States began indirect talks with mediators in Doha on Wednesday in a push to advance negotiations and quell tensions following exchanges

of fire between the two sides. Both had said they would send officials to discuss their memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the Middle East war, but Iran insisted direct negotiations will not take place.

A diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, confirmed negotiations were underway, after earlier saying the foes would take part in "indirect technical talks on Wednesday in Doha with Qatari and Pakistani mediators". The discussions, being held at a lower level and focused on the details of the MoU, will "build on the progress made at the Lake Lucerne Summit", the diplomat said.

The memorandum of understanding, brokered by Qatar and Pakistan, culminated in a summit last month in Lucerne, Switzerland. It includes a 60-day ceasefire pausing the war that broke out with US-Israeli strikes in late February, as well as the reopening of the blockaded Strait of Hormuz and a timeframe for a final deal to permanently end the conflict and reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear programme.

Tehran has denied an earlier claim by US President Donald Trump that there would be direct talks in Doha. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the Iranian delegation would be led by Deputy FM Kazem Gharibabadi. — AFP



PAKISTAN HOLDS FUNERALS FOR 14 CHILDREN

LAHORE: Pakistani mourners shouldered bedframes in a procession through the narrow streets of Lahore's Kahna area on Wednesday as they carried the bodies of 14 children killed when the roof of their tutoring centre collapsed the night before. Residents and families gathered by freshly dug graves at a nearby cemetery before returning to a neighbourhood where frantic rescue efforts had given way to mourning.

Grief engulfed the community in Pakistan's second-largest city, with some wiping away tears and embracing while others called for urgent action by authorities to prevent further disasters. Residents of the disadvantaged neighbourhood to the south of Lahore said they had suspicions that the building housing the tutoring centre was rundown.

The roof collapse has fuelled anger alongside grief, with the community questioning how an apparently unsafe building had been allowed to house a private tutoring centre. Authorities have promised an investigation and police said two people were taken into custody on Tuesday night. Broken bricks, twisted steel beams and shattered concrete lay strewn across the ground at the collapse site as local residents looked on in disbelief. — AFP

ENDING DISASTER PERIOD

Sri Lanka ends cyclone state of emergency



Sri Lanka's government ended a state of emergency it declared after a cyclone that killed 643 people eight months ago, a minister said on Wednesday. "From now on, there will be no state of emergency in the country," Media Minister Nalinda Jayatissa said. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake imposed the state of emergency shortly after the cyclone brought heavy rain and strong winds across the island, causing infrastructure damage estimated at \$4.1 billion. — AFP

DANGEROUS INFECTIONS

Bangladesh warns of fresh dengue surge



Bangladesh could face a sharp increase in dengue infections over the next two months, health experts warned, as wet weather spurs a wider outbreak. "We expect dengue cases in Dhaka to at least double in July from June levels and increase three to fourfold by August," said Professor Kabirul Bashar from Jahangirnagar University. "But the bigger challenge will likely be outside the capital, where several districts are at risk of a much steeper rise in infections." — Reuters

POLICE INTERVENTION

Over 900 arrested during S African protests



South African police arrested more than 900 people during nationwide anti-migrant protests that were mostly peaceful but at times turned violent, with shops looted. Of 120 marches, 108 were peaceful while 12 required police intervention, deputy national police commissioner Tebello Mosikili told a press conference, adding reasons for the arrests ranged from immigration violations to public violence, harbouring undocumented migrants and robbery. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Firefighters work at the site of a fire in a housing building in Antwerp, Belgium. — AFP

AT LEAST 6 PEOPLE KILLED IN BELGIAN BUILDING FIRE

ANTWERP: At least six people were killed in a fire in a 10-storey apartment tower in the Belgian city of Antwerp on Wednesday, police told local media. Rescuers were lowering residents from the side of the building by rope. Survivors described being trapped inside until police and firefighters arrived shortly after the blaze started in the morning.

“First the electricity went out. Three minutes later we got a fire alarm. By then, there was already smoke in the hallways”, Geert Dewulf, who lives on the 10th floor, said. “We tried to get down on our own but we couldn’t manage it anymore. We barricaded ourselves in our apartment and waited on the terrace. About 10 minutes later, the fire department came to rescue us from the terrace with their fire ladder.”

Several fire brigades from different districts were on site, as were ambulances and other emergency crews. Police told residents nearby to keep doors and windows closed to avoid harm from the smoke. Belgium’s Prime Minister Bart De Wever, a former mayor of Antwerp, said on X that his thoughts were with the victims. Belgium has experienced a series of severe blazes in the past weeks, including one in a warehouse in Brussels. — **Reuters**

GREECE SEES HUGE FOREST FIRE



A huge forest blaze in northern Greece killed two people before it was contained, the fire brigade said on Wednesday. A five-kilometre wall of flames had threatened the village of Liti, about 15 km from the city of Thessaloniki. Firefighters said on Wednesday that the blaze had been contained. A man had been killed, a woman injured, and firefighters found another body on Tuesday night that they were trying to identify. According to local residents, it was the 12-year-old son of the injured woman. Other forest fires have also broken out in recent days as Greece heads towards its peak tourist season. — **AFP**

BERLIN MAKES BID TO BUILD MORE US WEAPONRY

BERLIN: Germany is hoping to expand defence industry ties with the United States and produce more US-designed weaponry at factories in the country, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Wednesday. The pitch comes just ahead of a major Nato summit scheduled for July 7-8 in Türkiye, where European military expansion will remain in focus as US President Donald Trump puts pressure on allies to spend more.

“We know that American production capacities are limited

and that there is an urgent need to expand,” Pistorius told reporters alongside Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte, who had been invited to join a cabinet meeting in Berlin. “That is why we are very interested in manufacturing certain systems, or components of systems, here in Germany,” Pistorius added.

Demand for key American weaponry — particularly missiles and interceptors like the Patriot system — has surged amid wars

and global crises, and stockpiles are running low for weapons that have seen heavy use in Ukraine and the Middle East. At the same time, Germany and other European Nato allies are seeking to further develop their own weapons industries and reduce dependence on American-made gear. That shift has been driven in part by Trump’s frequent questioning of US security commitments to Europe, such as Trump’s tariff blitz and threats to seize Greenland. — **AFP**

Venezuelans search, suffer one week after earthquakes

VENEZUELAN WITH help from around the world, were still searching on Wednesday for survivors a week after massive earthquakes killed nearly 2,000 and left thousands unaccounted for. Survivors were mourning while battling shortages of food and shelter, but searches of the scores of flattened apartment buildings have carried on and saved lives. A three-year-old boy was rescued alive from the rubble in Caracas on Tuesday, a Jordanian rescue team said, a full six days after Venezuela’s most powerful quake in over a century. “We’re late, we’re very late... but our aim is to keep saving lives, to be able to save those citizens who are trapped under the rubble, who still need us,” said Luis Arteaga Benatuil, member of Spanish search and rescue group, after landing arriving on Wednesday in Venezuela.

The rescues have come long after the 72-hour period considered critical for survival and as the UN refugee agency said “food shortages are widespread in hard-hit port city of La Guaira. “The situation is quite critical,” said Lia Poggio, head of mission in Venezuela for the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude shocks — one of the worst earthquake disasters in Latin American history — collapsed whole residential complexes on June 24 and prompted frantic search-and-rescue operations for survivors trapped in the ruins. Venezuela’s National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez said on Tuesday that deaths had risen to 1,943, with more than 10,500 injured after one of Latin



Venezuelan Civil Protection members work at the site of a collapsed building in Caraballeda, La Guaira state. — AFP

America’s worst earthquake disasters. He added that nearly 6,500 people had been rescued from the rubble in La Guaira, but that number was likely closer to 20,000 including those who escaped or were helped out by family.

Many Venezuelans have not hidden their anger at the government’s slow response to the disaster in a country already struggling with decades of economic crisis that has weakened infrastructure and health services. “They give out supplies here, but sometimes people nearly kill each other for food... It’s like a cockfight,” Daniela Armas, 18, a vendor in La Guaira, said after waiting to get food an emergency shelter.

The UN agency said it needed some \$14.85 million to scale up aid and temporary shelter for 30,000 people over six months.

The quakes likely damaged or destroyed 58,870 buildings, according to a preliminary assessment of satellite data published by Nasa. With thousands in need of help, World Health Organization spokesman Christian Lindmeier said health services in Venezuela were overstretched and under “extreme pressure.” “There’s an increased risk now of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases” such as measles and diphtheria, due to low pre-earthquake vaccination coverage, he said.

As international rescue teams from the US, Mexico and dozens of other countries scrambled with trained dogs and heavy equipment to dig out survivors, Venezuelans began burying the dead they could find. Others were frantically searching by hand for missing loved ones in the rubble, but also in hospitals and morgues.

Darvin Silva, 37, described how he battled to reach his mother, who died under a pillar in a collapsed building. “The effort it took me to get her out of there with my bare hands, with sledgehammers, with pickaxes... you can’t even begin to imagine,” he said. “I hope that I can now offer her the rest she deserves,” he said. Around 50,000 people are still listed as missing, according to the UN.

Some seven million people in Venezuela would be affected by the disaster, the UN has said, with the quakes knocking a \$6.7-billion hole in the economy — or six per cent of Venezuela’s GDP. A total of 27 countries have mobilised 40 search-and-rescue teams. They include more than 2,000 personnel, along with more than 160 dogs, according to Gianluca Rampolla, the UN coordinator in Venezuela. — **AFP**

Portugal braces for high temperatures in new heatwave

LISBON: Parts of Portugal have been placed on red alert due to high temperatures forecast for the coming days, after being relatively spared from the recent heatwave in Europe. The country’s IPMA weather agency said the Lisbon and Setubal regions on the coast will be on red alert for high temperatures on Thursday. That will be extended on Friday to the Leiria and Coimbra areas further north, where temperatures could hit 44°C in places. An orange alert was imposed on Wednesday for four inland regions, including Evora, where 41°C could be reached, the Portuguese Institute for the Sea and Atmosphere (IPMA) said.

The second-highest warning will be extended to all regions not on red alert, it added. “During this period of very

hot weather, the most notable element is its duration, which should be for at least a week,” the IPMA said in a statement on Tuesday night. Coastal regions will be hotter due to a lack of sea breeze, while night-time temperatures may not fall below 24-28°C for several nights, it added.

The recent heatwave was the most severe ever recorded in Europe, and would have been “virtually impossible” in June without climate change, the World Weather Attribution group of scientists said. All-time temperature records have been broken in Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, as well as for the month of June in the UK and in Switzerland. France faced record-breaking average temperatures, with the country experiencing



A firefighter uses water cannon to spray residents at Heroes Square during a severe heatwave in Budapest, Hungary. — Reuters

its highest-ever night-time temperatures.

Meanwhile, storms that followed an intense European heatwave killed one person in Romania and another in Austria, authorities said on Wednesday. Storms lashed

parts of Romania including the capital Bucharest, during the night from Tuesday to Wednesday, flooding some basements and homes and tearing down trees.

Footage released by the emergency services showed

them clearing tree branches from cars and people wading through waist-high water. In Ganeasa, just outside of Bucharest, a person was found dead inside a car struck by a falling tree, they said.

