

A Living Legacy

Oman's first master planned community, Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006. This ambitious oceanfront development has become Oman's leading residential, lifestyle and investment destination, redefining urban living and transforming approaches to placemaking across the region.

2006

2026

“We will continue the March of development, building on what has been achieved and moving forward with firm determination.”

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIQ

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

More than a residential community and leisure destination, Al Mouj Muscat is a catalyst for economic growth and development, making substantial contributions to economic diversification and private-sector growth. Its impact is clearly visible in the scale of activity it generates and value it brings across the economy.



+1 Billion OMR

SALES REVENUE
GENERATED



878 Million OMR

DIRECT GDP
CONTRIBUTION



880 Million OMR

FOREIGN DIRECT
INVESTMENT



19 Million OMR

TOTAL TAXES PAID
TO
NATIONAL
ECONOMY



337 %

SHAREHOLDER
RETURN
OVER 20 YEARS



43.6 %

IN-COUNTRY
VALUE

CAPACITY BUILDING

Al Mouj Muscat has created quality jobs, built specialist capability and developed a generation of Omani talent with the experience, expertise and confidence to contribute to large-scale projects across the country.

88%

Score Achieved in the
McKinsey & Company
Organisational Health Index

40%

Women in Leadership
Positions - One of the
Highest in the GCC

1 Mn

Invested in
Human Capital
and Learning (OMR)

ENTERPRISE ECOSYSTEM

A long-standing champion of entrepreneurship, this forward-looking community gives SMEs and new businesses the setting, support and network needed to grow.



167

SMEs
Supported

385 Thousand OMR

DAILY
TRANSACTIONS



+85

Retail and
Oceanfront
Dining Outlets



31

Marine Tourism
SMEs - Serving
92,250 Visitors

FAHAD AL ABRI'S STORY

“Building Daymaniat Shells at Al Mouj Marina has given us far more than just a place to operate, it has been the foundation of our growth. What started as a one-person business has grown into a team of 7, thanks to the opportunities, visibility and community that Al Mouj Muscat provides my team.”

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND INNOVATION

Customer experience is a strategic priority at Al Mouj Muscat with integrated digital innovation and technology platforms enhancing engagement for residents, visitors and investors.

94%

RESIDENT
SATISFACTION RATE

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

An impressive awards portfolio is testament to the community's on-going pursuit of excellence.

70

LOCAL, REGIONAL
AND INTERNATIONAL
AWARDS





RESIDENTIAL UNITS HANDOVER



LIFE INSPIRED

Bridging people and culture, Al Mouj Muscat is, today, a vibrant community where residents enjoy world-class living and lifestyle in an exceptional natural environment.

CONTRIBUTING TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Home to some of the world's most recognised hospitality and hotel brands, Al Mouj Muscat is one of the region's most sought-after tourism destinations. Coupled with fantastic attractions and a curated programme of cultural, entertainment and sporting events, the oceanfront community has evolved into a hub for premium experiences.

80% OF THE MASTERPLAN COMPLETE

+90 NATIONALITIES LIVE AT AL MOUJ MUSCAT

466 K Sqm GREEN SPACES

40 DIFFERENT COMMUNITY AMENITIES

AL MOUJ GOLF
2ND BEST GOLF COURSE MENA REGION
& 100 BEST GOLF COURSE MENA REGION

AL MOUJ MARINA
GOLD ANCHOR INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION

274 Million AED TOURISM GDP CONTRIBUTION

Okura Hotels & Resorts, Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, ST REGIS AL MOUJ • MUSCAT, mysk by SHAZAA, VOCO BY IHG Muscat Al Mouj

1,196 HOTEL ROOMS
5 OPERATIONAL
THE OKURA RESORT MUSCAT
OPENING SOON

4 Million ANNUAL VISITORS

245 Million AED COMBINED ECONOMIC IMPACT FROM EVENTS

142 EVENTS HOSTED OVER 20 YEARS

IN HARMONY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Al Mouj Muscat is committed to the internationally recognised IWA 42 pathway to Net Zero.

140 BIRD SPECIES AT AL MOUJ GOLF

14.7 Mn GALLONS OF WATER SAVED
THE EQUIVALENT OF 22 OLYMPIC SIZE SWIMMING POOLS

8x INCREASE IN MARINE DIVERSITY FROM ARTIFICIAL REEF

Setting standards since 2006, Al Mouj Muscat is proud to contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and serve as a blueprint for the next generation of integrated urban development in the region.

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OMAN

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SHORT TAKES



Oman is presenting working papers addressing a range of themes.

OMAN PARTICIPATES
IN BAHRAIN SMART
CITIES SUMMIT

MANAMA: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the ninth edition of the Bahrain Smart Cities Summit 2026 as part of efforts to strengthen cooperation and exchange expertise in the fields of innovation and smart technologies. Throughout the two-day conference, the Sultanate of Oman is presenting five working papers addressing a range of themes related to the future of smart cities and sustainable urban development, including the role of decentralisation in achieving sustainability, the application of smart technologies in residential buildings to enhance resource efficiency and improve comfort and safety levels, the impact of urban planning and environmental sustainability projects on public health, and sustainable municipal transformation within the framework of Oman Vision 2040.

Additionally, a paper on the Al Batinah North Green Initiative will be presented, focusing on environmental sustainability, afforestation and the strengthening of green infrastructure. This participation underscores the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to adopting innovative solutions and advancing smart city concepts, thereby supporting sustainable development efforts and aligning with global trends in urban development and quality-of-life enhancement.

— ONA

National Committee
for Emergency
Management meets



Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi chaired the meeting.

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Emergency Management held a meeting, chaired by Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs and Chairman of the National Committee for Emergency Management.

During the meeting, the Committee reviewed its ongoing activities and followed up on the implementation of this year's annual plan.

Discussions also addressed a number of topics pertaining to mechanisms for developing and enhancing the efficiency of the national emergency management system.

Lt Gen Al Shraiqi commended the advanced level of coordination and integration among the Committee's sectors and sub-committees. This, he affirmed, contributes to strengthening efficiency and responsiveness. He also praised the cooperation of the community with the Committee, which constitutes a fundamental pillar in facilitating the performance of the emergency management system's duties and the achievement of its objectives. — ONA

OMAN,
UZBEKISTAN
HOLD
POLITICAL
CONSULTATION
SESSION

MUSCAT: The ninth round of political consultations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Uzbekistan was convened in Muscat on Tuesday. The Omani side was chaired by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Uzbek side was led by Bakhromjon Aloyev, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the session, the two sides reviewed existing bilateral relations and explored means of enhancing



them across various domains, particularly in the political, economic, investment, commercial, scientific and cultural spheres. Discussions also focused on supporting joint investments, activating trade exchange and pursuing their development in a manner that serves the mutual interests of both countries. — ONA

ROP urges residents to
secure homes before travel

LT MOHAMMED AL MADASARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

AS families head away for the summer holidays, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) is urging residents to take simple but effective precautions to safeguard their homes against theft and other risks during their absence.

With many households left unoccupied for extended periods, thieves often exploit lapses in home security. Authorities say following basic safety measures can significantly reduce the risk of burglary and help protect property.

Before travelling, residents are advised to ensure that all doors and windows are securely locked, disconnect unnecessary electrical appliances to minimise fire hazards, and ask trusted relatives or friends to check on their homes regularly.

Removing promotional flyers or advertisements from doorways is also recommended, as they can signal that a house is vacant.

The ROP further recommends using timer-controlled lighting to create the impression that a home is occupied and installing smart surveillance systems that allow homeowners to monitor their



BRIGADIER
JAMAL BIN
HABIB
AL QURAIISHI

ROP recommends using timer-controlled lighting to create the impression that a home is occupied and installing smart surveillance systems that allow homeowners to monitor their property remotely



property remotely through mobile devices.

Brigadier Jamal bin Habib al Quraishi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigation, warned against common mistakes that can make homes vulnerable to theft. These include leaving spare keys in obvious hiding places such as under doormats, failing to install or maintain security systems, and keeping valuables such as cash and jewellery in easily visible locations.

He stressed that surveillance systems play a vital role in protecting homes by providing real-time monitoring and

valuable evidence that can assist investigators in identifying and apprehending offenders.

"These systems can contribute significantly to reducing theft cases by providing evidence that helps identify and apprehend criminals," Brigadier Al Quraishi said. He also cautioned residents against installing poor-quality cameras or positioning them in areas that fail to provide full coverage of the property.

The ROP also advised the public to avoid sharing travel plans or holiday photos on social media while away, as such posts can inadvertently reveal that a home is unoccupied.

"Posting pictures provides information that confirms the absence of residents; therefore, it is advisable to delay sharing them until after returning from travel," Brigadier Al Quraishi said.

While combating residential theft remains a priority for the ROP through advanced technology and operational preparedness, Brigadier Al Quraishi emphasised that public cooperation remains essential.

"Community cooperation is vital, and adherence to safety procedures is the first line of defence in protecting homes," he said.

Al Buraimi attracts RO 13m worth of projects

AL BURAIMI: Al Buraimi Governorate is witnessing an investment boom and remarkable economic growth, making it an attractive hub for investors.

This revitalisation is driven by a package of developmental and strategic projects currently being implemented in the infrastructure, tourism, hotel and entertainment facility sectors.

This consolidates the position of Al Buraimi Governorate as a leading tourist destination and a promising economic centre in the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi, stated that the total volume of investments announced in the governorate's projects during the period from 2019 to 2026 reached approximately RO 13,850,301.

Al Busaidy added that in 2025, investments recorded approximately RO 2,148,000, while the volume of investments in the



SAYYID DR
HAMAD BIN
AHMED
AL BUSAIDY

Focus on investment in the tourism and service sectors, and tourist camps, opens new horizons for diversifying income sources and attracting tourists

first quarter of the same year amounted to RO 1,700,000.

This confirms a clear development compared to previous years, as the governorate continues to attract new projects as part of its long-term plans to enhance sustainable development.

He explained that the governorate is witnessing the implementation and development of many projects and tourist sites that represent a significant addition to the tourism sector. Prominent among these are the Al Buraimi Oasis project, which is considered one of the qualitative projects aimed at providing an integrated entertainment and tourism environment, and the Artificial Lake project, which represents a promising destination for family and entertainment tourism.

He pointed out that the governorate is working on developing and rehabilitating a number of heritage and historical

sites, foremost among which is the project to rehabilitate the old market of Harat Hamasah and the proposals related to establishing a heritage village at the site.

This is in addition to developing a number of the natural and tourist sites that characterise the governorate, which enhances the diversity of the tourism product and grants investors new opportunities in this sector.

He affirmed that these investments in Al Buraimi Governorate have a prominent impact on supporting the economic aspect.

They are not limited to creating job opportunities but also include supporting small and medium enterprises and enhancing their participation in investment projects, with a participation rate reaching 89 per cent. This enhances their ability to compete and increases their contribution to the local economy.

— ONA

SHORT TAKES



Registration opens for Innovation Centres Support Programme

MUSCAT: The Research and Innovation Authority has announced that registration for the second edition of the Innovation Centres Support Programme will open on July 1, Wednesday. The programme targets both public and private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Authority has invited institutions wishing to benefit from the programme to submit their support applications electronically via the Research Information Management System (RIMS), noting that the registration window will remain open until September 1.

The programme serves as a foundational pillar for investing in knowledge and fostering an innovation-conducive climate for entrepreneurship. It directly contributes to elevating the Sultanate of Oman's standing in global indicators — including the Global Innovation Index and the Global Competitiveness Index.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashdi, Acting Director-General of the Innovation Centre, explained that the Innovation Centres Support Programme is designed to establish new innovation centres, empower existing ones, and enhance the services they offer to innovators.

She noted that through this programme, the Authority aims to enrich the national economy with innovation-driven startups by developing competitive, innovative products and services. Additionally, the programme seeks to strengthen the role of universities and colleges in building a tangible knowledge-based economy, provide a safe and supportive environment for innovators and entrepreneurs to develop their ideas, and ultimately transform higher education institutions into entrepreneurial entities capable of production and meaningful impact. — ONA

Labour Ministry intensifies summer worksite safety measures

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

Reaffirming its commitment to safeguarding workers' health during the summer months, the Ministry of Labour continues to strictly enforce the annual midday work ban at open worksites and locations exposed to direct sunlight throughout June, July and August.

The measure forms part of the ministry's comprehensive occupational safety and health strategy aimed at preventing heat stress, heatstroke and other heat-related workplace injuries while promoting safer and healthier working environments across Oman.

Amer bin Hassan al Balushi, Industrial Safety Inspector at the Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Directorate-General of Labour Welfare, said the ministry adopts an integrated approach that combines inspections, monitoring and awareness programmes to protect workers and ensure compliance with safety regulations.

"The midday work ban is not intended merely to detect violations or impose penalties, but to strengthen a preventive safety culture by encouraging employers and workers to comply with occupational safety requirements during periods of extreme heat," he said.

Al Balushi noted that the ministry conducts intensive inspection campaigns throughout the enforcement period, complemented by continuous awareness and guidance programmes covering construction sites and other sectors where work is carried out in open environments or under harsh climatic conditions.

