

OMAN

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IN BRIEF

HM GREETES JORDAN KING, PORTUGAL PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of greetings to King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of Jordan on the anniversary of his accession to the throne. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to King Abdullah and the people of his country. His Majesty prayed to Allah the Almighty to return this occasion while they realise further progress and prosperity. His Majesty the Sultan has sent a cable of greetings to President António José Seguro of the Portuguese Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes to Portugal for continuous progress and prosperity. — ONA

MINISTER HOLDS MEETING WITH GOVERNORS



Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, with HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, in Muscat on Tuesday.

MUSCAT: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, convened a meeting with Governors on Tuesday. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the ministry. Sayyid Hamoud opened the meeting by welcoming the governors and lauding their efforts in following up and advancing the course of local development. The minister stressed the importance of continuing these efforts. **REPORT ON P2**

FIGHTING EBOLA



Caregivers of Berlin's Virchow clinic wearing full protective gear undergo final decontamination before exiting the Ebola isolation ward in Berlin, Germany, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Sayyid Theyazin chairman of International Financial Centre of Oman



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued a Royal Order appointing the members of the Board of Directors of the International Financial Centre of Oman (IFCO), a pivotal step in the Centre's establishment that reflects His Majesty's commitment to enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's position on the global financial map. The Board shall be chaired by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs. Its members

include a distinguished group of leaders and senior experts from government, financial, regulatory and international sectors: Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance as Deputy Chairman; Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority; Ahmed bin Ja'afar al Musallami, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman; Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Awaini; Mulham bin Basheer al Jarf; and an independent international expert. **TURN TO P2**

TRUMP SAYS PEACE DEAL WITH IRAN SOON

Israel strikes Tyre after evacuation orders, the first time it had done so for the city

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said negotiations over a peace deal to end the Middle East war were in their final stages, after Iran and Israel halted attacks that threatened to reignite the months-long conflict. Iran fired missiles at Israel on Sunday in response to strikes against Lebanon's Hezbollah in the southern suburbs of Beirut, before Israel struck back despite Trump's efforts to dissuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from doing so. The Israeli leader said that the "fire on that front is contained" hours after Tehran said it had stopped its military action, while both sides warned they could resume hostilities despite diplomatic efforts gathering pace. Iran and Israel "were going back and forth and now they both agreed through me to stop and we're in the final throes of what will be a very, very good deal," the US leader told reporters on his return from an NBA Finals game. When asked whether a deal would be a matter of days or weeks, he said it would take "two or three days." The flare-up came after weeks of negotiations seeking to bring about



Children sit in the bed of a pickup truck waiting in traffic, as people fleeing from Tyre in southern Lebanon after Israel's evacuation warning seek refuge in Sidon, on Tuesday. — AFP

Trump, who has reportedly grown increasingly exasperated with Netanyahu, had earlier urged both sides to stop "shooting".

a definitive end to the regional war sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, with Tehran insisting a halt to the conflict must include a truce in Lebanon. Trump, who has reportedly grown increasingly exasperated with Netanyahu, had earlier urged both sides to stop "shooting".

US Vice-President JD Vance said on Monday that while the United States and Israel shared interests, their positions did not always align. "The Israelis and the United States, we have a lot of shared interests," Vance said. "But we also have some situations where our interests diverge." In the recent escalation of attacks, Iran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel, according to the Israeli military, while Israel struck military sites in the Islamic republic. Iranian state media reported on Tuesday that two members of the "Army Air Defence Force" were killed in Israeli strikes a day earlier. No casualties were reported in Israel following the exchange. And despite Iranian demands, Israel has kept up its attacks on Lebanon, where it is fighting Hezbollah. On Tuesday, Lebanese state media reported an Israeli strike on the southern city of Tyre after the Israeli military urged residents to evacuate, the first time it had done so for the entire city and its surrounding areas. "Enemy warplanes launched a heavy strike on Tyre," the state-run National News Agency said. — AFP

UN warns heat waves could pose risk as World Cup begins tomorrow

BONN: Severe heat waves could affect the 2026 World Cup, scheduled to be held in the United States, Mexico and Canada, as rising temperatures driven by climate change continue to intensify, the UN Climate Change Secretariat has warned. This World Cup will feature a record 104 matches spread across 16 host cities. The global event will run from the opening match in Mexico on June 11 (Thursday) to the final on July 19, in New York. Speaking at the start of the

climate conference in Bonn, the secretariat said the tournament will take place under exceptional weather conditions that could impact both players and fans, inside stadiums and in surrounding areas and host cities. Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said rising temperatures are posing a growing challenge to sports and daily life, noting that the effects of climate change extend to many sectors, including food security and the



Supporters put up a cutout of Lionel Messi next to one of Cristiano Ronaldo in Kozhikode, India, on Tuesday. — Reuters

economy. The secretariat noted that some matches may be played in extremely hot conditions, requiring preventive measures to protect fans and mitigate heat-related risks. Meanwhile, Iran's football federation says its allocation of tickets for fans to attend the World Cup group fixtures has been withdrawn just days ahead of the start of the tournament. Following tensions during the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Iran moved its squad training base from Tucson, Arizona, to Tijuana in Mexico,

while the federation also said some members of backroom staff had been denied entry into the United States. The team, who have themselves been given strict visa conditions, are set to fly in and out of the United States for each of their three Group G games, against New Zealand and Belgium — both held in Los Angeles — and Egypt in Seattle. Under Fifa guidelines, each participating federation receives 8 per cent of tickets for each of the games to be available for its own supporters. — Agencies

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

Sayyid Theyazin chairman of International Financial Centre of Oman

FROM PAGE 1

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, said the Royal confidence placed by His Majesty the Sultan in appointing the Board reflects the importance of this strategic national project as a cornerstone of Oman Vision 2040 and a contributor to a diversified, competitive economy open to global opportunities.

The Centre aspires to become a leading international financial destination for companies and investors, a trusted, innovative hub for business and investment that creates sustainable value for the national economy, HH Sayyid Theyazin added. It will leverage Oman's unique competitive advantages to enhance value for investors and operating companies, and help cement Oman's position as an attractive

The Centre aspires to become a leading international financial destination for companies and investors, a trusted, innovative hub for business and investment that creates sustainable value for the national economy

investment and business destination regionally and internationally.

Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and Deputy Chairman of the Board, said the Centre represents an integrated strategic national project that bridges long-term national vision with global standards of institutional integrity. Through sound governance and reliable regulation, the Centre will send clear signals of confidence to global investors and strengthen

Oman's position as a trusted destination for capital.

The Board will oversee the completion of legislative, regulatory and operational frameworks, provide strategic direction, and establish a governance system based on integrity, transparency and accountability — reinforcing international confidence in the Centre and paving the way for the initial launch of its operations by the end of 2026.

The International Financial Centre of Oman is a legally and legislatively independent financial centre established under Royal Decree No 8/2026. It operates under a legal framework based on common law principles and consists of three bodies: the Authority of the International Financial Centre of Oman, the Regulatory Authority of the International Financial Centre of Oman, and the Centre's Dispute Resolution Authority.

The Centre's establishment is aligned with Oman Vision 2040, contributing to economic diversification, the development of the financial services sector, and consolidating Oman's position as a trusted platform connecting Gulf, South Asian and East African markets in line with the highest international standards.

MINISTER OF INTERIOR MEETS WITH GOVERNORS

MUSCAT: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, convened a meeting on Tuesday with the Governors. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the ministry.

Sayyid Hamoud opened the meeting by welcoming the governors and lauding their efforts in following up and advancing the course of local development. He stressed the importance of continuing these efforts.

The meeting addressed several items on its agenda, most notably His Majesty the Sultan's Award for Governorates Development, which is scheduled to be launched in the near



The meeting addressed several items on its agenda, most notably His Majesty the Sultan's Award for Governorates Development. — ONA

future.
In view of the Royal attention

accorded by His Majesty to social stability through the establishment

of marriage support funds in the governorates, the Minister of Interior emphasised the need to assess the previous period, review the progress of these funds and track their performance indicators. This, he noted, will help achieve the noble objectives sought from them in the next phase.

The meeting's agenda also included a review of the annual plans of the municipal councils in the governorates and ways to improve them, in a manner that enhances the efficiency of municipal work and contributes to the realisation of development targets. — ONA

Shura discusses legislative and developmental issues

THE Majlis Ash'shura discussed a number of legislative, oversight and developmental topics during its twenty-first regular session of the third ordinary sitting of the tenth term.

The items included the proposed draft law on sanctions and alternative penal measures, as well as the unified draft law on volunteer work in the GCC countries. The session was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura.

The session's agenda included a briefing by the members on several draft laws and agreements referred to the Council by the government. This forms part of the ongoing legislative procedures undertaken in accordance with the provisions and regulations of the Council of Oman Law.

During the session, the Council was also briefed on the draft environmental law. This draft seeks to develop the legislative system governing environmental protection and natural resource conservation, reinforce the requirements of sustainable development, and respond to emerging environmental issues and challenges associated with climate change and biodiversity preservation.

The session also addressed the briefing on the draft agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the



The session's agenda included a briefing by the members on several draft laws and agreements referred to the Council by the government. — ONA

The items included the proposed draft law on sanctions and alternative penal measures, as well as the unified draft law on volunteer work in the GCC countries

Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the elimination of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and the prevention of tax evasion.

The session also featured a discussion of the report submitted by the Economic and Financial Committee concerning the expressed interest regarding the assessment of the status of local industries in the Sultanate of Oman.

The session further included

a discussion of the report of the Committee on Education Research and Innovation concerning the expressed interest regarding the expansion of public-private partnership in the areas of early childhood education and the care of academically outstanding students, gifted students, and students with disabilities.

The session was attended by the members of the Council and the Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura. — ONA

Electoral register key to Municipal Council, civic engagement

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

The Ministry of Interior has called on eligible citizens to register in the electoral register for the Municipal Councils elections, underscoring the register's role as a cornerstone of the electoral process and an essential tool for ensuring broad public participation in local governance.

Malik bin Mohammed al Hinai, Head of Electronic Electoral Programmes and Systems at the Electoral Affairs Department of the Ministry of Interior, said that the electoral register contains the data of eligible voters and their designated polling centres, serving as the primary reference for organising and administering elections efficiently and transparently.

Speaking on the importance of voter registration, Al Hinai noted that citizens wishing to participate in the upcoming Municipal Councils elections are encouraged to register their details through the ministry's electronic platforms to secure their

eligibility to vote on the designated polling day.

"The electoral register is a vital component of the electoral process as it includes voters' information and their assigned polling locations. We encourage all eligible citizens to take the initiative and register through the electronic portal so they can participate in the voting process," he said.

He highlighted the ministry's continued efforts to simplify electoral procedures through digital solutions, enabling citizens who meet the legal requirements to complete registration quickly and conveniently.

Eligible voters can access the online registration platform using either their civil identification number or an authenticated mobile number. Once logged in, their personal information and electoral data linked to their registered wilayat will automatically appear, allowing them to complete the registration process in less than a minute.



Al Hinai also pointed to the 'Intikhab' mobile application, available across major smartphone operating systems, as one of the ministry's key digital services. The application provides a range of election-related services, including voter registration, access to electoral information and other services designed to facilitate citizen engagement in the electoral process.

"The ministry is committed to leveraging technology to make electoral services more accessible and user-friendly. Through both

the online portal and the Intikhab application, citizens can easily register and verify their electoral information from anywhere and at any time," he said.

Emphasising the significance of voter registration, Al Hinai described enrolment in the electoral register as a fundamental step in enabling citizens to play an active role in the democratic process and contribute to the development of their local communities.

He explained that Municipal Councils serve as an important platform for discussing developmental priorities, public services and community needs across the Sultanate of Oman's governorates and wilayats. As such, citizens' participation in electing council members contributes directly to strengthening local governance and supporting sustainable development efforts.

Regarding eligibility requirements, Al Hinai stated that voters must be at least 21 years old during the election year and

fulfil all legal conditions stipulated under the electoral regulations. He urged citizens to ensure that their information is registered and updated within the specified timeframe to avoid missing the opportunity to participate.

The official also reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to safeguarding voter information and maintaining the highest standards of data protection. He noted that the electronic systems supporting electoral services have been developed using approved software solutions and advanced security measures designed to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of voter data.

Al Hinai called on all citizens who meet the eligibility criteria to complete their registration before the deadline and actively participate in the Municipal Councils elections. He also encouraged members of the public to contribute ideas and proposals that support the development of municipal services and community initiatives.

SHORT TAKES



The initiative aims to empower entrepreneurs and startup owners to pitch their projects. — ONA

RIYADA INITIATIVE
SEEKS TO EMPOWER
SMEs in AL WUSTA

AL DUQM: The SMEs Development Authority “Riyada” department in Al Wusta Governorate, in cooperation with the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), implemented an initiative titled “Riyada Deal”.

The initiative aims to empower entrepreneurs and startup owners to pitch their projects and products to potential investors and partners in Duqm.

During the event, which saw the participation of approximately 38 individuals — including entrepreneurs, startup owners, investors, and representatives from public and private entities — six visual presentations were delivered to investors in Al Wusta Governorate. Consequently, several entities expressed interest in collaborating on these ideas and turning them into reality on the ground.

The event was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). — ONA

SEMINAR DISCUSSES
SUSTAINABLE
FOOD SECURITY



It seeks to build sustainable partnerships between farmers and national factories. — ONA

SUHAR: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in the Al Batinah North Governorate, represented by the Food Security Committee, organised a seminar on Tuesday titled “From Farm to Factory” under the slogan “A Sustainable Food Future.” The event was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture.

Dr Ali bin Mohammed al Hamdi, Chairman of the Food Security Committee at the Chamber’s branch in Al Batinah North, stated that the seminar stems from the committee’s keenness to enhance integration between the agricultural and industrial sectors.

It seeks to build sustainable partnerships between farmers and national factories in a manner that supports the food security system. He pointed out the importance of enhancing direct communication between producers and manufacturers, encouraging reliance on local products, and developing supply chains to achieve sustainability and efficiency. — ONA

85% of Al Mughsail road project complete, traffic to open in July

SALALAH: Al Mughsail Road and Bridge construction project in the Wilayat of Salalah has reached 85 per cent completion, with traffic on the road and bridge expected to open in early July 2026. This will improve traffic flow, enhance access to key tourist destinations, and strengthen logistical connectivity in Dhofar Governorate.

Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, stated that Al Mughsail Road and Bridge project is among the vital initiatives to which the ministry



Al Mughsail project is among the vital initiatives to which the ministry has devoted special attention. — ONA

has devoted special attention, given its qualitative contribution to the governorate’s road network. He

affirmed the ministry’s commitment to ensuring the project integrates engineering and aesthetic elements

State Council’s Office discusses government performance

MUSCAT: The State Council’s Office on Tuesday held the 5th meeting of its 3rd annual sitting during the Eighth Term. Held under the auspices of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, the meeting discussed studies on developing government performance and entrepreneurship.

The discussion included a study submitted by the Council’s Economic and Financial Committee on developing a Government Performance Management System in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The study deals with developing the government planning methodology, devising an integrated institutional framework for performance management, enhancing the efficiency of spending, augmenting productivity,



The meeting discussed studies on developing government performance and entrepreneurship. — ONA

achieving sustainability and improving the quality of government services. The study was presented by Dr Dhafir bin

Awadh al Shanfari, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee, and Mohammed bin Hassan al Shuhhi, Rapporteur of the Committee.

The State Council’s Office also reviewed a study titled “Analysis of the Business Environment in the Sultanate of Oman, Practical Steps to Promote Entrepreneurship”.

