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SHORT TAKES



UNESCO CHAIR AFLAJ CONTRACT EXTENDED

NIZWA: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) has extended the contract of the Unesco Chair in Aflaj Studies at Nizwa University for another four years under the new name: Unesco Chair in Aflaj Studies and Socio-hydrology.

The extension of the contract affirms the scientific role the University of Nizwa plays in documenting traditional and cultural knowledge and its sustainable management, particularly with regard to the Omani aflaj system, an ancient irrigation system that combines environmental, social and cultural aspects.

Dr Abdullah bin Saif al Ghafri, Professor of the Unesco Chair in Aflaj Studies and Sociohydrology said: “The change of the name comes in response to global scientific trends towards socio-hydrology, an interdisciplinary field that studies the relationship between human societies and their water resources. It highlights water management, water justice and the behaviour of individuals and institutions towards water as well as the associated cultural and developmental dimensions.

He pointed out that since its launch in 2021, the Unesco Chair in Aflaj Studies has achieved a number of scientific and academic accomplishments including the publication of dozens of research papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals, the introduction of specialised university courses on aflaj, the production of radio and documentary programmes and the provision of field consultations for farmers and aflaj managers. — ONA



OMAN BRINGS HOME OVER 1,300 CITIZENS AND EXPATS

FROM PI

“We could see huge columns of smoke and fire billowing out of buildings nearby where we were staying. People were being evacuated from everywhere. When we contacted the Indian Embassy in Iran, the result was disappointing as they told us to follow online updates and to contact them after the weekend,” Rafiq said.

“However, the Omanis who were with us took us to the Oman Embassy in Tehran. Although they were not bound to board us, the kind-hearted officials as well as the co-passengers succeeded in accepting us as their own citizens. We were given temporary accommodation.”

Rafiq said that the Omani authorities provided them with temporary facilities until Friday and Saturday; and then asked to approach the Indian Embassy. “We contacted the Indian Embassy, but the response from there was not as expected. Thanks to an Omani citizen who was with us, the authorities again arranged travel facilities for us. With this, we were taken along with the Omanis to Basra in Iraq via Bandar Abbas.”

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES MEETING

ISTANBUL: The Sultanate of Oman on Saturday participated in the extraordinary meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level which was held in Istanbul, Türkiye.

The Sultanate of Oman’s delegation was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs.



Oman’s delegation was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs. — ONA

The meeting condemned the Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of a UN member state and a threat to regional peace and security.

The meeting also underscored the need to halt the Israeli aggression and intensify efforts to reduce tensions towards achieving a ceasefire. — ONA

Training programme to improve quality of research

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

AS part of its ongoing efforts to build national research and innovation capabilities, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has launched the second edition of its Research and Innovation Training Support Programme.

This initiative aims to equip researchers and innovators across the Sultanate of Oman with the necessary skills and knowledge through specialised training programmes, developed in partnership with academic institutions.

Ali Abdullah al Maskari, Director of Capacity Building at MoHERI, said that the programme was introduced to strengthen national research capacity through targeted training that promotes knowledge production and scientific excellence.

“Our aim is to improve the quality of research and innovation output in Oman by providing high-level, specialised training courses in cooperation with academic institutions. This contributes directly to the Sultanate of Oman’s global ranking in science and innovation indicators. Previously, each institution could only submit two proposals — one in research and



We look at the quality and relevance of the content, the qualifications of the trainers, alignment with national research priorities, the proposed training duration, the training methods used, accessibility of the training location and the availability of essential facilities

ALI ABDULLAH AL MASKARI
Director of Capacity Building at MoHERI

one in innovation. Now, based on the size and research profile of each institution, universities are allowed to submit up to six proposals. This enables wider participation and diversity in training content,” Al Maskari explained.

The programme targets a broad segment of society including students, academics, technicians, administrators, researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, jobseekers and staff at higher education institutions. Both Omani and non-Omani participants aged 18 and above are eligible to apply.

The supported fields this year include research and innovation project management, scientific research methodologies, proposal writing, grant and funding acquisition, Artificial intelligence and digital transformation in research. Applications are assessed against a set of criteria that ensure quality and relevance. “We look at the quality and relevance of the content, the qualifications of the trainers, alignment with national research priorities, the proposed training duration, the training methods used, accessibility of the training location and the availability of essential facilities,” Al Maskari said.

Reflecting on the first edition, Al Maskari shared that 18 academic institutions submitted 36 training proposals, of which 18 were funded.

The programme attracted 489 participants from across Oman, achieving a satisfaction rate of 87 per cent. One particularly inspiring example was a group of four participants from the Wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate who attended a three-week training in Al Buraimi without missing a single session — demonstrating extraordinary commitment and enthusiasm.