He added that the regulation helps reduce occupational illnesses and accidents



The midday work ban is not intended merely to detect violations or impose penalties, but to strengthen a preventive safety culture by encouraging employers and workers to comply with occupational safety requirements during periods of extreme heat

AMER BIN HASSAN AL BALUSHI

Inspiring children to embrace cultural identity

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JUNE 30

THE Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Batinah North is nurturing a new generation that values Oman's cultural identity through a series of interactive activities under the 'Our Summer: Leadership and Innovation 2026' programme.

The initiative introduces children to the nation's heritage, traditional crafts, historical landmarks, and tourism assets, while encouraging them to preserve and celebrate the legacy of their ancestors.

A key highlight of the programme was the 'My Craft' workshop, where participants explored the traditional art of palm frond weaving. Conducted by Ahmed al Hamadani, the session combined hands-on training with a heritage exhibition featuring archaeological artefacts and interactive displays showcasing various Omani handicrafts. The experience helped children gain a deeper appreciation of traditional craftsmanship and its role in preserving national identity.

The department also organised an educational field trip titled 'A Step into a Museum' to the Majan Sons Museum. Museum owner Ahmed al Farsi guided students through the museum's history and its rich collection of archaeological discoveries and historical artefacts.

The visit offered participants an engaging journey into Oman's past, strengthening their understanding of the country's civilisation and cultural heritage. Adding a creative dimension, storyteller Rashid al Ghafri captivated young audiences with a traditional storytelling workshop inspired by Omani folklore and values. His



A key highlight of the programme was the 'My Craft' workshop, where participants explored the traditional art of palm frond weaving.

Interactive workshops, museum visits, and storytelling sessions help young participants connect with Oman's heritage and traditions

interactive narratives encouraged participation while reviving the oral storytelling tradition passed down through generations.

Ahmed al Maqbali, representative of the Summer Programmes at the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Batinah North Governorate, said investing in children is one of the most effective ways to safeguard Oman's heritage for the future. He noted that exposing young people to museums, traditional crafts, archaeological treasures, and tourist sites strengthens their sense of national identity and encourages them to become custodians of cultural heritage.

Fatma al Qutaiti, a parent, praised the programme, saying her children returned home eager to share what they had learned about Oman's history and traditional crafts. "These activities connect children with their roots

in a way that books alone cannot. They make heritage enjoyable, meaningful, and unforgettable," she said.

Another parent, Suad al Rawahi, described the programme as an excellent example of how heritage can be presented in a modern and engaging way. He noted that the museum visit, palm weaving workshop, and storytelling sessions encouraged his children to ask more questions about Oman's traditions and history, expressing hope that similar initiatives continue in the future.

Through workshops, museum experiences, and cultural activities, the Heritage and Tourism Department continues to transform the summer holiday into a meaningful learning journey, fostering pride in Oman's national identity while inspiring children to preserve its cultural and historical heritage for generations to come.



جامعة السلطان قابوس
Sultan Qaboos University



ELECTRONIC AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces its intent to hold a public electronic auction in collaboration with Mzadat Company for the sale a water desalination pump, used air items.

Please note that bidding will take place electronically via the website: [www.mzadat.om](#)

Auction Period	Viewing Period	Location	Items on Offer
From 06/07/2026 to 07/07/2026	From 01/07/2026 to 06/07/2026 Time: 8 AM – 2 PM	Research Laboratories - North Al Hail	Water desalination pump, used air conditioners, and various scrap.

Conditions for Entering the Electronic Auction:

- The interested party must register and subscribe on the Mzadat electronic platform ([www.mzadat.om](#)).
- The bidder must pay a security deposit of OMR 1,000 (One Thousand Omani Rials) via bank transfer. The deposit will be forfeited if the bidder wins the bid but fails to pay for the purchases within the specified payment period.
- The winning bidder is obligated to pay the value of the items within a maximum of three working days after receiving the auction invoice.
- The winning bidder must collect the items they have fully paid for within a maximum of five working days after completing payment. If not collected, the University and Mzadat Company will not be responsible for any loss, damage, or destruction of the items. A penalty of OMR 50 (Fifty Omani Rials) per day of delay will also be imposed.
- Items can be viewed starting from 01/07/2026 until the start of the auction, between 8:00 AM and 2:00 PM.
- For more details on viewing arrangements and inquiries, contact the Mzadat team at the following numbers:

Arabic	77402390
English	94693437
Electronic Support	76617644



OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The team has earned global recognition after stringent multi-day evaluation exercises.

NSRT ACHIEVES RECORD RESPONSE TIME IN DRILL

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

The National Search and Rescue Team (NSRT) of the Civil Defence and Ambulances Authority (CDAA) has recorded outstanding results in a simulated training exercise designed to assess readiness for both local and international missions.

The exercise, conducted as part of ongoing preparedness initiatives, tested the team's response speed and operational efficiency in handling various emergency scenarios.

Upon receiving the alert, NSRT members immediately initiated mission protocols in accordance with approved international standards. Teams swiftly progressed through equipment mobilisation, vehicle preparation, medical clearances and verification of all required documentation.

Once preparations were completed, the teams proceeded to the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) base for air deployment, demonstrating a high level of coordination, professionalism and operational readiness.

According to a source at the CDAA, the NSRT completed all response and readiness procedures in under five hours, significantly outperforming the international benchmark of 12 hours.

The CDAA noted that the NSRT operates under rigorous, globally benchmarked training programmes that include international disaster simulations, structural rescue drills, and specialised technical operations.

The team has earned the prestigious INSARAG 'Heavy Urban Search and Rescue' classification, a global recognition awarded after stringent multi-day evaluation exercises. It has also participated in joint international drills, including exercises with the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group, aimed at enhancing coordination during large-scale emergencies.

In addition, the NSRT has contributed to humanitarian missions in disaster-hit regions, including deployments during the Türkiye and Morocco earthquakes and Storm Daniel in Libya.

The authority further highlighted that it conducts large-scale evacuation and rescue drills across major public and commercial locations, including simulations at Qurum City Centre.

Specialised training also covers subterranean debris rescue, mountain and desert search operations, and flood response scenarios, using advanced life-detection technologies such as 3D imaging systems and acoustic sensors to locate survivors trapped under rubble.

23,000 marriage contracts, 291,000 passports issued

MUSCAT: Statistical data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that 81,630 new Omani identity cards were issued during 2025. Of these, a total of 42,354 identity cards were for males and 39,276 were issued for females.

Al Batinah North Governorate topped the list of governorates in terms of the number of new personal identity cards issued (a total of 18,597 cards), followed by Muscat Governorate (14,726 cards), Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (10,661 cards) and Al Wusta Governorate (547 cards).

In terms of monthly distribution, the month of August saw the issuance of the highest number of new personal cards (12,570), followed by July (12,435) and



Al Batinah North Governorate topped the list of governorates in terms of new personal identity cards.

March (2,287).

As many as 290,918 new and renewed Omani passports were processed during 2025. Muscat Governorate saw the largest number of passports issued (a total of 76,484

passports), followed by Al Batinah North Governorate (56,111), Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (33,616) and Al Wusta Governorate (1,797).

The total number of passports in 2023 stood at 431,211. The number

went down to 310,913 in 2024 and dropped to 290,918 in 2025.

The number of marriage contracts registered at offices of the Notary Public rose to 23,117 contracts during the year 2025, compared to 17,896 in 2024 and 14,716 in 2023. The number of divorce documents also increased to 4,208 during 2025, compared to 4,122 in 2024 and 3,828 in 2023.

Muscat topped the list of governorates in terms of the number of marriage contracts registered during 2025, as it saw a total of 6,651 marriage contracts, followed by Al Batinah North Governorate (3,753), Al Batinah South Governorate (2,683), Dhofar Governorate (2,462) and Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (2,425).

— ONA

8.37M BOULEVARD PROJECT REACHES 60PC

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JUNE 30

CONSTRUCTION of the Al Dakhiliyah Boulevard project in Nizwa has reached 60 per cent completion, marking significant progress on one of the governorate's largest integrated urban development initiatives.

Valued at more than RO 8.37 million and spanning 145,000 square metres, the project is designed as a vibrant destination that combines tourism, entertainment, investment and culture. It will also link with key developments, including the Nizwa Gate project, the integrated public transport station and nearby commercial and tourism facilities.

The Boulevard will feature open-air theatres, exhibition spaces for events and festivals, a central promenade surrounded by landscaped green areas, water features, restaurants and cafés, children's play areas, and dedicated spaces for productive families. The project includes 10 investment sites and 50 usufruct agreements across various sectors. Once completed, it is expected to attract around 944,000 visitors annually, create approximately 340 direct and indirect jobs, and provide



The Al Dakhiliyah Boulevard project is expected to be completed in 2027.

opportunities for about 60 productive families.

Ahmed bin Zayed al Busaidy, member of the Municipal Council of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and representative of Nizwa, said the Boulevard would become a prominent architectural landmark that enhances the quality of life while generating investment and employment opportunities for the governorate.

As construction progresses, some residents have expressed concerns about the project's location adjacent to a wadi channel, particularly regarding its resilience during heavy rainfall and extreme weather events.

Responding to these concerns, Israa al Mahrouqi, official spokesperson for Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said the project has been designed in accordance with the highest engineering and technical standards.

She explained that a three-metre-deep reinforced concrete protection wall has been constructed along the Boulevard to safeguard both the development and surrounding areas from potential flooding.

The Al Dakhiliyah Boulevard project is expected to be completed during the first quarter of 2027.

Over 173 projects worth RO 37.5m underway in Al Wusta Governorate

AL DUQM: Al Wusta Governorate is currently implementing more than 173 developmental, economic, and tourism projects at a total cost exceeding RO 37.5 million, distributed across the governorate's wilayats.

This reflects the scale of developmental momentum and the expanding scope of service-oriented projects. The data were presented during the Al Wusta Governorate media briefing held on Sunday in the Wilayat of Al Duqm, under the theme 'Development in Sight & A Future Under Construction.'

Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, stated that the governorate has emerged as one of the most promising regions in the Sultanate of Oman, endowed with strategic assets and comparative advantages, and witnessing a

steady flow of developmental and investment projects and initiatives. He affirmed that the achievements realised reflect the integration of efforts among various stakeholders.

He further noted that the projects underway in the governorate align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the 11th Five-Year Plan, contributing to the enhancement of quality of life, the promotion of balanced urban development, and the provision of an integrated infrastructure.

The media briefing showcased a number of infrastructure projects, including the design and execution of internal roads across the governorate's wilayats. These initiatives contribute to improving the urban landscape, enhancing service efficiency, and



The media briefing reviewed projects in the fisheries, livestock, agricultural and water sectors.

boosting the tourism and investment appeal of the governorate's wilayats.

In the transport and roads sector, the spotlight was placed on vital projects including the maintenance of asphalt roads in Al Wusta Governorate at a cost of RO 6.4 million, the completion of the North Haima dual carriageway at RO 44 million, and the third phase

of the South Haima dual carriageway project at RO 70 million. These projects enhance road safety, support logistical connectivity, and facilitate the movement of people and goods between the governorate's wilayats and economic zones.

The media briefing also addressed achievements in the health sector, foremost among which is the Mahout

Hospital project at a cost of approximately RO 17 million, representing a qualitative addition to healthcare services in the wilayat and surrounding areas. Additional projects include the Emergency and Accident Unit at Al Duqm Hospital at RO 2.3 million, financed by OQ Group; the Emergency and Accident Unit in the Wilayat of Al Jazir at RO 300,000; and the establishment of a training centre at an estimated cost of RO 250,000.

In the tourism sector, the media briefing highlighted the unique natural and environmental assets of Al Wusta Governorate through distinctive projects, including the Mahout Wetland Reserve project at RO 4 million and the Arabian Oryx Reserve project in the Wilayat of Al Duqm at RO 9.2 million. These projects support the governorate's drive towards

ecotourism development and enhance its presence on Oman's tourism map.

The media briefing also reviewed a number of projects in the fisheries, livestock, agricultural and water sectors.

In the livestock sector, the media briefing presented the broiler breeder project and fertilised egg production in the Wilayat of Haima at RO 61.5 million, a camel milk production project in the Wilayat of Mahout at RO 7.69 million, and the Nusra poultry project in Mahout at RO 300,000.