The study, submitted by the Council’s Special Committee, aims to assess the current status of the business environment across various sectors and establishments.

The study outlined the main challenges facing business establishments and entrepreneurs. It was presented by Abbas bin Ali al Humaid, Chairman of the Special Committee, and Mohammed bin Abu Bakr al Ghassani, Rapporteur of the Committee. — ONA

Call for caution as heat
wave sweeps north Oman

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

WITH northern Oman experiencing a slew of heatwaves, people have been advised to take precaution as experts warn of its occupational health hazards in the wake of the recent categorisation of heatwaves by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an important environmental and occupational health hazard.

The number of people exposed to extreme heat is growing exponentially due to climate change across the world. Heat-related mortality for people over 65 years of age increased by approximately 85 per cent between 2021 till date and between 2000–2019 studies show approximately 489, 000 heat-related deaths occurred each year, with 45 per cent of these in Asia and 36 per cent in Europe.

High intensity heatwave events can bring high acute mortality; in just one year, 70,000 people in Europe died as a result of the June–August event. Over the year, excess deaths occurred during a 44-day heatwave in the Russian Federation.

Vulnerability to heat is shaped by both physiological factors, such as age and health status, and exposure factors such as occupation and socio-economic conditions.

“By and large, the negative health impacts of heat are predictable and largely preventable with specific public health and multi-sectoral policies and interventions. WHO has issued guidance for public health institutions to identify and manage extreme heat risks. Action on climate change combined with comprehensive preparedness and risk management can save lives now and in the future,” a statement from the WHO said.

In the Sultanate of Oman, heatwave is a period where local excess heat accumulates over a sequence of unusually hot days and nights. However, since heat waves and prolonged excess heat conditions are increasing in frequency, duration, intensity and magnitude due to climate change. Even low and moderate intensity heat waves can impact the health and well-being of the vulnerable people. With temperatures rising during the summer months, it is important



The best way to survive a heat wave is to avoid strenuous outdoor activities during peak sunlight hours.

to take precautions against heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

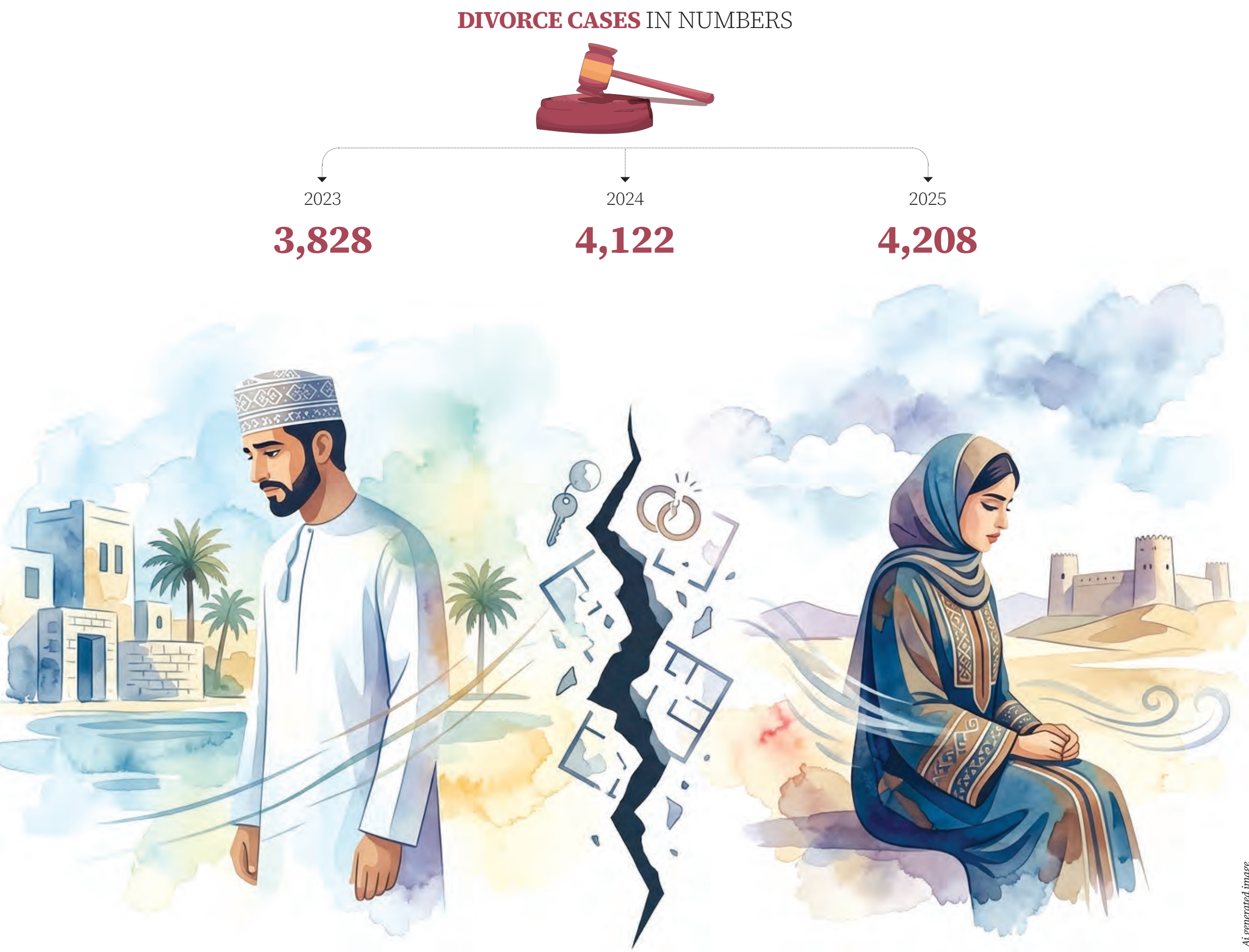
“The best way to survive a heat wave is to avoid strenuous outdoor activities during peak sunlight hours and to stay hydrated by drinking water consistently,” advises Dr Mahamood al Rahbi, Head of Emergencies at the Ministry of Health, adding that certain drinks should be avoided or intake reduced as they can backfire and they include alcohol, caffeine (coffee, tea, soda), and high-sugar beverages, as these will dehydrate your body faster.

“Also, never leave children, elderly individuals, or pets in parked vehicles. If someone develops dizziness, headache, nausea, confusion, excessive fatigue, or

loses consciousness after heat exposure, seek immediate medical attention, as these may be signs of heat stroke — a medical emergency that requires prompt treatment. Stay safe, stay hydrated and take extra care during periods of extreme heat”, adds Dr Al Rahbi.

To keep everyone at home safe from heatstroke, efforts should be made to keep the living space cool by closing curtains in the daytime and opening windows at night. Never leave anyone or pets in a parked vehicle for any reason and suggest water-rich, cooling foods like cucumbers, melons and citrus fruits for the family. Avoid heavy meals such as hot protein-heavy dishes that increase metabolic heat, according to the doctor.

SPOTLIGHT



COUNSELLING KEY TO STABLE FAMILY LIFE

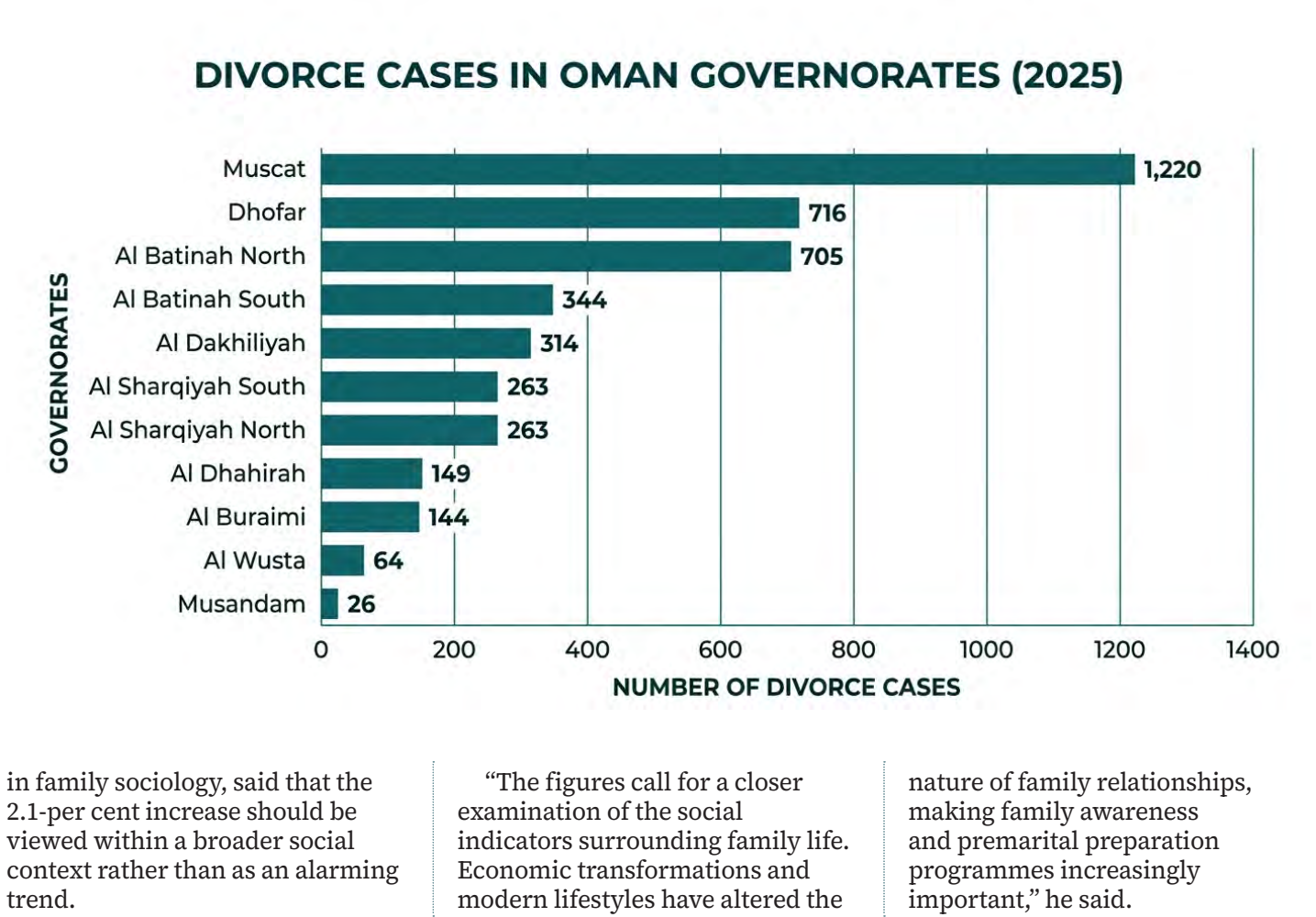
Social specialists noted that the increase in divorce cases, although modest, reflects a combination of social and economic factors that continue to influence family life

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

THE number of divorces in Oman increased to 4,208 cases in 2025, which represents a 2.1-per cent rise from the 4,122 cases recorded in 2024. The figures show that Muscat Governorate recorded the highest share of divorce cases, accounting for 28.9 per cent of the total divorces during the year. Dhofar followed with 17 per cent, while the remaining cases were distributed across other governorates.

Social specialists noted that the increase, although modest, reflects a combination of social and economic factors that continue to influence family life. Financial pressures, communication challenges between spouses and changing social dynamics are among the factors often associated with marital disputes and family breakdowns.

Dr Abdulla bin Said, a specialist



He added that investment in family counselling services and educational initiatives can play a significant role in promoting marital stability and helping couples navigate challenges more effectively.

Family counsellor Maryam bint Abdullah al Rashdi said many marital disputes could be resolved before reaching the stage of separation if couples sought professional guidance at an early stage.

“Constructive dialogue, mutual understanding and shared responsibility remain key pillars of a successful marriage. Early intervention and access to counselling services can help couples address challenges before they escalate,” she said.

She emphasised the importance of expanding awareness programmes targeting young people preparing for marriage, noting that such initiatives contribute to a better understanding of marital responsibilities and family values.

SHORT TAKES

‘SAVE A LIFE, NOT A BAG’ SAFETY CAMPAIGN TAKES OFF

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has announced the launch of ‘Save a Life, Not a Bag’, a passenger safety campaign urging travellers not to take cabin baggage during an aircraft evacuation. Supported by aviation safety regulators, including the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the campaign reinforces what passengers must do when instructed to evacuate for their safety and the safety of all on board: follow crew instructions, leave all baggage behind, and move quickly to the nearest usable exit.

“Taking bags during an evacuation is not a minor issue. Every second matters and even taking one bag can affect the safe evacuation of everyone onboard. Crew instructions are clear and simple: leave everything behind and move quickly. ‘Save a Life, Not a Bag’ is a message that passengers need to understand and act upon,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director-General.

Speaking to the Observer, Sunil D’souza, CEO of ONIEC travel group, said it is a timely initiative that aims at saving lives in the event of evacuation.

“During evacuation, every fraction of a second matters, and anyone attempting to grab his or her cabin baggage would result in the loss of lives as one would be obstructing the others who will be running for life,” said D’souza.

“The baggage would block the aisle, resulting in metering others from saving lives, and hence, baggage should be given the least priority in such events, and IATA must be initiating such a statement in light of past such experiences,” added D’souza. The campaign responds to the growing number of cases where travellers have stopped to collect their baggage or take photos during aircraft evacuations. Evidence of this is seen in many videos posted online. Valuable seconds can be lost when retrieving baggage from overhead bins. Carrying bags can cause people to fall or damage the slides that all passengers need to use. Most concerningly, some passengers have been seen attempting to evacuate while carrying both infants and bags or other personal items, compromising safety at a critical moment.

“Rapid evacuation in an emergency situation saves lives. Aircraft are certified to stringent evacuation standards, and crews are trained extensively for emergency situations, to make sure every single passenger has the best possible chance of survival in an acute situation. For this to work in a real emergency, all passengers must play their part too. And it is very simple: follow crew instructions, leave all baggage behind and move quickly to the nearest usable exit.

LABORATORY TO SUPPORT ORGAN TRANSPLANT PROGRAMMES

MUSCAT: The Histocompatibility Laboratory was inaugurated at the National Genetic Centre in the Royal Hospital. This move marks a step that enhances the capacity of the healthcare system in the Sultanate of Oman to support organ transplant programmes and develop advanced diagnostic laboratory services aligned with the latest international standards.

The laboratory’s launch coincides with the addition of immunological compatibility testing using flow cytometry technology to the histocompatibility services now



The laboratory’s launch coincides with the addition of immunological compatibility testing using flow cytometry technology. — ONA

offered within the Sultanate of Oman. This test ranks among the most advanced examinations used to assess immunological compatibility between donor and recipient prior to organ transplant procedures.

Histocompatibility tests have been available in the Sultanate of Oman for years; however, compatibility testing using flow cytometry technology was previously conducted in laboratories outside the country, necessitating the sending of samples abroad to obtain results.

With the operation of the new laboratory, all histocompatibility tests — including immunological compatibility testing using flow cytometry technology — can now be performed locally and for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman.

This development is expected to accelerate the assessment process for organ transplant cases, reduce waiting times for results, enhance the efficiency of medical decision-making, and lower the operational costs associated with sending samples outside the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Thamrait, Marmul ideal for green hydrogen projects

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

AS the world accelerates its transition towards renewable energy sources, the Sultanate of Oman is emerging as a key regional player with highly ambitious plans for clean energy development, particularly in wind energy and green hydrogen. Leveraging its strategic location and unique desert climate, Oman offers a natural open-air laboratory for developing innovative energy solutions suited to arid environments.