Storms have also lashed Austria, causing landslides in Tyrol province and elsewhere since Sunday. A man died on Tuesday after being hit by a falling branch in Perg district in Upper Austria province, police said. The 26-year-old was driving his quad, together with his partner, when a roadside tree branch — battered by a storm — broke off and hit him, police said. Storms have followed a severe heatwave that lasted more than a week and broke temperature records across Europe. Experts say climate change caused by greenhouse

gas emissions generated by human activities is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

The recent heatwave that roasted Europe marked Austria’s longest-ever in June, with temperatures exceeding previous highs by 1.4°C on average, the national weather agency said on Wednesday. “What is remarkable about these new June records is that they don’t surpass the old ones by just a few tenths of a degree,” said climatologist Alexander Orlik of GeoSphere Austria in a statement. Depending on the region, from 10 to 14 days temperatures reached at least 30°C below 800 metres of altitude, the service said. “Such conditions had never occurred nationwide in June before,” Orlik added. — **AFP**

OPINION

Heat as infrastructure, public health and governance



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

LinkedIn
@rumaithaalbusaidi

The writer is
environmental
strategist and
advocate for
sustainable
development

I landed in Geneva and felt as if I was melting. The irony was lost on no one. People joked that the heat should be nothing to me, since I come from a hot country. We survive heat through what surrounds us, the homes, hours and infrastructure shaped around it over centuries. My comfort was engineered long before I arrived to enjoy it.

In Oman and across the Gulf, heat is a design condition. It sets the depth of a wall, the hours we work and rest. Europe was built on a different premise, that winter is the problem worth solving, and this summer is testing it hard: Switzerland set new June heat records three days running, approaching the 40-degree mark.

Here is where the European argument about air-conditioning goes wrong. It asks whether cooling is good or bad for the climate, when a hotter world faces a harder question: how do we cool without warming the planet further? The answer exists, and it is being built. The worry is not baseless. Conventional air-conditioning strains grids, leaks potent refrigerants, and throws waste heat into the street. We cannot air-

condition our way out of a heat crisis, as the UN's environment chief said this year. Cooling only the wealthy fails the climate test too, since heat sorts people by income, hardest on the elderly, the sick and families in thin-walled homes. Cooling now belongs beside water and sanitation, as essential infrastructure.

The proof is already running, some of it in Geneva. A network called GeniLac draws cold water from the depths of the lake to cool and heat buildings across the city, using around 80 per cent less energy than conventional units, part of the canton's climate strategy. Efficient heat pumps, district cooling and cleaner refrigerants work today. The real obstacles are capital, political will, and whether knowledge is allowed to move.

For generations, climate expertise flowed outward from the cool, wealthy capitals. Heat is reversing that current. The knowledge of living well in high temperatures now sits with the countries that never had the luxury of forgetting it, and invention is following, with most of the world's patents today filed in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In fact, India is among the fastest-rising inventors anywhere.

Efficient heat pumps, district cooling and cleaner refrigerants work today. The real obstacles are capital, political will, and whether knowledge is allowed to move

What the temperate world is only beginning to need, the hot world has practised for centuries.

This is a real opening for Oman. Our inheritance is specific and still standing: the mudbrick towns of Al Hamra that hold the night's cool past noon, the falaj that carries water and coolness through a settlement, the wind tower and the shaded lane. This is design knowledge that travels, as codes and methods for building in extreme heat, as passive cooling that a warming Europe will increasingly have to learn. A country that has managed heat for centuries can become a place where hot-climate solutions are studied, tested and sent outward, rather than only bought in.

Coming from Oman does not make me immune to heat. It taught me to read heat as infrastructure, public health and governance, the sum of a society's choices about who gets to stay cool. This is knowledge we hold, in the thick old walls that still work and in the cooler cities we know how to design. The warming world will need what the hot countries have always known. The only open question is how quickly the rest of it decides to learn.

NEW OXFORD
ACADEMIC CENTRE
SYMBOLISES UK'S
BIG-DONOR ERA

JOE JACKSON

With its grand atrium, 500-seat acoustics-led concert hall and other state-of-the-art spaces, Oxford's Schwarzman Centre is the newest example of an elite UK university showcasing a billionaire's endowment.

Completed last year, it was paid for by a \$250-million gift from American private equity titan Stephen Schwarzman — the latest in a string of primarily domestic and US mega-philanthropists donating to Britain's top universities this century.

This big-donor era, which emulates the more established philanthropy of the United States, has coincided with UK government cuts to higher education funding, prompting universities to hike student fees and boost gift-netting efforts.

It has also emerged as the super-rich give more, earlier in their lives, according to sector experts.

"Increasingly, we are seeing philanthropists giving from earned income... while they're still active in business," Karl Wilding, lecturer at Kent Business School's Centre for Philanthropy, said.

"US philanthropists form a substantial proportion of this class of elite givers, reflecting the distribution of wealth globally," he added while noting such philanthropy was also growing in East Asia.

The trend has earned criticism. Schwarzman's Blackstone firm, one of the world's biggest commercial landlords, has faced condemnation over some of its alleged practices.

Oxford faculty and students opposed the donation when it was announced in 2019, writing in an open letter the centre "will be built with the proceeds of the exploitation and disenfranchisement of vulnerable people".

Such gifts to UK universities increased by 93 per cent in the decade to 2022, reaching a record £1.5 billion that year, according to a 2023 report by higher education association CASE.

But the distribution was uneven, with Oxford and Cambridge — known as "Oxbridge" — accounting for nearly half.

Underlining the imbalance, British billionaire hedge fund owner Chris Rokos in March announced a £190-million gift to Cambridge — billed the largest in modern times to a UK university.

"The overall giving continues to go up, but it relies on a smaller number of bigger donors," Amir Pasic, dean of Indiana University's School of Philanthropy, said.

"Higher education does tend to be a magnet for the very large gifts." — AFP

When change means loss

CHANGE

is often presented as a promise. A promise of better

systems, faster services, stronger institutions, smarter technology, and improved performance. In organisations, we use confident words to describe it: transformation, innovation, reform, restructuring, quality improvement and future readiness.

These words are important. They reflect ambition. They also reflect the direction many institutions must take, especially in a world where expectations are changing rapidly and where countries, including Oman, are working toward more efficient, innovative, and future-oriented systems.

Yet inside organisations, change is not experienced only through plans, policies, or performance indicators. It is experienced by people.

And people do not always receive change in the same way leaders intend it.

A new digital system may be introduced to improve efficiency, but an employee may experience it as a loss of competence. A new structure may be designed to clarify roles, but a team member may feel a loss of influence. A new policy may aim to create fairness, but someone may feel a loss of flexibility. A new work process may be more effective, but it may also remove a familiar routine that once gave people confidence.

This is why some changes look logical on paper but become emotionally difficult in practice.

The psychological concept of loss aversion helps explain this. Loss aversion suggests that people often feel the pain of losing something more strongly than the pleasure of gaining something of similar value. In simple terms, what we lose can feel heavier than what we gain.

This has deep relevance for leadership.

When leaders introduce change, they often focus on what people will gain. They explain the benefits: better outcomes, clearer



DR ASMA
AL YAHYAEI

The writer is an
assistant professor
at SQU

They may fear losing control over work they once understood. They may fear losing their professional identity. They may fear losing their place in a team. They may fear losing confidence, status, routine, or the comfort of knowing exactly how things are done.

processes, improved quality, greater accountability, and stronger performance. All of this matters. People need to understand the reason for change.

But there is another question that often remains silent.

What do people feel they are losing? They may fear losing control over work they once understood. They may fear losing their professional identity. They may fear losing their place in a team. They may fear losing confidence, status, routine, or the comfort of knowing exactly how things are done.

When these fears are not acknowledged, resistance begins to appear.

Sometimes it appears openly through criticism or refusal. More often, it appears quietly through delay, silence, minimal engagement, or nostalgic attachment to the old way. Leaders may hear the familiar sentence, "But we have always done it this way," and dismiss it as stubbornness.

But sometimes that sentence is not only about habit.

Sometimes it is about safety. The old way may not have been perfect, but it was known. People understood it. They knew where they stood. They knew how to succeed within it. Change asks them to step into something uncertain, and uncertainty can feel like loss before it feels like opportunity.

This does not mean leaders should avoid change. On the contrary, progress requires change. Institutions cannot grow by protecting every old practice. Organisations must adapt, learn, modernise and improve. But the way change is led matters.

Good leadership does not treat resistance as an enemy. It treats resistance as information.

Instead of asking only, "Why are they resisting?" a more thoughtful leader asks, "What are they afraid of losing?" This question changes the tone of leadership. It moves the conversation from blame to understanding. It allows leaders to see that people may support the goal of change while still struggling with

what the change requires them to leave behind.

This is particularly important in sectors where transformation is continuous: education, health care, public service, technology, and quality assurance. New systems, accreditation requirements, digital platforms, performance measures, and updated standards are now part of institutional life. These changes may be necessary for excellence, but their success depends on more than implementation plans. They depend on whether people feel guided through the transition.

A mature leader does not only announce change.

A mature leader prepares people for it. This can be done through simple but powerful actions: explaining the purpose clearly, involving people early, acknowledging their previous contributions, providing training, allowing questions, and giving people time to rebuild confidence. Leaders can say, "This new direction is important, but I understand it may feel uncomfortable."

They can say, "Your experience still matters, even as we learn a new system." They can say, "We are not erasing what came before. We are building on it."

Such messages may sound small, but they reduce threat. They protect dignity. They remind people that change is not a judgement on their past work, but an invitation to grow beyond it.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked responsibilities of leadership is helping people cross the emotional distance between the familiar and the future.

Because change is not only a technical process. It is a human transition. And sometimes resistance is not rejection. Sometimes it is grief for the familiar.

When leaders understand this, they lead differently. They do not only push people toward the new. They help them let go of the old with respect, clarity, and confidence.

That may be where real transformation begins.