In the agricultural and water resources sector, projects included Wadi Al Sail water station in the Wilayat of Mahout at RO 500,000, a water purification plant in the wilayats of Al Duqm and Haima at RO 250,000, and a fodder project in Haima at RO 150,000. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Britain’s PM Keir Starmer delivers a speech during a visit to Malloy Aeronautics, west of London. — AFP

OUTGOING STARMER ANNOUNCES ‘RECORD’ DEFENCE SPENDING

LONDON: Outgoing UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Tuesday that Britain would spend a “record” of almost £300 billion (\$397 billion) over the next four years to modernise its armed forces in the face of rising threats. Starmer, expected to leave office next month after losing the support of Labour members of parliament, announced an extra £15 billion for defence spending up to 2030 when he launched his long-awaited Defence Investment Plan (DIP).
The plan, due to be published later on Tuesday, will see increased money for drones and autonomous systems as the nature of modern warfare changes. “This record investment puts the security of the British public first, transforming our armed forces and giving them the funding and equipment they need to fight and defend our nation,” Starmer said.
Starmer has called the defence plan “game-changing investment”. “I am absolutely certain that this is the platform on which whoever comes after me can build,” he said. The plan includes £5.0 billion for drones over the next four years. — AFP

RUSSIA SAYS SHOT DOWN OVER 400 UKRAINIAN DRONES



A serviceman of the National Guard of Ukraine walks near destroyed apartment buildings in Donetsk region. — Reuters

MOSCOW: Russia on Tuesday said it shot down 419 Ukrainian drones over the country overnight, including in the Moscow region, where authorities said a six-month-old baby was killed. Kyiv has stepped up its long-range drone strike campaign against Russia in recent months, as Moscow’s full-scale offensive against Ukraine drags on for almost four-and-a-half years.
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his forces struck a satellite communications site in the Moscow region for the second time in a week. Air defence systems “intercepted and destroyed 419 Ukrainian fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicles” around the country, Moscow’s defence ministry posted on the state-run Max platform.
The governor of the Moscow region, Andrei Vorobyov, later said that drones had hit the village of Yevgoryevsk, south-west of Moscow, hitting a “private house.” “Unfortunately, a six-month old baby died on the way to hospital,” he said on Telegram. Two adults and another child were hospitalised, he added. — AFP

UN SAYS TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE MUST ADAPT TO CLIMATE

GENEVA: Transport infrastructure across Europe, North America and central Asia must adapt to more adverse climate conditions, the United Nations said on Tuesday, warning that inaction could prove more costly than upgrades. Roads, railways, waterways, ports and airports will face a greater likelihood of flooding, high temperatures, reduced snow, ice and permafrost, and sea level rise from 2050 to 2080, the UNECE regional agency said.

UNECE covers 56 countries across Europe, North America, the Caucasus and central Asia. It mapped the key inland transport networks needing specific attention. “Transport systems are vital for the smooth functioning of our societies and economies,” said UNECE chief Tatiana Molcean. “Disruptions can have dramatic consequences on communities and come at huge financial cost. “Because extreme weather events are no longer a future risk but a reality

today, adaptation of transport infrastructure is an imperative.” The report said changing conditions would result in increased damage and disruption to transport systems if they were not made more resilient. “The recent episode of extreme heat that we’ve seen in Western Europe has highlighted climate risks and the impact and the consequences they can have on transport infrastructure,” UNECE spokesman Jean Rodriguez told reporters. — AFP

WHO alarms over disease outbreaks in Venezuela

THE World Health Organization voiced concerns on Tuesday about potential disease outbreaks in Venezuela with local health services overwhelmed following deadly earthquakes. “The health services are under extreme pressure now, with facilities operating beyond the capacity,” spokesman Christian Lindmeier told a press conference in Geneva, noting the surge in trauma cases. By the latest official count, some 1,700 are dead and 5,000 are injured, with no governmental word on the number of missing. Other estimates place these in the tens of thousands.
The WHO also said there were problems with adequately registering casualties and tracking missing persons following the 7.5- and 7.2-magnitude earthquakes on Wednesday. “There’s an increased risk now of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases” such as measles and diphtheria, said Lindmeier, due to low pre-earthquake vaccination coverage, as well as yellow fever, and other vector- and water-borne diseases, including malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika. He said Venezuela’s interim president Delcy Rodriguez had reported that 38 hospitals had been affected by the twin earthquakes.

There’s an increased risk now of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and diphtheria due to low pre-earthquake vaccination coverage, as well as yellow fever, and other vector- and water-borne diseases, including malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika



This view shows a heavily damaged multi-storey building with collapsed upper floors in the Playa Verde sector of Catia La Mar. — AFP

As of Saturday, the WHO has gathered data from 21 health facilities across Caracas La Guaira, Miranda and Falcon. Of those, three are in critical condition; six have structural damage or are only partially functional, while the others remain operational but under “significant strain”, said Lindmeier. “Preliminary findings reveal chaotic service delivery and patient flow, marked by overcrowding; growing surgical backlogs especially under mainly trauma, orthopaedics, and neurosurgery; breakdown in biosafety measures; and severely stressed staff,” he said. “Critical gaps include the collapse of forensic and morgue services, and inadequate

casualty registration and tracking of missing persons.” UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, warned that community tensions were rising in quake-hit areas due to constrained aid access. UNHCR said it needs an estimated \$14.85 million to scale up protection, and provide core relief items and temporary shelter support for 30,000 earthquake-affected people over the next six months. And Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said it was planning assistance for thousands of people left homeless. “As the acute search-and-rescue phase comes to an end, both the number of people killed and the needs of survivors continue to rise.” — AFP



FRESH ISRAELI STRIKES POUND GAZA

GAZA CITY: Gaza health officials said Israeli strikes killed five people including a child in the Palestinian territory. A ceasefire is in place in the Israel-Hamas war, but it has not ended the violence and progress towards a final deal to end the war has stalled. “Three people were killed and several injured when an Israeli drone struck a group of civilians,” Al Aqsa Hospital said in a statement, adding that one of the victims was a child aged eight years old.
Gaza’s civil defence agency, which acts as a rescue force under Hamas, said the strike hit an area in Deir el Balah in central Gaza.
Later, Gaza’s civil defence agency reported two people killed and more than 27 injured in an Israeli air strike on a tent on Khan Yunis beach in the south of the territory. Nasser Hospital confirmed receiving the bodies of the dead. At least 1,045 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect on October 10. — AFP

EXPLOSIVE PACKAGE

Police hunt for Monaco bomb suspect



Police on Tuesday were searching for the suspect behind a parcel bomb that wounded a businessman of Ukrainian origin and two others in Monaco, after the unprecedented attack rocked the super-safe principality. Dozens of officers were deployed in Monaco, while two helicopters and some 30 gendarmes scoured neighbouring France for a man who left a package in a residential building near the border, according to the police and gendarmerie. — AFP

NATIONWIDE PROTESTS

South Africans march over illegal migrants



Thousands of people marched on Tuesday in cities across South Africa to demand the departure of undocumented foreign nationals. The nationwide protests cap growing demonstrations called by a loose coalition of political parties and groups that set an unofficial June 30 deadline for foreigners without papers to leave. South Africans took the streets in the centre of the financial capital Johannesburg, where most shops stayed shuttered and transport hubs were quiet. — AFP

DEVELOPMENT CRISIS

Ebola could cost up to \$3.6 bn, says UN



The United Nations said that an Ebola outbreak could cost Africa up to \$3.6 billion and hundreds of thousands of jobs. “If we have the resources and we step up, we can contain this outbreak and prevent further losses,” said Damien Mama, United Nations Development Programme resident representative in Congo. “If we do not, this health emergency risks becoming a much deeper and prolonged development crisis across the region and potentially the continent.” — Reuters

OPINION

Childhood was never meant to be scrolled



HYESHA BARRETT
The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

THERE WAS a time when summer meant boredom, imagination, slow afternoons and children learning what to do with themselves.

Now, summer has become the season where the structure of school disappears and the screen quietly replaces it instead. The device becomes the babysitter, entertainer, comforter, reward and emotional regulator.

Oman’s current discussion around children and social media reflects this. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority is not enforcing a general blanket ban on screens.

Screens are a part of modern life. What is being evaluated is more specific: draft regulations around children’s use of social media platforms, including whether children under 16 should have access to them.

Some people will think, “Children need to learn how to live in the real world.” I agree, however we need to question whether social media is the real world, or a highly engineered version of it. These platforms are not neutral playgrounds. They are designed to hold attention, trigger emotional reactions and keep the nervous system coming back for more. Adults struggle to regulate themselves around them, so why do we expect children to do what grown-ups cannot?

Childhood is not meant to be lived under

constant performance. A child should not grow up measuring their face, body, friendships and popularity against an endless scroll or edited lives. Their identity is still forming. Their impulse control is still developing. Their brain is still learning how to pause, choose, tolerate discomfort, be bored, and be with themselves. When we hand over too much too soon, we give a developing nervous system access to a world built to overstimulate it.

Summer makes this even more important. When school is on, there is at least some rhythm around the day. During the holidays, time stretches.

In Oman, the heat means families spend more time indoors, and without intention, the easiest solution becomes the quickest one. A few minutes turn into an hour. An hour turns into the afternoon. The child who was bored becomes quiet, and quiet can easily be mistaken for regulated.

This is not about blaming parents or pretending technology has no value. Many parents are exhausted, working, overstimulated themselves and trying to survive long summer days.

The deeper issue is that we have outsourced boredom, imagination, discomfort and connection to devices. We are asking screens to do work that relationships, boundaries and presence are meant to do.

This is not about blaming parents or pretending technology has no value. Many parents are exhausted, working, overstimulated themselves and trying to survive long summer days

The regulation being explored in Oman could help because it gives families something many parents are desperate for: support. It is much harder to hold a boundary when every other child seems to have full access. It is easier when society begins to say, ‘Children need protecting here.’

Good policy does not replace parenting, but it can strengthen it. It can create clearer norms, demand more responsibility from platforms and remind us that children’s wellbeing should not be left to algorithms.

Adults also need to hear this. We cannot ask children to look up from their screens while we are emotionally absent behind ours. Children notice when we half-listen, scroll at the table, answer messages during conversation, or reach for the phone the moment there is silence. If we want them to return to real life, we have to return too.

Perhaps this summer is an invitation. Not to panic, punish, nor declare war on technology. An invitation to reclaim the spaces where childhood is built: eye contact, boredom, movement, conversation, creativity and moments where children discover that life does not need to be instantly entertaining to be meaningful.

A screen can occupy a child, but it cannot raise one. A platform can hold their attention, but it cannot hold their heart. Happy holidays!

TURKS DESPAIR AS SCHENGEN VISA DELAYS MOUNT

MELDA GUNGOROGLU

Outside the EU’s visa application centre in an Istanbul shopping mall, a large crowd waits patiently, clutching thick folders and scanning lists of required documents one last time, their anxiety palpable as they await the security guard’s call.

With top European Union officials in Ankara ahead of next week’s Nato summit, the recurring issue of Europe’s long-promised visa liberalisation scheme was likely hovering over the talks as frustration grows in Türkiye over Schengen visa delays and rising rejections.

Guney Hazan, a 19-year-old student, was one of the lucky ones. “Finally!” he shouted after ripping open the envelope containing his passport to find a Schengen visa affixed, opening the door to a university exchange programme in Germany.

“Even though all my documents were in order, I was anxiously awaiting the result. You never know these days,” he said. With demand rising and a mounting backlog, applicants routinely face a long and anxiety-inducing wait that can also be very expensive. “It’s become torture for us. We feel like third-class citizens,” said a 25-year-old waitress after dropping off her paperwork, asking to remain anonymous for fear that her visa application for France might be turned down.

“They used to give me a five-year visa, but now I’m only allowed a two-year one. In the meantime, my application has been denied twice without any explanation,” she said.

“It’s because of the situation in Türkiye,” her friend said. “Since Europe doesn’t approve of Türkiye’s policies, it doesn’t want its citizens either,” she said. In recent years, concerns have spiralled over declining political and civil freedoms under Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, prompting growing numbers of often younger people to look West for better opportunities, observers say.

Last year, Turkish nationals submitted 1.25 million visa applications for the Schengen zone, up from 906,000 in 2019, European Commission figures show.

Of that number, 1.07 million were approved. But due to the surge in applications in recent years, the rejection rate has also risen — from 9.7 per cent in 2019 to 14.6 per cent in 2025, prompting headlines decrying a ‘visa crisis’.

A diplomatic source at the French embassy said the economic crisis in Türkiye, where annual inflation hit 32.6 per cent in May, has changed the profile of visa applicants. — AFP

The importance of women’s voices in Majlis Ash’shura

OMAN’S

DECISION to reserve 11 additional seats for women in the Majlis Ash’Shura marks one of the most significant political reforms for women in the country in recent years. By allocating one guaranteed seat for a woman in each of the Sultanate of Oman’s eleven governorates, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has addressed a long-standing challenge in Omani politics: despite women’s growing role in education, business, healthcare and government, they have remained underrepresented in elected office.

The importance of this decision extends far beyond numbers. It is about ensuring that Omani women are not merely participating in society but are also helping shape its future. The reform follows the 2023 Majlis Ash’shura elections, in which no female candidates were elected among the council’s 90 members. The absence of women from the elected chamber stood in sharp contrast to their growing presence across nearly every other sector of Omani society. Women today serve as ministers, ambassadors, entrepreneurs, university professors, doctors, engineers and senior executives. Their absence from elected politics therefore reflected not a lack of ability, but structural barriers that made electoral success particularly difficult.

By guaranteeing representation from every governorate, Oman is recognising that women deserve not only the opportunity to run for office, but also a meaningful place within national decision-making.

Politics affects every aspect of people’s lives, from education and healthcare to employment, housing and family policy. When only one segment of society dominates



OMAN AL YAHYAI
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They represent recognition that women belong at the table where national decisions are made as well as confidence in the abilities of Omani women to contribute to legislation, oversight and public policy.

decision-making, there is always a risk that other perspectives receive less attention. Women often bring experiences and priorities that differ from those of their male counterparts, not because one perspective is inherently better than another, but because societies function best when multiple voices contribute to policy.