Against this backdrop, a research team from Sultan Qaboos University, led by Dr Naveed Nasiri from the College of Engineering, has conducted a comprehensive study assessing the potential of converting Oman’s wind resources into green hydrogen. The research addresses a critical knowledge gap linking renewable energy generation with hydrogen production technologies.

The study went beyond theoretical analysis, employing detailed simulations across 14 geographical locations in Oman and utilising advanced statistical tools to evaluate wind energy resources. This rigorous scientific approach enabled the researchers to assess the efficiency of each site and its capacity to generate reliable clean energy, while providing objective comparisons based not only on wind speeds but also on economic viability and



The research addresses a critical knowledge gap linking renewable energy generation with hydrogen production technologies.

levels of reliability and consistency, thereby significantly enhancing the prospects for successful green hydrogen projects in Oman.

The significance of the research extends beyond economic returns to encompass substantial environmental benefits. Such projects could play a pivotal role in reducing carbon emissions on a large scale. Estimates indicate that a site such as Thamrait alone could help prevent the release of thousands of tonnes of carbon emissions annually. This tangible environmental impact supports the government’s climate commitments, particularly those outlined in Oman Vision 2040, which places sustainability at the forefront of national priorities and seeks to achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050. In this context, green hydrogen represents not only a promising economic opportunity but also a strategic pillar for enhancing future energy security and reducing the nation’s carbon footprint.

While highlighting these opportunities, the study also acknowledges the challenges associated with desert environments, particularly water scarcity for electrolysis processes and logistical constraints in remote areas. To address these issues, the research team proposed innovative solutions, including integrating wind farms with alternative water sources and strengthening supporting infrastructure. These recommendations lay the foundation for a comprehensive renewable energy model tailored to arid regions.

Tender Notice for the purchase of used light vehicles, light equipment, and used/unused project materials.

Al Watanyiah United Engineering and Contracting Co. LLC hereby announce following Tenders for the purchase of used light vehicles, light equipment and used/unused project materials, as described in the table below, on an “as is, where is” basis. Those wishing to submit Bids must obtain the Tender documents from the Company's Head Office (HO) in Ghala Industrial Area after paying the specified Tender Fee in the Company's Bank Dhofar account: 01040605344006 (IBAN NO: OM080250001040605344006).

S. No.	Tender No.	Description	Location	Tender Fee Inc. VAT 5% (﷮)	Earnest Money Deposit (﷮)	Period for purchase of Tender	Last date for submission of offer
1	AW/T/ PH3/ 01/2026	For the purchase of 80 no. used light vehicles (3 Ton Trucks, Saloon cars, Pickups, Buses, Station Wagons).	Ghala/ Barka Yard	75/-	10% of the submitted offer	10/06/2026 To 23/06/2026	30/06/2026 5.00 PM
2	AW/T/ PH3/ 02/2026	For the purchase of 157 no. used light equipment (3 Ton Tandem Rollers, 2 Ton Dumpers, Generators, Skid Steer Loaders etc).	Ghala/ Barka Yard	50/-	10% of the submitted offer	10/06/2026 To 23/06/2026	30/06/2026 5.00 PM
3	AW/T/ PH3/ 03/2026	For the purchase of used / unused M.S., G.I. items, HDPE, PVC, UPVC, D.I. pipes & fittings, D.I.manhole covers, RCC pipes, items for High Tension electrical work, building materials, furniture, water tanks, etc.	Ghala/ Barka Yard	25/-	10% of the submitted offer	10/06/2026 To 23/06/2026	30/06/2026 5.00 PM

- The last date for submission of offers accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 10%) of the total offered value is on 30/06/2026, 5 PM, detailed date on the above table.
- The EMD must be valid for 30 days from the last date of submission of offer and the original EMD along with the offer must be submitted in the tender box at the reception of our HO Ghala, Muscat, Oman on or before the date or time mentioned above.
- Contact details: 2450 2581 / 82 - Extn. 149 / 150, GSM: 9294 7637 / 7722 8166

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It’s where buyers meet sellers.

‘Women Leading Technology 2026’ on June 17

Tech Oman, a leading technology community platform, is organising a ‘Women Leading Technology 2026’ dedicated event designed to highlight, promote, recognise, and support women making an impact in Oman’s technology landscape. The event will take place on Tuesday, June 17.

The event is open to the public and will bring together a diverse cross-section of women working in technology roles across industries, including telecommunications, oil and gas, finance, education, and more, spanning both Omanis and expatriate professionals contributing to Oman’s digital future.

Highlights of the event includes keynotes address, panel discussions, and awards.

TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Retenders:-

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
345/2026/MAFWR/HQ-25	MAINTENANCE OF STORAGE DAM IN WADI BAAL HAYAQAN AT WILAYAT RAKHYUT, DHOFAR GOVERNORATE	Tuesday 2/6/2026	Monday 22/6/2026	Sunday 12/7/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
354/2026/MAFWR/HQ-26	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF AIR CONDITIONING EQUIPMENT IN THE FISH MARKET IN BIDBID	Thursday 4/6/2026	Wednesday 24/6/2026	Tuesday 14/7/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board. (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402244 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

US HELICOPTER RESCUED IN STRAIT OF HORMUZ



Smoke rises following an Israeli air strike in Tyre, Lebanon. — AFP

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Tuesday that two US helicopter crew members were “fine” following their rescue by a US Navy drone after their Apache gunship went down in the Iranian-controlled Strait of Hormuz. A US Navy surface drone found and rescued the two crew from the waters of the strait, the US military’s Central Command said. The pair were rescued within about two hours and were in stable condition, Centcom said in a statement.

It was not immediately clear whether the Apache had been shot down by Iranian fire, experienced mechanical failure, or encountered another problem. Asked if he knew what had brought the helicopter down, Trump said a report would be issued later on Tuesday. “The pilots are fine,” Trump said, speaking on the runway at New York’s John F Kennedy International Airport before returning to Washington, DC “Nobody injured.”

Trump also told reporters he might have “an idea” for an Iran deal within a few days, without elaborating. The Republican president, struggling with record low approval ratings as November’s midterm elections approach, has often hinted at an imminent deal with Tehran, but none has yet materialised

IRAN, ISRAEL STOP ATTACKS Iran and Israel said that they had halted attacks on each other after an appeal from Trump, settling back into a tenuous ceasefire announced on April 8. Two Iranian air defence personnel were killed in Israeli strikes, Iran’s military said, and their funerals were due to be held on Tuesday afternoon in Tehran. No deaths were reported in Israel after the Iranian strikes. Oil prices, which had risen on the exchanges of fire, gave up most of their gains on Tuesday after the two sides paused attacks.

Tehran warned, however, that it would resume hostilities if Israel continued to hit Hezbollah in Lebanon. On Tuesday, the Israeli military issued an evacuation order for the Lebanese city of Tyre ahead of possible strikes. The order included the Christian quarter, an area previously excluded from evacuation warnings. The military said Hezbollah were operating there, without providing evidence. Israel’s campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon helped trigger the latest missile exchanges between Iran and Israel - the most direct confrontation since the April ceasefire, complicating Trump’s push to end a

war that the US and Israel launched on February 28. Trump also told reporters he might have “an idea” for an Iran deal within a few days, without elaborating. The Republican president, struggling with record low approval ratings as November’s midterm elections approach, has often hinted at an imminent deal with Tehran, but none has yet materialised. Iran had fired missiles towards Israeli territory late on Sunday, calling the strikes retaliation for attacks on Hezbollah on the outskirts of Beirut. Israel then hit Iranian air defence systems and a petrochemical plant that it said was used to produce ballistic missiles. Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said it retaliated with a strike aimed at a similar Israeli plant in the city of Haifa. US and Israeli officials said Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke. In an interview with Axios, Trump said he had warned the Israeli leader not to return to war with Iran: “I said, ‘Bibi, you better be careful, or you will be on your own very soon.’” Meanwhile, US Energy Secretary Chris Wright said on Tuesday that ship traffic

through the Strait of Hormuz is rising “very meaningfully” as the conflict with Iran continues. “I would say rising very meaningfully,” Wright said when asked how ship traffic is flowing through the Strait compared to a week or two ago. Wright made the remarks during an Atlantic Council conference and added that it would take many months to get back to normal flows of energy once the war is over. Vessel movements on the strait have been largely blocked since US and Israeli strikes on Iran in late February, interrupting around 20 per cent of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies. But some vessels have since begun transiting the narrow waterway bordering Iran, often with transponders turned off and under cover of darkness. Disruptions to normal flows have triggered a surge in global energy prices, upending economies around the world and creating a political vulnerability for US President Donald Trump and his Republican party ahead of midterm elections in November. Washington has been pressing for a peace deal with Tehran that would include a full reopening of the strait. — Reuters

ISRAELI FORCES SHIELD SETTLERS DURING ATTACKS ON PALESTINIANS

GENEVA: Israeli authorities are directly involved in settler attacks that have killed, injured and displaced Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, while Israeli security forces provide protection to settlers, a UN inquiry said on Tuesday. The report by the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory found that Israeli authorities had enabled settler attacks through financial and military support, in a climate of impunity fostered by judicial and law-enforcement bodies. It also found that the Palestinian group Hamas had committed war crimes against both Palestinians and Israelis. The report said Israeli settler attacks on



A man takes cover as Israeli army armoured vehicles, east of Nablus in the West Bank. — AFP

Palestinian villages and agricultural land had surged since 2023, rising by 130 per cent, including incidents involving groups of masked assailants. Israeli security forces routinely accompanied settlers and acted as a shield for the violence, it said. The Israeli mission in Geneva rejected the report’s findings accusing the body of drawing a “false moral equivalence” between Hamas and Israeli civilians and of relying on what it called unsubstantiated allegations. It said Israeli authorities including the president and prime minister had repeatedly condemned violence against Palestinians. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers live

EU proposes 21st package of sanctions against Russia

BRUSSELS: The EU has proposed a 21st package of sanctions against Russia for its war in Ukraine, heavily targeting the country’s banks and crypto networks as well as drone production, oil traders and refiners, EU chief diplomat Kaja Kallas said on Tuesday. The new package will propose listing 170 individuals and entities. These include close to 90 banks — the biggest in one go — and would take the total number of listed banks to over 100, or more than half of Russia’s 213 internationally connected lenders. The banks will come under the full weight of EU sanctions including asset freezes, travel and transaction bans.

Russian companies now uses a broad network of smaller lenders to evade sanctions and continue



An apartment building damaged during overnight Russian drone strikes in the town of Chuhuiv in Kharkiv region, Ukraine. — Reuters

trading. “We intend to deal a heavy blow to Russia’s financial sector, imposing assets freezes on close to 90 banks and additional transactions bans on over 30 banks in Russia and other third countries,” Kallas said in a post on X. An EU diplomatic source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the aim was to weaken Russia’s financial system and incentivise Moscow to negotiate a peace deal with Ukraine.

Russian economic growth slowed sharply to just 1 per cent last year, from 4.9 per cent in 2024, which officials blamed on high interest rates, Western sanctions and a strong rouble. Influential Russian think tank TsMAKP has repeatedly warned of a looming banking crisis, which the central bank denies. — Reuters

Israel keeps deadly strikes on Lebanon, killing 8

TYRE: Lebanon’s health ministry said an Israeli air strike on Tyre killed at least eight people on Tuesday, with the Israeli military warning the entire city to evacuate shortly after the strike. Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported raids on more than a dozen other locations across the country’s south, as Israel pressed on with its war against Hezbollah. It is acting despite a warning the day before from Iran that it would resume attacking Israel if it continued striking its neighbour. Tehran insists that Lebanon must be part of any deal to end the wider Middle East war, which Hezbollah dragged Lebanon into on March 2 by attacking Israel in support of its backer Iran.

A correspondent saw residents of Tyre, including from the Christian quarter, fleeing and heavy traffic heading north after the Israeli

A correspondent saw residents of Tyre, including from the Christian quarter, fleeing and heavy traffic heading north after the Israeli

warning. Another correspondent in the coastal city of Sidon, further north, saw displaced people arriving from Tyre, some with belongings hastily strapped to the roof of their cars.

Israel has repeatedly struck the city of Tyre since the latest war erupted with Hezbollah, following a rocket fire at Israel on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran’s supreme leader. But until Tuesday, Tyre’s Christian quarter in the Old City — a small, picturesque area where displaced people had also sought refuge — had been spared Israeli evacuation warnings targeting the rest of the city in the ongoing war. “Urgent warning to the residents of the city of Tyre, including the Christian quarter, and the camps and surrounding neighbourhoods,” the Israeli army warning on X read, referring to several Palestinian refugee camps in the area.

“For your safety, we ask you to immediately evacuate your homes... and move north of the Zahrani River.” The Zahrani river is around 30 kilometres north of Tyre. The Israeli army last month declared all areas south of the river “combat zones”.

The NNA reported an Israeli strike on Tyre’s outskirts before the evacuation notice was issued, and further strikes on the city later in the day after the warning. The health ministry said the pre-warning strike killed at least eight people and wounded 32 others, with rescuers still searching rubble for survivors. Hezbollah has also kept up its attacks on Israeli troops who have invaded south Lebanon.

The Israeli army on Tuesday said its forces killed a gunman who had managed to infiltrate Israeli territory from Lebanon and opened fire on its troops. — AFP



Children sit in the bed of a pickup truck waiting in traffic, as people fleeing from Tyre in southern Lebanon. — AFP

among millions of Palestinians on land Israel captured in a 1967 war. Most countries consider such settlements a violation of international law, a position upheld in a 2024 ruling by the UN’s top court. Israel disputes this, citing historical and biblical ties to the land. At least seven Palestinians were killed and 832 injured last year, with violence continuing into 2026 in the form of near-daily attacks, according to the United Nations. “The increasing participation of Israeli security forces in settler attacks amounts to a de facto collapse of the distinction between settlers and soldiers,” the report found. It said such violence has been used to advance state policy, including the

unlawful occupation, displacement of Palestinians and the annexation of Palestinian territory. The commission documented cases of assaults, abductions and abuse of Palestinian children by settlers. In one incident on April 19, 2025, a 12-year-old girl and her three-year-old brother were abducted at knifepoint, dragged to an olive grove and tied to a tree with plastic restraints until their family intervened. The Commission also said settlers committed or threatened sexual violence to instil fear, and harassed Palestinian women. “The relentless, daily assaults by Israeli settlers against Palestinians are intolerable - and must end,” said the commission’s head, S Muralidhar, an Indian

former senior judge. He urged the international community to press Israel to dismantle settlements and outposts and curb the violence. Despite periodic condemnations and the dismantling of some unauthorised outposts, Israeli authorities have not taken sustained measures to stop the attacks, the report said. Wassel Abu Yousef, a member of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the body the UN recognises as representing Palestinians, said that the report “reflects the extent of the violence perpetrated by settlers against our people”. He called for measures such as sanctions in response. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



MEDIATION EFFORTS

PAKISTAN, LEBANON ARMY CHIEFS MEET FOR PEACE TALKS

ISLAMABAD: The heads of the Pakistani and Lebanese armed forces agreed to boost cooperation on Tuesday as they met in Pakistan with peace talks over the Middle East war dragging on. Pakistan has been mediating between the United States and Iran to end the months-long conflict, with Tehran insisting that any deal should include Lebanon, where Israel has been fighting Hezbollah. Lebanese army chief Rodolphe Haykal left on Saturday to meet his powerful Pakistani counterpart Asim Munir, with a Lebanon-based source telling AFP the visit was linked to the broader peace talks. The two military commanders discussed “matters of mutual interest, (the) evolving regional security environment, defence cooperation and prospects for enhancing bilateral military relations”, a statement from the media wing of the Pakistani military said on Tuesday. Munir “underscored (the) Pakistan Army’s commitment to expanding defence collaboration with the Lebanese Armed Forces,” it said, after Haykal received a guard of honour ahead of the meeting in the city of Rawalpindi. Conflict in Lebanon has become a centrepiece of weeks of stop-start efforts to bring a formal end to the war. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said a US-Iranian agreement to end the war was “about to be achieved” when fresh fighting between Iran and Israel erupted on Sunday. — AFP