The programme’s inaugural cycle also revealed a number of challenges. One such issue was the inconsistent visual branding of the training materials. “We resolved this by developing a unified template for presentations, posters and electronic materials to be used by all participating institutions,” said Al Maskari. Other measures included shortening some training courses and offering hybrid options (in- person and online) to increase accessibility and participation.

Looking ahead, Al Maskari revealed that the ministry is working on launching a new initiative aimed at supporting Omani researchers and innovators to participate in international training programmes. “This expansion will open new global learning pathways and will be launched in the last quarter of this year. It complements our current programme and directly supports the goals of Oman Vision 2040,” he said.

W o r l d H y d r o g r a p h y D a y

Oman committed to navigational safety

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman National Hydrographic Office, marked the World Hydrography Day (WHD), which falls on June 21 of each year.

This year’s celebration is held under the theme ‘Seabed Mapping: Enabling Ocean Action’ with the aim of highlighting the importance of hydrographic data in promoting environmental and economic development and achieving ocean sustainability.

The Sultanate of Oman joined the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1989 and the Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea in 1999 and has since then shown a great commitment to providing hydrographic services to the international community. The National Hydrographic Survey Authority was established in September 1992. The following month, the Sultanate of Oman

While marking the 2025 World Hydrography Day, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its commitment in developing its national capabilities, enhancing regional and international cooperation



Oman reaffirmed its commitment in developing national capabilities. — ONA

joined the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). In April 1995, the Oman National Hydrographic Office was established with the aim of producing nautical charts and marine products as well as carrying out surveys to ensure maximum navigational safety.

While marking the 2025 World



Hydrography Day, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its commitment in developing its national capabilities, enhancing regional and international cooperation, contributing to the shared goals of protecting the seas and enabling their responsible and sustainable use for present and future generations. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Muscat Municipality stated that the traffic study is crucial for the development of the transportation sector.

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY CONDUCTS TRAFFIC SURVEY

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The Muscat Municipality has initiated a community survey for the Traffic Study 2025 to evaluate traffic flow in Muscat.

The goal of the traffic survey is to enhance traffic efficiency.

The campaign encourages the public to voice their opinions and contribute to development.

Some individuals will receive text messages with a link to the survey, where they can share their personal experiences.

According to the Muscat Municipality, the comprehensive traffic study is being conducted to monitor and assess traffic flow in Muscat, identify congestion points and propose appropriate solutions to address the challenges.

The Muscat Municipality stated that the traffic study is crucial for the development of the transportation sector, providing sustainable traffic solutions, reducing time wasted in traffic, improving quality of life and enhancing economic development.

The Muscat Municipality also emphasised that the community survey is essential for understanding the reality of traffic from the community's perspective, identifying challenges and improving opportunities. This, in turn, helps in developing traffic solutions that meet everyone's needs.



COMMERCIAL VESSEL SINKS NEAR SALALAH COAST

SALALAH: The Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Saturday said that the commercial vessel, Phoenix 15, flying the Comoros flag, has sank 20 nautical miles southeast of Salalah. The MSC noted that the 20 crews who were on board the vessel were rescued by the commercial vessel Gulf Barakah which was sailing nearby. — ONA

QS TO LAUNCH REPORT ON OMAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION

MUSCAT: On Monday, June 23, Oman will host a landmark academic event to unveil a new global report by QS Quacquarelli Symonds, titled 'The Enormous Potential of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman.'

The event will take place at the Modern College of Commerce and Science in Muscat, under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and in the presence of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Bringing together prominent academic leaders, policymakers, representatives from Omani universities and international institutions, the event will spotlight Oman's rising profile as a global hub for higher education.

The QS report presents data-driven insights and practical



DR KHAMIS BIN SAIF AL JABRI

recommendations aimed at enhancing the performance of Omani universities in global rankings. It also emphasises the Sultanate of Oman's strategic strengths — its geographic location, cultural diversity and sustained investment in educational development — as key drivers for attracting international students and researchers.

This initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, reflecting the nation's strong commitment to raising educational standards and achieving institutional excellence on both regional and international fronts.

‘Neo-Russian Style’ expo opens at National Museum

WITHIN the frameworks of ‘The Russian Seasons,’ the National Museum inaugurated the ‘Neo-Russian Style’ exhibition hosted in collaboration with the State Hermitage Museum, under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The exhibition, which will run until November 2, is dedicated to the bright period in the history of artistic life of the Russian Empire in the 1880s-1910s, when ‘the Russian style’ in art formed several decades earlier was experiencing its new rise.

The features of the Neo-Russian style during the rule of the last emperors Alexander III and Nicholas II manifested themselves in the architecture of St Petersburg, Moscow, large and small provincial towns of Russia, in works of painting, sculpture, decorative and applied art.



The National Museum inaugurated the ‘Neo-Russian Style’ exhibition hosted in collaboration with the State Hermitage Museum

Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, stated in his opening speech that the inauguration of this exhibition comes as part of a series of cultural events under the Russian Cultural Seasons, reflecting the ongoing interaction with cultural and museological institutions in the Russian Federation to strengthen the bonds of cultural and museological cooperation — the most recent of which was the launch of the National Museum's website in the Russian language.