Standing at crossroads in society



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

BANNING social media for teenagers is unlikely to have a significant impact. Technology is created by people, and it operates according to their intentions. Attempting to impose age restrictions overlooks the fundamental issue: the core architecture of social platforms. An increasing number of countries are banning social media use by teens under 16 or introducing laws that restrict it. In Brazil, for example, users under the age of 16 must link their social media accounts to a parent or guardian to ensure supervision. Additionally, platforms are not allowed to offer infinite scrolling because it creates addictive behaviours. But do these measures truly protect young users or simply drive them toward less regulated, darker corners of the Internet? Algorithm-driven content is a key aspect of social media platforms. Dedicated software known as AI humanisers can circumvent age verification by evading detection. Users frequently seek loopholes, such as modifying their facial appearance or making device adjustments to interfere with webcam analysis. While technology advances faster than legal frameworks, tech companies have been slow to adjust their code regulations. Yet the responsibility for the code, algorithms, and accountability rests with the organisations involved. So, when someone says, ‘That will happen anyway’, it suggests that using

social media is unavoidable, and that is precisely where the challenge lies! The use of restrictions may hinder valuable opportunities to educate young users about responsible online behaviour. With the rapid evolution of AI, youth need to be prepared to navigate technological, digital, and emotional challenges. New social platforms can emerge overnight featuring styles that ignore existing regulations. Historically, every major technological leap has sparked intense social anxiety regarding its impact on youth. For example, critics worried that the introduction of the printing press would corrupt young minds and discourage physical activity. The arrival of the radio sparked concerns among parents that bedtime programmes would disrupt children’s sleep. Similarly, when television made its way into our living rooms, experts warned it would lead to a decline in family conversations and foster a passive generation. When computer games came out in the 1980s, people thought they made kids more violent and socially isolated. Current concerns focus on mental health issues, highlighting the connection between algorithms and increasing levels of anxiety, depression, and body image problems. Short-form videos are said to diminish the ability to concentrate, while exposure to blue light, along with late-night scrolling, disrupts the body’s natural daily cycles. The most harmful of all present concerns is cyberbullying. Algorithms that drive engagement can ultimately affect self-esteem

Digital literacy and open communication can better serve adolescents navigating the digital world than blanket bans. We have to provide a supportive environment as we prepare a generation of informed citizens who can navigate the complexities of online life and its ethical, social, and political challenges.

and overall mental health. There is a wide range of literature examining the relationship between social media and adolescents’ mental health, with anxiety and depression being the two most frequently measured outcomes. However, the exact nature of this relationship remains the subject of ongoing research. Would these bans genuinely improve mental health or safety online? I believe that tech companies are misleading users and are shifting the responsibility for social well-being onto educators, parents, and policymakers. For years, tech companies have resisted these bans, citing concerns about decreased digital advertising revenue, necessary architectural changes, and legal challenges. Understandably, the bans aim to protect young users from potential harm; however, most of the root causes of issues like anxiety, depression, and isolation may have deeper underlying motives. Social platforms only aggravate an already subconscious situation. In fact, the bans can inadvertently exacerbate feelings of isolation. Digital literacy and open communication can better serve adolescents navigating the digital world than blanket bans. We have to provide a supportive environment as we prepare a generation of informed citizens who can navigate the complexities of online life and its ethical, social, and political challenges. The debate reveals a significant conflict among the construction of platforms, user habits and government actions.

JAPAN VISA RULES PUSH OUT FOREIGN RESIDENTS

KYOKO HASEGAWA

In a tiny Tokyo restaurant filled with the smell of Nepalese dumplings, Budhathoki Samjhana surveys the business she built from scratch but may now have to give up as Japan tightens visa rules. Even though Japan has a rapidly ageing population and is suffering labour shortages in many sectors, opposition to immigration is growing and the new rules for business manager visas were introduced by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in late 2025. Nepalese national Budhathoki, who spent a decade away from her young daughter to create a new life for them in Tokyo, faces expulsion from the country because she may not be able to meet the specifications. “I always wanted to become a bridge between Japan and Nepal... but my dream is broken,” the 38-year-old said from the capital’s Okubo district, where her restaurant is nestled alongside Vietnamese cafes, Indian curry houses and Korean barbecue joints. The stricter rules come as some residents complain of overtourism and soaring land prices in part due to foreign investment, prompting a push by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi for tighter regulations on foreign nationals. Japan is also tripling a departure tax to 3,000 yen (\$18) for all travellers — including Japanese citizens — from Wednesday, with the extra funds used to tackle issues caused by an increasing number of foreign tourists. And while business manager visa holders have a three-year grace period to meet the new conditions, some thriving businesses — including many popular eateries in Okubo — fear they won’t manage. Indian restaurant owner Manish Kumar, who has lived in Japan for three decades, has already been told his business manager visa won’t be renewed, in spite of the grace period. He doesn’t know exactly why but visa experts say immigration officials have become more rigorous, demanding more documentation including tax receipts and social insurance premiums. The tightening of regulations comes after the justice ministry in May last year announced a “zero illegal foreign residents” plan to address public concern. Super-ageing Japan has one of the world’s lowest birth rates, and increasing immigration could help reverse its falling population. But foreigners were a major issue in last year’s upper house election which saw the sharp rise of the “Japanese-first” Sanseito party, which describes immigration as a “silent invasion”. The business manager visa, meant to attract entrepreneurs, had become an easy route for would-be immigrants without real business plans, said Kazuki Yuda, an administrative affairs adviser. — AFP

From value-neutral capital to purpose-driven markets

ON the same day, somewhere in the world, three financial transactions take place. A green bond helps finance a solar energy project designed to reduce carbon emissions for the next thirty years. An Islamic sukuk funds infrastructure intended to support economic activity while sharing risk among investors. At the same time, a speculative trade executed in milliseconds generates a substantial profit without creating a single physical asset, job or productive enterprise. All three transactions are legal. All three involve capital. All three generate returns. However, are they morally equivalent? For decades, the global financial establishment operated under a convenient consensus: finance was a neutral mechanism, an amoral engine designed solely to allocate capital and maximise returns. This “value-neutral” stance posited that whether capital funded a hospital or a purely speculative high-frequency trade was a matter of market efficiency, not morality. Today, this paradigm is collapsing. We are witnessing a historic transition from finance as a simple mechanism to finance as a moral system. For global investors and policymakers, this shift represents a strategic pivot; the “shrug” with which markets once met the social and environmental consequences of capital allocation is being replaced by a rigorous, purpose-driven framework that views finance as a primary architect of our collective future. The strategic divergence of this new era is best illustrated by the above-mentioned three simultaneous transactions. While all three generate returns, they are no longer economically or morally equivalent. The speculative trade represents systemic friction unproductive rent-seeking that increasingly acts as a legacy risk in a climate-constrained world. Conversely, the green bond and



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

The future of the market does not belong to any single philosophy in isolation; instead, it belongs to a system where conventional finance provides the necessary scale, sustainable finance ensures systemic resilience, and ethical and Islamic finance provide the social conscience and moral architecture required for long-term stability.

sukuk represent future-proofed assets with tangible asset-backing, signalling a fundamental redefinition of “return on investment” from short-term nominal gains to the long-term viability of the productive economy. The dissolution of this value-neutral consensus is not merely philosophical; it is being codified by the movement of capital across the global balance sheet. The transition toward ethical and sustainable finance has transcended its origins as a niche movement to become a fundamental market shift. The scale of assets governed by purpose-driven mandates has reached a critical mass, fundamentally altering the “moral geography” of the global marketplace. As institutional actors move to de-risk their portfolios from environmental and social volatility, the mobilisation of capital toward ethical ends is accelerating. The sheer volume of the current financial landscape underscores this transformation. The benchmark for total global financial assets remains at approximately half a quadrillion dollars (\$500 trillion). Islamic Finance has surpassed \$4 trillion in value, exhibiting an accelerated growth rate that consistently outpaces many conventional banking segments. Sustainable Debt Instruments have seen the mobilisation of multi-trillion-dollar capital pools through specialised instruments, including Green Bonds/Sukuk, Social Bonds/Sukuk, and Sustainability-Linked Bonds. Mid-sized economies like the Sultanate of Oman are increasingly leveraging the principles of moral geography to deepen their domestic debt and equity markets. By integrating ethical and sustainable frameworks, Oman is not merely reacting to global trends but is strategically positioning its financial sector to attract high-quality, long-term capital that aligns with national development goals. A closer look at the Omani market reveals a maturing financial landscape characterised by

increasing depth and regulatory sophistication. While green and sustainable finance remains modest, Oman has emerged as a standout “late entrant” in the Islamic finance industry, with Islamic finance now accounting for over 20 per cent of total financial assets. This success has provided a natural foundation for the country’s broader ESG regulatory framework, facilitating the adoption of mandatory reporting and climate-related disclosures. This regional implementation highlights a broader trajectory toward a global convergence of financial philosophies, where ethical mandates become inseparable from market participation. In an era where climate risk and social welfare are becoming inseparable from financial yield, long-term strategic forecasting is a baseline requirement for capital preservation. The future of capital will not be defined by a competition between “conventional” and “sustainable” models, but by their eventual convergence into a single, unified operating paradigm. The trajectory of global finance is moving toward a grand convergence. The future of the market does not belong to any single philosophy in isolation; instead, it belongs to a system where conventional finance provides the necessary scale, sustainable finance ensures systemic resilience, and ethical and Islamic finance provide the social conscience and moral architecture required for long-term stability. Ultimately, the defining question of twenty-first-century capital has shifted. We have moved past the era where the only metric of success was the generation of returns. The new, essential standard for capital is whether those returns can be generated without undermining the environmental, social, and moral foundations upon which all future wealth depends. Success is now defined by the preservation of the very world that makes the returns possible.



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



LIONEL

Scaloni will mark his 100th game as Argentina coach at the World Cup on Friday – the latest milestone in a golden era for the Albiceleste.

The 48-year-old has transformed a team led by the incomparable Lionel Messi into serial trophy winners in South America and on the global stage.

Scaloni was a relative unknown with scant coaching experience when he replaced Jorge Sampaoli on an interim basis weeks after the 2018 World Cup.

He has since masterminded two Copa America triumphs, in 2021 and 2024, and led his team to victory in the Finalissima – an intercontinental match between the European and South American champions in 2022.

But his crowning glory was winning a third World Cup for Argentina in Qatar in 2022, defeating France in a captivating final.

Messi's trophy lift at Lusail Stadium marked the end of an agonising 36-year wait dating back to 1986, when Diego Maradona's team triumphed in Mexico.

Maradona himself had voiced scepticism over the appointment of Scaloni, a former defender who played for a series of clubs including Deportivo La Coruna and Lazio.

"Scaloni is a great guy, but he couldn't even direct traffic," were the harsh words of the Argentine great, who favoured a return for Gerardo Martino.

Scaloni's experience on the international stage was admittedly limited.

He won only seven international caps as a player, featuring briefly alongside a young Messi at the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The former right-back served as Sampaoli's assistant during the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where Argentina were eliminated in the round of 16.

That marked the end of the road for Sampaoli and a unique opportunity for Scaloni, whose caretaker stint turned into a glorious reign.

The Albiceleste are now also known as the "Scaloneta" in honour of their leader, who has built the most successful team on the planet in recent years.

PEOPLE'S TEAM

Scaloni has taken charge of 99 Argentina matches, recording 72 wins, 18 draws and nine defeats – including a 36-game unbeaten run between July 2019 and November 2022.

He will reach his century on Friday in Miami against newcomers Cape Verde in the World Cup round of 32.

Argentina's route to a potential semifinal looks relatively favourable.

Scaloni admitted he had not expected to reach 100 matches but said he was not thinking about his legacy yet as he targets back-to-back titles.

"To be honest, I haven't really thought about it," he said.

"It's not that I worry about what people will say what matters to me is that people identified with the team's approach, with the feeling that we were a squad that truly represented its people, and nothing else.

"That alone would be enough."

"I never imagined reaching 100 matches in my life, he added. "It's a huge number, especially in this jersey. It will be a wonderful moment when it happens."

Humble, composed, and respectful of Argentina's footballing and cultural identity, Scaloni has forged an incredibly tight-knit group around Messi, the team's undisputed talisman.

He provided the tactical foundations and the man-management skills that enabled Messi to finally achieve the success he had long craved with the national team.

The 39-year-old, leading the race for the World Cup Golden Boot with six goals, has netted 58 times in 74 matches under Scaloni (an average of 0.78), compared with 65 goals in his previous 128 games (0.51).