Women are often at the forefront of issues affecting families, childcare, education, healthcare and community wellbeing. They understand challenges that may otherwise receive less political attention. Their experiences allow them to contribute ideas that strengthen public policy not only for women, but for society as a whole.

Around the world, politics continues to be dominated by men.

While progress has been made in many countries, women remain underrepresented in national parliaments globally. This matters because political decisions rarely affect everyone equally. Women, children, people with disabilities and other underrepresented groups often experience public policy differently. Ensuring that these perspectives are present during legislative discussions creates more inclusive and effective decision-making.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, welcomed the reform, stating, “Women in the Sultanate of Oman have gained a new entitlement through the allocation of 11 permanent and elected seats in the Majlis Ash’shura, representing an advanced level of representation by global standards. This further consolidates the concept of women as essential partners in national development.” This reflects an understanding that women’s political participation is not symbolic; it is essential for the country’s continued

progress. In addition, young Omani girls will now grow up knowing that women will have a guaranteed place in one of the country’s most important elected institutions. Representation matters because it shapes expectations. Seeing women debate legislation, question ministers and participate in national policymaking encourages future generations to imagine themselves in similar positions.

Importantly, these eleven additional seats do not replace existing elected positions. Women will still be able to compete for the general seats alongside male candidates. The reserved seats therefore expand female representation without reducing opportunities elsewhere. Rather than limiting democratic participation, the reform broadens it.

The decision also aligns with Oman’s wider national development goals. Oman Vision 2040 emphasises human capital, innovation and inclusive participation in public life. These objectives cannot be fully achieved if half the population remains underrepresented in political institutions. Development is strongest when talent, not gender, determines who contributes to the country’s future.

Ultimately, the significance of these eleven seats lies not simply in the number itself, but in what they represent. They represent recognition that women belong at the table where national decisions are made as well as confidence in the abilities of Omani women to contribute to legislation, oversight and public policy. And they represent an investment in a more representative political system, one where the voices shaping Oman’s future better reflect the people who call the country home.

When you stay up all night for the World Cup



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

AS THE do-or-die elimination drama of the World Cup is now in full swing, excitement has heightened, captivating billions of football fans worldwide. From packed stadiums in the US, Canada, and Mexico to bustling cafés, homes, and public viewing areas around the globe, it is celebration everywhere.

In every World Cup, we find a surprise team, and in 2026, that story revolves around Cape Verde, an archipelago and island nation off the coast of West Africa. Entering the tournament as underdogs, few expected Cape Verde to advance from a challenging group containing renowned football nations.

Their focus, defensive structure, and remarkable team unity have enabled them to make history at the 2026 World Cup by defying all odds and becoming the smallest country to earn a spot in the knockout stages of the competition.

However, the world’s largest football event began with attention focused on the sport’s greatest stars: Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappé, and Erling Haaland. The legends continue to make history.

For Messi and Ronaldo, what may be their final World Cup appearance has become another remarkable chapter in their extraordinary careers. At 39 and 41, respectively, both stars have shown that their passion for competing at the highest level remains as strong as ever.

Although the legends still endure, the younger generation demonstrates its readiness to advance the sport with their firm

presence. Mbappé has further cemented his World Cup legacy, increasing his total to 16 World Cup goals and approaching the all-time record.

And, of course, players such as EHaaland, Ousmane Dembélé, and Vinícius Júnior have also become key figures in driving their teams’ successes.

Now, with the knockout stage bringing thrilling moments, football enthusiasts should also be aware of the impact of sacrificing sleep for their passion — staying awake late into the night and sometimes until dawn, all while maintaining their usual daily routines.

For many, it starts with watching a single match but often extends to multiple matches, resulting in lost sleep, accumulated fatigue, and significant difficulty functioning the next day.

Specialists caution that unusual start times may lead to prolonged sleep deprivation. “Although the enthusiasm is understandable, it results in a consistent loss of sleep throughout the month,” they state.

Temporary sleep deprivation may not pose a significant threat to young and healthy individuals, but insufficient sleep lasting more than a week can be dangerous for everyone. Ultimately, lack of sleep can lead to various health problems, including heart issues, high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar levels, anxiety, stress, and depression, experts warn.

An analysis shared on LinkedIn highlights a well-known fact: major sporting events can significantly disrupt sleep patterns, especially when matches occur overnight or in the early hours of the morning.

Now, with the knockout stage bringing thrilling moments, football enthusiasts should also be aware of the impact of sacrificing sleep for their passion — staying awake late into the night and sometimes until dawn, all while maintaining their usual daily routines

Sleep deprivation, combined with post-game exhilaration, can lead to difficulty concentrating, mood swings, impaired judgement, and dangerous drowsiness the following day.

“Just a couple of days without sufficient sleep can make an individual feel lethargic, fatigued and unable to focus. It may also affect mood, resulting in irritability and hindering the ability to carry out everyday tasks at work, school, or home,” an expert told the Hindustan Times newspaper.

A video produced by Loughborough University highlights concerns about driver fatigue, stating, “Being tired isn’t always unsafe, but it becomes a serious issue when combined with safety-critical tasks like driving. For most people, driving is one of the most hazardous activities they undertake daily, making sleep loss especially significant during events like the World Cup.”

The final takeaway from the LinkedIn analysis is that “Football matters, but your health matters too.” By preparing in advance, carefully selecting which games to watch, and protecting your sleep whenever possible, you can enjoy the tournament while minimising its impact on your health. Ultimately, no one wants to experience the World Cup feeling fatigued.

However, one fact remains: when the World Cup begins, the entire world awakens and starts to dream. Nevertheless, fans should not forgo all the excitement; experts recommend that they stay adequately hydrated and avoid excessive caffeine and heavy late-night meals.

NASA ROBOT MISSION AIMING TO RESCUE SPACE TELESCOPE

CHARLOTTE CAUSIT

NASA is set to launch a daring robotic rescue mission, a long shot bid to prevent one of its ageing telescopes from vanishing into dust.

If successful, the effort could pave the way for giving other satellites a second life.

The operation is set to last several months, kicking off with the launch of a robot designed to rescue the Swift space telescope that’s currently falling towards Earth.

Without intervention, Swift is expected to soon burn up in the atmosphere.

The rescue spacecraft developed by the US startup Katalyst was slated to lift off Tuesday from a Pacific Ocean atoll aboard a small rocket named Pegasus. But NASA postponed the launch, citing unfavourable weather conditions, and set the next launch attempt for “no earlier than Wednesday.

The rocket-propelled launch vehicle will not take off from a launch pad. Instead, it will be released from a jet.

After it reaches an orbit near that of the telescope, the robot must locate Swift across the vastness of space. The aim is then for the robot to manoeuvre around the telescope and latch on with three movable arms.

It will then vie to tow Swift into a stable orbit over the course of at least a month, rescuing it from destruction by moving it about 300 km higher.

The Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory telescope was launched in 2004, and was originally designed for a two-year mission. The device was intended to study gamma-ray bursts, what Caputo called “the most energetic things that happen in the universe.”

She likened it to a supercharged version of a supernova, which is a dramatic, explosive death of a star. Gamma-ray bursts are extremely brief, she explained, so the telescope was placed at an altitude of approximately 600 km in low Earth orbit, so it could remain in constant communication with researchers.

But with that pro came a con — at such an altitude, the device without its own propulsion would eventually drift closer to Earth and burn up in the atmosphere.

Despite its age, the Swift telescope remains in high demand within the scientific community, not least for its rapid response capabilities.

Should it burn up, it could not be immediately replaced. The mission attempting unprecedented manoeuvres has a projected cost of \$30 million to save the device, which originally cost \$250 million.

The rescue robot named LINK will have to overcome numerous challenges and unknowns.

For example, engineers do not have a clear picture of what the back of the telescope actually looks like — even though that’s where the robot must latch on.

With a laugh, Caputo projected the chances of success at “maybe 50-50.” — AFP

Why the Gulf needs Iran

THE US-ISRAELI war against Iran has shattered the Gulf’s old security order. As governments search for alternatives, debate has focused largely on military strategy, diplomatic realignments, and the role of outside powers. Missing are the economic foundations of a lasting peace.

Recent moves to expand Omani-Iranian trade and revive the Hejaz Railway linking Türkiye to Saudi Arabia suggest that economic integration, once dismissed as politically impossible, is becoming conceivable. Whatever order emerges from the current crisis, its durability will depend not only on deterrence but also on economic incentives that make conflict costly.

In an influential 2015 essay, the Nobel laureate economist Douglass North and the Stanford social scientists Gary Cox and Barry Weingast described what they called the “violence trap.” As trade, investment, infrastructure, and production become interconnected, economic complexity raises the cost of violence. Restraint becomes economically rational, because states, firms and citizens have more to lose.

The Gulf remains trapped in the opposite equilibrium. Violence persists not because regional actors are irrational, but because the incentive structure keeps the expected returns of conflict relatively high. In many respects, the Gulf is a single economic space with a common stake in energy infrastructure, shipping routes, financial markets, and shared environmental challenges. But political fragmentation into competing blocs allows proxy warfare, infrastructure sabotage, and asymmetric attacks to impose enormous regional costs while imposing only limited costs on those who initiate them.

A more economically integrated Gulf would overturn this calculus. Dense commercial ties act as a commitment device, making disruption prohibitively expensive and embedding stability within the region’s economic architecture. Security is generated from within, through organic economic linkages.

This perspective helps explain



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The Gulf does not need to trust Iran, resolve every ideological dispute, or abandon existing alliances. It simply needs to create an economic environment in which instability becomes progressively more expensive than coexistence.

the paradox that one of the world’s wealthiest regions has failed to achieve durable peace. The rivalry between Iran and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members divides what is naturally a shared regional system connected by geography, energy resources, and complementary markets. For decades, external security guarantees, primarily by the US, managed this rivalry without removing its underlying incentives. Security effectively became a traded commodity, with hydrocarbons and capital exchanged for military protection. States overinvested in deterrence and underinvested in regional economic integration.

This model’s weaknesses are becoming increasingly visible. The Gulf is among the world’s most heavily militarised regions yet remains structurally vulnerable. Drone warfare has transformed the strategic landscape. Relatively inexpensive weapons can now disable infrastructure worth billions of dollars. Even forward-deployed American military bases have become vulnerable targets rather than bulwarks of stability.

Most Gulf observers agree that the old security order is dying. But none of the most commonly proposed options—buying more advanced weapons, seeking protection from new partners in the Global South, or building stronger national militaries—is adequate to achieve a stable peace. More hardware does not solve the problem of asymmetric vulnerability.

Building capable national militaries is even less viable. Smaller GCC states lack the population needed, while for the larger states—especially Saudi Arabia—strong professional armed forces create a political dilemma. A military strong enough to defend the state may also be strong enough to challenge it.

So, if stability cannot be purchased through arms alone, it must be built by changing the economic incentives that sustain conflict. Critics will argue that economic integration is unrealistic given decades of mistrust between Iran and its Gulf neighbours. But trust does not necessarily precede cooperation; often, cooperation gradually creates trust by making predictable interaction more valuable than confrontation.

Postwar Europe transformed centuries of rivalry by integrating strategic industries and creating common markets that made conflict increasingly irrational. Economic interdependence altered incentives long before political disagreements disappeared.

The Gulf itself has a long history of commercial integration. For centuries, Iranian and Arabian ports were connected by trade, migration, finance, and family networks that crossed the Gulf with remarkable ease. The current equilibrium of sustained hostility is relatively recent.

There is also a broader structural argument for integration. The GCC states are relatively small economies whose prosperity depends on trade, capital mobility, and open networks. Long-term stability for such states is rarely compatible with rigid geopolitical alignment.

Just as prudent investors diversify portfolios to reduce risk, Gulf states should diversify the foundations of their security, beginning modestly. Gulf states and Iran could revive dormant dialogues on maritime safety, environmental protection, disaster response, and infrastructure resilience, issues where mutual interests are obvious and political costs are relatively limited.

Without greater economic cooperation, the Gulf will continue spending vast sums on a defence architecture now vulnerable to inexpensive asymmetric disruption, while security itself remains elusive. Economic cooperation should therefore be understood not as a concession to Iran but as a form of strategic insurance.

The Gulf does not need to trust Iran, resolve every ideological dispute, or abandon existing alliances. It simply needs to create an economic environment in which instability becomes progressively more expensive than coexistence.

This is not a utopian vision. It is a pragmatic strategy for reducing risk in an era when military superiority alone can no longer guarantee security.

The Gulf’s next security order will depend not only on weapons or alliances, but on the economic ties it chooses to build.

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FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



MOROCCO

EARNED WORLD'S RESPECT AFTER VICTORY OVER NETHERLANDS



MOROCCO

coach Mohamed Ouahbi said his side had earned respect after knocking the Netherlands out of the World Cup in a penalty shootout on Monday, adding that his players were fuelled by the desire to make the millions watching back home proud.

Morocco beat the Dutch 3-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw to reach the last 16, where they will face co-hosts Canada.