HUMANITARIAN CALL

UN’S GUTERRES CALLS FOR END TO VIOLENCE

WASHINGTON: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday he was “deeply alarmed” by a renewed escalation of violence in the Middle East and called on Israel to reopen crossings into Gaza. “All attacks must stop immediately. The ceasefires in Lebanon, Iran & Gaza must be fully respected,” he said in a post on X. Israel struck targets in Iran on Monday for the first time since a ceasefire in April, after Iran fired missiles at Israel in what Tehran said was retaliation for Israeli strikes on Lebanon’s capital. Israel and Iran both called a halt to the exchange on Monday shortly after Trump told them to stop shooting, although they each left the door open to a possible resumption. The most direct confrontation between the two countries since April threatened to wreck Washington’s efforts to reach an agreement with Tehran to end their more than 3-month-old war. Guterres also said Israel should open crossings it has closed into Gaza to allow for the flow of humanitarian aid. “I’m also deeply concerned by Israel’s decision to close crossings into Gaza & reiterate my call for the immediate reopening of all crossings to ensure the rapid, safe & unhindered passage of humanitarian assistance at scale throughout Gaza,” he said. A US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in place since October 2025 that includes guarantees of increased aid. Israel and Hamas have repeatedly accused each other of violating the truce. Israeli strikes have killed more than 950 people since the truce, health officials say, while Israel says four soldiers were killed by militants during the same period. — Reuters

OPINION

When the world becomes a mirror



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

HAVE you ever found yourself reacting strongly to something someone said or did, only to discover later that their intention was completely different from what you assumed? It happens more often than we realise. Two people can experience the exact same event and walk away with entirely different interpretations. One sees criticism, while another sees feedback. One sees rejection, while another sees honesty. The event remains unchanged, yet the meaning attached to it can be completely different. This is because we are not responding to reality as much as we like to believe. We are responding to our perception of reality. Every one of us moves through life carrying invisible lenses shaped by our experiences, upbringing, beliefs, fears and emotional wounds. Those lenses influence how we interpret people, situations and ourselves. Since we have been wearing them for so long, we rarely notice they are there. We simply assume what we see is the truth. Imagine looking through a stained-glass window. The landscape beyond remains exactly as it is, yet the colour of the glass changes your experience of it. Our emotional history works in much the same way. The events unfolding around us are filtered through the colours of our past before they

even reach our conscious awareness. This is where the idea that perception is projection begins to reveal itself. What we have not healed, understood or examined within ourselves often gets projected onto others. Someone who grew up feeling unseen may be sensitive to moments when they feel overlooked. Someone who experiences criticism may hear judgement in a neutral comment. Someone who learned that love could be withdrawn may interpret distance as abandonment. The challenge is that projections feel real. They do not arrive announcing themselves as old wounds. They arrive disguised as certainty. We become convinced that the colleague who did not respond is disrespecting us, that the friend who cancelled plans no longer values us, or that the partner who seems distracted is pulling away. Another person under the same circumstances may arrive at a completely different conclusion. The difference is not the situation itself. The difference is the lens through which it is viewed. This understanding becomes particularly important in parenting. Children have an extraordinary ability to activate parts of us we thought we had outgrown. A child’s defiance may awaken memories of feeling powerless. Their tears may trigger discomfort around emotions that were never

Sometimes the world is not showing us who others are. Sometimes it is showing us who we are. The moment we realise that, every trigger becomes an invitation, every reaction becomes a clue and every relationship becomes an opportunity to heal

welcomed in our own childhood. What appears to be a reaction to our child is often a reaction to something much older beneath the surface. Life has a remarkable way of presenting us with mirrors. The people around us frequently reflect aspects of ourselves that are asking to be acknowledged. This does not mean others are never responsible for their behaviours. It simply means that our strongest reactions often contain valuable information about our inner world. Personal growth begins when we become curious about our reactions instead of automatically believing them. Rather than asking “Why are they making me feel this way?” let’s ask, “What is this situation awakening in me?” That subtle shift moves us from blame to awareness and from reactivity to reflection. Perhaps the greatest freedom comes when we stop trying to change the people in front of us, and start examining the lens through which we view them. Sometimes the world is not showing us who others are. Sometimes it is showing us who we are. The moment we realise that, every trigger becomes an invitation, every reaction becomes a clue and every relationship becomes an opportunity to heal. The scenery may remain the same, however when the lens becomes clearer, everything begins to look different.

TRUMP LOOMS LARGE OVER BRAZIL’S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

FACUNDO FERNÁNDEZ BARRIO

US President Donald Trump’s sometimes bombastic stance towards Brazil has placed him at the centre of debate ahead of the country’s tightly fought presidential elections in October.

Given Trump’s track record of throwing his weight behind his Latin American allies — like Argentine leader Javier Milei, Colombia’s presidential hopeful Abelardo de la Escriella and Nasry Asfura in Honduras, to name but a few — a similar intervention in Brazil appears likely.

“It can be expected that Brazil will also be the target of a US attempt to influence the elections” given Trump’s past “partisan interventionism,” according to Oliver Stuenkel, a professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation. The US leader’s influence could be less clear-cut this time around, however. While celebrating his “excellent chemistry” with leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is seeking reelection, Trump has also called candidate Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, a “smart young man who loves his country.”

Both have visited the White House in recent weeks. Lula, who has accused Trump of behaving like an “emperor,” praised their solid rapport after the pair’s meeting in May.

But within days of Bolsonaro’s visit the same month, Trump endorsed a cause celebre of Brazil’s political right by designating the country’s two largest drug cartels as terrorist organisations.

He also announced possible tariff hikes on Brazilian products, much to the displeasure of the Lula administration.

With polls currently projecting a tight second round between Lula and Bolsonaro, the right-wing camp is adamant that victory requires a healthy relationship with Washington.

Bolsonaro took to social media to celebrate his own role in getting Trump to designate the so-called Red Command (CV) and First Capital Command (PCC) crime groups as terrorist organisations.

“On a trip as a pre-candidate, we did more for Brazil and the safety of Brazilians than the Workers’ Party and Lula did in 17 years in office,” he boasted.

Tens of millions of Brazilians living in working-class areas are highly concerned by organised crime and the violence it generates. — AFP

Rubble can’t win what diplomacy has already lost

In 627 CE, a coalition of ten thousand Mecca coalition fighters assembled outside Medina in what they believed would be a swift, overwhelming siege. Instead, they found a trench, a simple ditch inspired by Persian military tradition and proposed by the adviser Salman al Farsi. The coalition had no answer for it. Their psychological and military pressure evaporated within weeks, and they retreated having gained nothing. The Battle of the Trench endures as history’s clearest lesson: The side that refuses to be intimidated almost always outlasts the side that relies on intimidation. That lesson has pressing relevance today. The US attempt to coerce the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) states into abandoning their positive neutrality is not merely poor diplomacy. It is the psychological warfare arm of what the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Jerusalem Post have both documented as Israel’s Rubble Doctrine, a strategy of such total physical and psychological destruction that adversaries cannot reconstitute. The doctrine, which began in Palestine and spread to Lebanon, southern Syria, and now Iran, has a political companion: The use of maximum pressure, public threats, and economic coercion to break the will of anyone who refuses alignment. Applied to sovereign AGCC states, it is failing for the same structural reasons it has failed elsewhere. You cannot reduce a mediator to rubble, physical or psychological, and then ask them to mediate. The most visible example came on May 27, 2026. At a Cabinet meeting, President Donald Trump was asked about Oman’s role in managing the Strait of Hormuz during the US-



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The US Government’s psychological war against the GCC is the latest chapter of a doctrine built on destruction and it is failing for the same reasons

Israeli war with Iran. His answer was unambiguous: “Oman will behave just like everybody else, or we will have to blow them up.” Days later, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent threatened Oman with sanctions. The State Department then shared the quote publicly, confirming this was not a slip but a posture. Senator Chris Murphy described the threat as “one more sign that this war has gone off the rails.” He was right, but the deeper failure is strategic, not temperamental. As I have learned from one of the most renowned psychological warfare scholar, my late brother Colonel Anwar al Huraibi, psychological warfare operations, known as PsyOps, requires three conditions to succeed: A credible threat, an isolated target, and a message that resonates with the target’s own population. Against the AGCC, all three conditions are absent. Oman has never been isolated for the past five thousand years, it is indispensable. Its back-channels produced the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, brokered last year’s Ansar Allah ceasefire, and are currently the primary mechanism keeping Hormuz negotiations alive. Threatening to destroy this architecture is the equivalent of threatening to burn the bridge you are trying to cross. The broader AGCC record makes Washington’s approach look even more self-defeating. Oman and the US have built a constructive relationship since 1790, the AGCC is not only the centre of the world’s oil and gas but also the critical minerals needed by the global digital economy and more importantly the global food security. In addition, Saudi Arabia hosted the first direct US-Russia talks since the Ukraine war began. Qatar negotiated the Gaza ceasefire framework.

Kuwait is one of the world’s biggest aid contributors in Asia, Africa and beyond. The UAE has facilitated over 4,300 prisoner-of-war exchanges between Russia and Ukraine, patient, trust-building diplomacy that took years to construct. These are not the acts of states that need to be frightened into usefulness. They are the acts of states that have made themselves irreplaceable precisely by wise alignment and refusing to take sides, and that irreplaceability is now the AGCC’s greatest strategic asset. The Rubble Doctrine assumes that enough destruction, physical or psychological, eliminates the will to resist. But Carnegie’s analysis of the Zionist’s destructive conduct since October 2023 notes that the doctrine’s core ambition, preventing adversarial reconstitution, has not been achieved in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Somalia or Iran. Resistance adapts. And neutral states, whose entire identity rests on not being coerced, have even greater incentive to hold firm. The Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy published a public critique of the war in The Economist in March 2026, an act of Omani candid feedback and a signal that the pressure is producing defiance, not compliance. History’s most durable alternative to coercion is wise alignment. When Caliph Harun al Rashid built Abbasid influence across rival courts, he did not send ultimatums. He sent scholars, ambassadors, and trade. The AGCC states today practise a version of that same alignment wisdom, and they are gaining global stature because of it. Washington still has the option to join that table rather than overturn it. The Strait of Hormuz cannot be resolved by threatening the people who understand it best. The trench will hold.

No one expects to be a victim of cybercrime



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

No matter where you are or what you do, you can feel transformations occurring faster than ever before. This transformative impact of technology is evident across various sectors, mainly communication, healthcare, business, and education.

The digital age, with its immense convenience and connectivity, has unfortunately witnessed an alarming increase in cybercrime, resulting in adverse effects on individuals, communities and the world.

This exposes countless potential victims to cyber attacks, including data breaches and more personal assaults, resulting in chaos and heightened feelings of insecurity, especially when their privacy and safety are compromised.

The effects of cybercrime can be substantial, causing financial losses and identity theft for individuals. For companies, it can lead to reputational damage and legal consequences. Moreover, cybercrime can harm the broader economy, threaten national defence systems, and increase instances of online bullying and harassment.

“These and other concerns are transforming the landscape of peace and security. They add to existing threats, such as organised crime and terrorism. Increasing insecurities related to climate change and environmental degradation are exacerbating conflicts, impacting vulnerable communities already grappling with divisions, violence, and displacement,” notes a United Nations

report.

Microsoft’s Trends and Insights Report for Q1 2026 indicates that cyber attacks have evolved to include rapid, AI-enhanced escalations and disruptive strategies, rather than merely focusing on data theft.

“Threat actors have reduced the time between initial access and ransomware deployment to just 30 minutes, heavily targeting supply chains and educational platforms, while also leveraging QR-code phishing,” the report highlights.

According to Check Point Research data, the global volume of cyber attacks continued its steady escalation in January 2026. Organizations worldwide experienced an average of 2,090 cyber attacks per organisation per week, marking a 3 per cent increase from December and a 17 per cent rise compared to January 2025.

As cybercriminals continue to ramp up their activities, it is essential to make sure that people in their homes can be protected, as well as businesses.

Ultimately, strengthening collective cyber resilience has become both an economic and societal imperative. Cyber laws can transform the way we think, govern, conduct business, and perceive ourselves.

This means that having robust cyber security laws in place can help instil confidence among businesses, organisations and individuals regarding their digital security, paving the way for safer and more secure use of technology. It is also essential that these laws remain up to date and

The newly enacted Cyber Crime Law in Oman has a primary aim: ensuring safety for individuals and society as a whole by safeguarding and aiding them in maintaining their data privacy and security against destructive threats and breaches

effective at all times.

In this context, the newly enacted Cyber Crime Law in the Sultanate of Oman has a primary aim: to ensure the safety of individuals and society by protecting and helping them maintain their data privacy and security against harmful threats, breaches, and attempts to misuse data.

The law established by a Royal Decree introduces strict measures to deter digital blackmail and threats, specifically targeting individuals who misuse information technology to undermine a person’s honour, dignity, or safety.

“Any individual who uses an electronic platform, information system, or technological tool to intimidate or extort someone into doing or refraining from doing something—even if that action is otherwise legal—will face imprisonment for one to three years, along with additional penalties,” states the law.

Another significant aspect of the law is its prohibition of exploiting children under 15 years old and domestic workers in media content, along with restrictions on releasing materials that incite violence or instil undue fear in children.

In addition to addressing threats and extortion, the decree aims to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of electronic information and data. It also seeks to enhance the protection of digital evidence by implementing stricter legal deterrents and imposing harsher penalties for offences committed using information technology.

SOUTH AFRICA’S ANTI-MIGRANT MARCHES BUILD AHEAD OF POLLS

EANETTE CHABALALA

Bare-chested and wearing traditional headgear and armbands, Phakela Ndabandaba led several hundred South African men in a Zulu war cry directed at undocumented immigrants.

“We are ready to act,” they chanted on Monday — many carrying sticks, whips and shields — at one of the largest protests in months demanding the departure of foreigners with no papers.

The imposing Ndabandaba is emerging as the face of a swelling nationwide protest movement spearheaded by various citizen-led fringe groups that is stirring up the hot-button issue in South Africa ahead of local elections in November.

That so many attended the latest protest at Kwa-Thema near Johannesburg during the work week should be a worry for the authorities, Ndabandaba said.

“This means they are not working,” he told journalists.

With South Africa’s official unemployment rate above 30 per cent, his group, another called March and March and other smaller organisations have similar complaints: foreign nationals are taking scarce jobs and resources.

The growing tensions, fuelled by a torrent of online hate, are blamed for the killings of two Mozambicans more than a week ago, raising fears of a repeat of the bloodshed that has marked previous flare-ups in anti-migrant sentiment.

Foreign nationals have told of intimidation and beatings by mobs going door-to-door to tell them to leave by June 30, a “deadline” repeated by Ndabandaba and regularly broadcast across social media, even though it has no official backing.

“I was sleeping early in the morning and people just came and broke in the door,” Malawian national Uledi Folloma, 31, said in the small Western Cape province town of Gansbaai.