The Argentine Football Association, according to local media, has already begun negotiations to extend Scaloni's contract, currently set to expire on December 31, by another five years.

The head coach, who briefly hinted at stepping down in 2023 after beating Brazil at the Maracana in the South American World Cup qualifiers, has indicated that he is open to renewing his deal.

"Right now, the focus is on the World Cup," he told Radio La Red. "It's not an urgent matter for me, and I don't think it is for the AFA either."

But he added: "If we all agree and things work out, I don't foresee any problems." – AFP

100

GAMES,
4 MAJOR
TITLES:
SCALONI'S
ARGENTINA
LEGACY
GROWS

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni looks on. — Reuters





Toronto Stadium, Toronto, Canada.

PORTUGAL and Croatia's World Cup last-32 clash on Thursday could be Cristiano Ronaldo or Luka Modric's final game on soccer's biggest stage and the massive moment will unfold at the tournament's smallest venue.

If there was any scepticism about how the 43,036-seat Toronto Stadium would hold up against its much bigger counterparts in the US and Mexico, that was squashed by electric atmospheres, sell-out crowds and special moments in the five group matches it hosted.

Toronto Stadium is not the grandest venue, but what it lacks in size it makes up for by bringing fans closer to the action and players, with few bad seats in the house.

Before hosting World Cup matches, the home

of Major League Soccer's Toronto FC underwent a C\$158 million (\$111.4 million) facelift to bring its capacity up to tournament standards, and those temporary changes are paying off.

Soccer fan James Cuthbert said the venue did not feel like a World Cup stadium in March when Canada played Iceland in a friendly as it was still being renovated. But when he returned for Senegal and Iraq's group match last Friday, he was impressed.

"It feels different, it feels more like a world-class stadium," said Cuthbert, who also attended the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Cuthbert and his wife were sitting in the back row of a 200-level section at Toronto Stadium but were very happy with the view. "We're (in) the very highest seats but it feels amazing," he said. "Just being so close to everything (and) it still has that same World Cup feel."

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

The NFL stadiums hosting World Cup games in the US are impressive in their own right. Their capacities of 64,000 to 80,000 get more fans in the stands, and Belgium playmaker Kevin De Bruyne said the Seattle and Los Angeles stadiums had a real NFL feeling about them.

Mexico is also home to one of soccer's most storied venues in the 80,824-seat Azteca Stadium, where Brazilian great Pele and Argentina's Diego Maradona both won the World Cup. The latter also scored his famous "Hand of God" and "Goal of the Century" goals there in 1986 against England.

Toronto Stadium is not big, nor has it yet witnessed defining moments on the global stage. But the venue that sits along

the shores of Lake Ontario in the city's downtown was built for soccer and its small size creates a unique, intimate atmosphere.

Croatia captain Luka Modric was serenaded by a sea of red-and-white-clad supporters celebrating his 200th international cap last week after his team earned a 1-0 win over Panama.

One did not need to know the lyrics of the Croatian song to be moved by the passion and emotion reverberating around the open-air venue as Modric and the team did a lap of the field to applaud their fans. Toronto Stadium's finale is a huge occasion with so much on the line for Ronaldo and Modric, the former Real Madrid teammates chasing the perfect ending to their World Cup careers. But the small stadium by the lake is ready to seize the moment. — Reuters



SPAIN SEEK CUTTING EDGE AGAINST AUSTRIA IN WC LAST 32



Spain's defender Pau Cubarsi controls the ball during the 2026 World Cup Group H football match between Uruguay and Spain at the Guadalajara Stadium. — AFP

Algeria's defender Jaouen Hadja and Austria's midfielder Konrad Laimer fight for the ball during the 2026 World Cup Group J football match between Algeria and Austria at the Kansas City Stadium. — AFP

SPAIN march into their World Cup last-32 clash against Austria on the back of an unbeaten run of 34 matches, a defence yet to be breached and an old question still nagging away - what happens when all that possession runs into a locked door?

Luis de la Fuente's European champions face Ralf Rangnick's Austria, who are making their first World Cup knockout appearance in 44 years after finishing runners-up in Group J, with Spain carrying momentum and a mild tactical headache.

The Spaniards topped Group H with two wins and a draw, taking seven points from nine, after Friday's bruising 1-0 win over Uruguay. It was progress, certainly, but not perfection.

Spain have looked secure at the back, with goalkeeper Unai Simon having gone 429 minutes without conceding at the World Cup. Yet their opening 0-0 draw against Cape Verde in Atlanta offered an early warning that control alone may not be enough.

Against one of the tournament's debutants, Spain had 74 per cent possession and 27 shots, but only seven were on target. Cape Verde

sat deep, kept their lines tight and invited Spain to solve a puzzle with precious few gaps. The Spaniards could not.

For Spain, the sight was uncomfortably familiar. Their 2022 World Cup campaign ended on penalties after a 0-0 draw against Morocco, another match in which possession did not bring goals.

With their talented, speedy wingers Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams arriving at the World Cup nursing hamstring injuries sustained in April, De la Fuente started Gavi and Ferran Torres on

the flanks against Cape Verde, but the lack of width slowed Spain's circulation and made their attacks predictable.

They attempted 39 crosses in that match and completed only eight as they moved the ball neatly between defence and midfield but struggled to penetrate the final third.

They responded with a convincing 4-0 win over Saudi Arabia but Uruguay brought a different sort of discomfort.

Marcelo Bielsa's side turned that match into a physical examination, leaving Spain with injury concerns over Williams and Jeremy Pino. Williams felt discomfort in his right

leg, while Pino suffered a shoulder injury. Although initial fears were more serious, both diagnoses offered some encouragement, with the pair potentially available again if Spain reach the quarterfinals.

Austria are expected to use similar tactics, deploying a low block and daring Spain to break the deadlock. But they are unlikely to merely admire Spain's passing carousel.

Rangnick's side have already made history by reaching the knockouts, but Spain's task is clear: keep the clean-sheet streak alive and prove they can unpick a defensive lock. — Reuters

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,561.128

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$67.07
BRENT \$71.94
LIGHT \$68.57



SHORT TAKES



At the heart of the proposed interconnection project is a 141-km long submarine cable extending from Shinas (Al Batinah North Governorate) to Dibba (Musandam Governorate) [Picture for illustration].

OMAN WEIGHS MUSANDAM POWER INTERCONNECTION VIA SUBSEA CABLE

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 1

Musandam Governorate — the geographically separated but strategically important Omani exclave overlooking the Strait of Hormuz — is proposed to be interconnected with the country’s Main Interconnected System (MIS) via a 141-km submarine cable, the longest of its kind in Oman.

The initiative is being spearheaded by Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the majority state-owned and operator of the Sultanate of Oman’s power transmission grid. When operational, tentatively by June 2030, the interconnection project will significantly enhance system security and reduce reliance on the governorate’s isolated local generation, the operator said.

Highlighting the project in its newly published 5-Year Annual Transmission Capability Statement (2026–2030), OETC stated: “OETC is currently evaluating the interconnection between Musandam and the Main Interconnected System (MIS) via overhead lines and submarine cables.

The most feasible connection is a 220kV link comprising a 141-km submarine cable and a 35-km overhead line between the Dibba and Shinas grid stations. The 220kV configuration delivers superior long-term security, scalability and resilience, aligned with Musandam’s strategic integration into the national grid”.

The project, OETC added, is currently in the planning stage and is expected to enter service by 2030, subject to final guidance from the Authority for Public Services Regulation, the sector regulator.

Electricity demand in the governorate is currently met primarily by the Musandam Power Plant, a gas-fired independent power plant located near Khasab, supplemented by smaller diesel generation units in remote communities where required.

OMIFCO IPO attracts **₹4.69 billion** in bids

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 1

THE Financial Services Authority (FSA) has approved the share allocation ratios for the initial public offering (IPO) of the Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO), following its review of the subscription results.

The results showed that total subscription proceeds exceeded the value of the offer by 3.909 times for the individual investor category and 27.4 times for the institutional investor category. Total subscription demand reached RO 4.69 billion.

In determining the allocation mechanism, the FSA carefully considered all available options in accordance with the methodology set out in the prospectus, adopting an allocation policy designed to accommodate all subscriber categories as fairly as possible, allocate appropriate holdings to the largest possible number of shareholders, achieve the desired balance and, at the same time, broaden participation in public offerings.

Accordingly, the FSA approved the allocation results for small retail investors (Category II) by setting a minimum allocation of 6,500 shares, in addition to allocating approximately 5.618% of the remaining shares.

Subscription requests in this category totalled 737,943,400 shares, while the total amount subscribed reached approximately RO 115.12 million, representing an oversubscription rate of approximately 2.206 times.

The approved allocation results for large individual investors (Category I) amounted to approximately 17.818% on a pro rata basis for each subscriber.

Subscription requests in this category totalled 1,877,108,000 shares, while the total amount subscribed reached



The subscription results showed that institutional investors submitted applications for 27,461,059,143 shares.

In determining the allocation mechanism, the FSA carefully considered all available options in accordance with the methodology set out in the prospectus, adopting an allocation policy designed to accommodate all subscriber categories as fairly as possible, allocate appropriate holdings to the largest possible number of shareholders, achieve the desired balance, and, at the same time, broaden participation in public offerings.



The FSA said it reviewed the subscription results and approved the allocation mechanism in line with the methodology set out in the prospectus.

approximately RO 292.83 million, representing an oversubscription rate of approximately 5.612 times.

With regard to local institutional investors (Category I), the approved allocation amounted to 2.6806% on a pro rata basis for each subscriber.

As for foreign institutional investors (Category I), the FSA approved the allocation in accordance with the mechanism set out in the prospectus,

following the determination of the offer price at 156 baisa per share for both local and foreign institutional investors through the book-building process.

The subscription results showed that institutional investors submitted applications for 27,461,059,143 shares, while the total amount subscribed by this category reached RO 4.284 billion, representing an oversubscription rate of 27.4 times.

The FSA affirmed that the strong investor response and continued confidence in the primary market underscore the importance of leveraging the IPO market to support economic activity and finance a wide range of investment projects.

The remaining stages of the offering will proceed in accordance with the timetable set out in the prospectus.

Refunds of excess subscription amounts are scheduled to commence on July 2, while the company’s shares are scheduled to be listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange on July 8.

Etlaq, Latitude sign pact for first launch from Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 1

Oman’s Etlaq Spaceport and France’s Latitude have signed a letter of intent (LoI) to cooperate on the first experimental launch of a Latitude rocket from Oman, marking a new milestone in the growing strategic partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and France in the space sector.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq’s state visit to France, during which His Majesty met French President Emmanuel Macron. The signing underscores expanding bilateral cooperation in advanced industries, technology and the space economy.

Under the agreement, Etlaq, Oman’s commercial spaceport operator, and Latitude, a French commercial launch service provider, will establish a framework for the first experimental launch of Latitude’s launch vehicle from Etlaq Spaceport. The launch is currently targeted for late 2027.

The two companies will also



Etlaq and Latitude will establish a framework for the first experimental launch of Latitude’s launch vehicle from Etlaq Spaceport.

work together on developing the necessary ground infrastructure, operational planning and regulatory preparations required to support future launch operations.

HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Founder and CEO of National Aerospace Services Company (NASCOM) and Etlaq Spaceport (Middle East’s first commercial spaceport), said the agreement represents an important step in positioning Oman as an emerging commercial space hub.

“We are proud to welcome Latitude as our latest partner at Etlaq. This collaboration marks

a significant milestone, not just for Etlaq, but for the broader relationship between Oman and France, two nations with a shared vision for what space can unlock for humanity.

Working with partners like Latitude strengthens our capabilities and reinforces the growing confidence international players have in Oman as a space hub. We look forward to building a partnership that cements Etlaq’s role as a key gateway to space and we are proud that France is part of that journey”, he said.

Latitude Chairman of the Strategic Committee Olivier Zarrouati said the agreement reflected the strategic importance both countries attach to developing independent access to space.

“Space has become an arena where tomorrow’s strategic balances are being shaped. This signing, on the sidelines of the meeting between President Macron and His Majesty the Sultan, is no coincidence: it reflects the shared ambition of France and Oman to build an

independent space capability together. Latitude is proud to be its industrial vehicle”, he said.

Etlaq’s location near the equator provides favourable conditions for launching satellites into low Earth orbit, sun-synchronous orbit and mid-inclination trajectories from a single site, offering commercial operators greater flexibility for future missions.

Officials said the partnership represents the first step towards establishing Latitude’s long-term presence in Oman while supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s ambitions to build a competitive commercial space ecosystem.

The agreement also reflects confidence in Oman’s evolving regulatory framework for space activities, which is designed to facilitate international launch operations and attract global space companies. The cooperation supports Oman Vision 2040 by promoting high-value technology industries, encouraging international partnerships and strengthening Oman’s position as an emerging regional hub for commercial space activities.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Valid until July 8, 2026, the promotion packages excellent value with extensive benefits to guarantee complete driving confidence.

TURN UP THE FRESHNESS THIS SUMMER WITH TOYOTA CAMRY

MUSCAT: Summer road trips across Oman are getting a major upgrade with the arrival of rewarding seasonal advantages on the legendary Toyota Camry and Camry HEV. The newly rolled out “Turn Up The Freshness” campaign makes it incredibly easy for car buyers to experience this world-class mid-size sedan.

Individual retail customers looking to swap their current vehicle can benefit from a dedicated trade-in bonus processed through Best Cars, which is credited straight to the invoice as a special purchase discount.

This special seasonal deal gives motorists an incredibly smooth path to driving home a brand-new flagship sedan.

Valid until July 8, 2026, the promotion packages excellent value with extensive benefits to guarantee complete driving confidence. Beyond the trade-in incentive, qualifying purchases of the Camry and Camry HEV include 1 year of comprehensive insurance (Oman only), 1 year of free registration and a 5-year or 50,000 km service package.

These valuable campaign benefits are built on an exceptional automotive foundation, as the Camry utilises the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform.

The Camry lineup sets an uncompromising standard for mid-size performance by giving drivers a choice between two highly advanced powertrains. The range features a highly responsive 2.5-litre four-cylinder VVT-iE engine alongside a cutting-edge electrified hybrid (HEV) variant that produces a robust 226 HP.

Both options provide quick acceleration while maintaining excellent, fuel-saving efficiency. On the outside, the sedan effortlessly stands out across the Sultanate of Oman due to its distinct, low-slung profile and athletic “Hammer Head” front styling that commands an instant presence on any highway.

Step inside and the Camry reveals a premium, tech-forward sanctuary focused heavily around driver and passenger convenience. The sophisticated dashboard layout features an expansive 12.3-inch touchscreen display paired with seamless wireless smartphone connectivity for easy media and navigation access.

The cabin offers excellent legroom, high-end upholstery finishes and ergonomically shaped seating designed to keep five adult passengers completely relaxed during long commutes or weekend getaways.

Family safety remains central to the Camry experience, backed by the intelligent Toyota Safety Sense active protection framework.

Nissan spotlights V6 powertrain dominance

NISSAN Middle East has highlighted the enduring market leadership and engineering excellence of its current V6 powertrain lineup, a suite of engines that continues to serve as the definitive benchmark for performance, reliability and durability in the region.

Driven by a deeply rooted connection to regional driving culture, Nissan’s six-cylinder technology remains a massive commercial driver, naturally representing 35% of the brand’s total regional sales volume, backed by a dominant majority in the highly competitive SUV segment.

The foundation of this success is a celebrated 43-year legacy of engineering supremacy. Nissan pioneered the landscape in 1983 with Japan’s first mass-produced V6 engine, the VG series, setting off decades of continuous innovation. This relentless pursuit of performance is epitomised by the legendary Nissan GT-R.

While the GT-R stands as an independent performance icon within Nissan’s historic lineage, its elite twin-turbo V6 DNA has served as the technological baseline from which the current flagship Patrol’s cutting-edge twin-turbo powerplant was derived.

Thierry Sabbagh, Divisional Vice President, President Middle East, KSA, CIS and India, Nissan and INFINITI, said: “Our current V6 engine portfolio represents the perfect intersection of proven heritage and modern versatility.

In the Middle East, where driving conditions demand absolute durability and uncompromised power, our six-cylinder lineup delivers exactly what customers expect. The fact that V6 models comprise over half of our regional SUV sales is a



The foundation of this success is a celebrated 43-year legacy of engineering supremacy.

testament to their real-world relevance. We are proud to celebrate a powertrain legacy that continues to define driving excitement across our markets today”.

SUV DOMINANCE: UNMATCHED POWER AND PRACTICALITY

The absolute pinnacle of this engineering evolution is showcased in the current Patrol family, which utilises distinct V6 configurations tailored precisely to regional demands.

Drivers seeking smooth, linear power and the time-tested dependability that built the Patrol’s legendary status can utilise the robust 3.8-litre naturally aspirated V6 engine. For those demanding rapid torque and next-generation efficiency, a sophisticated 3.5-litre twin-turbocharged V6

powers the upper-tier All-New Patrol and the all-terrain Patrol PRO-4X.

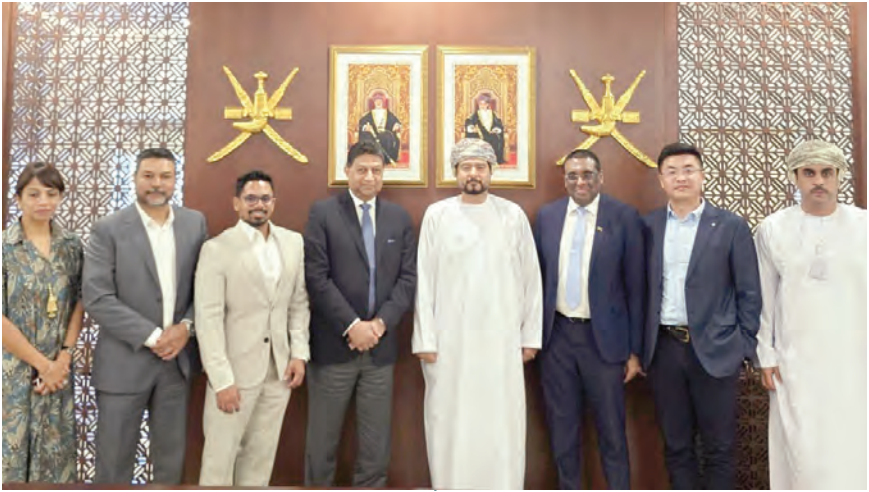
Sitting at the absolute apex of the lineup is the Middle East-exclusive All-New Patrol NISMO, which features a meticulously track-tuned variant of the 3.5-litre twin-turbo engine to unleash a staggering 495 horsepower.

This comprehensive SUV offering is seamlessly complemented by the Nissan Pathfinder. Designed with the modern family in mind, the Pathfinder utilises a highly refined 3.5-litre Direct-Injection V6 engine. It carries forward a multi-decade legacy of dependable family exploration, delivering seamless power, long-distance cabin refinement and heavy-duty towing capability essential for regional weekend escapes.

Sri Lanka promotes Port City Colombo in Oman

MUSCAT: Sri Lanka has stepped up efforts to attract Omani investment into Port City Colombo through high-level meetings and an investor forum in Muscat aimed at strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries.

The investment mission, led by Harsha Amarasekera, Chairman of the Colombo Port City Economic Commission, held talks with Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Nasser al Kindi, Chief Executive Officer of Invest Oman, to explore opportunities for closer cooperation between the special economic zones of both countries. The delegation also met Omani investors



The mission aims to explore opportunities for closer cooperation between the special economic zones of both countries.

and business leaders during an investment forum at the Sheraton Oman Hotel to showcase opportunities within Port City Colombo.

Sri Lanka’s Ambassador to Oman, W A K S De Alwis, highlighted the long-standing maritime and commercial links between Muscat and Colombo,

describing the project as a platform for expanding trade and investment between the Gulf and South Asia.

Amarasekera said Port City Colombo and Oman could create a stronger investment corridor linking the Gulf with South Asia, enabling businesses to expand across both regions.

Port City Colombo is being developed as a special economic zone offering 100 per cent foreign ownership, transactions in 16 foreign currencies and a single-window regulatory framework to facilitate investment.

Officials said the Muscat visit forms part of Sri Lanka’s broader strategy to strengthen investment partnerships across the Gulf and promote Port City Colombo as a gateway to South Asia.

Sohar International launches ‘Fueling Your Journey’ rewards initiative

MUSCAT: Continuing to redefine the way customers engage with everyday banking, Sohar International has launched a new rewards campaign as part of its ‘Fueling Your Journey’ initiative, offering customers additional value and exciting opportunities to win.

The campaign builds on the bank’s landmark collaboration with Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO), which led to the establishment of the Sultanate of Oman’s first co-branded service station at Al Qurum Heights.

Under the campaign, customers using their Sohar International debit or credit cards at the OOMCO Service Station in Al Qurum Heights will be automatically entered into monthly draws, with two winners selected



The campaign builds on the bank’s collaboration with Oman Oil Marketing Company.

each month to receive Basma Cards worth RO 500. Running over a three-month period, the initiative will reward a total of six winners, further strengthening the bank’s

differentiated value proposition. Commenting on the initiative, Abdul Qadir al Sumali, Chief Retail & Wealth Management Officer at Sohar International, said, “The idea behind

the initiative is straightforward: we want customers to experience the value of banking with Sohar International in moments they might not expect.

A routine stop for fuel can become an opportunity to win something meaningful and that simplicity is deliberate. We believe the strongest propositions are those that fit naturally into our customers’ daily lives, creating relevant and rewarding moments without adding complexity.

As the first partnership of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, our collaboration with OOMCO reflects a shared commitment to rethinking how and where customers engage with their bank, delivering practical benefits through more intuitive and

connected interactions.

We also believe that the future of customer engagement lies in thoughtful cross-sector collaborations that bring together complementary strengths to create more impactful and differentiated propositions for the communities we serve”.

Beyond the immediate customer benefits, the initiative reflects Sohar International’s broader approach to fostering more purposeful customer interactions.

Through its collaboration with OOMCO, the bank is extending its presence outside conventional banking touchpoints, creating opportunities to connect with customers in familiar, high-frequency environments.