He added: “As part of cultural diplomacy, work is underway on a number of joint projects and events with the Russian Ministry of Culture, including the hosting of musical seasons at Bayt Greiza this coming October, as well as cooperation with the State Tretyakov Gallery to organise an exhibition on the pioneers of Omani fine art.

Oleg Vladimirovich Levin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Sultanate of Oman, in his speech said that the exhibition sheds light on a period of Russian culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, known as the peak of the ‘Russian style’, which reflects the diversity of traditions of the Russian Empire as manifested in art, architecture and daily life.

He added that this exhibition represents an important step in strengthening the cultural dialogue between the Russian Federation and the Sultanate of Oman, as it demonstrates how art and tradition can serve as a bridge between nations in the pursuit of preserving the world's cultural heritage.

The exhibition showcases remarkable examples of applied arts and historical masquerade costumes that were worn at court balls in Imperial Russia. He also referred to the opening of the second exhibition under the Hermitage Museum Corner initiative, entitled ‘Gifts of the Emirs of Bukhara and Central Asia to the Russian Imperial Court’ and expressed his enthusiasm for the exhibition in the ‘Oman Hall’ at the State Hermitage Museum.

The exhibits include gifts to the Russian monarchs: tray dishes, saltcellars and fans. These items, like a mirror, reflected the idea of the unity of the people, the Church and the Tsar, formulated in the Russian Empire back in the first third of the 19th century as the official ideological triad.

Among the exhibits is a silver presentation dish presented to Emperor Alexander III and

Empress Maria Feodorovna by oilmen from the Absheron Peninsula during their visit to the Caucasus in 1888 CE. The dish was crafted in the Russian style at the renowned jewelry factory of Ivan Khlebnikov.

The exhibition also features a silver presentation salt cellar with Lid presented to Emperor Nicholas II upon his return from his Eastern journey between 1890 and 1891. It was produced at the famous Pavel Ovchinnikov factory in Moscow and gifted to the emperor by artisans from the Southern Ural region.

Additionally, the exhibits include a lace fan made from Vologda bobbin lace, featuring the letter ‘M’ engraved on a yellow Stain Pad in Wooden Case. The fan belonged to Empress Maria Feodorovna and it dated 1883 CE.

Also, on display is a Portrait of a young woman wearing a traditional Russian outfit, including the kokoshnik headdress, painted by artist Sofya Yunker-Kramskaya, dating back to the early 20th century.

The Yusupov princes whose costumes will be on display at the exhibition were said to be incomparable organisers of masquerades and ‘historical balls’ in St Petersburg. — ONA

126 participate in championship for persons with disabilities

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JUNE 21

The fourth edition of the Boccia Championship for Persons with Physical Disabilities concluded successfully at the Sohar Sports Complex, under the auspices of Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Hajri, Wali of Shinas. Organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), the championship ran for four days in June and brought together 126 talented participants with moderate to severe physical disabilities from various regions across Oman.

Khalifa al Mazrouei, Head of the Sports Activities Department for Persons with Disabilities at the

Ministry, stated, “The competition aimed to create an inspiring and inclusive sports environment that allows individuals with physical disabilities to showcase their talents. It also provides a platform to discover promising athletes who could be selected for national teams, while promoting interaction among peers and broader community engagement.”

Now recognised as a landmark event in Oman's adaptive sports calendar, the championship continues to highlight the remarkable abilities, determination and competitive spirit of people with disabilities. The event featured a range of individual, duo and team competitions across various Boccia



The competition provided a platform to discover promising athletes while promoting interaction among peers.

classifications.

In the BC1 individual category, Arwa al Harthy secured first place among the female participants, while Samir Said al Sulaimi topped the male category.

In the BC2 classification, Iman al Maamari claimed the top spot for females, with Omar al Hinai winning among the males.

The BC3 female category saw Aisha al Radaini take home the gold medal.

In the BC4 events, Amal al Raisi emerged victorious among females, while Hassan al Balushi won in the male category.

The BC5 classification saw strong performances, with Maysun al Buraiki winning the female title and Abdulmutalib al Ajmi securing first place among males.

In the mixed BC4 duo category, the team of Hassan al Balushi and Hamda al Badi claimed the top prize. The mixed team event for BC1 and

BC2 classifications was won by the trio of Samir al Sulaimi, Mohammed al Zadjali and Fathiya al Harthy. Meanwhile, in the open category, Noah al Sheedi emerged as the winner.

Reflecting on the success of the event, Safaa al Shezawi, Sports Activity Specialist at the Ministry and one of the key organisers, commented, “The championship witnessed strong competition and played a crucial role in raising awareness about Boccia as a recognised Paralympic sport. It created a dynamic and competitive atmosphere that attracted skilled participants from across the country and highlighted emerging talents.”