Ismael Saibari converted the winning spot kick after goalkeeper Yassine Bounou had saved Crysencio Summerville's attempt.

"Morocco has gained everybody's respect now," Ouahbi told reporters. "It's not because of what we've said. We've now shown it."

The coach, who stepped up from Morocco's under-20 setup after helping guide the country's youth teams to success, said his players were driven by something greater than football.

"This team, and all the Moroccan youth teams, are fighting for much, much more than just football or simply winning a match," he said.

"They know that behind them there are millions and millions of people. We played when it was two in the morning in Morocco and we're certain that most people stayed awake. That gives you the energy not to give up, to keep going and to believe in yourself."

Ouahbi said Morocco had dominated the match despite needing penalties to progress.

"We completely dominated a Netherlands team," he said.

"We had 70 per cent possession, more shots and more expected goals. We controlled the match," he added.

"We wanted to stay calm, play our game and believe that if it went to penalties we had an exceptional goalkeeper. We didn't turn the match into a chaotic battle. We controlled it."

Ouahbi said the Netherlands' defensive approach came as a surprise but viewed it as recognition of Morocco's

Ouahbi cautioned that Canada would provide another stern test in the last 16 but said Morocco would approach the knockout tie full of belief. — Reuters

Netherlands' Wout Weghorst in action with Morocco's Yassine Bounou and Noussair Mazraoui. — Reuters

growing stature.

"I really didn't expect this kind of low block because the Netherlands like to have the ball and are very strong when they do," he said. "I saw this type of play as a form of respect."

The 49-year-old felt Morocco's run to the semifinals at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar had changed the country's mentality.

"For the past few years, Moroccan players believe in themselves and the supporters believe in us as well," he said.



Morocco forward #09 Soufiane Rahimi celebrates with fans after winning in the shootout during the 2026 World Cup round of 32 football match between the Netherlands and Morocco at the Monterrey Stadium. — AFP



Morocco's head coach Mohamed Ouahbi celebrates with his midfielder #23 Bilal El Khannouss after winning the penalty shootout at the Monterrey Stadium. — AFP



Morocco fans celebrate after the match as Morocco qualify for the Round of 16 stage of the World Cup. — Reuters





NAGELSMANN UNDER FIRE AFTER GERMANY EXIT AMID KLOPP CALLS

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann looks dejected after the match as Germany are eliminated from the World Cup. — Reuters



A football fan reacts as she watches the 2026 World Cup round of 32 football match between Germany and Paraguay during a public viewing event in Berlin. — AFP

GERMANY were licking their wounds on Tuesday after yet another World Cup disaster amid calls for coach Julian Nagelsmann to go and Jürgen Klopp to take over. A 4-3 defeat on penalties against Paraguay in the first knock-outmatch was deemed effectively as bad for the four-time champions as group stage exits in 2018 and 2022.

It was not yet clear whether the team would already fly home later on Tuesday but German Football Federation (DFB) were expected to further assess the damage and the future of Nagelsmann who has been on the job since 2023 and has a contract until 2028.

Nagelsmann was bullish after the defeat, telling broadcasters ZDF in a fractious interview: “I’m available if the DFB wants it, I have a deal until 2028. If not, then they have to tell me. I am not the sort of person who runs away.” Germany national team sporting director Rudi Völler said he was “still convinced that he’s the right man for the job, the right person in the right place. “When



you’re eliminated like this, many people won’t understand it.

I still think he’s an absolutely top-class coach,” he said, while adding that it wasn’t up to him alone to decide. Germany’s previous group-stage eliminations came in 2018 under 2014 World Cup-winning coach Joachim Low and 2022 under Hansi Flick.

Both were kept on after the shock exits. A number of former German World Cup winning pundits ranging from Lothar Matthaus and Jurgen Klinsmann to Christoph Kramer and Mats Hummels called for consequences in every area.

The Bild paper bluntly said that “now Klopp must come” and wasn’t alone in the call for the the former Borussia Dortmund and Liverpool coach to take over. But Klopp, who is now head of Red Bull’s global football operations and at the World Cup as a Magenta TV pundit, would not comment. “I understand that my name is brought into play. But it is not the right moment to talk about it,” Klopp said. — dpa



Germany’s forward Nick Woltemade, defender Malick Thiaw, midfielder Leon Goretzka and forward Kai Havertz react during the penalty shootout of the 2026 World Cup round of 32 football match between Germany and Paraguay. — AFP



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



‘WE CAME FROM NOTHING’:
DR CONGO DREAMS OF
ENGLAND WORLD CUP UPSET



England's forward
Harry Kane. — AFP

Congo DR's Cedric
Bakambu. — AFP

KIERAN Canning DR Congo's long road to a first World Cup in 52 years has been beset by challenges that their English opponents in the last 32 on Wednesday could scarcely imagine.

Despite having to navigate 13 qualifiers, a pre-tournament quarantine due to an Ebola outbreak and the instability caused by decades of conflict, the war-torn nation is making its mark on the global stage.

"It's not easy in our country," said Yoane Wissa after his two goals secured his nation's first World Cup win against Uzbekistan and a meeting against England, where the Newcastle striker has played his club football for the past five years.

That is by no means the only English connection in the squad.

Aaron Wan-Bissaka was born in London and played for England to under-21 level.

Axel Tuanzebe also represented the Three Lions at youth level and could come up against his former schoolmate and teammate Marcus Rashford in Atlanta.

Of the 26-man squad, 20 were born

outside of Congo — the majority, like Wissa, in France.

The battle for the mineral-rich East Congo has sparked a decades-long conflict between a litany of armed groups and forced families to flee, seeking security in Europe.

"There's a war in East Congo. Everyday, every time we wear this shirt, we think about them," added Wissa.

"Because we want peace and for them, I just say 'thank you'. Thank you because we came from far. We came from nothing to be here. Now we write our story with a black pen and we need to be proud."

The roots of an inspiring story on the field come from that tragic backdrop.

Sourcing and recruiting dual-national players has become crucial for smaller nations to punch above their weight in international football.

'NEW GENERATION WANTS TO HELP' Wan-Bissaka was one of those who initially needed some convincing.

Signed by Manchester United for £50 million (\$66 million) when just 21, DR

Congo swooped when the England career he imagined he would have failed to materialise.

But as the Leopards' star has risen, players are becoming increasingly keen to join the Congolese cause.

Noah Sadiki represented Belgium at youth level and would almost certainly now be a mainstay for the Red Devils had the Sunderland midfielder not switched allegiance.

"There is a new generation that wants to help the people of the country," Sadiki told French sports paper L'Equipe.

Competing as Zaire in 1974, the country's only previous World Cup ended in embarrassment with 14 goals conceded in three defeats.

Over half a century on, Congo's new generation have given a nation reason to dream.

The outbreak of Ebola that has claimed more than 300 lives had had an impact on the team's World Cup preparations.

The United States imposed a 21-day isolation period on players in Belgium before they were allowed to enter.

Their most famous fan Michel Nkuka Mboladinga known for his statue-like pose honouring the country's first prime minister Patrice Lumumba was denied entry to the US.

But the team led by Sebastien Desabre, a Frenchman, has defied the odds.

Congo eliminated African powerhouses Cameroon and Nigeria in qualifying before sealing their place with victory over Jamaica in an inter-continental play-off in March.

Desabre's men then thwarted Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal as Wissa's header secured a 1-1 draw in their opening World Cup game.

A narrow 1-0 defeat to Colombia meant they had to beat Uzbekistan to reach the knockout stages for the first time.

Roared on by thousands from the Congolese diaspora in the stands, Wissa was the hero once more in a 3-1 win.

The challenge of England, one of the favourites for the competition, awaits.

But Congo are unlikely to be overawed given the hurdles they have scaled to get to this stage. — AFP

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,507.935

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$65.20
BRENT \$73.96
LIGHT \$70.69



SHORTTAKES



The MoU aims to transfer expertise in smart metering and IoT technologies to Oman.

OMAN, FRENCH FIRM PARTNER ON SMART METER MANUFACTURING

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

Oman's Platform for Smart Manufacturing (Ectron), a subsidiary of the National Energy Centre (NEC), has signed a strategic partnership with France's Sagemcom to localise the production of smart metering technologies and strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's advanced manufacturing sector.

The agreement was signed by Salah bin Abdullah al Zakwani, Chief Executive Officer of NEC and Ahmed Selmani, President of Sagemcom. The partnership aims to transfer expertise in smart metering and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to Oman while supporting the development of domestic manufacturing capabilities and reducing reliance on imported equipment.

Under the agreement, the two companies will collaborate on the production of smart electricity and water meters, combining Ectron's manufacturing capabilities with Sagemcom's expertise in smart grid technologies, data management systems and remote monitoring solutions.

Located in Al Rusayl Industrial City, Ectron is the first smart meter manufacturing facility of its kind in Oman. The project was established with an investment of approximately \$10 million and is expected to generate business worth around \$350 million over the next eight years.

The facility is being developed by the National Energy Centre in partnership with the Social Protection Fund, Shumookh Investment & Services SAOC and Modim.

Sagemcom, headquartered in Paris, operates in more than 50 countries and has over 25 years of experience in smart electricity, water and gas metering technologies.

EDF to invest in energy storage and solar projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

DURING the official visit of a high-level delegation from the Sultanate of Oman to France, three strategic agreements were signed in Paris in the presence of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic.

The agreements mark a significant milestone in the strengthening of economic growth and energy cooperation between Oman and France, while supporting Oman's ambitious energy transition agenda and long-term sustainable development objectives.

The 2,000 MW Jabal Abyad PHES Project, to be developed in partnership with EDF power solutions, Oman National Engineering and Investment Co (ONEIC), Takhzeen Oman and Green Universe Enterprise (GUE) alongside Oman's Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), would be the largest pumped hydro energy storage project in the Middle East.

Located in the vicinity of the Wadi Dayqah Dam, the project will provide long term energy storage capacity, playing a critical role in enhancing grid stability and enabling higher penetration of renewable energy sources across Oman.

Beyond its contribution to the power sector, the project is expected to generate substantial in-country value through local procurement, job creation and support for Oman's construction industry and SMEs.

The 500 MW Al Kamil Solar PV Independent Power Project (IPP) will be financed, built and operated by a consortium comprising EDF power solutions, ONEIC and OQ Alternative Energy



Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Oman and Beatrice Buffon, Chief Executive Officer of EDF Power Solutions.

The 2,000 MW Jabal Abyad PHES Project, to be developed in partnership with EDF power solutions, Oman National Engineering and Investment Co (ONEIC), Takhzeen Oman and Green Universe Enterprise (GUE) alongside Oman's Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), would be the largest pumped hydro energy storage project in the Middle East.

(OQAE) alongside Nama Power and Water Procurement Company.

The project represents another important step towards increasing the share of renewable energy in Oman's electricity mix and supporting the country's growing demand for reliable, affordable and clean electricity.

In parallel, the Omani government, EDF power solutions and Synergy Investments signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate on the development of a 1,000 MW sustainable digital infrastructure platform supporting the positioning of the Sultanate of Oman as a regional strategic hub for artificial intelligence, advanced computing and cloud services.

Béatrice Buffon, Chief Executive Officer of EDF power solutions, said: "Today's signing reflects the strength of the strategic relationship between France and the Sultanate of Oman, as well as our shared ambition to accelerate the energy transition. By combining large-scale renewable

generation with advanced energy storage solutions, EDF power solutions is proud to bring its industrial expertise to the development of a more resilient, sustainable and secure energy system for Oman. These projects will support the country's long-term energy objectives while creating lasting economic and social value for future generations".

Commenting on the signing, Ahmed bin Salim al Abri, Chief Executive Officer of Nama PWP, stated: "Al Kamil Solar IPP is a key addition to Oman's clean energy portfolio, advancing Nama Power and Water Procurement commitment to delivering reliable, competitive and low-carbon power.

The project strengthens private sector participation, enhances Sultanate of Oman's investment attractiveness and reinforces the role of renewable energy in supporting sustainable economic development and environmental responsibility".

SUEZ wins 900 million water services pact in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

On the occasion of the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France, the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) announced it has granted global utility giant SUEZ and its partners, National Trading Company LLC and National Energy Centre SAOC, a performance-based contract to provide water and wastewater services to the governorates of Muscat, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South — collectively known as Cluster 1.

This 15-year contract, for a total amount of 2 billion euros (approximately RO 900 million), will cover the Operation and Maintenance of water and wastewater assets and services for 2.3 million inhabitants, equivalent to 43% of the population of the Sultanate of Oman.

It also includes a water loss reduction target to meet the highest international standards.

Commenting on the pact, Xavier Girre, CEO — SUEZ, said: "It is an honour for SUEZ to collaborate



Qais al Zakwani, CEO — Nama Water Services (left), with a representative of SUEZ at the agreement signing in Paris.

with the Omani authorities to provide sustainable drinking water and sanitation services to more than 2 million people.