SHORTTAKES



The initiative is aimed at strengthening national food security, improving supply chain resilience and moderating logistics costs for essential food imports into Oman.

ASYAD SHIPPING SECURES FOOD CARGO SUPPORT

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 1

Asyad Shipping will receive government support covering 50 per cent of fuel and insurance costs for eligible food cargo shipments on the India-Oman trade route for up to six months, the company said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The initiative, effective immediately, is aimed at strengthening national food security, improving supply chain resilience and moderating logistics costs for essential food imports into the Sultanate of Oman.

Asyad Shipping said the benefit would be passed on to qualifying customers transporting eligible food cargoes, helping reduce shipping costs for basic food products entering the country through regular container liner services.

The company currently operates one container liner vessel on the India-Oman route. It said the programme was expected to have a positive impact on its container shipping segment during the subsidy period, while the financial impact was still being assessed and would be reflected in its financial reporting where applicable.

Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, Chief Executive Officer of Asyad Shipping, said the company was proud to support the Government of Oman’s food security objectives.

“We are proud to play our part in supporting the Government of Oman’s food security objectives and contribute to the reliable supply of essential goods to the Sultanate of Oman. As Oman’s national shipping carrier, we remain committed to providing dependable maritime transport solutions that strengthen supply chains and support the nation’s long-term economic goals over the duration of the programme”, he said.

The support comes as Oman continues to place food security, trade connectivity and logistics resilience at the centre of its economic planning, particularly for essential imports and maritime routes linking the Sultanate of Oman with key regional trading partners.

Grid ambitions raise stakes for cable makers

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

OMAN’S shift towards renewable energy, electrification and digital infrastructure is opening a larger role for local manufacturers, while also raising questions over grid readiness, supply-chain resilience and the ability of domestic industry to compete on quality, cost and delivery.

Oman Cables Chief Executive Officer Erkan Aydoğdu said the company is preparing for stronger demand from renewable energy projects, power networks, industrial expansion and digital infrastructure, as electricity becomes more central to economic activity.

“Oman Cables has a strong industrial foundation, deep local roots and an established position in the market”, he said. “But the energy and infrastructure landscape is changing quickly”.

The policy backdrop is clear. Oman aims to generate 30 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. Reaching that target will require more than solar and wind projects. It will also depend on grid connections, transmission and distribution networks; and infrastructure capable of managing more complex power flows.

For cable manufacturers, this changes the nature of demand. Customers are no longer looking only at basic supply.

Technical reliability, safety, lifecycle performance, sustainability standards and delivery timelines are becoming more important in procurement decisions.

Aydoğdu said Oman Cables sees this shift as an opportunity to move from a traditional product-supply role towards more specialised energy and infrastructure solutions.

“The market is moving towards more integrated solutions”, he said.

“Customers are looking for reliability, performance,



The policy backdrop is clear. Oman aims to generate 30 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. Reaching that target will require more than solar and wind projects. It will also depend on grid connections, transmission and distribution networks, and infrastructure capable of managing more complex power flows.

ERKAN AYDOĞDU
CEO, Oman Cables

sustainability and systems that can serve specific applications”.

The opportunity, however, is not automatic. It will depend on the pace of renewable project awards, industrial investment, grid upgrades and the ability of local manufacturers to compete with regional and international suppliers. Pricing pressure, technical certification and supply-chain capacity will remain important tests.

Oman Cables, which has operated for more than 40 years, is investing in additional capacity and technical capability.

Aydoğdu said the company’s Plant 3 investment is increasing medium-voltage capacity, while its Renewable Excellence Centre is designed to support applications linked to renewable energy projects.

The company’s wider industrial platform includes Oman Aluminium Processing Industries SPC in Suhar and Associated Cables Private Limited in India. Aydoğdu said these operations support the group’s value chain, from aluminium rod and conductor production to specialised cable solutions.

Such integration could become more important as countries seek more secure supply chains for strategic infrastructure. But local manufacturing will still need to show that it can meet international performance standards while remaining commercially competitive.

Digital infrastructure is another emerging demand driver. Data centres, cloud services, artificial intelligence and industrial automation require stable and high-performance power systems. Aydoğdu said this is creating new requirements for cable design, testing and reliability.

“The market is moving towards more integrated and technology-driven infrastructure systems”, he said.

“Our focus is to remain ready for that shift with strong local capability and global standards”.

Oman Cables’ relationship with

Prysmian is also part of its positioning. Aydoğdu described Prysmian as a strategic and technological partner that gives the company access to international expertise, quality standards and research and development capability.

He said Oman Cables also serves as Prysmian’s regional headquarters for the Middle East, Africa, Russia and Türkiye, reflecting the company’s operational base in Oman and its regional role within the wider group.

Beyond commercial expansion, Aydoğdu said local value creation remains central to the company’s role in Oman. Omanisation at Oman Cables exceeds 53 per cent across the organisation, compared with the 35 per cent manufacturing requirement set by the Ministry of Labour.

But he said localisation should be judged by skills and leadership development, not only by percentages. “Omanisation should not be treated only as a percentage”, he said. “The real test is whether companies are developing Omani talent for technical and leadership roles”.

The company runs more than 10 development programmes annually, covering technical expertise, leadership, career progression and cross-functional learning. It also supports education-related initiatives aimed at encouraging interest in science, technology and engineering.

For Oman, the wider issue is whether industrial companies can help deepen local supply chains as the country pursues economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040. Renewable energy, grid modernisation, data infrastructure and industrial growth all require a stronger technical base.

Aydoğdu said local value creation should be seen in that wider context. “Local value creation is not only about what we produce”, he said. “It is about what we build around the business — people, skills, knowledge and long-term industrial resilience”.

New podcast celebrates success stories with Tariq

MUSCAT: Oman Daily Observer is proud to announce the launch of its new podcast series, “With Tariq”, created in strategic partnership with renowned Omani media personality, entrepreneur and thought leader Tariq bin Hilal al Barwani.

“With Tariq” is dedicated to exploring the stories behind success. Through authentic and engaging conversations, the series will feature entrepreneurs, business leaders, innovators, policymakers, creatives, athletes and other inspiring personalities from Oman and around the world, examining the experiences, decisions, challenges and defining moments that have shaped their journeys. Each episode will go beyond achievements to uncover the lessons learned, obstacles overcome, values embraced and visions that continue to drive success.



While success stories remain at the heart of the podcast, conversations will also explore technology, leadership, innovation, personal growth and the future, offering listeners practical insights and inspiration for their own journeys.

Speaking on the launch, Tariq al Barwani said: “Success is never a straight line. Behind every achievement is a story of perseverance, learning, resilience and purpose.

Through ‘With Tariq’, we want to bring those stories to life, giving our audience the opportunity to learn directly from people who have turned ambition into reality. My hope is that every conversation leaves listeners inspired to pursue their own path with greater confidence and clarity”.

Abdullah al Shueili, Editor-in-Chief of Oman Daily Observer, said: “At Oman Observer, we

believe powerful stories have the ability to educate, inspire and create meaningful impact.

Partnering with Tariq al Barwani allows us to introduce a podcast that celebrates the people behind success while sharing lessons that resonate across generations. We are delighted to launch this platform and look forward to bringing insightful conversations to our audience”.

Combining Oman Observer’s journalistic expertise with compelling storytelling, “With Tariq” aims to become a leading regional platform for conversations on success, leadership, innovation and the ideas shaping tomorrow.

The podcast will be available on major streaming platforms, with new episodes released regularly.

TRADE PERFORMANCE

Korea exports hit record pace



South Korea’s exports surged 70.9 per cent year-on-year in June, marking their fastest growth since 1978 and exceeding \$100 billion for the first time.

The increase was driven by booming semiconductor shipments linked to global artificial intelligence investment. Imports rose 30.1 per cent, producing a record monthly trade surplus of \$36.15 billion, while exports to the Middle East declined 8.4 per cent. — Reuters

EQUITY MARKETS

Japanese shares extend gains



Japanese equities advanced as artificial intelligence-related stocks continued to attract investors. The Nikkei 225 rose 0.6 per cent, while the broader Topix index gained 0.4 per cent.

A Bank of Japan Tankan survey showed business sentiment among major manufacturers reached its highest level since 2018, although firms remain cautious over rising costs and potential supply disruptions. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold pressured by yields



Gold prices declined after rising US Treasury yields reinforced expectations of higher US interest rates. Spot gold fell 0.7 per cent to \$3,979.41 an ounce, while US futures lost 1.1 per cent.

Investors are awaiting US government employment data for further signals on Federal Reserve policy, with markets increasingly expecting tighter monetary conditions in the coming months. — Reuters

OPINION

Overcoming industrial challenges in Oman



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

OVER the past few years, Oman's industrial sector has succeeded in attracting substantial investments while maintaining a steady growth trajectory. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector has reached approximately RO 31 billion (around \$80 billion), highlighting a significant transformation in the industry's ability to attract capital and support the country's sustainable economic diversification agenda.

This was recently emphasised by Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farooji, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion. Today, the industrial sector stands at the forefront of Oman's economic diversification efforts. Its contribution to total investment has increased from 6% to 9.5%, making it one of the key pillars supporting the national economy's resilience against global economic shocks.

Despite the remarkable achievements of the Omani industrial sector in supporting the national economy and boosting non-oil exports, industrialists and investors continue to highlight a number of challenges that affect the sector's growth pace and competitiveness.

Among the most significant challenges is the rising cost of energy and utilities. Heavy industries such as cement, metals and petrochemicals remain highly dependent on energy consumption. With fluctuations in global fuel and electricity prices, production

costs increase, reducing the competitiveness of some manufacturing facilities.

Another challenge relates to the relatively limited size of the domestic market compared to larger regional economies. This necessitates a stronger focus on exports to achieve economies of scale and increase production volumes. At the same time, Omani products face intense competition from imported goods originating from countries with larger markets, lower production costs, or greater government support.

Also, there is a growing need to open new markets, expand trade agreements and facilitate export procedures through several seaports located outside the Strait of Hormuz. In addition, the industrial sector requires stronger technical and specialised skills and smart technologies; and is a need to strengthen the workforce with highly qualified engineers and technicians.

Access to financing is another major concern since industrial projects often require substantial capital investments and long payback periods.

Investors therefore call for more concessional financial incentives and supportive funding mechanisms for new industrial ventures. Such support would enable companies to accelerate technological transformation, foster innovation, modernise production lines and embrace Industry technologies.

Global supply chains continue to face disruptions due to rising shipping, insurance and logistics costs. These challenges affect

the availability and pricing of raw materials, particularly for factories that rely heavily on imported inputs.

To overcome these challenges, Oman's industrial sector should continue strengthening export-oriented industries, especially those where the Sultanate of Oman enjoys competitive advantages, including petrochemicals, fertilisers, metals, food industries and emerging green hydrogen-related industries.

It is equally important to expand education, training and workforce development programmes, particularly for graduates seeking careers in industrial engineering, automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and quality management.

Continued support for industrial innovation remains essential, alongside improving financing mechanisms through a stronger role for commercial banks and government investment funds in supporting promising industrial projects.