“They started to take our stuff and chased us,” he said at a community hall, waiting with scores of foreign nationals for buses sent by their governments to take them home.

Ghana, Mozambique and Malawi are among the countries that have repatriated hundreds of their nationals this month. South African authorities say most did not have the correct documentation to be in the country.

The flare-up comes as campaigning starts for the local government elections, when President Cyril Ramaphosa’s long-dominant ANC party is expected to face another drubbing after losing its national majority in 2024.

Ndabandaba’s group, which has no formal name, will not divulge its financial backers for rallies, which is now extending beyond its Zulu base, such as the one in Kwa-Thema in the ANC-led Gauteng province. — AFP

Heatwaves are becoming Europe’s new normal

EUROPE’S latest heatwave should be a wake-up call, temperatures reaching 35°C in parts of France and the United Kingdom would once have been considered exceptional. Today, they are becoming increasingly common. What was once described as a “once in a generation” event now seems to occur every summer, showcasing a reality that many governments have been slow to confront: climate change is no longer a future threat. It is already reshaping everyday life across Europe.

The problem is not only that temperatures are rising, it is that much of Europe was never designed to cope with such heat. For centuries, homes, public buildings and infrastructure were built with cold winters in mind. Thick walls, insulation, smaller windows and construction methods that trap heat make perfect sense when temperatures regularly drop close to freezing. However, when summer temperatures climb into the mid 30s or higher, these same features become a problem.

Many European homes do not have air conditioning. In countries such as France and the UK, air conditioning has traditionally been viewed as unnecessary, expensive or environmentally unfriendly. As a result, millions of people find themselves living in homes that become unbearably hot during heatwaves. In some apartments, temperatures indoors can actually become higher than outside because there is little airflow and heat accumulates throughout the day.

For many residents, surviving a heatwave has become a daily routine. Curtains and shutters remain closed throughout the day to block sunlight. Windows stay shut until evening, when cooler air finally arrives. People sleep with fans running continuously or struggle through sleepless nights in overheated bedrooms. What used to be occasional discomfort is



A woman holds a fan as she walks during a spring heatwave in Madrid, Spain. — Reuters



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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The danger is often underestimated because heatwaves do not produce dramatic images in the same way floods, hurricanes or wildfires do.

increasingly becoming a seasonal reality.

Recent heatwaves have repeatedly disrupted rail networks, roads, and public transport systems. Extreme temperatures place enormous pressure on electrical systems, rail tracks and signalling equipment. During the recent heatwave in France, at the end of May, a train was left stranded for hours after electrical problems caused a complete breakdown. Air conditioning stopped working while passengers, including young children, waited in difficult conditions before they could be evacuated. Similar incidents have occurred across Europe as ageing infrastructure struggles to function under temperatures it was never designed to withstand.

The danger is often underestimated because heatwaves do not produce dramatic images in the same way floods, hurricanes or wildfires do. There are no collapsed buildings or spectacular scenes of destruction. Instead, the effects are quieter but also potentially deadly. Hospitals become overwhelmed and ambulance services receive more emergency calls. Elderly people living alone suffer in silence. Workers in construction, agriculture and transport face dangerous conditions simply by doing their jobs.

Climate scientists have repeatedly

warned that Europe is warming faster than the global average. According to the European Environment Agency, Europe is the fastest warming continent, with temperatures rising at roughly twice the global rate. This means that heatwaves like the current one are likely to become more frequent, more intense, and longer lasting in the years ahead.

Urban areas are particularly vulnerable because of the “heat island effect,” where concrete, asphalt and buildings absorb and retain heat. This can make cities several degrees hotter than surrounding rural areas. As populations continue to grow, these conditions are likely to worsen unless significant changes are made. Governments will need to rethink how cities are designed and managed. One of the simplest and most effective solutions is increasing urban green spaces. Trees provide shade, lower temperatures and improve air quality. Cities such as Paris, London and Madrid have already begun expanding tree planting programmes, but much more needs to be done.

Building standards must also evolve. New housing developments should be designed with heat resilience in mind, incorporating better ventilation, reflective materials, shaded outdoor areas and energy-efficient cooling systems. Public transport networks and rail infrastructure must be upgraded to withstand higher temperatures. Cooling centres should become a standard feature in cities, providing vulnerable populations with safe spaces during extreme heat events.

What makes this situation particularly frustrating is that the science has been clear for decades. Experts warned that rising global temperatures would lead to more extreme weather events, including heatwaves. Yet many governments treated these warnings as distant concerns rather than immediate challenges.

SPORTS

‘EVOLVING NEAR’



US player Serena Williams holds a press conference on the eve of the HSBC WTA tennis Championships at Queen’s Club in London. — AFP

SERENA TO RETURN TO TENNIS IN QUEEN’S DOUBLES

LONDON: Serena Williams will take part in her first professional tennis match in nearly four years on Tuesday after organisers confirmed the order of play at London’s Queen’s Club.

Granted a wildcard into the women’s doubles of the WTA tournament, Williams and Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko will face third seeds Erin Routliffe and Nicole Melichar-Martinez in the grass-court event, a warm-up for Wimbledon.

Williams is one of tennis’ all-time greats with 23 Grand Slam singles titles to her credit.

The 44-year-old American last played at the 2022 US Open when she said she was “evolving away from tennis”.

Williams’ return is fuelled by a desire for her two young daughters with husband Alexis Ohanian to see her in a competitive environment before she finally hangs up her racquet for good.

“It’s really about the kids seeing me play,” Williams told reporters at Queen’s on Sunday. “Olympia is a little bit older, Adira is very young. It’s components like that.”

After competing at Queen’s, Williams will take part in the doubles at the Berlin Open from June 15-21.

In her first press conference since announcing her return, Williams played down suggestions she would extend her return to singles competition.

But, with Wimbledon looming later in June, she did not completely rule out the possibility of featuring at a tournament she has won seven times.

“For singles, I can’t say ‘yeah’ and I can’t say ‘no,’” explained Williams. “Right now, no. I feel like I probably need to train a little bit more if I want to play singles.

“We will see if I get there and if not, it is not my journey right now.” — AFP

Oman para athletes step up Tunisia preparations

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

OMAN’S national para athletics team has intensified preparations at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher ahead of the Tunisia International Meeting, scheduled from June 16 to 19, 2026, as part of its build-up to the Asian championships in Japan this October.

The training programme, overseen by the Oman Paralympic Committee and the national coaching staff, focuses on improving athletes’ physical and technical readiness, enhancing personal best performances and increasing the number of athletes capable of qualifying for major continental competitions.

Training continues under the guidance of a technical staff led by head coach Sami al Zarli, alongside national coaches Auf al Maamari, Abdullah al Anbari and Asaad al Qarni. The squad comprises 21 athletes: Mohammed al Mashaikhi, Taha al Harrasi, Mohammed al Qasmi, Fawzi al Hubaishi, Talib al Balushi, Sultan al Sinani, Maktoum al Maqbali, Qusai al Rawahi, Othman al Habsi, Saif al Muqbali, Saqr al Qasmi, Maryam al Badi, Sharifa al Hatmi, Sarah al Anboori, Rawan al Hosni, Shaikha al Hamadi, Aisha al Balushi, Eman al Shamsi, Amer al Rashdi, Muhanna Awwad Thani and Mutasim al Saadi.

The team enters the Tunisia event on the back of encouraging results at recent international competitions, including the Asian qualification meeting in Morocco, where several Omani athletes secured places at upcoming continental events.

ON SCHEDULE
Head coach Sami al Zarli said preparations are progressing according to plan ahead of a busy period that includes major international competitions.



Head coach Sami al Zarli said preparations are progressing according to plan ahead of a busy period that includes major international competitions. He highlighted the importance of continued overseas participation and training camps in maintaining the athletes’ progress and achieving qualification targets.

“The current phase is part of a long-term development programme,” Al Zarli said. “Our focus is not only on the Asian championships but also on building towards future events, including next year’s World Championships and the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.”

He highlighted the importance of continued overseas participation and training camps in maintaining the athletes’ progress and achieving qualification targets.

Al Zarli also praised the support provided by the Oman Paralympic Committee and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, noting that opportunities remain available for emerging athletes who can meet the required standards.

Athletics coach Asaad al Qarni said the team will depart for Tunisia on June 14 with a group of throwing-event athletes aiming to improve their personal records and gain valuable international experience.

“The Tunisia meeting will

provide strong competition and help assess our readiness ahead of the upcoming Asian events,” Al Qarni said.

He added that several athletes have shown noticeable improvement following their recent participation in Morocco and the West Asian Championships hosted by Oman.

Among those aiming for further success is Eman al Shamsi, who won silver medals in both shot put and javelin at the Morocco meeting after earlier claiming bronze medals in the same events at the Arab Women’s Championship.

Shot put athlete Mutasim al Saadi said his goal is to achieve a new personal best and compete for a medal at future continental events.

The national team continues to train intensively through a combination of field sessions, technical evaluations and specialised gym work as it seeks to strengthen Oman’s presence on the regional and international para athletics stage.

Musandam gears up for fifth Summer Sports Programme

MUSANDAM: The Directorate General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Musandam Governorate is preparing to launch the fifth edition of the Musandam Summer Programme 2026, which coincides with the implementation of the Summer Sports Programme, as part of efforts to make productive use of the summer holiday period and provide diverse opportunities for children and youth to develop their skills and talents.

The programme aims to offer a comprehensive range of sports, cultural, social and youth activities targeting different age groups of both males and females in a safe and stimulating environment.

As part of the Summer Sports Programme, participants will have access to training in football, handball, swimming, badminton and fitness activities, in addition to a sports camp. The activities will be delivered through organised training programmes supervised by specialised coaches and instructors.



The Musandam Summer Programme 2026 aims to offer a comprehensive range of sports, cultural, social and youth activities.

The fifth Musandam Summer Programme will also feature a variety of cultural and creative activities designed to nurture talent and enhance participants’ creative abilities. These include acrylic painting workshops, story-

writing sessions, a cultural forum for intellectuals from Musandam Governorate, a photography exhibition and a photography competition titled ‘The Family Between the Past and Present’.

The programme will further

include workshops on virtual reality and content creation, among other initiatives aimed at promoting knowledge, creativity and modern skills.

Abdulrahman bin Ahmed Al Mulla al Shihi, Director of the Directorate General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Musandam Governorate, said the programme has been carefully designed to provide a balanced mix of sports, cultural and youth activities that cater to the interests and aspirations of various age groups across the governorate.

He noted that the activities will not be limited to the directorate’s facilities and the Khasab Sports Complex, but will also be implemented in cooperation with all four sports clubs in the governorate — Khasab, Bukha, Dibba and Madha — in addition to Lima Sports Centre. The initiative aims to expand the reach of the programme and maximise participation across all wilayats of Musandam.

Al Shihi added that the directorate is committed to providing an attractive and safe environment for participants through purposeful activities that help develop talents, strengthen personal and social skills, promote teamwork and foster a sense of national belonging, while encouraging young people to make constructive use of their free time.

He explained that registration for the summer programmes and activities will be conducted electronically through a dedicated registration link and QR code, calling on parents and young people across the governorate to register and benefit from the diverse activities on offer.

The fifth Musandam Summer Programme is expected to attract broad participation from different segments of society, reflecting the diversity of its activities and the directorate’s commitment to delivering a rich summer season that combines learning, skill development and recreation.

SPORTS

NEWSTAR



France's forward #11 Michael Olise ccontrols the ball during their friendly against North Ireland at the Decathlon Arena - Pierre Mauroy stadium in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, northern France. —AFP

DESCHAMPS TIPS
HAT-TRICK MAN
OLISE TO MAKE BIG
IMPACT AT WC

LILLE, France: France coach Didier Deschamps challenged forward Michael Olise to make his mark at the World Cup after he hit a hat-trick in a 3-1 World Cup warm-up win over Northern Ireland in Lille on Monday.

The Bayern Munich winger and Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe were joined in a fearsome attack by Desire Doue and Ousmane Dembele. The Paris Saint-Germain pair had been rested for the previous friendly — a loss to Ivory Coast — after winning the Champions League.

But Olise shone brightest, drilling home rebounds just before and just after half-time before curling in a superb shot from outside the area to finish off the visitors after Patrick Kelly had pulled a goal back.

“We’ll need a Michel Olise at that level,” Deschamps said. “Michael stands out because of the season he has had at Bayern and with us.”

“He has achieved some really great things, he is full of confidence. He also has the ability to put in the effort, which is remarkable,” Deschamps said.

Another Champions League finalist, William Saliba of losers Arsenal, showed he has shaken off an injury scare as he returned to give France a look similar to how they could line up for their World Cup opener against Senegal in New Jersey on June 16.

The French though were frequently disjointed in attack, with skipper Mbappe, who needs one goal to equal Olivier Giroud’s team scoring record, often lacklustre.

Yet they still pressed the packed Northern Irish defence, forcing desperate blocks and loose clearances.

Although the Lille stadium roof was kept closed on a chilly and damp evening, play was stopped for drinks breaks in the middle of each half to help Les Bleus prepare in every detail for the World Cup.

France, who leave for their training base near Boston on Wednesday, will also face Iraq in Philadelphia and Norway in Foxborough outside Boston in Group I. — AFP

Spain beat Peru to gear up
in style for World Cup

SPAIN beat Peru 3-1 in their final World Cup warm-up match on Monday, giving thousands of fans in Puebla a glimpse of one of the tournament favourites days before the global showpiece begins.

Mikel Oyarzabal opened the scoring after two minutes with a fierce strike from the edge of the area before Pedri doubled the lead after the half-hour mark, tapping into an empty net following a cross from Ferran Torres.

Spain added a third early in the second half when Jeremy Pino's delivery forced an error from goalkeeper Pedro Gallese, before Jairo Velez pulled one back for Peru with a low finish.

The World Cup kicks off on Thursday, while 2010 champions Spain open their campaign against Cape Verde on June 15.

World Cup fever was evident around the stadium in Puebla, where Spain shirts dominated the stands alongside Barcelona jerseys, reflecting the club's strong representation in Luis de la Fuente's squad.

Peru supporters were outnumbered but remained vocal throughout the evening.

Pedri, Rodri and Ferran Torres drew some of the loudest cheers as fans broke into chants and performed Mexican waves around the stadium.

World Cup merchandise stalls lined the streets outside, while heavy security protocols did little to dampen the festive atmosphere.

“It was a match to build momentum, and we’ve managed to do just that,” Pedri told reporters. “I didn’t realise they loved me so much here in Mexico.”

Oyarzabal's opener extended his scoring streak with Spain to six consecutive games and he said he hoped to make it seven when the World Cup begins.

“I’m happy and I try to help in any way I can,” Oyarzabal said. “What has made things go well for us is that as a group we know what we have to do and we trust each other.”

Coach De la Fuente welcomed another convincing display but played down suggestions that Spain were clear favourites for the title.

“Being recognised as favourites guarantees nothing,” he said. “We have confidence in ourselves and in the way we play, but there are many other national teams with the same quality and ability as us.” — Reuters



Spain's defender #02 Marc Pubill and Peru's forward #09 Adrian Ugarriza vie for the ball during their international friendly at Cuauhtemoc Stadium in Puebla, Mexico. — AFP

Somali referee denied US entry, will miss World Cup debut

ZURICH: The United States has denied entry to soccer referee Omar Abdulkadir Artan, who had been expected to be the first Somali to officiate at a match in the World Cup.

A Fifa spokesperson said Artan would not be able to train or officiate at the World Cup — which kicks off on Thursday — after he was not allowed to enter the United States over the weekend.