SPOTLIGHT



HOW SIMPLE ACTIONS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR FEATHERED FRIENDS IN OMAN

WINGED VISITORS NEED YOU THIS SUMMER

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

A GLANCE out the window on a summer afternoon might reveal birds seeking refuge on the windowsill – resting in the shade, searching for food, and most importantly, water. It's bird-watching of a different kind – less about spotting exotic species and more about observing resilience and survival.

House sparrows are frequent visitors, staring through tinted glass with quiet hope, while pigeons seem to carry on undeterred, even during the peak heat hours.

Bright blue Indian Rollers add a splash of colour to the otherwise sun-bleached scene. In Oman's intense summer, birds face extreme challenges: searing temperatures, dehydration, and reduced food availability.

Birdwatchers and conservationists alike stress the need for accessible water. A simple, shallow dish under a tree or on a balcony can become a life-saving oasis. One company created such a haven under a peepal tree in its parking lot – dozens of pigeons now gather around the shaded water bucket in contentment.

Providing shelter through native trees like the ghaf and sidr, or using shade nets and shrubs, can offer vital cover.

Equally important is offering appropriate food – grains, seeds or fruits – while avoiding processed items that harm birds.

Observer spoke with Nasser al Kindi, bird-watching expert and author of 'Birds in Oman', who emphasised the importance of habitat and water. He explained that

while some migratory birds pass through, others like the European Roller and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater spend parts of the summer in Oman. Dhofar, with its monsoon clouds, becomes a seasonal home for species like the grey-headed kingfisher and the Diederik Cuckoo. Nasser recommends cultivating gardens with native plants and avoiding pesticides to attract birds and other beneficial species like butterflies and dragonflies.

He adds, "Support birds by providing water, and remember to clean the dish with soap at least once a week to avoid disease spread."

Three simple ways to support birds this summer:

Provide fresh water daily in shallow dishes placed in shaded spots – and clean them weekly with soap.

Plant native trees and avoid chemicals in gardens to create safe, natural habitats.

Spread awareness in your community about how to protect and support local wildlife.

SHORT TAKES



Germany braces for a short heatwave over the solstice weekend.

GERMANY BRACES FOR 37°C HEATWAVE

BERLIN: The German summer is off to a sweltering start, with temperatures set to hit 37 degrees Celsius as the country braces for a short heatwave over the solstice weekend.

Temperatures in western Germany have been forecast to reach up to 33 degrees on Saturday, which marks the astronomical start of summer.

A breeze is expected to provide a more bearable climate along the country’s coastal areas, according to the DWD national meteorological service.

By Sunday, south-western Germany is expected to see a steamy 37 degrees, though nationwide temperatures are more likely to hover between 31 and 35 degrees.

The record temperature measured by the DWD was 41.2 degrees in July 2019, while the highest temperature ever seen in June was 39.6 degrees, in the same year.

Heavy downpours and storms are forecast to bring temperatures back down in the west and north-west on Sunday evening, with the rain due to move east and south-east overnight.

Temperatures on Monday are expected to reach a maximum of 30 degrees. The hot weekend coincides with the official start of summer on Saturday. The Earth’s axis is slightly inclined as it orbits the Sun. This means that the northern hemisphere is currently tilted towards the Sun - resulting in long days and a high position of the Sun. — *dpa*

THAI PM WILL NOT RESIGN OR DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT

BANGKOK: Thailand’s embattled prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra will not resign or dissolve parliament, a senior official from the ruling Pheu Thai party said on Saturday, risking a prolonged political crisis in Southeast Asia’s second largest economy.

Sorawong Thienthong, who also serves as Thailand’s tourism minister, said in a Facebook post that the prime minister would not quit, despite growing calls for her

resignation after her apparent mishandling of a border dispute with neighbouring Cambodia.

“The prime minister has clearly confirmed to us that she will continue to perform her duty to resolve various crises that the country is facing to the best of her ability,” he said.

“The government confirms that it will continue to work, not resign, and not dissolve parliament.”

Paetongtarn, daughter of divisive tycoon and former premier Thaksin

Shinawatra, is facing domestic anger over the leak of a phone call between her and Cambodia’s influential former leader Hun Sen, in which she appeared to kowtow before the veteran politician and denigrated a senior Thai military commander.

The Bhumjaithai Party, which was the second-biggest partner in Thailand’s ruling coalition, withdrew from the alliance late on Wednesday, citing the leak earlier that day. — *Reuters*

Pro-Palestinian leader released from US custody

COLUMBIA University graduate Mahmoud Khalil walked out of a Louisiana immigrant detention centre on Friday, hours after a judge ordered his release, a major victory for rights groups that challenged what they called the Trump administration’s unlawful targeting of a pro-Palestinian activist.



Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil speaks to media after being released from immigration custody in Louisiana, US. — *Reuters*

he ruled from the bench, adding that punishing someone over a civil immigration matter was unconstitutional.

Khalil is the latest in a string of foreign pro-Palestinian students arrested in the US since in March who have subsequently been released by judges.

A legal permanent resident of the US, Khalil says he is being punished for his political speech, in violation of the Constitution’s First Amendment. Khalil condemned antisemitism and racism in interviews with CNN and other news outlets last year.

Noor Zafar, senior staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, which supported the activist, said: “Today’s ruling underscores a vital First Amendment principle: The government cannot abuse immigration law to punish speech it disfavors.”

The Syrian-born activist plans to return to New York to be with his wife, Dr Noor Abdalla, and their infant son, who was born during Khalil’s 104 days in detention.

The White House condemned the decision to release Khalil, saying he should be deported for “conduct detrimental to American foreign policy interests” and fraudulently obtaining a student visa. — *Reuters*

US District Judge Michael Farbiarz of Newark, New Jersey, ordered DHS to release him from custody at a jail for immigrants in rural Louisiana by 6:30 pm on Friday.

Farbiarz said the government had made no attempt to rebut evidence provided by Khalil’s lawyers that he was not a flight risk or a danger to the public.

“There is at least something to the underlying claim that there is an effort to use the immigration charge here to punish the petitioner,” Farbiarz said, referring to Khalil as

Khalil is the latest in a string of foreign pro-Palestinian students arrested in the US since in March who have subsequently been released by judges

Japan, US, Philippines stage unified maritime training exercise

ON BOARD THE ASANAGI, Japan: Helicopters buzzed in the shadow of a smouldering volcano and boats rescued dummies from the sea this week in a show of maritime unity by Japan, the United States and the Philippines.

The joint coast guard exercises held off Japan’s southwest shore follow a warning from the three countries about Chinese activity in disputed regional waters.

Tensions between China and other claimants to parts of the East and South China Seas have pushed Japan to deepen ties with the Philippines and the United States.

This week marked the second time the countries’ coast guards have held training drills together, and the first in Japan.

They took place over five days off the coast of Kagoshima, where Sakurajima volcano dominates the skyline, quietly puffing out smoke and ash.

Dozens of personnel took part, with Friday’s final exercises featuring one vessel from each of the three countries’ coast guards.

They included the BRP Teresa Magbanua, which was provided to the Philippines by Japan through a loan agreement. The 2,265-tonne vessel, named after a schoolteacher and revolutionary, usually monitors Chinese boats in the South China Sea.

China and the Philippines have engaged in months of confrontations



The Japan Coast Guard ship ‘Asanagi’ returns from a maritime exercise with the Philippine Coast Guard ship ‘Teresa Magbanua’ and the US Coast Guard ship ‘Cutter Stratton’ in the waters around the southern city of Kagoshima, Kagoshima prefecture. — *AFP*

in the contested waters, which Beijing claims almost entirely, despite an international ruling that the assertion has no legal basis.

Chinese and Japanese patrol vessels in the East China Sea also routinely face off around disputed islands.

On Friday, Manila accused China of using a water cannon on two of its fisheries department boats as they attempted to resupply Philippine fishermen near the

disputed Scarborough Shoal. The US Coast Guard was represented in the exercises by the cutter Stratton, which can carry up to 170 personnel, and Japan by the 6,000-ton Asanagi.

Friday’s drills began with a simulation of a person falling overboard. Once the dummy, wearing a bright red lifejacket, was in the water, a US drone was launched from the Stratton, circling high above as it scanned the area.

— *AFP*



Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal Tender

Tender No.	83/2025/MHT/HQ-19	Tender Name	Construction of Tourism Guidance Office for Ministry of Heritage & Tourism in Nizwa
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 OMR	
Tender Document Sales End Date		7/7/2025	
Last Date for Bid Submission		29/7/2025	
Grade		Second, Third	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@gstb.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sotic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

3 Iranian commanders killed in fresh wave of strikes



A protester wearing a keffiyeh as a head scarf takes part in a march through central London, at a demonstration organised by the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign. — AFP



Iranian flags are displayed on the National Mall near the US Capitol as part of a demonstration organised by activists in Washington, DC, US. — Reuters



Israeli soldiers and first responders check the damage caused to a building from an Iranian strike in Beit Shean amid the ongoing fire exchange between Iran and Israel. — AFP

ISRAEL SAID on Saturday it had killed three Iranian commanders in its unprecedented bombing campaign across the Islamic Republic, which Foreign Minister Gideon Saar claimed had already delayed Tehran's presumed nuclear plans by two years.

Israel's military said its fighter jets successfully targeted a top Iranian official Saeed Izadi, in charge of coordination with Palestinian Hamas, in Qom south of Tehran and announced the deaths of two other commanders from Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

As Israel continued to strike Iran's nuclear facilities and military targets, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said in an interview that by the country's own assessment, it had "already delayed for at least two or three years the possibility for them to have a nuclear bomb".