Furthermore, the continued development of industrial zones, promotion of local content policies and greater reliance by government entities and major corporations on nationally produced goods will contribute significantly to industrial growth.

By addressing these challenges through strategic planning, investment in human capital, technological advancement and expanded market access, Oman can further strengthen its industrial sector and enhance its role as a key driver of sustainable economic growth and diversification.

Today, the industrial sector stands at the forefront of Oman's economic diversification efforts. Its contribution to total investment has increased from 6% to 9.5%, making it one of the key pillars supporting the national economy's resilience against global economic shocks.

Yuan ‘Plaza Accord’ would barely dent China’s edge

JON SINDREU

Big problems invite simple fixes and there is a risk that Western policymakers are starting to treat the yuan as one. Force Beijing to revalue the currency, the thinking goes and the hollowing-out of global industries caused by cutthroat Chinese competition begins to reverse.

But China's cost advantage is so vast that counteracting it is impossible without bold industrial policies and even some targeted protectionism. At last month's G7 summit in France, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz blamed an "artificially low" yuan as a key driver of China's large current-account surplus, which hovers around 3.8% of GDP.

It marked a notable shift in his position towards American and French thinking.

According to Handelsblatt, citing an unnamed high-level official, Merz was swayed by research paper by Sander Tordoir and Brad Setser at the Council on Foreign Relations. Setser often cites the 1985 Plaza Accord, when several countries coordinated to weaken the US dollar, as a template to appreciate Asian export currencies.

Beijing has already loosened its grip on the yuan, allowing it to gain 4.6% in inflation-adjusted terms over the past year.

But at that pace, it would take five years to be at a level that brings exports in line with imports.

Still, the International Monetary Fund is sceptical of a new Plaza Accord, arguing that lasting rebalancing requires Chinese households to spend more, the US to cut its budget deficit and Europe to invest.

Neither Beijing nor Washington will abandon growth models that have served them well. And the same applies to the currency: Chinese officials won't change tack, not least because they believe Plaza set the stage for Japan's financial crisis in the 1990s.

Setser and fellow economist Shahin Vallée argue that coordinated US-European tariff threats could force China's hand. But the currency is only a small part of the reason the West is becoming less competitive.

Carmaker Volkswagen's plans to cut 100,000 jobs underscore the urgency to close the overall gap; EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic, who met China's commerce minister Wang Wentao in Brussels in Monday, wants trade talks to yield tangible results by October. — Reuters

Firms are hiring traders, very few are women

FINANCE firms in London are struggling to boost gender diversity — an important issue in the UK and Europe — in an increasingly lucrative area of finance, as just 9 per cent of Britain's algorithmic traders are female, data suggests.

There are likely no more than 140 women in the UK, compared to more than 1,450 men, according to an analysis of regulatory data.

The proportion of female algo traders has improved since 2020, when it stood at 6 per cent, but has remained broadly the same compared to previous analysis a year ago.

"It is disheartening but unsurprising to see the lack of progress when it comes to gender diversity within the front-office trading community over the last year", said Virginie O'Shea, chief executive of capital markets advisory firm Firebrand Research.

The records were obtained of professionals certified under "algorithmic trading" roles in the Financial Conduct Authority's register. The FCA does not track people's gender, but does record the salutations they use.

Looking back from late February, 1,112 algo traders went by 'Mr', while 105 used either 'Miss', 'Mrs' or 'Ms'. Around 24 per cent of algo traders either had a gender-neutral or did not provide any.

"Firms might give a lot of lip service to saying they are trying to get women on board, but they have to be prepared to make significant cultural changes to attract them to keep them", said Niki Beattie, CEO of consultancy Market Structure Partners.

"In my experience, few firms are willing to make that complete shift in mindset".

A lack of female representation has plagued finance, mathematics, engineering and science — sectors that marry with the world of algo trading, where complex computer programmes automatically open



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

There are likely no more than 140 women in the UK, compared to more than 1,450 men, according to an analysis of regulatory data. The proportion of female algo traders has improved since 2020, when it stood at 6 per cent, but has remained broadly the same compared to previous analysis a year ago.



Just 9 per cent of Britain's algorithmic traders are female, data suggests. — AFP

and close positions in fractions of seconds. Heavy hiring has done little to shift the dial.

The total number of UK registered algo traders has roughly doubled over the past six years to around 1,600, according to the FCA data.

"The problem is it becomes circular", Beattie said. "The fewer the women you have, the more one-dimensional the culture and the more one-dimensional the culture, the less attractive it is to women".

O'Shea said a "tech bro dynamic" had negatively impacted the industry.

She noted the growing popularity of controversial "monosphere" influencers among new generations entering the workplace and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg's comments last year that most companies need more "masculine energy".

"The lack of Diversity, Equality, Inclusion (DEI) policies as a recourse to address these issues is extremely worrying from a future diversity standpoint", O'Shea added.

Banks, asset managers and hedge funds have piled into algo trading as they look to capitalise on the latest advancements in technology.

The electronification of financial markets has also seen the explosive growth of specialist market-makers and proprietary trading firms that bet their own capital at massive volumes.

These jobs pay hefty sums. It is not uncommon for quantitative trading firms in London to hire top PhD graduates on annual compensation of £250,000 and these deals can reach £800,000 in some cases, as has been previously reported.

President Donald Trump's policies have seen Wall Street firms and some European banks operating in the US scrap aspirational hiring and promotions targets for under-represented groups.

"The wholesale move away from diversity, equality and inclusion programmes at most major financial institutions continues", O'Shea said, adding that rowbacks by large US institutions have "filtered down to the smaller UK firms".

"After more than a decade of significant impetus to improve the workplace and opportunities for women, it has become easier for firms and individuals to start to make excuses again", Beattie said.

Last year, UK regulators backtracked on plans to launch fresh DEI rules following criticism from London firms and politicians.

The proposals included diversity targets for companies and forcing larger firms to disclose information about employees' gender, ethnicity and religion.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

SENIOR Accountant: Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

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

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

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

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

Looking for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

اوربیت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

JOB VACANCY

WE ARE LOOKING FOR THIS CATAGORY

POSITIONS	YEAR OF EXPERIENCES
Purchase Manager • 10+years of total experience • Oil & Gas sector experience is mandatory (Candidate preference in Oman)	10 +

Contact No: +968 74135535
Email: subinraj1221@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman. Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

JOB OPENING FOR
CV SELECTION | WORK VIDEO REQUIRED OMAN

VACANT POSITIONS

- DIESEL MECHANIC**
- HYDRAULIC MECHANIC**

SALARY: 250-300 OMR

JOB DETAILS

- REQUIRED FOR WORK IN HEAVY EQUIPMENT WORKSHOP
- CANDIDATES MUST HAVE EXPERIENCE IN RELEVANT FIELD, EMPLOYMENT VISA PROVIDED

COMPANY BENEFITS ACCOMMODATION TRANSPORT MEDICAL SALARY APPLY NOW

Contact: 91935289
duqumcrusher@gmail.com

JOB VACANCY

JOB VACANCY : Operations Manager – Lifting Inspection Company
Required Qualifications :

- ASNT Level II (minimum requirement).
- LLEA or ASNT Foundation certification.
- Diploma In Lifting Accessories.
- Diplomas in the following equipment :
- Mobile Crane
- Overhead Crane
- MEWP (Mobile Elevating Work Platforms)
- Forklift
- Gantry Crane

Additional Advantage: ASNT Level III certification
Send all your CVs and certified Certificates on below email: Pipe2566@yahoo.com



SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for part time or full time Accounts/Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

Experienced Accounts & Finance Candidate Seeking Suitable Opportunity. Expertise in Accounts, Invoicing, Reconciliation & Reporting. Contact: 75177637

FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. Contact: 94158080

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

OMAN DAILY Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

*** NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY**

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info

ازديهار izdihar



ART/LIFE



MASIRAH 'S KITESURFING SEASON TAKES OFF AS WINDS RETURN

> 20

CHANGING WORLD

TRAVEL LIGHT AND REST DEEP



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

I'm sitting cross-legged on the floor with my suitcase open right, a few hours before my flight later today. And I can already feel last year's mistake trying to creep back in.

"Just in case", I caught myself muttering, holding up a linen shirt that's beautiful and completely wrong for 35-degree heat. I put it down.

Last summer I did a two-week trip with a bag heavier than me. By day three I was dragging it over uneven streets, sweating, tired and already counting down to the flight home. I spent more time managing my luggage than enjoying where I was. I came back more stressed than when I left. I'm not doing that again.

So today I'm packing lighter and I'm thinking lighter too. I'm starting with what I will actually wear, not with the version of me who suddenly becomes a hiker, a wedding guest and a club regular in one trip.

That version never shows up. The real me fits in 5 tops on repeat: soft tees, two linen shirts that don't mind wrinkles, and a casual t-shirt I can dress up or down. Then 3 bottoms that all work together. One light trousers for planes and cafés and one nice casual set that can double for dinner.

I'm using the same rule for my plans as I fold the last shirt and zip the case this morning. Flights are booked, the first two nights are sorted and one thing I really don't want to miss is in the calendar. The rest is blank. Last year I filled every day because I was scared of "wasting" time.

Over-scheduled holidays felt like work with better weather. Under-planned ones felt like panic. The middle is where I actually rest, so I'm leaving space for it starting today.

I'm giving myself permission before I even leave the house to do nothing every few days. I don't have to earn rest by sightseeing first. I want mornings where I sleep late, read on a balcony with bad coffee and good light; and people-watch without reaching for my camera. Boredom is in the vacation budget and I'm not cutting it.

I'm chasing mornings, not itineraries. Summer mornings are cooler, quieter, cheaper and kinder. I'll walk to a bakery while the streets are still soft, or sit by the water for an hour. That will stay with me longer than three rushed attractions before lunch. My phone is going down more, too. I don't need a photo of every sunset. I'll take a few, then pocket it. I'm going to remember the trip, not edit it later. That's the rule I'm carrying with me on today's flight.

I'll eat like a local, not like a critic. The corner café with plastic chairs. The stall with a line of locals who know something I don't. A grocery run for fruit, bread and whatever looks good. If the plan falls apart, there's ice cream. There's always ice cream.

Before I close this zipper, I've booked one buffer day after I land back home. No more 11 pm arrivals straight into meetings. I want a day to unpack, wash the sand out of everything, water my plants and remember where I live without resentment. That one day saves two weeks of post-holiday dread. Two weeks is long enough to actually rest if I don't spend it managing my luggage, my schedule, or my expectations.

So I'm zipping it now, with room to spare. I did not pack light last year and paid for it. Today I'm heading out to do it right. Pack light, plan less, breathe more.