Somalia's government said it had unsuccessfully tried to negotiate with the US and Fifa so that Artan could enter the country and it was saddened by what had happened.

“His international achievements are a source of honour and pride for the Somali people,” Somalia's sports ministry said in a statement.

In a press release issued on

Tuesday, the Somali Football Federation expressed sadness over the situation, calling Artan's appointment a milestone for the country that resulted from years of dedication, professionalism and integrity. The SFF said it has not received an official explanation as to why Artan was denied entry to the US, adding that it is working closely with Fifa and the relevant authorities to understand the circumstances of the situation.

FIFA ‘NOT INVOLVED’

A senior Somali official said diplomatic efforts were continuing to try to get Artan into the US for the tournament, but declined to share further details.

A Fifa spokesperson said the



Somalian referee Omar Abdulkadir Artan gestures during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 Group D match between Mauritania and Algeria at Stade de la Paix in Bouake, Morocco on January 23, 2024. — AFP

organisation “is not involved in host country immigration processes, including visa adjudications, and has been informed by authorities that Mr Artan's status will not be changed at present.”

Artan said in a statement that despite the circumstances he was in a positive mood and focused on the next challenges of his refereeing career. “I would like to thank Fifa and CAF (Confederation of African Football) for all their support and I promise to keep my refereeing levels up as I concentrate on the future,” he said. It was not clear which game or games Artan would have refereed, although such information is typically only announced two to three days in advance.

Without naming him, the US

Customs and Border Protection said in a statement that a Somali national arrived at Miami International Airport from Istanbul on Saturday and was deemed inadmissible due to vetting concerns. The agency did not elaborate on those concerns, but said the referee underwent routine additional inspection before being denied entry.

“Admissibility determinations are made on a case-by-case basis using law enforcement, national security, and immigration information available at the time of inspection,” the CBP said. Last year, the US imposed travel ban on citizens of 12 countries, including Somalia.

Artan, who was named CAF's Best Male Referee for 2025, had a valid visa, according to reports. — Reuters

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,624.898

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$88.59
BRENT \$92.65
LIGHT \$89.51



SHORT TAKES



The seminar aimed to familiarise business owners and jobseekers with freelance opportunities.

FREELANCERS TO GAIN ACCESS TO FINANCE, TENDERS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

Oman is moving to strengthen freelance work as part of its wider push to diversify the economy, expand private-sector participation and create more flexible employment opportunities for national talent.

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) announced a package of financial and regulatory initiatives during a seminar titled *The Reality of Freelance Work in the Sultanate of Oman*, organised by its Labour Market Committee.

The initiatives include new financing facilities for freelancers and measures to enable them to participate in government project contracts, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI's Board of Directors, said the seminar aimed to familiarise business owners and jobseekers with freelance opportunities and the platforms available for practising freelance work.

He said several initiatives had been announced, including allocating a percentage of government tenders through the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority to workers in the freelance sector. Al Rawas said one of the key incentives was the launch of a new financing product, offering special facilities for freelancers.

He said the initiatives aim to promote a culture of self-employment and turn freelance work into an economic enabler that supports growth, productivity and national development.

Saleh bin Juma al Balushi, Acting CEO of OCCI, said self-employment has become a promising economic driver that enhances labour market flexibility, empowers national talent and supports diversification efforts.

He said the rapid global growth of freelance work has made it a modern economic model that offers opportunities for creativity, innovation and professional independence. Self-employment also contributes to creating quality job opportunities, improving labour market efficiency and supporting the knowledge-based economy.

Omar bin Abdulaziz al Maamari, Supervisor of the Freelance Work System at the National Employment Programme, reviewed Oman's freelance work system as a pathway for empowering national talent and expanding self-employment opportunities.

583m FFO portfolio boosts investment drive

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

FUTURE

Authority (OIA), has unveiled a new portfolio of 105 strategic projects and investments worth RO 583 million, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's drive to diversify its economy, attract foreign capital and strengthen private sector participation.

The newly announced portfolio includes RO 225 million in commitments from FFO, around RO 176 million in local investments and approximately RO 182 million in foreign direct investment (FDI). The projects are expected to generate 2,302 jobs, with 568 positions already filled.

The announcement was made during a special event organised by FFO to showcase its latest investments across priority sectors, including renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, tourism, healthcare, medical technologies, innovation and food industries.

Speaking at the event, Mulham bin Bashir al Jarf, Deputy President of Oman Investment Authority for Investment, said the new package represents a practical translation of the vision on which the fund was established.

"The portfolio of projects and investments reflects our commitment to directing capital towards national priority sectors and supporting initiatives capable of generating added value for the economy, enhancing competitiveness and creating new opportunities for growth and innovation", he said.

Al Jarf noted that since its launch in early 2024, FFO has worked to establish itself as an economic catalyst and a trusted investment partner by forging strategic partnerships, supporting high-potential projects and enabling the private sector

Fund Oman (FFO), a key investment arm of Oman Investment



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The portfolio of projects and investments reflects our commitment to directing capital towards national priority sectors and supporting initiatives capable of generating added value for the economy, enhancing competitiveness and creating new opportunities for growth and innovation

MULHAM BIN BASHIR AL JARF
Deputy President of Oman Investment Authority for Investment

to participate in investment opportunities that contribute to economic diversification.

He added that the fund also plays an important role in enhancing Oman's attractiveness to international investors by bringing in strategic partners and highlighting the country's competitive advantages across a range of sectors.

The investment portfolio underscores FFO's growing role in advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 through economic diversification, venture investment, entrepreneurship development and foreign capital attraction.

Among the flagship projects announced is the Orion Solar Project in SOHAR Port and Freezone, which aims to establish the Middle East's first fully integrated solar cell and module manufacturing facility. With an annual production capacity of six gigawatts, the project is expected to support the localisation of the entire solar energy value chain in Oman.

In Salalah, FFO has invested in the Jalant Industrial Project, which will produce 66,000 tonnes annually of lithium iron phosphate cathode active materials, a key component used in electric vehicle batteries and energy storage systems.

The project is expected to

strengthen Oman's position in global clean energy and advanced technology supply chains.

In tourism, the fund has backed the Al Sawda Island Resort project in the Al Hallaniyat Islands, an integrated development spanning around 10 kilometres of coastline and designed to enhance Oman's high-end tourism offering.

The fund has also invested in Station 11, described as Oman's first integrated innovation hub. The project brings together startups, venture capital firms, researchers and policymakers under one roof to accelerate innovation, entrepreneurship and technology development.

Additional investments include Alma, a specialised animal nutrition company that plans to establish a world-class manufacturing and research centre with annual production capacity of 12,000 tonnes, as well as XCyber, a cybersecurity firm providing sovereign AI-powered solutions to protect critical infrastructure and systems.

In a major move to strengthen healthcare investments, FFO announced a RO 50 million Healthcare Investment Fund targeting opportunities in healthcare services, pharmaceuticals, medical technologies, digital health, diagnostics, insurance and medical research.

Comprehensive economic partnership agreement: Why India is betting on Oman

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

As the Oman-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) enters its first week of implementation, an interesting trend is emerging across Indian policy and business circles. Increasingly, the discussion is no longer focused on tariffs, customs procedures or market access. Instead, it is centred on Oman itself.

For India, Oman appears to be evolving from a traditional Gulf trading partner into something more strategic: a stable economic platform linking the Gulf, Africa and the wider Indian Ocean region.

This shift in perception may prove more significant than the agreement itself.

Since CEPA entered into force on June 1, Indian media commentary, former diplomats and business



Oman is being viewed not as a peripheral player but as an important part of the region's future economic architecture.

analysts have increasingly highlighted Oman's ports, political stability and geographic position. The message is consistent: in an era of geopolitical uncertainty and fragmented supply chains, Oman offers something increasingly valuable — reliability.

The timing is not accidental.

The global economy is undergoing a profound transformation. Supply chains are being redesigned, companies are diversifying production networks and countries are searching for trusted partners capable of ensuring uninterrupted trade flows.

At the same time, India's economic ambitions continue to expand far beyond South Asia.

As one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, India is seeking stronger connections with markets in the Gulf, Africa and Europe. In that context, Oman's location on the Arabian Sea, its modern ports and its reputation for political stability are attracting growing attention.

Yet the most important aspect of the discussion may be what it reveals about how India views Oman.

Historically, the relationship between the two countries was anchored by energy trade,

commerce and centuries of maritime links. Today, Indian analysts increasingly describe Oman as a logistics hub, an investment destination and a strategic gateway to wider markets.

That distinction matters. Countries do not invest heavily in logistics corridors, industrial partnerships and long-term trade agreements simply because they value a market. They do so because they see strategic value.

An economic analyst speaking to the Observer said the agreement should be viewed through a broader lens.

"The Oman-India CEPA should not be read as a normal trade agreement. It is a strategic test of Oman's ability to convert geography, trust and diplomatic capital into economic value. India is looking at Oman as a gateway; Oman must now prove that it can turn that gateway into industry, exports and jobs".

The analyst noted that the real success of CEPA will not be measured by tariff concessions alone, but by whether it attracts new investments, supports industrial development and expands Oman's role within regional and global supply chains.

This is where the conversation becomes particularly relevant for Oman. The Sultanate of Oman's economic ambitions under Oman Vision 2040 extend beyond trade. The objective is to develop a diversified economy supported by manufacturing, logistics, technology and foreign investment. CEPA offers an opportunity to accelerate that process, but only if the country is prepared to capitalise on it.

The question is no longer whether India sees opportunity in Oman.

The more important question is whether Oman is prepared to leverage the growing strategic interest it is attracting.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The ceremony was held under the auspices of Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism; and Chairman of Omran Group.

Omran concludes 1st edition of Hikayat Balad accelerator programme

MUSCAT: Driven by its commitment to strengthening the tourism entrepreneurship ecosystem and empowering national talent, Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) concluded the first edition of the ‘Hikayat Balad’ Accelerator Programme.

The programme aims to transform promising ideas into viable business ventures capable of enriching the tourism sector with diverse products and services.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism; and Chairman of Omran Group. The event featured presentations by the participating startups, showcasing their innovative projects and solutions to an audience of investors, partners and entrepreneurs.

Delivered in strategic partnership with Al Jabr, the accelerator built on the outcomes of the ‘Hikayat Balad’ Hackathon held in 2024.

It sought to support entrepreneurs and enable startups to develop their projects and unlock growth opportunities through an integrated programme comprising specialised mentorship, entrepreneurial training and direct networking with investors and industry partners.

Over the past months, the accelerator received 29 applications from Omani entrepreneurs, from which 7 startups were selected, representing the TravelTech, Tourism Marketplaces, AgriTech and PropTech sectors.

The cohort progressed through a comprehensive path encompassing ideation, acceleration and intensive guidance. Demonstrating the commercial viability of these ventures, three participating startups successfully secured initial funding during the programme.

Eng Ayad bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Omran Group, stated: “The accelerator embodies Omran Group’s endeavours to create a supportive environment for innovation, empowering Omani entrepreneurs to deliver practical solutions that elevate tourism experiences. We believe these emerging ventures possess genuine potential to unlock new developmental horizons aligned with our corporate aspirations and the objectives of Oman Vision 2040”.

Mohammed bin Salim al Wahibi, CEO of Al Jabr, added: “Our collaboration with Omran Group exemplifies the importance of integration in transforming promising ideas into successful commercial projects.

Exclusive summer offers on the Toyota Corolla

THE ongoing “Turn up the Freshness with Toyota” summer campaign brings an array of exclusive benefits to the Toyota Corolla, making it an excellent time to own this dependable sedan. Valid until July 8, 2026, the seasonal promotion delivers exceptional value and peace of mind to car buyers across the Sultanate of Oman.

Customers upgrading to a Corolla can take advantage of a dedicated Trade-In Bonus applied as a direct discount on the purchase price, complemented by a 5-year or 50,000 km service package.

The comprehensive summer package also includes one year of insurance and one year of registration (Terms and conditions apply).

The Toyota Corolla allows drivers to confidently express their style on the road, while maintaining its position as the benchmark for comfort and reliability in Oman.

Built to handle both daily city routines and long-distance travel with ease, the sedan effortlessly combines sophisticated driving dynamics with everyday practicality.

Motorists can choose between two proven engine options tailored to their driving needs: a responsive 2.0-litre engine that delivers 168 horsepower, or a highly efficient 1.6-litre engine producing 121 horsepower for a quiet, fuel-saving journey.

Passenger comfort and convenience are central to the Corolla’s refined cabin design.

The interior offers generous legroom, premium seating support and rear AC vents to keep everyone cool and comfortable during warmer days.

The spacious layout features wide



The Toyota Corolla allows drivers to confidently express their style on the road.

armrests and an expansive boot for effortless storage, while the modern dashboard houses an 8-inch display audio system, a 4.2-inch multi-information screen and a six-speaker audio setup. Standard cruise control and an available moonroof enhance the overall sense of openness on the move.

Engineered with family protection in mind, the Corolla features a robust safety framework for absolute confidence on every road. The vehicle is equipped with four SRS

airbags alongside active safety technologies, including Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and Brake Assist. Features like Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD) and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) further elevate vehicle control.

To explore these summer rewards firsthand, customers are invited to visit their nearest Toyota showroom before the campaign concludes on July 8, 2026.

PDO’s Hackathon 2.0 to boost digital innovation

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has launched the second edition of its Hackathon, a three-day innovation challenge held under the Ignite Digital Campaign 2026. The event brings together innovators from PDO and the wider community to develop practical digital solutions that support business performance and national development.

Building on the success of the inaugural edition, Hackathon 2.0 reinforces PDO’s commitment to accelerating digital transformation, fostering innovation and empowering local talent.

Over three days, multidisciplinary teams comprising PDO employees, university students, job seekers, technology enthusiasts and innovators will work together to design and develop prototypes focused on cost savings,



Hackathon 2.0 reinforces PDO’s commitment to accelerating digital transformation.

production optimisation, operational efficiency, digital enablement and scalable innovation. The proposed solutions will be presented to a panel of expert judges on the final day of the event. This year’s

edition has expanded its scope to strengthen collaboration with academia, Omani SMEs and the wider technology ecosystem.

The initiative reflects PDO’s efforts to create shared value by connecting industry expertise

with emerging talent and local innovation capabilities.

A key feature of the 2026 edition is the introduction of a dedicated incubator and accelerator programme to support the continued development of winning ideas beyond the competition.

The programme aims to facilitate implementation within PDO and create opportunities for successful solutions to scale into broader markets.

The hackathon is designed to help participants validate ideas, transform concepts into working prototypes and demonstrate the feasibility of delivering innovative solutions within a limited timeframe.

It also promotes an innovation-driven culture across PDO and strengthens digital capabilities as part of the company’s broader transformation journey.

Changan launches new energy vehicle Deepal brand in Oman

MUSCAT: Deepal, Changan Automobile’s dedicated new energy vehicle brand, has officially entered the Omani market with the launch of the S05, S07 and G318.

Introduced at a special launch event hosted by Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), the brand brings to Oman a line-up of intelligent new energy vehicles that have already gained strong recognition across the Middle East and Africa region.

The launch builds on Changan’s strong foundation in Oman. Since entering the market in 2020, Changan has served more than 10,000 customers, ranked second among Chinese automotive brands for four consecutive years, established eight standalone showrooms and built a network of



The launch builds on Changan’s strong foundation in Oman.

more than 14 service centres across the Sultanate of Oman.

Launched in 2022, Deepal is Changan Automobile’s dedicated new energy vehicle (NEV) brand, focused on delivering intelligent, sustainable and user-centric mobility solutions.