"We will do everything that we can do there in order to remove this threat," Saar told German newspaper Bild, asserting Israel's onslaught would continue.

Israel and Iran have traded wave after wave of devastating strikes, after Israel launched its aerial campaign on June 13, saying Tehran was on the verge of developing a nuclear weapon -- an ambition Iran has denied.

Israel said it had attacked Iran's Isfahan nuclear site for a second time after its air force said it had also launched salvos against missile storage and launch sites in central Iran.

The military later said it struck military infrastructure in southwest Iran.

US President Donald Trump warned on Friday that Tehran has a "maximum" of two weeks to avoid possible American air strikes, as Washington weighs whether to join Israel's unprecedented bombing campaign.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Istanbul on Saturday, for a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to discuss the conflict.

Top diplomats from Britain, France and Germany met Araghchi in Geneva on Friday, and urged him to resume talks with the United States that had been derailed by Israel's attacks.

But Araghchi told NBC News after the meeting that "we're not prepared to negotiate with them (the United States) anymore, as long as the aggression continues."

Trump was dismissive of European diplomatic efforts, telling reporters, "Iran doesn't want to speak to Europe. They want to speak to us. Europe is not going to be able to help in this."

Trump also said he is unlikely to ask Israel to stop its attacks to get Iran back to the table. "If somebody's winning, it's a little bit harder to do," he said.

Any US involvement would likely feature powerful bunker-busting bombs that no other country possesses to destroy an underground uranium enrichment facility in Fordo.

A US-based NGO, the Human Rights Activists News Agency, said on Friday that based on its sources and media reports at least 657 people have been killed in Iran, including 263 civilians. — AFP

Erdogan to Iran: Talks, the only solution



Türkiye's President Tayyip Erdogan meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during the 51st Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in Istanbul. - Reuters

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday told Iran's foreign minister that resuming Iranian-US talks on Tehran's nuclear programme was the only way to achieve a solution to their dispute and the conflict with Israel, the Turkish Presidency said.

Erdogan met Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on the sidelines of an Organisation of Islamic Cooperation meeting in Istanbul. In a statement, his office noted that Erdogan said Israel had to be stopped immediately.

Erdogan said Turkey was ready to play a facilitator role to help resume the nuclear talks, adding "steps should be taken as soon as possible to open up diplomacy via technical and leaders-level talks between Iran and the US," his office added.

Meanwhile, the United Nations' Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA will open an office in Ankara, President Erdogan said on Saturday, urging Muslim countries to give the agency more support after Israel banned it. Israel last year banned UNRWA, saying it had employed members of

Palestinian Hamas who took part in the October 2023 attacks on Israel that triggered the Gaza war. Turkey has called Israel's assault on Gaza genocide and its move to ban UNRWA a violation of international law, particularly amid worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza, which has been reduced to rubble with millions displaced.

Addressing foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul, Erdogan said opening an Ankara UNRWA office would deepen Turkey's support for the agency.

"We must not allow UNRWA, which plays an irreplaceable role in terms of taking care of Palestinian refugees, to be paralysed by Israel. We expect our organisation and each member state to provide financial and moral support to UNRWA to thwart Israel's games," Erdogan said. A Turkish diplomatic source said Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini were expected to sign an accord on the sidelines of the OIC meeting in Istanbul on establishing the office. — Reuters

WAR MUST NOT BECOME REFUGEE CRISIS, SAYS UN



FILIPPO GRANDI
UN high commissioner for refugees



This region has already endured more than its share of war, loss and displacement. We cannot allow another refugee crisis to take root

some cases abroad. "This region has already endured more than its share of war, loss and displacement. We cannot allow another refugee crisis to take root," said Filippo Grandi, the UN high commissioner for refugees. "The time to de-escalate is right now. Once people are forced to flee, there's no quick way back -- and all too often, the consequences last for generations."

Israel said on Saturday it had launched fresh air strikes against missile storage and launch sites in central Iran. Iran has responded with barrages which Israeli authorities say have killed at least 25 people. Iran hosts the largest number of refugees in the world -- around 3.5 million -- mostly of them from Afghanistan.

If the conflict persists, Iran's existing refugee populations would also face renewed uncertainty and yet more hardship, UNHCR said.

The agency called for an urgent de-escalation in the conflict and urged countries in the region to respect the right of people to seek safety.

The Israeli government says the unprecedented wave of attacks it has launched at Iran since June 13 is aimed at preventing its rival from developing nuclear weapons -- an ambition Tehran strongly denies. Israel has maintained ambiguity about its own atomic arsenal, neither officially confirming nor denying it exists, but the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute says it has 90 nuclear warheads. — AFP

Hundreds of US citizens left Iran last week



Outbound passengers arrive with their luggage at the Emirates check-in counter at the Iranian capital Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport. — AFP File

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of American citizens have departed Iran using land routes over the past week since an aerial war between the Islamic Republic and Israel broke out, according to an internal State Department cable seen on Friday.