This is also a great source of pride as it is the largest contract ever awarded to SUEZ in the Middle East, illustrating the strong momentum of our development in the region. This success reflects the recognition of SUEZ teams'

expertise in addressing critical water challenges in a context of structural water stress. The scope of the contract, drawn on SUEZ's expertise, will cover both:

- Water services with the operation and maintenance of 240 wells and 10,700 km of pipelines to distribute 470,000 m³/day of drinking water. It also covers the refurbishment and upgrading

of 4 desalination plants and the operation of more than 400 000 smart meters.

- Wastewater services with the operation and maintenance of 22 wastewater treatment plants, representing a total treatment capacity of 280,000 m³/day, around 3,000 km of sewer networks, and 400 km of treated effluent networks delivering treated water for reuse and installation and operation of new wastewater house connections.

The performance-based contract incorporates 33 key performance indicators (KPIs) designed to ensure the sustainable operation of the network and the delivery of high-quality water services, with the operator's remuneration linked to its performance.

Among the key targets are reducing water losses from 34% to 11% by 2040, ensuring a continuous 24-hour supply of high-quality drinking water and implementing optimised preventive maintenance programmes to enhance service reliability and extend the lifespan of critical assets.

Beyond technologies, the

success of the project relies on the expertise of the Omani teams.

A comprehensive capacity-building programme, drawing on international expert knowledge, has been designed to develop operational and managerial skills over the long term.

The performance-based contract involves strong commitment to Omanisation (>83%) and In Country Value, supporting the government's strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040.

In this partnership, Nama Water Services retains its strategic and regulatory role of supervision and governance, while the Consortium will be responsible for day-to-day operations, through the dedicated company National Sustainable Water Alliance LLC: National Trading Company LLC, a multi-sector investor across Power & Utilities, Manufacturing, IT, Real Estate and retail, will provide field knowledge, financial and investment expertise; and National Energy Centre (NEC), a leading Omani utility development and infrastructure investment company focused on water, energy and digital utility solutions.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The forum brought together senior HR leaders from the nation's banking and financial services industry.

NATIONAL FINANCE HOSTS HR LEADERSHIP FORUM

MUSCAT: As the financial services and banking sector continues to evolve and navigate rapid advancement, the role of human capital has become increasingly critical to sustainable growth and organisational success.

Against this backdrop, National Finance, in partnership with renowned Omani HR Consulting firm, Wakan, hosted an exclusive HR leadership forum titled 'Future Ready HR – Banking & Financial Services Sector'.

The forum brought together senior HR leaders from the nation's banking and financial services industry to explore strategies for building future-ready workplaces and fostering organisational excellence through people, leadership and innovation.

Featuring insightful discussions on emerging human capital trends, workforce capability enhancement and creating balanced work environments, the forum provided a valuable platform for industry leaders to exchange perspectives on the evolving workforce needs of the financial services sector.

Conversations centred on empowering people, strengthening corporate culture and identifying opportunities for collaboration that can accelerate corporate growth and transformation.

The forum commenced with a welcome address by Marwa al Kharusi, Chief People Officer at National Finance, who set the stage for meaningful deliberations throughout the event. Participants also explored how institutions can equip their people with the capabilities required to navigate an increasingly dynamic business landscape, enhance competitiveness and deliver long-term sustainable value.

Commenting on the occasion, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, stated, "The future of our industry is being shaped by rapid technological advancement, Fintech innovation and an increasing focus on operational excellence. Yet, human capital remains the driving force behind business resilience and sustainable growth, making the development of skilled and empowered workforces more important than ever.

At National Finance, we firmly believe in creating a future-ready workforce by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving business landscape. We also recognise the importance of building work environments that enables continuous learning, professional development and long-term success. Bringing industry leaders together to exchange ideas, share experiences and explore emerging trends is an important step towards strengthening the collective capabilities of our sector and building workforces that are prepared for the future".

OMPAY ACHIEVES ISO/IEC 27001:2022 CERTIFICATION

MUSCAT: OMPAY, Omantel's digital wallet and fintech platform, has achieved ISO/IEC 27001:2022 certification, the internationally recognised standard for Information Security Management Systems (ISMS), further reinforcing its commitment to safeguarding customer data and maintaining the highest standards of security across its digital financial services.

The certification covers OMPAY's digital wallet and business payment solutions, reflecting



a comprehensive approach to information security, risk

management and operational governance across the organisation.

As digital payments continue to grow across Oman, maintaining strong security frameworks remains essential to building trust and supporting sustainable growth.

ISO/IEC 27001:2022 provides a globally recognised framework for identifying, managing and continuously improving information security practices, ensuring sensitive data is protected at every stage.

Upgrade your summer with the intelligent iCAUR

IN iCAUR, the sun stays out. Step into a world where summer isn't something to survive, but something to enjoy with an automotive experience designed for total cooling and peace of mind. iCAUR Oman has introduced its latest seasonal initiative, focusing on the all-new iCAUR 03T and V27 models.

This campaign is valid from May 13, 2026 to July 31, 2026, pairing the brand's signature 99.9% UV protection technology with a substantial package of ownership rewards to ensure drivers enjoy a heat-resistant cabin and significant financial ease during the peak summer months.

The programme delivers high-value benefits including 1 year comprehensive insurance and free registration on all models. To ensure long-term reliability, new owners will also receive a complimentary service package for 2 years or 30,000 km (whichever comes first).

These benefits are structured to provide a seamless transition into the iCAUR line-up, allowing customers to experience a brand that is "Born to Play" with the peace of mind that comes from full manufacturer warranty terms, service support and zero initial maintenance costs (Terms & Conditions Apply). Engineered for 100% comfort, the



This campaign is valid from May 13, 2026 to July 31, 2026.

iCAUR V27 is equipped with specialised "Stellar Porthole" panoramic roofs. This advanced laminated glass structure provides 99.9% UV protection, effectively blocking harmful rays and significantly reducing heat build-up within the sanctuary of the cabin. While the V27 with 449 HP utilises Range Extended Electric Vehicle (REEV) technology to deliver over 900 kilometres of freedom, the 03T offers exhilarating urban performance with 429 HP and an

all-aluminium multi-cavity cage body for maximum safety.

Whether navigating busy city commutes or embarking on long-distance desert explorations, iCAUR models provide the perfect blend of rugged soul and high-tech sophistication.

With class-leading storage compartments and intelligent driving assistance systems, these vehicles are built for the modern Omani lifestyle.

Beat the summer heat with Ford genuine parts

MUSCAT: Ford vehicles are well known for their appealing designs, inspiring safety features, advanced technology and reliability, making them a popular choice among a diverse range of customers.

When it comes to safety for your family on every journey, there should be no shortcuts or compromises. That's why every Ford vehicle is meticulously engineered and tested to ensure confidence on the road. To maintain this high quality throughout your ownership experience,



Ford Genuine Parts are specifically engineered to integrate seamlessly with Ford vehicles.

the experts at Arabian Car Marketing Company, the official distributors of Ford and Lincoln vehicles in Oman,

strongly recommend using Ford Motorcraft Genuine Parts. These are the only parts designed, tested and approved by Ford Motor Company.

Ford Genuine Parts are specifically engineered to integrate seamlessly with Ford vehicles, making them the ideal choice for every model. Unlike non-genuine alternatives that may offer short-term savings but compromise on performance and safety, Ford Genuine Parts are built to last. They help reduce wear and tear while maintaining your vehicle's

efficiency for years. In addition to safety and reliability, using Ford Genuine Parts provides greater long-term value due to their superior durability and optimised performance. It's a smart choice that protects both the driver and the vehicle.

When it comes to your family's safety on the road, there is no substitute for authenticity. Choose Ford Genuine Parts and enjoy a stress-free experience.

Ford Genuine Parts are available throughout Oman through Arabian Car Marketing Co LLC.

Sohar International gold sponsor at Bonds, Loans & Sukuk Middle East 2026

MUSCAT: Sohar International participated as a Gold Sponsor at Bonds, Loans & Sukuk Middle East 2026, the region's premier corporate and investment banking event.

Held at the Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Events Centre in Dubai, UAE, it brought together more than 2,000 senior decision-makers from over 46 countries, including sovereign issuers, institutional investors, financial institutions, regulators, corporates; and leading legal and advisory firms from across the regional and international debt capital markets ecosystem.

Through a dedicated exhibition presence and active participation in the event's discussions, the bank reinforced its role in the industry's ongoing dialogue, while a series of strategic one-to-one



Through a dedicated exhibition presence and active participation in the event's discussions, the bank reinforced its role in the industry's ongoing dialogue.

meetings provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships across the global financial community and deepen engagement with key stakeholders in the capital markets ecosystem.

Commenting on Sohar International's participation, Hisham Hassan Moosa, Senior Executive Vice President and Head of Project Financing and Global Banking at Sohar International, said, "The GCC's energy transition presents one of the most significant investment opportunities of our time, underpinned by ambitious national strategies and growing demand for sustainable infrastructure.

As the region accelerates its transition towards a low-carbon economy, building bankable renewable energy and infrastructure

projects will be critical to attracting long-term capital and ensuring successful execution. This requires strong collaboration across governments, financial institutions, developers and capital markets participants to create robust financing structures that support sustainable growth.

Industry forums such as Bonds, Loans & Sukuk Middle East provide an important platform for exchanging insights, strengthening strategic partnerships and advancing the financial ecosystem needed to support the region's energy transition ambitions. Sohar International remains committed to contributing to these discussions and supporting the development of innovative financing solutions that enable long-term economic growth across the GCC".

SHORTTAKES



The MoU will see the companies explore opportunities to integrate advanced digital solutions into public and commercial transport systems.

MoU signed on smart transportation technologies

MUSCAT: Karwa Motors and eMushrif have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the development of smart transportation technologies aimed at improving fleet management, road safety and operational efficiency.

The agreement will see the two companies explore opportunities to integrate advanced digital solutions into public and commercial transport systems, supporting the wider digital transformation of Oman’s transport sector.

Under the MoU, Karwa Motors and eMushrif will assess cooperation in areas including vehicle tracking, fleet management, bus monitoring systems, driver and passenger safety technologies, operational data analysis and intelligent monitoring systems.

The partnership will also examine the use of artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and data analytics to enhance operational performance and improve the quality of transport services.

The two companies said the collaboration combines Karwa Motors’ expertise in vehicle manufacturing with eMushrif’s capabilities in smart mobility technologies to deliver integrated transport solutions for government and private sector fleet operators.

Officials said the agreement reflects a shared commitment to supporting digital transformation and developing a smarter, safer and more sustainable transport ecosystem. — ONA

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

ASYAD Group, Oman’s global integrated logistics provider and CMA CGM Group, a global player in sea, land, air and logistics solutions, headquartered in France, have signed a Framework Agreement to develop, manage and operate a multipurpose logistics terminal in Suhar.

The agreement was signed during the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France.

It reflects the growing economic cooperation between the two countries.

This partnership establishes a long-term strategic collaboration between the two organisations, combining their capabilities and expertise to enhance Oman’s ports as key global trade hubs, strengthen operational efficiency and deliver superior service to customers across the region.

The partnership provides the framework for the development of a \$400 million new multipurpose logistics terminal in Suhar, which will enhance advanced integrated logistics services and supply chain solutions and will contribute to reinforcing new regional and international trade corridors, increasing cargo handling volumes and solidifying Omani ports’ connections to global shipping networks and key



Eng Abdulrahman al Hatmi, Group CEO of Asyad Group, with Rodolphe Saadé, Chairman and CEO of CMA CGM Group

international markets.

Eng Abdulrahman al Hatmi, Group CEO of Asyad Group, commented: “This partnership reflects Asyad Group’s vision of building strategic collaborations with major global companies to enhance the commercial attractiveness of Omani ports and maximise the economic value of their assets.

This cooperation will open new horizons for attracting trade flows and quality investments to ports and free and economic zones; and strengthening Oman’s position in global supply chains, in support of the Sultanate of Oman’s objectives to establish its

position as a pivotal centre for trade and logistics services at the international level”. Rodolphe Saadé, Chairman and CEO of CMA CGM Group, said: “This partnership with Asyad Group marks an important step in the development of our logistics and port activities in the Gulf.

By developing a new logistics terminal at Suhar, we will strengthen regional connectivity while securing reliable inland access to key trade corridors.

It will ensure greater resilience and efficiency for our customers’ supply chains.

It also reflects our confidence in Oman’s long-term vision

and our commitment to strengthening its position as a strategic gateway connecting the Gulf to global markets”. Asyad Group operates an integrated logistics ecosystem spanning more than 76 cities in 24 countries worldwide. This ecosystem is supported by a diverse maritime fleet of over 100 vessels, with services extending to more than 90 destinations globally. In addition, Asyad operates and manages a number of ports, free and economic zones, reflecting the accelerated growth of its business portfolio and the expansion of its logistics services globally.

India’s L&T to handle FEED for Meranti steel project in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

The Minerals & Metals business of Indian engineering and construction conglomerate Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has been selected by Meranti Green Steel to oversee the delivery of the front-end engineering and design (FEED) stage of its green iron project planned at the Special Economic Zone in Duqm in southeastern Oman.

Phase 1 focuses on a 2.5 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) direct reduced iron (DRI)/hot briquetted iron (HBI) facility, with a final investment decision (FID) anticipated in the third quarter of this year.