Since its launch, the brand has expanded across key markets in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, bringing advanced new energy vehicles that combine technology, performance and practicality for modern drivers.

Xiao Feng, General Manager, Changan Automobile Middle East and Africa, said: “Today is not simply the launch of a new vehicle brand — it is a statement of long-term confidence in this market. More than 10,000 customers in

Oman already drive a Changan vehicle every day and Deepal represents the next chapter in that journey.

Through our advanced electrification and intelligent technologies, we are bringing vehicles that are smarter, safer and better suited to the needs of modern drivers in Oman and across the region. We believe Oman will play an important role in Changan’s global ambitions and we are proud to bring the very best of our innovation and vision to this market”.

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SHORTTAKES



The workshop brought together senior officials, experts and representatives from relevant government and regulatory entities.

MoCIIP reviews construction materials sector and highlights growth potential

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by the Competition and Monopoly Prevention Centre, held a specialised two-day workshop to review the construction materials sector in the Sultanate of Oman, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The workshop brought together senior officials, experts and representatives from relevant government and regulatory entities to validate findings of an ongoing sector study and develop actionable recommendations to enhance market efficiency and competitiveness.

Preliminary findings indicate that the construction materials market in Oman ranges between \$206 million and \$300 million, with the architectural and decorative segment accounting for the largest share at 85 per cent. The cables and electrical wires segment also demonstrates strong manufacturing and export capabilities, with production exceeding 120,000 tonnes and exports reaching more than 50 countries.

Ahmed bin Salim al Rasbi, Director General of the Competition and Monopoly Prevention Centre at MoCIIP, said, “The workshop represents an advanced stage following the completion of the first phase of the comprehensive study, which focused on analysing market structure, competition dynamics and identifying challenges affecting sector efficiency”.

He added, “We are now moving into the stage of practical validation and formulation of recommendations through stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the outcomes are aligned with market realities”.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

TRUFUD Oman, an Omani private-sector company focused on sustainable agriculture, food security and climate-positive investments, has unveiled an ambitious large-scale agricultural and environmental project in Hanfit, Thamrait, aimed at demonstrating how commercial farming can simultaneously support food production, environmental restoration and carbon management.

Spanning approximately 10.5 million square metres (1,050 hectares), the project will combine large-scale moringa cultivation with desert greening, carbon sequestration, renewable-energy-powered irrigation and export-oriented agricultural production, positioning it among the largest integrated climate-smart agriculture initiatives currently under development in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the company — an affiliate of Al Adrak Trading & Development, the development will ultimately encompass nearly 15 million moringa trees, supported by strategically located plantations of subabul (Leucaena leucocephala), a fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing species used primarily as a protective wind barrier around the moringa farms.

Richard Sathish Sequeira, Deputy General Manager — Facility Management at Al Adrak Trading & Contracting, described the initiative as a pioneering model that seeks to align commercial agriculture with environmental



Trufud Oman's sustainable agriculture project launched in Thamrait, Dhofar Governorate.

stewardship.

“This project demonstrates that agriculture can be a powerful tool not only for food production, but also for environmental restoration, carbon removal and sustainable economic development”, he said. “Our objective is to create a commercially viable agricultural ecosystem that contributes to Oman’s food security while generating measurable environmental benefits”.

The Wilayat of Thamrait in Dhofar Governorate was selected as the project location due to its favourable combination of land availability, climatic conditions, abundant solar resources and access to groundwater.

These characteristics make the area well-suited for large-scale cultivation in an arid environment.

Irrigation requirements will be met through borewell water supported by solar-powered pumping systems, reducing dependence on conventional

energy sources and reinforcing the project’s sustainability credentials.

The primary commercial focus will be the production of high-value moringa products, including organic moringa oil and nutritional moringa powder destined for international markets.

Trufud estimates that exports to North America, Europe and Asia could generate annual revenues of between RO 4 million and RO 5 million once the project reaches full maturity.

Beyond its commercial potential, the initiative is expected to deliver significant environmental benefits.

The company estimates that the planned plantation of approximately 15 million moringa trees could absorb more than 400,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, while contributing to biodiversity enhancement, soil regeneration and erosion control.

“The project has been designed around the principle that economic returns and

environmental outcomes can reinforce each other”, Sequeira said. “In addition to supporting agricultural production, the plantations will help rehabilitate degraded land, improve soil fertility and create long-term carbon assets”.

The project also reflects growing interest in the emerging voluntary carbon market, where verified carbon sequestration activities can generate tradeable carbon credits.

Trufud intends to develop measurable carbon-removal assets that may eventually participate in future carbon-credit mechanisms, creating an additional revenue stream while supporting national climate objectives.

Development of the project is expected to proceed over approximately 36 months, with commercial moringa production commencing relatively early in the plantation lifecycle.

Sequeira said the long-term vision extends beyond agricultural production alone.

Workshop aims to enhance export readiness of Omani firms

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 9

The training workshop entitled “Enhancing the Export Performance of Omani Institutions” was launched today, organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by “Oman Exports”, in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC).

The workshop is attended by 30 participants from more than 25 Omani exporting companies.

It is held within the framework of ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening the international competitiveness of medium and large companies and institutions in the Sultanate of Oman; and enabling them to keep pace with the growing demands of competition in global value chains.

The three-day workshop aims to equip



The workshop aims to equip Omani businesses with the essential concepts and tools needed to enhance their competitiveness in international markets.

Omani businesses with the essential concepts and tools needed to enhance their competitiveness in international markets, as well as to introduce them to the methodologies and programmes adopted by the International Trade Centre in the field of export

performance development and institutional efficiency improvement.

The workshop also represents a preliminary step towards launching a comprehensive and specialised technical programme expected to be implemented in the coming period, following a series of preparatory activities and field studies carried out by ITC experts in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

The goal is to design a training programme that aligns with the needs and operational characteristics of Omani institutions and contributes to addressing the challenges they face while capitalising on available opportunities to strengthen their presence in global markets.

The workshop targets the following sectors and products: food and beverage manufacturing, plastics and plastic products, rubber and rubber products, chemical industries and related industries, metals

and metal products, pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical preparations, as well as Omani frankincense products, dates and date products, electrical conductors and iron and steel products and agricultural products.

Lubna bint Mohammed al Harthy, Director of the Export Development Department at the Ministry, said the training programme is structured around three key pillars designed to strengthen the export capabilities and global competitiveness of Omani enterprises.

These include enhancing export readiness through strategic planning and market assessment; improving product packaging to boost competitiveness, ensure compliance and reduce waste; and promoting continuous improvement by optimising internal operations, addressing challenges related to costs, logistics, compliance and cash flow; and adopting modern approaches to drive sustainability and performance enhancement.

ECONOMIC SENTIMENT

US business confidence weakens



US small-business confidence declined in May as inflation concerns intensified and uncertainty remained elevated.

The National Federation of Independent Business said its Small Business Optimism Index fell to 95.3, below the long-term average of 98.0. The share of firms planning price increases over the next months rose to its highest level in four years, reflecting persistent cost pressures. — Reuters

ENERGY MARKETS

Oil retreats after truce signals



Oil prices fell on Tuesday after Iran and Israel indicated they had halted attacks following an appeal by US President Donald Trump.

Brent crude dropped 1.6 per cent to \$92.70 a barrel, while US crude fell 2.1 per cent to \$89.37. Despite the decline, analysts warned that shrinking global oil inventories could renew upwards pressure on prices if supply concerns persist. — Reuters

CURRENCY MARKETS

Dollar stays near peak



The US dollar remained close to a two-month high as uncertainty over Middle East developments boosted demand for safe-haven assets and strengthened expectations of a US Fed rate hike.

The euro and pound weakened slightly, while the yen hovered near 160 per dollar, a level closely watched for possible intervention. The dollar index held near 100, close to its strongest level in two months. — Reuters

OPINION

Can economies automate and employ at the same time?



DR ZIAD ALZAIDI

The writer is a Strategic Management & Organisational Transformation Consultant

ONE of the most important economic debates today is not about artificial intelligence itself. It is about what AI and automation mean for jobs. Across the world, governments are trying to achieve two objectives at the same time. They want to create employment opportunities for growing populations and young people entering the labour market. At the same time, they want businesses to become more productive, more competitive and more innovative through automation, robotics and digital technologies. The question is straightforward but difficult: can economies create more jobs while increasingly relying on machines and artificial intelligence? This debate is far from new. More than 200 years ago, workers feared that the machines of the Industrial Revolution would take away their livelihoods. Similar concerns emerged with the rise of assembly lines, computers and later the internet. In every case, some occupations disappeared while new industries and professions emerged. Over time, technology raised productivity, expanded economic output and improved living standards. This historical experience led many economists to argue that technology does not eliminate work; it changes the nature of work. However, the rise of artificial

intelligence has revived the debate because this technology is different from previous waves of automation. Earlier technologies mainly replaced physical labour. AI is increasingly capable of performing cognitive tasks such as analysing data, drafting reports, reviewing contracts, processing information and supporting decision-making. The scale of the potential impact is significant. The International Monetary Fund estimates that around 40 per cent of jobs worldwide could be affected by AI, rising to nearly 60 per cent in advanced economies. Goldman Sachs has suggested that up to 300 million jobs globally are exposed to AI-driven automation. Yet exposure does not necessarily mean elimination. The World Economic Forum projects that while technological change may displace around 92 million jobs by 2030, it could also create approximately 170 million new ones, resulting in a net gain of about 78 million jobs. These figures suggest that the future is unlikely to be defined by mass unemployment. Instead, it will be shaped by how economies manage the transition. A key point often overlooked in public discussions is that not all automation is the same. Economists increasingly distinguish between two forms of automation. The first is Labour-Substituting Automation, where

Across the world, governments are trying to achieve two objectives at the same time. They want to create employment opportunities for growing populations and young people entering the labour market. At the same time, they want businesses to become more productive, more competitive and more innovative through automation, robotics and digital technologies.

technology directly replaces workers. The second is Labour-Augmenting Automation, where technology increases the productivity and value of workers rather than replacing them. This distinction may determine whether automation becomes a threat to employment or a driver of economic opportunity. Consider a simple example. A traditional factory may employ 1,000 workers. A modern smart factory producing the same output may require only 300 workers because robots, sensors and AI systems perform many routine tasks. If the analysis stops there, the conclusion seems obvious: automation has eliminated 700 jobs. Yet the reality may be very different. If that smart factory becomes the centre of a broader industrial ecosystem, it can generate demand for maintenance services, industrial software development, data analytics, logistics operations, supply-chain management, packaging companies, export services, quality-control laboratories and industrial AI providers. In this scenario, the factory itself may employ fewer people directly, but it can support thousands of jobs indirectly. The true employment impact lies not only within the factory walls but across the wider economic network built around it.

JAPAN’S SHAREHOLDER MEETINGS RUN ON BUNK CLOCKWORK

HUDSON LOCKETT

Imagine if Apple, Disney, General Motors, JPMorgan and two-dozen other titans of corporate America scheduled their yearly shareholder votes during the same week. That’s the norm in Tokyo every June, when most of Japan Inc holds annual general meetings. This AGM scramble is becoming less tenable as Japan’s \$8.6 trillion stock market grows in global stature. Such clustering was once rational. In the late 20th century, mobster-adjacent corporate sleuths, known as sōkaiya would threaten to air a company’s dirty laundry during its AGM or could, for the right price, ensure smooth proceedings in management’s favour. In response, firms began scheduling votes at the same time, lowering the overall odds of being targeted. The trend reached its apogee in 1995, when 96% of AGMs scheduled in June fell on a single day, per Japan Exchange Group surveys. An epochal sōkaiya scandal two years later led

to more stringent policing and sentencing for related crimes. Racketeers have since gone almost extinct but over half of all Tokyo-listed firms today — including industrial giants like Toyota Motor — have shareholder meets scheduled in June, of which 83% will occur between June 22 and 26. Those include index heavyweights like \$266 billion memory-chip maker Kioxia and SoftBank Group. And more than a dozen of Japan Inc’s top names will hold votes on the 26th alone, including Nintendo, Honda Motor and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group. A mix of regulation and habit has kept the June rush going. Japanese companies typically set the cut-off to determine which shareholders are eligible for AGM voting to March 31 to align with the national fiscal calendar. Since Japan’s Companies Act requires an AGM be held within three months of that day, known as the “record date”, those firms’ deadline falls at the end of June. Further complicating matters, most don’t release their annual securities report until the day of the AGM or even after, often without an English version. For investors, particularly the foreign set, the result is a rush of voting based on limited information. The fix is straightforward: Japan’s Financial Services Agency, now digesting feedback mooted tweaks to the country’s Governance Code, can expand revisions to strongly encourage companies to set record dates later in the year — say in April or May, allowing AGMs to be held in July or August. — Reuters

Understanding Oman’s stance on Hormuz Strait

THE Strait of Hormuz has once again returned to the forefront of political and diplomatic discussions. This resurgence follows indications of Omani-Iranian understandings to study regulatory mechanisms and potential fees aimed at financing maritime services, enhancing security measures and protecting the marine environment in the strait. While the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) recognises the waterway as an international strait where foreign vessels enjoy the right of transit passage — meaning coastal states are legally barred from imposing arbitrary tolls — it does allow these littoral nations to seek cooperative mechanisms for environmental protection and navigational aids. These developments have drawn criticism from the administration of US President Donald Trump, which views any joint regulatory arrangements with Tehran through the lens of their potential impact on the principle of freedom of international navigation. Conversely, Muscat maintains that any such measures fall within the responsibilities of the strait’s littoral (coastal) states, conducted in accordance with established international legal frameworks.

THE SHADOW OF “MAXIMUM PRESSURE” AND REGIONAL INFLUENCE This divergence in perspectives comes amidst ongoing tensions between Washington and Tehran, despite years of stringent economic sanctions and the “maximum pressure” campaign originally initiated during President Trump’s first term following the unilateral US withdrawal from the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) in 2018. Although this policy was explicitly designed to isolate Iran economically, Tehran has nevertheless maintained its regional role and active presence across numerous security and political files. This enduring reality ensures that any development concerning sensitive maritime chokepoints is scrutinised closely by decision-



TURKI AL BALUSHI

The writer is a storyteller, journalist and founder of @alqissahlab

The Strait of Hormuz serves as a vital artery for global energy flows; approximately one-fifth of the world’s seaborne petroleum — nearly 20 million barrels per day — passes through it, alongside massive quantities of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) shipped primarily from Qatar as the world’s leading LNG exporter.

makers in Washington, who remain highly sensitive to any step that could be interpreted as an implicit recognition of Tehran’s maritime influence. Consequently, America’s sensitivity towards any arrangements that might grant Iran a greater coordinating role in managing one of the world’s most critical maritime corridors is highly understandable. The Strait of Hormuz serves as a vital artery for global energy flows; approximately one-fifth of the world’s seaborne petroleum — nearly 20 million barrels per day — passes through it, alongside massive quantities of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) shipped primarily from Qatar as the world’s leading LNG exporter. Therefore, the United States views the stability of the strait as an inseparable component of the international economic security architecture and the strategic security of its regional allies, encompassing both the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and major energy-dependent economies in Asia, such as Japan and South Korea.