While many left without problem, "numerous" citizens had faced 'delays and harassment' while trying to exit, the cable said. It said, without giving further details, that one unidentified family had reported that two US citizens attempting to leave Iran had been detained.

The internal cable dated June 20 underscores the challenge Washington is facing in trying to protect and assist its citizens in a country with which it has no

diplomatic relations and in a war in which the United States may soon get involved.

President Donald Trump and the White House said on Thursday he will decide in the next two weeks whether the US will get involved in the Israel-Iran war. Trump has kept the world guessing on his plans, veering from proposing a swift diplomatic solution to suggesting Washington might join the fighting on Israel's side.

The air war began on June 13 when Israel attacked Iran and has alarmed a region that has been on edge since the start of Israel's war in Gaza in October 2023.

Israel is the only country in the Middle East widely believed to have nuclear weapons, and said it struck Iran to prevent Tehran

from developing its own nuclear weapons.

Iran, which says its nuclear programme is peaceful, has retaliated with its own strikes on Israel. Iran is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while Israel is not.

"Due to the limitations of US consular support in Iran, US citizens seeking departure should take advantage of existing means to leave Iran," a State Department spokesperson said in comments emailed late on Friday, when asked about the cable, which was first reported by The Washington Post.

The US State Department in a travel alert earlier on Friday urged its citizens wishing to depart Iran to use land routes via Azerbaijan, Armenia or Türkiye. Iranian

airspace is closed.

The US Embassy in the Turkmenistan capital of Ashgabat has requested entry for over 100 American citizens, but the Turkmenistan government has yet to give its approval, the cable said.

The Islamic Republic treats Iranian-US dual citizens solely as nationals of Iran, the State Department emphasised.

"US nationals are at significant risk of questioning, arrest and detention in Iran," the alert said.

Washington is looking at ways to potentially evacuate its citizens from Israel, but it has almost no way of assisting Americans inside Iran. The two countries have had no diplomatic ties since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. — Reuters

OPINION

The ethics of using AI to predict patient choices



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

RECENTLY attended a conference on bioethics in Switzerland where professionals from different countries met to discuss recent topics in medical ethics which was the main theme of this year's conference. Among the highlights of the meeting were several talks about the inclusion of Artificial Intelligence in decision-making and its ethical impact.

What caught my attention was a talk about Personalised Patient Preference Predictor, or P4, which is a tool that aims to predict an individual patient's preferences for healthcare, using machine learning.

The idea is that in situations where a person is incapacitated — for example, found unconscious with no advance directive — the AI would comb through their digital footprint, including tweets, Instagram and Facebook posts, and possibly even emails, to infer their likely wishes. The system would then create a virtual copy of the individual's personality, known as a 'psychological twin,' which would communicate decisions to the medical team on the person's behalf.

While this concept is technologically

fascinating, it raises several pressing ethical concerns. First, it assumes that our social media presence accurately reflects our core values and long-term preferences. However, people's views are dynamic and influenced by their emotional state, life experiences, and personal growth. A sarcastic tweet or a momentary opinion shared online may not represent someone's actual end-of-life wishes. Second, the use of AI risks introducing or amplifying bias — especially against the elderly and individuals from ethnic or religious minorities. AI systems often generalise from large datasets, which can lead to 'one-size-fits-all' assumptions that disregard cultural, spiritual, or personal nuances.

Another critical question is: can AI truly understand or navigate the emotional and moral complexity of disagreements among family members and healthcare providers? Would it possess the empathy required to mediate a delicate conversation, or would it deliver cold logic such as: "Grandpa is too old, his survival chances are low, so resources would be better allocated elsewhere"?

The module uses machine learning to analyse data from individuals' social media activity, enabling it to predict their preferences when they are unable to communicate them due to illness

Furthermore, relying on AI for such deeply human decisions risks the deskilling of health professionals. Ethical decision-making is an essential skill developed through experience, reflection, and dialogue. If AI takes over these roles, clinicians may gradually lose the ability — or the confidence — to engage in these vital discussions.

The speaker, who advocated for the use of P4, admitted he did not fully understand how the AI makes its decisions. This lack of transparency is alarming. If we are to entrust a machine with life-or-death recommendations, we must first demand clarity and accountability in its design and operation.

In my opinion, while AI has a growing role in healthcare, ethical decision-making remains a human responsibility. These discussions are often fraught with disagreement, cultural sensitivity, and intense emotion — particularly when they involve questions of life and death. In my view, we are not yet ready to hand this task over to machines. We are not yet ready to hand this task over to machines.