Announcing its selection, Meranti said in a post: “Following a competitive process with world-class firms, we are pleased to be partnering with Larsen & Toubro (L&T) as our project delivery partner for the front-end engineering and design (FEED) stage of our 2.5 Mtpa DRI/HBI plant in Al Duqm, Oman.



HBI plant of the kind that is proposed to be established at Duqm SEZ.

FEED is where the plant takes shape in detail — process, layout, cost and schedule are engineered and de-risked before we build. L&T’s Minerals & Metals team brings the large-scale engineering capability and ‘tons’ of experience to do that with us”, the Singapore-

headquartered developer stated.

L&T is one of India’s largest engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) companies, with operations spanning infrastructure, energy, hydrocarbons, heavy engineering, information technology, defence, manufacturing

and services across more than 50 countries.

Its Minerals & Metals (M&M) business is a leading provider of EPC solutions for the mining and metallurgical sectors, delivering projects across mineral beneficiation, bulk material handling, pelletisation, iron and steel plants, non-ferrous metal processing, alumina and aluminium facilities, cement plants and associated infrastructure.

Significantly, the announcement is the latest in a series of milestones designed to prepare the ground for the seamless implementation of the landmark project ahead of an FID expected in the next quarter.

Earlier, the investor selected Midrex Technologies, a global leader in direct reduced iron (DRI) technology, to supply the hydrogen-ready direct reduction process for its green iron plant, enabling the progressive substitution of natural gas with green hydrogen as fuel.

Paul Wurth, the Luxembourg-based metallurgical engineering

specialist and part of Germany’s SMS group, has been entrusted with engineering and integrating the ironmaking complex based on Midrex technology.

KfW IPEX-Bank is advising Meranti as lead arranger, while Jebsen & Jessen Industrial Solutions (JJIS) has been appointed as a key partner for the project’s export credit agency (ECA)-backed debt financing.

Earlier this year, Meranti revealed offtake commitments covering much of the plant’s output. Under the agreements, 1.0 Mtpa of HBI will be supplied to German-based global industrial materials trader Thyssenkrupp Materials Trading, while 0.25 Mtpa has been committed to INTERFER Edeltstahl and INTERFER Austria.

The remaining volumes will be allocated to Swiss-based commodity trading and mining major Glencore, as well as to Meranti’s upcoming steel plant in Rayong, Thailand, supporting the ramp-up of green hot-rolled coil production.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

China factory activity expands



China’s manufacturing activity expanded in June as stronger exports of computer equipment and recovering demand for artificial intelligence supported factory output.

The PMI rose to 50.3 from 50.0 in May, exceeding market expectations. New orders also returned to growth, while the production index edged higher, signalling improving momentum in the manufacturing sector. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold heads for steep decline



Gold prices fell more than 1 per cent and were on course for their biggest monthly decline since October 2008 as expectations of higher US interest rates outweighed easing geopolitical concerns.

Spot gold dropped 1.5 per cent to \$3,956.92 an ounce. Silver, platinum and palladium also declined, while gold remained on track for its first quarterly loss since 2024. — Reuters

CURRENCY MARKETS

Yen hits 40-year low



The Japanese yen weakened to its lowest level since 1986, raising expectations of possible intervention by Japanese authorities, while the US dollar eased from a 13-month high ahead of key employment data.

The yen traded at 162.41 per dollar despite previous market interventions. Investors continue to favour the dollar amidst expectations of prolonged US monetary tightening. — Reuters

OPINION

Arab Insurance: Vision for growth and value creation



MURTADHA MJ IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI

The writer is an Insurance & Risk Management Expert

ONE of the most significant challenges facing the insurance industry in the Arab world is its continued reliance on external models and schools of thought in regulation, management and performance evaluation. This is despite the fact that the size of Arab insurance markets, the evolution of legislative and regulatory frameworks; and the existence of well-established supervisory authorities provide a solid foundation for developing an independent Arab insurance model that reflects the region's unique economic, legal and regulatory environment. Another major challenge is the heavy dependence on international credit rating agencies. This underscores the need for developing robust regional evaluation and analytical frameworks that are better aligned with the realities of Arab insurance markets, thereby strengthening regulatory independence and enhancing the quality of supervisory decision-making. In this context, it has become essential to conduct a comprehensive strategic assessment of the insurance sector every five years using the SWOT Analysis methodology, with the active participation of both the public and private sectors. Such assessments would identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, while providing a strategic roadmap for sustainable growth, resilience and enhanced competitiveness. Furthermore, evaluating executive

leadership, human capital, recruitment strategies and Career & Succession Planning has become a fundamental requirement across the financial services, banking and insurance sectors. These elements form an integral part of corporate governance and enterprise risk management, ensuring business continuity, sustainable performance and the development of future leadership capable of responding to an increasingly dynamic business environment. Equally important is a comprehensive understanding of the three core financial statements: the Balance Sheet, the Profit & Loss Account (Income Statement) and the Cash Flow Statement. Each provides a distinct perspective on an organisation's financial health. The Balance Sheet reflects the company's financial position at a specific point in time, the Profit & Loss Account measures operating performance over a defined period, while the Cash Flow Statement demonstrates the organisation's ability to generate liquidity and meet its operational and investment obligations. A meaningful financial assessment can only be achieved through an integrated analysis of all three statements. Within the framework of strengthening corporate governance and enhancing capital market efficiency, improving the trading performance of insurance companies' shares should be regarded as a shared responsibility of both Boards of Directors and executive

It has become essential to conduct a comprehensive strategic assessment of the insurance sector every five years using the SWOT Analysis methodology, with the active participation of both the public and private sectors.

management. Executive compensation and incentive schemes should therefore be linked to a balanced set of performance indicators rather than focusing solely on revenue growth or accounting profits. These indicators should include share price performance, net profitability, cash flow generation, return on shareholders' equity, capital management efficiency, risk management effectiveness and compliance with sound corporate governance principles. Adopting this comprehensive and integrated approach to corporate governance, enterprise risk management, performance evaluation and aligning executive performance with long-term market value and financial sustainability will significantly strengthen the competitiveness of the Arab insurance industry. It will enhance operational efficiency, increase investor confidence, improve market attractiveness and transform the sector into a more mature, resilient and sustainable financial industry that supports economic growth while safeguarding the interests of policyholders and shareholders alike. Sustainable insurance markets are built not merely on premium growth, but on sound governance, prudent risk management, strong human capital, transparent financial reporting and the creation of long-term value for policyholders, shareholders and society.

BT-VERIZON DEAL PUTS GLOBAL TELCO GHOSTS TO BED

LIAM PROUD

Telecom companies once used international joint ventures to take on the world. Now, JVs are a handy way to retreat from it. London-based BT on Monday announced a partnership with US giant Verizon Communications, under which the two broadband-to-mobile carriers will create a new 50-50 company focused on multinational corporate clients, with \$4 billion in annual revenue. It's a wise move, but one that also shows how low the sector's animal spirits have fallen in the last few decades. BT's international unit dates back to a more gung-ho era in the telecom sector's history. One of the many hot areas, at the time, was serving global corporate clients. Imagine a bank or retailer with offices, call centres and stores in different countries and which might like a one-stop shop for mobile and broadband access rather than stitching together its own patchwork solution. In the 1990s — when the internet and cell phones were still relatively new — telco CEOs thought this would be a massive business, which they hoped to tap through JVs with international peers. It all fell apart when the dotcom boom ended. BT, for example, in 2001 said it would take a \$2 billion hit to scrap Concert, a JV with AT&T formed in the late 1990s. Reports at the time suggested that there was too much overlap between the venture and the parent companies, which had domestic wholesale businesses of their own. Ironically, Concert was originally a partnership with a different American telco called MCI, which ended up being part of Verizon many years later. Fast forward to today, and BT International is hardly thriving. Analysts reckon the top line will be some \$2.4 billion this year and shrink thereafter, with negligible EBITDA and an operating loss. The revenue number suggests BT's unit will contribute 60% of the new JV's total, which may explain why the British company is getting a \$625 million "equalisation payment" from Verizon. These transfers are typically necessary to compensate the larger party in a 50-50 venture. That cash bonus and the chance to deconsolidate a shrinking loss-making asset, make the new JV a worthwhile deal from BT's perspective. CEO Allison Kirkby is delivering on her pledge to focus on the UK. New Street Research analysts reckon the deal values the international assets at nearly 12 times EBITDA, far higher than the mid-single-digit valuation multiples at which American and European telcos tend to trade. Still, pivoting more deliberately to a slow-growth domestic market is hardly an exciting move. So-called altnets, which are challenger broadband builders, have been snapping at BT's toes. Elon Musk's SpaceX is making a play for more retail satellite-internet customers. — Reuters

Is EU single market for energy such a good idea?

WHATEVER

happens with the US-Iran peace process and global energy prices, the strategic implications of this year's supply disruptions are already clear. The crisis is further confirmation of the need to phase out fossil fuels, both to mitigate climate change and to strengthen energy security. But for Europe, which remains heavily dependent on imported energy, some less obvious implications may ultimately prove more consequential. To address the precipitous decline in its share of global GDP this century, Europe must lower its energy costs. European de-industrialisation stems not just from the decline of energy-intensive output such as chemicals, fertilisers and steel, but also from the fact that European industries pay twice as much for electricity as their US and Chinese competitors. As long as that remains true, the continent will fall behind in the industries of the future, not least AI, which depends on power-guzzling computing power. We have all heard the optimistic pitch for a transition from imported fossil fuels to domestically produced, price-competitive renewable energy. But like the energy crisis triggered by Russia's 2022 war in Ukraine, the latest shock has helped to expose the wishful thinking behind this vision. Solar and wind power may be generated domestically, but the industry is far from indigenous. Renewables depend on far-flung supply chains dominated by China. Though the cost of the equipment is constantly falling, the drop is but a fraction of the full cost of keeping the lights on amidst the transition to renewables. For example, Europe still needs massive investment in transmission networks, owing to the growing share of electricity in total energy consumption and the distance that many renewables facilities are from existing grids. The



BRIGITTE GRANVILLE

The writer is a Professor of International Economics and Economic Policy at Queen Mary University of London.

European de-industrialisation stems not just from the decline of energy-intensive output such as chemicals, fertilisers, and steel, but also from the fact that European industries pay twice as much for electricity as their US and Chinese competitors. As long as that remains true, the continent will fall behind in the industries of the future, not least AI, which depends on power-guzzling computing power.

burden of recovering these costs will ultimately fall on electricity consumers. Moreover, electricity prices have been inflated by the intermittency of renewable power — ate frontier-free wholesale power markets. This combination calls attention to the divide between national and “federal” (EU-wide) energy agendas — an issue that is poised to come to a head in next year's French presidential election. The EU's internal electricity market uses a marginal pricing model, whereby the most expensive megawatt hour needed to meet all demand sets the price for the entire market. Since the marginal supply source (to plug gaps when the sun does not shine or the wind does not blow) is electricity generated by gas turbines, the price recently spiked when the closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupted Qatari gas exports. Textbook microeconomics shows why this model is efficient for Europe as a whole. The same logic underpins former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi's recommendation to remove as many internal barriers as possible across European product and services markets. But a better outcome for Europe overall could still be a bad deal for countries producing abundant low-carbon electricity at minimal marginal cost. Chief among these are solar-power-rich Spain and Portugal and nuclear-powered France. The construction of France's nuclear power stations and the associated transmission grid long predate the dominant role of climate change in energy-policy discussions. Now, France's longstanding emphasis on national security and self-reliance has positioned it well for the energy transition. It generates clean and secure power at low marginal cost, with the bulk of fixed costs already absorbed. But the benefits for French competitiveness are diluted by the effects of EU-wide marginal pricing

and this has not gone unnoticed. The far-right National Rally has already seized on the issue as it continues to build support ahead of the 2027 presidential election. Fragmented electricity markets may well be sub-optimal for the European economy overall, just as there are serious shortcomings to having a monetary union without a fiscal union. But economically rational integration — whether in energy markets or state budgets — risks provoking political backlashes that could blow up the European project. Moreover, even if Europe as a whole ends up making some economic sacrifice in the name of political prudence, the trade-off could have silver linings. Each European region and country will face its own set of challenges in replacing fossil fuels with electricity that is both low-carbon and competitively priced relative to global peers. The most plausible path to optimal solutions therefore may require trial and error; and such experimentation is obviously best pursued at the national, rather than the European, level. With this bottom-up approach, the aggregate cost of errors for Europe overall may be lower. And since there would be implicit competition between each country, all would be motivated to discover optimal strategies tailored to their own needs. The United Kingdom has already shown what can go wrong when you put all your eggs in one basket. Energy economist Dieter Helm notes that the country is now in a “lamentable” position, owing to an ill-considered renewables push that raised industrial electricity prices to twice the level in Europe (whose own energy prices are far from competitive). At the same time, Spain and Portugal show what national-level pilot schemes can achieve: During its sun-soaked daytime hours, the Iberian Peninsula generates more power than it needs. © Project Syndicate 2026

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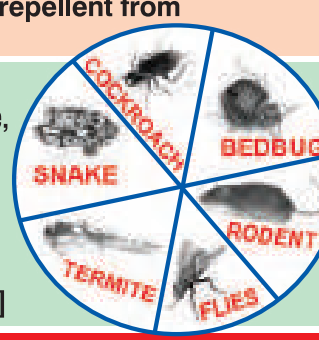
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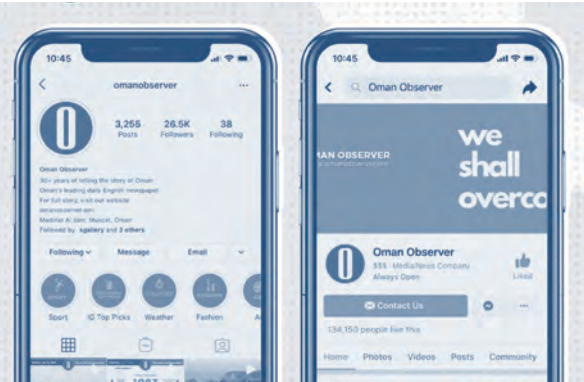
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ENTREPRENEUR WITH DOWN SYNDROME INSPIRING CHANGE

> 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT** A NUMBER PLATE THAT TELLS A BIGGER STORY



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

There is something surprisingly powerful about good branding.