THE OMANI APPROACH: DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW In contrast, the Omani approach is grounded in a different vision based on managing regional balances and maintaining stability through dialogue and joint diplomatic coordination. The Sultanate of Oman maintains stable and balanced relations with various regional and international actors. Historically, this unique position has allowed Muscat to play the role of a trusted mediator, facilitating communication channels and building trust between international adversaries who would otherwise find it difficult to gather at a single negotiating table — a diplomatic capability most notably demonstrated when Oman facilitated the secret back-channel talks that ultimately paved the way for the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA). This approach does not stem from fleeting political considerations or temporary manoeuvring; rather, it is rooted in a long-term Omani understanding of its geographic location and direct legal

responsibilities. The strait is not merely an international waterway running adjacent to Omani shores; it is a vital part of the Sultanate of Oman’s surrounding security and economic environment. Geographically, the actual inbound and outbound shipping lanes inside the Strait of Hormuz lie directly within Oman’s territorial waters, effectively placing the legal and operational responsibility for ensuring safe and orderly international navigation squarely on Muscat’s shoulders. Therefore, Muscat relies on the mechanisms of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and official diplomatic channels, while maintaining a strict commitment to avoiding entanglement in the regional policy of alliances or sharp polarisations.

TWO DIVERGENT APPROACHES TO THE STRAIT This distinct diplomatic philosophy places Muscat’s calculated legalism in sharp contrast with Washington’s broader geopolitical and military objectives for the region. To better understand how these two contrasting worldviews manifest in the daily oversight and strategic planning for the waterway, it is useful to look at the core pillars that define each nation’s strategic framework:

BROADER ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS The significance of this debate is further underscored by its broader economic implications. Any tension associated with the Strait of Hormuz directly impacts international trade flows, global oil markets, maritime insurance premiums, shipping costs and investor confidence. Hence, the controversy surrounding the management of the strait transcends bilateral political disputes, directly affecting files that form the backbone of both regional and global economies. Ultimately, the divergence between Washington and Muscat does not reflect a disagreement over the principle of maritime security itself, but rather a fundamental difference in the approach to managing this sensitive file.

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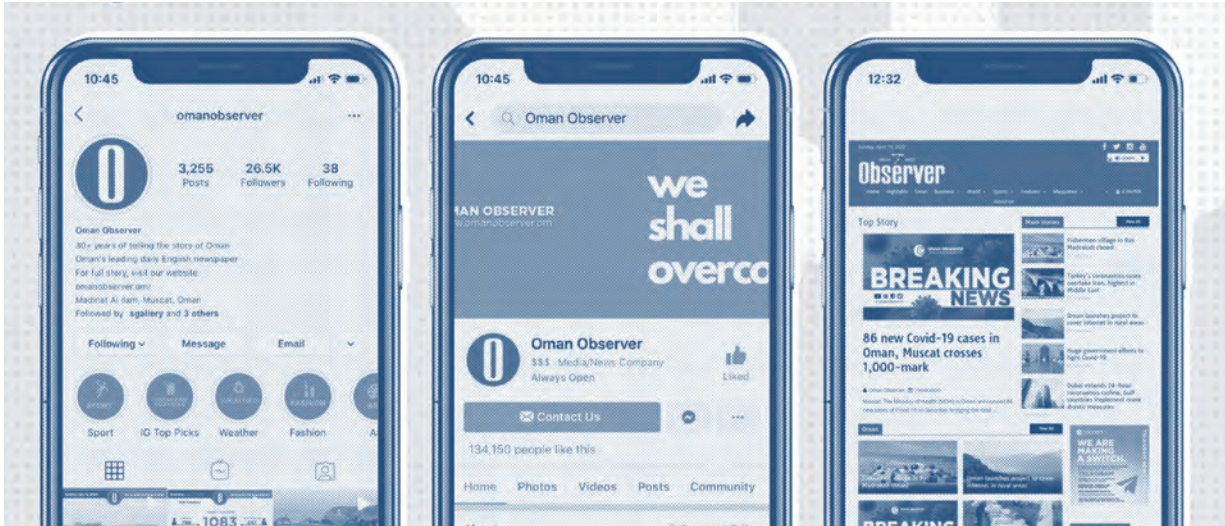
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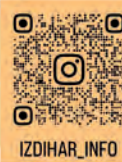
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ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

THE NEW REALITY OF AIR TRAVEL



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

Not too long ago, booking a quick trip from Muscat to Dubai didn't require much thought. If you planned ahead or caught a promotion, a return ticket for around RO 50 was fairly common. A long weekend in Doha, Bahrain or Kuwait felt affordable and regional travel was something many residents could enjoy several times a year.

These days, finding a return fare for less than RO 100 feels like a bargain.

It is a change many travellers have noticed and one that frequently comes up in conversations and on social media. People aren't just complaining about expensive long-haul flights. They're talking about short regional trips that now cost significantly more than they did just a few years ago.

The reasons are not particularly complicated. Airlines have faced rising fuel costs, increased operating expenses, aircraft shortages and occasional disruptions to regional airspace. At the same time, demand for travel remains strong. More people want to travel than there are seats available on many routes, particularly during weekends, school holidays and major events.

The result is simple: prices stay high.

Spend a few minutes reading comments online and you'll see the same frustrations repeated over and over. Travellers complain that fares seem to jump overnight. Families say that a short break now requires a much bigger budget than before. Others point out that flying to a neighbouring Gulf country can sometimes cost almost as much as travelling much further afield.

For many people, regional travel has quietly shifted from being a regular part of life to something that requires much more planning and consideration.

That should concern more than just airlines.

Tourism across the Gulf has benefitted enormously from people moving easily between countries. Weekend city breaks, shopping trips, concerts, sporting events and family holidays all depend on affordable and convenient travel. When the cost of getting there increases, people naturally begin travelling less often.

This presents a challenge for tourism authorities across the region. Governments and tourism boards have invested heavily in attractions, events, luxury hotels and cultural experiences. Yet even the most impressive destination becomes a harder sell if the journey itself feels expensive before the holiday has even begun.

The difficult reality is that prices may not return to what they once were. Many of the factors driving higher fares appear to be long-term rather than temporary. Airlines are operating in a very different environment from the one they faced a decade ago.

If that's the case, tourism boards may need to rethink how they encourage travel. Better airline partnerships, seasonal promotions, bundled hotel and flight packages; and targeted regional offers could help make short trips feel accessible again.

The Gulf has spent years building itself into one of the world's most connected regions. The challenge now is making sure people can still afford to enjoy that connectivity.

Because a destination can only attract visitors if they can afford to get there in the first place.

QUICK FEATURES



AWARDS

US actor Joshua Henry poses with the award for Best Performance by an Actor during the 79th Annual Tony Awards. — **AFP**



FASHION

Students showcase slow fashion creations during "Le Souffle du Mistral" in Marseille, France. — **AFP**



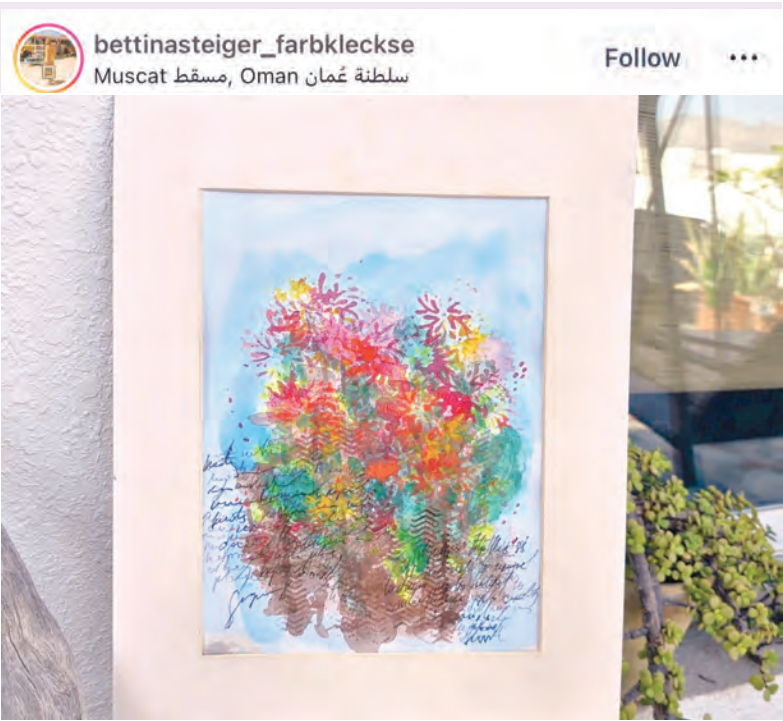
CULTURE

A man throws tomatoes from a basket during the 16th Tomato Fight Festival known as "Tomatina" in Sutamarchan, Colombia. — **AFP**

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UNIVERSAL TO OPEN FIRST UK THEME PARK



British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves meets with Comcast NBCUniversal’s Universal Destinations & Experiences Chairman and CEO Mark Woodbury, in London, Britain. — Reuters

Comcast NBCUniversal will invest more than £5 billion in building its first European theme park in Bedfordshire, north of London, supported by £1.3 billion of government money to upgrade road and rail links and other infrastructure. The resort, which was first announced in April 2025, will be named “Universal United Kingdom Resort”, the US media giant said on Wednesday. It will employ nearly 20,000 during construction and create a further 8,000 jobs when it opens in 2031, it added. Universal Studios has five resorts and parks in the US states of California and Florida as well as in Singapore, Japan and China, offering rides and attractions based on Jurassic Park, Harry Potter and other movie franchises. The company has said the UK park will feature “several themed lands” and aims to attract 8.5 million visitors in its first year. Once completed, the resort would mark Universal’s first move into the European theme park market, positioning

Bedfordshire as a major new leisure destination and adding to the UK’s portfolio of large-scale tourism projects. The government support will focus on transport links and surrounding infrastructure needed to serve visitors and workers. British finance minister Rachel Reeves and Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy joined Comcast chairman Brian Roberts in Downing Street to unveil the name and logo for the resort, with Nandy calling the investment a “huge vote of confidence” in Britain. Roberts said Comcast had a “long and proud history” in Britain through pay-TV business Sky, which is in talks to buy ITV’s broadcasting unit and NBCUniversal; and it looked forward to creating “a spectacular destination”. Comcast bought a 500-acre former brickworks in Bedfordshire, about 55 miles north of London, in 2023 for the park and it was granted planning permission in December 2025. — Reuters



The emerging economy includes paid partners for running, sightseeing and even eating out at hotpot restaurants. — Reuters

CHINA’S LONELINESS ECONOMY GROWS



The increasingly popular service is part of a broader “companionship economy” emerging in China. — Reuters

ON the stone steps leading up Mount Tai, one of China’s best-known peaks, hikers can book and pay for “climbing buddies” to walk with them, carry bags and take photos for a few hundred yuan. The increasingly popular service is part of a broader “companionship economy” emerging in China, which includes paid partners for running, sightseeing and even eating out at hotpot restaurants — a meal traditionally shared with friends. Providers, often students or young gig workers, advertise on social media with promises of “emotional value”, conversation and practical help, turning what was once an experience or favour among friends into a bookable — and payable — service. While there is no official data about the size of the companionship economy, estimates cited by state media said it was worth around 50 billion yuan (\$7.4 billion) in 2025. The trend reflects broader shifts in China’s urban lifestyles and service economy. Researchers and state media have described growing demand for “emotional consumption” as young people live and work farther from family networks, face longer working hours and have a harder time maintaining traditional social ties. China’s prolonged youth unemployment has coincided with — and contributed to — a growing

reliance on gig and flexible work among young people, as graduates and job seekers turn to delivery, ride-hailing and other online platform work in the absence of stable jobs. Official data shows China has more than 200 million so-called flexible workers. After leaving the army in 2022, Chen Wenxin founded a hiking-companion company, with a focus on the eastern province of Shandong. “I have always been a hiker and have a lot of hiking experience”, Chen said. “I noticed rising demand in the hiking escort service, then decided to try my hand in the field”. His team has expanded from fewer than 10 workers to about 370 now. He said the company charges 800 yuan (\$116) for daytime climbs on Mount Tai, the highest point in Shandong. Psychotherapist Sami Wong, managing director of research firm 3Drips Psychology, said the appeal of paid companions is partly about certainty and control in a social environment that can otherwise feel like a lot of effort and high-risk. Meeting people requires emotional labour and investment, she said and “the outcome is very uncertain”, which creates anxiety. Paid companionship can help customers avoid the sting of rejection. “When you pay for this service you always get a ‘yes’”, Wong said. Tang Junxing, 24, a junior at a university in the southern Chinese



The trend reflects broader shifts in China’s urban lifestyles and service economy. — Reuters

city of Guilin, said he earns pocket money as a travel companion. The side gig started when a university professor asked him to be her driver on a week-long road trip. “That’s when I realised you can actually make money by accompanying people on trips and driving for them”, he said. Tang said he typically earns 3,000 to 5,000 yuan a month. “Most of my clients are women and their core need is emotional value, someone who makes them feel good and makes the trip easy”, he said. — Reuters

FEATURES



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

OMANI women’s traditional attire takes centre stage in the “Bahaa Oman Visual Arts Show”, an exhibition celebrating one of the most distinctive expressions of the Sultanate of Oman’s cultural identity. Held at the Omani Society for Fine Arts, the exhibition was inaugurated by Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Honorary Consul of the Republic of South Africa in Oman, and will run until June 16.

Bringing together painting, photography, digital art and installation works, the exhibition explores traditional Omani fashion through contemporary artistic perspectives. The showcased works create a dialogue between heritage and modernity, highlighting the enduring beauty of regional dress while embracing new artistic techniques and technologies.

Diana bint Abdulmajeed al Zadjali, Director of the Visual Arts Department at the Directorate General of Arts at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said the exhibition reflects the vitality of Oman’s art scene and demonstrates how artists can draw inspiration from national identity while engaging with contemporary developments, including digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

She noted that the exhibition highlights the ability of Omani artists to use modern tools to showcase the aesthetics of the country’s cultural heritage in ways that resonate with contemporary audiences.

A distinctive feature of the exhibition is its collaborative approach. Participating artists took part in workshops and creative discussions from the early stages of the project, contributing to a shared artistic vision. This spirit of cooperation is reflected in the diversity and quality of the final collection, making the exhibition a model of cultural work rooted in innovation and collective creativity.

Among the featured artists is Said al Dahli, who presented a series of hand-painted 3D-printed figurines dressed in traditional attire from various regions of Oman, including Muscat, Musandam, Dhofar, Al Wusta, Al Sharqiyah North and South Governorates and the Baluchi community.

“This is the first time I am working with 3D prints and it took about three months”, Al Dahli said. Each figurine is characterised by intricate details and distinct facial features, showcasing the diversity of Omani dress traditions.

Calligrapher Hadeel Rashid al Yahyai took a different approach by combining Arabic calligraphy with traditional women’s attire from Al Buraimi. Although best known for her calligraphy, she turned to painting for this exhibition to integrate script directly into her artwork.

“The Arabic calligraphy can be incorporated into this style of dress,” she explained, noting that the embroidery found on many traditional garments can make such integration difficult. Her work features elegant Arabic lettering surrounding a female figure, including the phrase: “She is the full moon in beauty, while other women are merely stars.”

The exhibition also highlights the historical influences reflected in traditional Omani clothing. Juma al Battashi’s three-



ART IN CLOTHES

THE BAHAA OMAN VISUAL ARTS SHOW



canvas acrylic work portrays a woman from Sur wearing Al Kidma As Suriyah against a coastal backdrop. The painting references Sur’s maritime heritage and the trade connections that linked Oman with Zanzibar and India.

Meanwhile, Kawthar al Maskari’s work, titled Zinat Al Sharqiya, celebrates the identity of women from Al Sharqiyah North by blending traditional and contemporary styles. Through colour and design, the artwork reflects the continuity and evolution of eastern Omani dress.

Together, the works demonstrate how Omani culture remains a rich source of inspiration, proving that preserving heritage and embracing innovation can go hand in hand.