QUICK FEATURES



FOOD
A Musang King cheesecake in Karak, Malaysia, made with the prized durian variety popular locally and exported mainly to China. — **AFP**

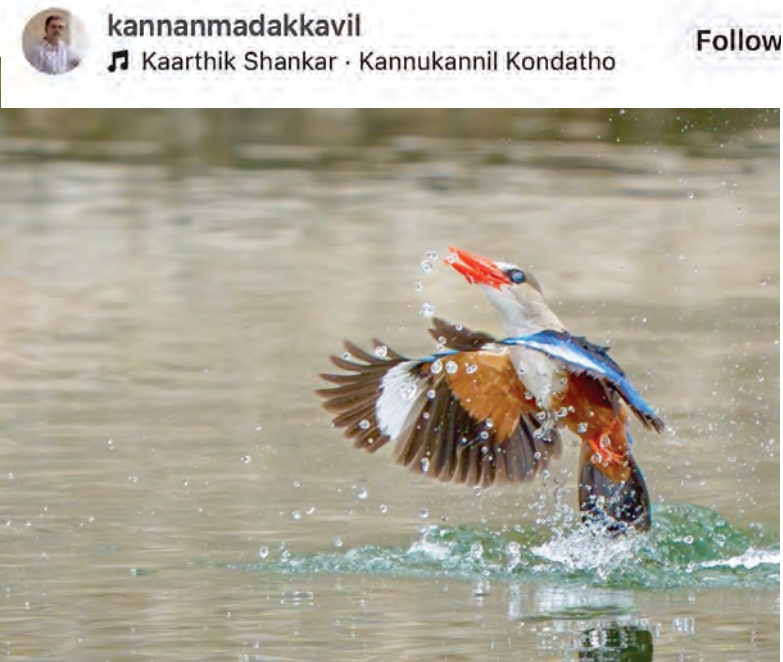


CULTURE
Members of a Batalhao, a dance and singing troupe, perform during the Unesco-listed Bumba-Meu-Boi festival in Sao Luis, Brazil. — **AFP**

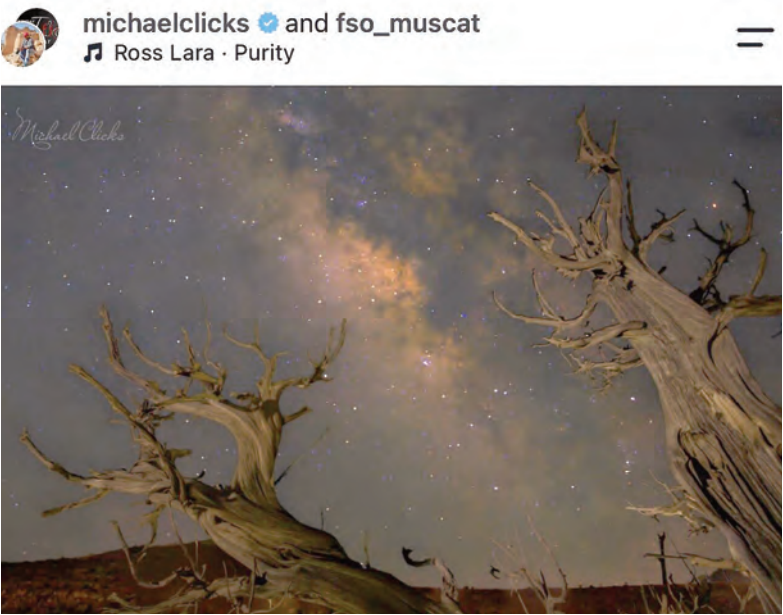


ART
Shuttlecocks sculptures by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen stand outside the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri. — **Reuters**

INSTA PICKS



Grey Headed Kingfisher in Salalah, Oman.



“Beneath ancient trees, the universe whispers its timeless story...”

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

OSAKA WOWS WIMBLEDON IN KIMONO-INSPIRED DRESS



Osaka walked on to the court in a dress embroidered with cranes and cherry blossoms, created alongside designer Hana Yagi. — AFP

Japan’s Naomi Osaka made a striking entrance at Wimbledon on Monday, arriving on court in a kimono-inspired dress before her first-round match against France’s Elsa Jacquemot. Known for her bold pre-match fashion choices, the four-time Grand Slam champion drew crowds of fans and photographers around Court Three as she unveiled the all-white look, designed to comply with the All England Club’s strict dress code. The 28-year-old wore a ceremonial kimono-style outer garment decorated with embroidered cranes and cherry blossom, paired with a traditional kanzashi hair ornament featuring white flowers. She later removed the pieces to reveal a white Nike tennis dress inspired by kirigami, the Japanese art of paper cutting. Osaka collaborated with Japanese designer Hana Yagi on the Wimbledon outfit, sharing a video of the look on social media

with the caption: “Culture”. Her Wimbledon appearance follows similarly theatrical fashion statements at other Grand Slams this year, including a jellyfish-inspired Australian Open look dedicated to her daughter Shai and a gold French Open dress influenced by the Eiffel Tower. Speaking to British Vogue, Osaka said she sees fashion as a form of storytelling. “I like to use fashion as a medium for storytelling”, she said. “Every walk-out is an opportunity to bring people into my creative world”. Osaka’s longtime creative director, Marty Harper, said the design was shaped by Wimbledon’s distinctive sense of tradition and ceremony. “The starting point was the idea of evolving ceremony”, Harper said. The garment was constructed using vintage shiromuku, traditional Japanese ceremonial garments created to mark important moments in people’s lives. — AFP



The festival aimed to promote locally grown grapes as a high-value seasonal crop

GRAPE HARVEST SEASON BEGINS IN AL AWABI VINEYARDS



Visitors explored traditional aflaj-irrigated farms and green mountain vineyards, received grape seedlings and experienced the village’s rural cafés.

KABEER YOUSUF @KABIYUSEF

THE air drifting through Jalb in Al Alya Village, the Wilayat of Al Awabi, Al Batinah South Governorate, carried the scent of ripening grapes, newly ploughed soil, freshly cut leaves and grass. Before sunrise, following the Fajr prayers, farmers gathered at their vineyards to begin the grape harvest before the summer heat became too intense. After the morning’s usual banter, they set to work picking grapes from farms stretching across the village’s lush mountain landscape. By mid-morning, they returned home with the day’s harvest, having completed much of their work before the sun reached its peak. The season was celebrated through the second Al Awabi Grape Festival, held at Jalb Farm in Wadi Bani Kharus under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. The two-day agricultural and eco-tourism event highlighted Al Awabi’s grape-growing heritage, promoted locally grown produce and encouraged domestic rural tourism. Among those in attendance were Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage;

Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South; Colonel Nasser bin Saud al Riyami; and Ishaq bin Salem al Rawahi, Wali of Al Awabi. The festival aimed to promote locally grown grapes as a high-value seasonal crop, while encouraging farmers to expand cultivation and adopt modern production techniques. “This Grape Festival, celebrated for the second time in a row, is where farmers from across Oman display the fruits of their labour — a wide variety of fresh local grapes and agricultural products — for the public”, said Ammar al Bahri, one of the organisers and proprietor of Jalb Café. “We were expecting no less than 5,000 to 6,000 kilos of crop this year”, he added. Al Bahri said the festival served as a platform for farmers to showcase their produce, exchange expertise and strengthen Al Awabi’s reputation as one of Oman’s leading agricultural and heritage destinations. The event also supported farmers and small businesses by connecting them directly with consumers. The accompanying agricultural market featured exhibitors from across the Sultanate of Oman, offering grape varieties and value-added grape products alongside seasonal fruits, Omani honey, sidr products, natural soaps and handmade rural goods

produced by local families. Visitors explored traditional aflaj-irrigated farms and green mountain vineyards, received grape seedlings and experienced the village’s rural cafés. Stalls selling Omani honey, handicrafts and local food added to the festival atmosphere. Beyond its cultural value, the grape harvest had a growing economic and tourism impact. Around 4,000 kilos of Omani grapes were exported annually, while the harvest season attracted visitors from within Oman and abroad to Al Awabi’s villages and farms. Speaking at the festival, Ishaq bin Salem al Rawahi, Wali of Al Awabi, said the event reflected growing national interest in supporting agriculture and empowering farmers to improve production methods. He noted that the festival contributed to Oman’s food security goals by encouraging increased local agricultural production, sustainability and self-sufficiency. The event also provided a platform for productive families, including the Omani Women’s Corner in Al Awabi and the Al Awabi Charity Team. They displayed traditional foods and handicrafts, while the programme included heritage performances, seminars on modern farming, children’s activities and live tastings of grape-based products.

FEATURES

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

AS the summer wind strengthens across Masirah Island, more kitesurfers, windsurfers and wing foilers are arriving to take advantage of one of the region’s most consistent wind seasons, as Oman continues to strengthen its reputation as an emerging adventure tourism destination.

Accommodation providers and instructors say visitor numbers have been increasing in recent weeks as adventure tourists from Europe and the Gulf make their way to the island. While some say overall numbers remain slightly below last year’s levels, something many attribute to ongoing geopolitical tensions affecting international travel, confidence remains high as more riders continue to arrive, with many choosing to stay for several weeks to make the most of the reliable conditions.

For many first-time visitors, Masirah has exceeded expectations. Drawn by its reliable winds, they have discovered an untouched paradise of wide sandy beaches, turquoise waters and uncrowded riding spots, offering an experience that is becoming increasingly difficult to find in more established wind sports destinations.

Unlike many popular kitesurfing locations around the world, Masirah remains largely unspoilt, allowing riders to enjoy long sessions on the water without crowded beaches or busy launch areas. The island’s natural setting, combined with warm temperatures and consistent winds generated by the southwest monsoon, has made it one of the Middle East’s best-kept secrets among the international kitesurfing community.

Marta, who travels annually from Dubai to spend the season in Masirah teaching kitesurfing and offering yoga sessions, said this year’s conditions arrived earlier than expected.

“The season actually started earlier than usual”, she said. “The wind conditions we had in May felt more like June, so we had excellent conditions from the beginning. Now the wind is becoming more consistent, more people are arriving and it’s exciting to see what the rest of the season brings”.

She said Masirah continues to attract visitors not only because of its reliable wind but also because of its peaceful setting, where riders can combine long days on the water with a slower pace of life, reconnect with nature and enjoy a close-knit international community that returns to the island every summer.

Visitors say the atmosphere is unlike many commercialised destinations, with people from different countries gathering on the beach each afternoon to share sessions, exchange experiences and introduce newcomers to the sport. For many, the appeal extends well beyond the wind itself, creating a lifestyle centred on the outdoors and the simplicity of island life.

Driven by the southwest monsoon, Masirah’s wind season attracts everyone from beginners learning the sport to experienced riders seeking long, uninterrupted sessions in open water. The seasonal influx of visitors also provides an important boost to local guesthouses, restaurants, transport providers and small businesses while supporting Oman’s growing adventure tourism sector.

As colourful kites fill the skies above the island once again, Masirah is reinforcing its reputation as one of the Middle East’s leading destinations for wind sports. With the season now gathering momentum, riders believe the island’s combination of consistent wind, unspoilt natural beauty and relaxed atmosphere will continue attracting returning visitors while introducing a new generation of adventure travellers to one of Oman’s most remarkable coastal destinations.

MASIRAH 'S KITESURFING SEASON TAKES OFF AS WINDS RETURN

Steady monsoon winds are drawing kitesurfers, windsurfers and wing foilers to Masirah Island, where reliable conditions, pristine beaches and a laid-back atmosphere are cementing its reputation as one of the Middle East’s fastest-growing adventure tourism destinations.

Driven by the southwest monsoon, Masirah’s wind season attracts everyone from beginners learning the sport to experienced riders seeking long, uninterrupted sessions in open water.