It can turn an ordinary coffee cup into a souvenir, transform a landmark into a global attraction, or encourage thousands of people to share the same image online.

Increasingly, destinations have realised that branding is no longer confined to advertising campaigns. Sometimes, it is woven into everyday objects people barely notice.

Oman's new commemorative vehicle number plates for Khareef Dhofar 2026 are a perfect example.

Introduced by the Royal Oman Police, the optional plates feature the Khareef identity while retaining each vehicle's existing registration number. Valid from June until the end of December, they celebrate one of the Sultanate of Oman's biggest tourism seasons while allowing motorists to become part of the campaign itself.

Across the GCC, destination branding has steadily evolved beyond billboards and television commercials. The UAE has long embraced commemorative number plates for national milestones, international exhibitions, sporting events and cultural celebrations.

These limited-edition designs have become moving advertisements, reinforcing a destination's identity every time a vehicle takes to the road. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have adopted similar approaches as they strengthen their tourism brands and promote major events.

Every vehicle displaying the Khareef plate becomes a small ambassador for Dhofar.

Every photograph shared on social media featuring the distinctive design quietly extends the campaign's reach. In an age where travel decisions are increasingly influenced by images online, these subtle branding touches often prove remarkably effective.

Naturally, the initiative has also sparked conversation.

One concern raised by some commentators centres on sustainability. Since the commemorative plates are only authorised for a limited period, some have questioned whether producing temporary designs creates unnecessary waste. It is a reasonable discussion, particularly as environmental responsibility becomes a growing priority across the region.

Commemorative plates are often produced in controlled quantities, with owners encouraged to retain them as collector's items rather than discard them. Many programmes also use recyclable aluminium, allowing the materials to be recovered at the end of their life. Destination branding and sustainability do not have to compete; they simply need thoughtful planning.

Ultimately, these plates represent far more than a fresh design. They reflect a growing understanding that tourism is shaped by countless details working together to build a memorable identity.

As with any new initiative, there is always room to grow. Future editions could explore recycled materials, artist collaborations or annual collector designs.

But every successful tradition begins with a first step and this is undoubtedly one worth celebrating.

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



FASHION

A model presents a creation for Ziggy Chen for the Menswear Spring/Summer 2027 collection, fashion show as part of the Paris Fashion Week. — **AFP**



FESTIVAL

A participant is briefly lifted into the air as a giant dragon train kite catches the wind during a kite festival in Bantul, Indonesia. — **AFP**



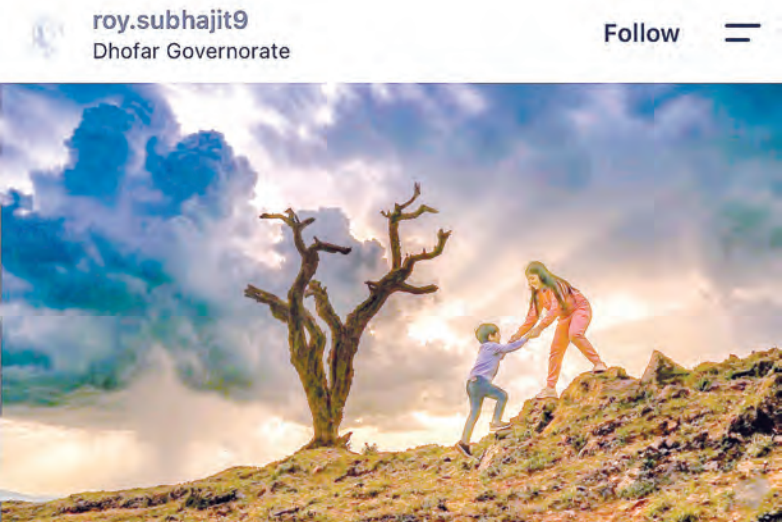
MOVIE

US actress Allison Janney attends the premiere of "Minions & Monsters" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



“Territorial Fight”



“The tree might be barren and the sky may be dark, but human kindness in a fire that never loses its spark”

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COMEDIAN JOHN OLIVER JOINS “GENERAL HOSPITAL”

Comedian John Oliver is heading to Port Charles, the fictitious town that is the setting for long-running ABC television soap opera “General Hospital”. Oliver, the Emmy-winning host of HBO’s “Last Week Tonight”, said on his show in March that he longed to make a cameo on a daytime soap opera. He said he was jealous of ESPN commentator Stephen A. Smith, who has appeared on “General Hospital” as Brick, the right-hand man to a mob boss, for 10 years. Producers of ABC’s “General Hospital” granted Oliver’s wish. The comedian is scheduled to appear on the show as an undisclosed character for three episodes starting on Thursday, the network said. “It’s a true honour to be a small stain on the history of this illustrious show”, Oliver said in a statement released on Sunday. “General Hospital” began airing on ABC 63 years ago. The show has featured unconventional stars in the past, including rock musician Rick Springfield and Oscar winner Elizabeth Taylor. It still runs on ABC and streams on Hulu. In his appeal back in March, Oliver said he wanted to play a character who would “do something juicy like murder,



John Oliver poses with the Outstanding Scripted Variety Series award at the 76th Primetime Emmy Awards.

— Reuters

or slapping, or being slapped, or being someone’s long lost something”. “And ideally, I’d like a dramatic close-up of my face”, he added. “In return, trust me, I will give my all to this performance”. — Reuters



TEAM DISCOVERS ‘WRONG CANYON’ IN WADI TANUF

DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

AFTER our recent adventure to Wadi Qasheh, one of the main branches of Wadi Tanuf, about two weeks ago, Rami, Hamood and I decided it was time to explore another tributary of this epic landscape.

On May 13, we were set and ready to head out from my place in Al Mawaleh South at 6:30 am, bound for Tanuf.

Like clockwork, we made our customary stop at our favourite coffee shop in Hay Al Turath, about 30 minutes from Al Faraa, the last spot accessible by car.

Over steaming cups of karak tea and our usual double-cheese, double-egg sandwiches, we fueled up for the day ahead. By 9 am, we were at Al Faraa, our starting point.

The weather that day was scorching, with temperatures soaring to 41°C. We packed all the gear we’d need for the exploration into our bags — an effort that felt particularly burdensome under the oppressive heat.

Setting out, we followed the trail connecting Al Faraa to the abandoned village of Al Rahbah, trudging along at a slow and steady pace. With no shade to shield us from the relentless sun, we made a couple of pit stops to rehydrate.

About 45 minutes into our arduous trek, we finally reached the entrance to the wadi tributary I had previously identified using Google Earth. The wadi bed was a sight to behold, carved beautifully over millennia by flowing water into sleek, grey stone platforms. Not long after descending into the wadi, we encountered our first obstacle: a 10-metre drop. A sturdy tree served as our natural anchor for the descent.

Continuing on, we faced a second drop of 20 metres where, once again, a conveniently placed tree came to our rescue for attaching the rope. After that, we progressed smoothly through the canyon until we ran into an area with



A group of adventurers exploring Wadi Tanuf’s tributaries faced steep descents and rugged terrain during a challenging canyon expedition. A navigational error led them to what they later dubbed the ‘Wrong Canyon,’ before they successfully completed a second, more scenic descent later in the day

no natural anchor for an upcoming 25-metre descent.

It was here that we brought out the drill and installed a permanent metallic anchor for abseiling. Further along, we navigated two more descents using natural rock threads to secure our ropes.

The biggest surprise of the day came at the final abseil when I realised — much to my dismay — that we had ended up in a completely different tributary!

Instead of landing where I had planned, we found ourselves at the Falaj of Al Faraa. My two companions wasted no time ribbing me about my navigational misstep and promptly dubbed it “The Wrong Canyon”.

By 11:30 am, we were back in Wadi Qasheh and had no intention of calling it quits just yet. Determined to find and explore the ‘right canyon’ this time, we retraced our steps back to another starting point. I was confident — very confident, I might add — that this was the correct wadi.

Fortunately, I wasn’t wrong this time!

The descent was smooth and stunningly scenic, with



cascading drops between 7 and 60 metres — the final one being the longest. In total, we tackled four drops during this second excursion.

At one tricky section, we even had to traverse sideways to avoid plunging into water below. After a rewarding climb through increasingly beautiful terrain, we completed our second wadi adventure of the day around 3 pm.

We ended our journey with a well-deserved treat. Just like last time, we stopped at the ‘Mandoos’ boulder for refreshments — and boy, did Hamood surprise us! He’d packed fresh melon and Greek yoghurt in an ice-filled cooler as a reward for all our hard work. It was pure bliss after such an exhausting but exhilarating day.

On the drive back to Muscat, my friends couldn’t resist poking fun at my earlier mishap with “The Wrong Canyon”. Their playful banter kept us laughing all the way home. By 7 pm, we finally arrived in Muscat — tired yet thoroughly satisfied after another unforgettable adventure in Oman’s breathtaking wadis.

FEATURES

ENTREPRENEUR WITH
DOWN SYNDROME
INSPIRING CHANGE

Fatma al Zahra believes society needs greater awareness and genuine support, not sympathy. Meaningful opportunities allow people with disabilities to demonstrate their talents, contribute with confidence and challenge limiting assumptions, creating space for their potential to be truly seen.



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

SOME dreams begin with a business plan. Others begin in the most unexpected places. For young Omani entrepreneur Fatma al Zahra al Lawati, who has Down syndrome, the foundation of her growing home business was laid in an evening Quran memorisation school, where she first learned the art of making skincare creams. What started as a simple lesson soon blossomed into a passion and, with the unwavering support of her mother, she began crafting products at home, one batch at a time.

Today, that passion has become Lotion Al Ameerat, a homegrown brand offering handmade body creams, natural soaps, scented candles and body scrubs. More products are already on the horizon as Fatma al Zahra continues to expand her creative vision, driven

by a desire to provide quality products that reflect care and craftsmanship.

Yet the greatest challenge she faced had little to do with perfecting recipes or building a business. Instead, it was convincing people that someone like Fatma al Zahra could succeed as an entrepreneur.

“In the beginning, many people did not believe we were capable of doing anything,” she says. “But once they tried my products, they realised that we are capable.”

Her words reflect a wider issue that many people with disabilities continue to encounter, where ability is often judged before opportunity is given. Fatma al Zahra believes society still needs greater awareness and genuine support — not sympathy, but meaningful opportunities that allow people to demonstrate their talents and contribute with confidence.

“We are an inseparable part of society,” she says. “We need your

Fatma al Zahra, a young Omani entrepreneur with Down syndrome, turns her passion for skincare into Lotion Al Ameerat, a growing home business challenging perceptions and inspiring change.

support, for you to stand with us and give us a chance.”

That chance came through participating in exhibitions and local markets. While taking part initially required overcoming her own fears, those events transformed both her confidence and her business. Visitors began appreciating the quality of her products, returning not because of her story alone, but because the products themselves earned their trust.

Behind every milestone stands a family that believed in her from the very beginning. Fatma al Zahra credits her parents and her brother as her greatest source of strength.

“Without them, I would never have reached where I am today,” she says.

Their encouragement helped nurture more than a business; it strengthened a belief that determination can overcome doubt.

Among her proudest memories are the moments when customers stop at her exhibition stand to praise her work and support her journey. Their encouragement reminds her that perseverance is rewarded and that every small success contributes to changing perceptions.

Her message to others is simple yet powerful: believe in your abilities, place your trust in God and remain patient through every challenge.

Looking ahead, Fatma al Zahra dreams of taking Lotion Al Ameerat beyond Oman and introducing her brand to the world. More than commercial success, however, she hopes to see lasting support for entrepreneurs with disabilities, allowing them to thrive and feel recognised as valued members of society.

Fatma al Zahra’s story is not merely one of entrepreneurship. It is a reminder that talent knows no boundaries, that opportunity can transform lives and that sometimes all it takes to change perceptions is giving someone the chance to prove what they have always known they were capable of.

Readers can follow Fatma al Zahra al Lawati’s journey on Instagram at @pfz786 and support her growing business, Lotion Al Ameerat, through @lotion_alameerat.