UK MPS VOTE IN FAVOUR OF ASSISTED DYING BILL IN HISTORIC STEP

PETER HUTCHISON & LIDIA PEDRO

Britain's parliament took a historic step towards allowing euthanasia on Friday when MPs backed contentious legislation that would introduce assisted dying for terminally ill people.

Lawmakers in the lower House of Commons chamber voted 314 in favour to 291 to send the proposal to the upper House of Lords for further scrutiny following four hours of emotional debate.

The outcome sparked celebrations among supporters gathered outside parliament who say legalised euthanasia will give people with an incurable illness dignity and choice at the end of their lives. But opponents attending a neighbouring counter-protest said they feared vulnerable people could be coerced into dying and urged lawmakers to focus on improving palliative care instead. The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill would allow assisted suicide in England and Wales for adults who have been given less than six months to live.

They would have to be able to administer the life-ending substance themselves, and any patient's wish to die would have to be signed off by two doctors and a panel of experts.

A change in the law would see Britain emulate several other countries in Europe and elsewhere that allow some form of assisted dying, including Belgium and the Netherlands.

Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, who proposed the legislation, told the so-called third reading debate that a law change would "offer a compassionate and safe choice" for terminally ill people.

She said maintaining the status quo would mean more "heartbreaking stories" of "pain and trauma, suicide attempts, PTSD, lonely trips to Switzerland, (and) police investigations".

But Vicky Foxcroft, also of Labour, said the proposal did not include adequate safeguards for disabled people.

"We have to protect those people who are susceptible to coercion, who already feel like society doesn't value them, who often feel like a burden to the state, society and their family," she pleaded.

Outside parliament, protesters waved placards with slogans including "Let us choose" and "Don't make doctors killers".

David Walker, 82, said he supported changing the law because he saw his wife of 60 years suffer for three years at the end of her life. "That's why I'm here, because I can't help her anymore, but I can help other people who are going through the same thing, because if you have no quality of life, you have nothing," he said. But Elizabeth Burden, a 52-year-old doctor, said she feared the legislation would open "slippery slope" where those eligible for assisted dying expands. — AFP

Water levels plummet at drought-hit reservoir

SHWAN MOHAMMED

WATER

LEVELS at Iraq's vast Dukan Dam reservoir have plummeted as a result of dwindling rains and further damming upstream, hitting millions of inhabitants already impacted by drought with stricter water rationing.

Amid these conditions, visible cracks have emerged in the retreating shoreline of the artificial lake, which lies in northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region and was created in the 1950s.

Dukan Lake has been left three quarters empty, with its director Kochar Jamal Tawfeeq explaining its reserves currently stand at around 1.6 billion cubic metres of water out of a possible seven billion.

That is "about 24 per cent" of its capacity, the official said, adding that the level of water in the lake had not been so low in roughly 20 years.

Satellite imagery analysed shows the lake's surface area shrank by 56 per cent between the end of May 2019, the last year it was completely full, and the beginning of June 2025.

Tawfeeq blamed climate change and a "shortage of rainfall" explaining that the timing of the rains had also become irregular.

Over the winter season, Tawfeeq said the Dukan region received 220 millimetres of rain, compared to a typical 600 millimetres.

Upstream damming of the Little Zab River, which flows through Iran and feeds Dukan, was a secondary cause of the falling water levels, Tawfeeq explained.

Also buffeted by drought, Iran has built dozens of structures on the river to increase its own water reserves.

Baghdad has criticised these kinds of dams, built both by Iran and neighbouring Turkey, accusing them of significantly restricting water flow into Iraq via the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Iraq, and its 46 million



Hussein Khedr Shekha, a 57-year-old farmer, speaks by a field near the village of Sarsian, at the edge of the Dukan dam reservoir northwest of Iraq's northeastern city of Sulaimaniyah in the autonomous Kurdistan region. — AFP

In a country ravaged by decades of conflict, with crumbling infrastructure and floundering public policies, residents already receive water intermittently

inhabitants, have been intensely impacted by the effects of climate change, experiencing rising temperatures, year-on-year droughts and rampant desertification.

At the end of May, the country's total water reserves were at their lowest level in 80 years.

On the slopes above Dukan lies the village of Sarsian, where Hussein Khader Sheikhah, 57, was planting a summer crop on a hectare of land.

The farmer said he hoped a short-term summer crop of the kind typically planted in the area for an autumn harvest – cucumbers, melons, chickpeas, sunflower seeds and beans – would help him offset some of the losses over the winter caused by drought.

In winter, in another area near the village, he planted 13 hectares mainly of wheat.

The water shortage at Dukan has affected around four million people downstream in the neighbouring Sulaimaniyah and Kirkuk governorates, including their access to drinking water.

For more than a month, water treatment plants in Kirkuk have been trying to mitigate a sudden, 40 per cent drop in the supplies reaching them, according to local water resource official Zaki Karim.

In a country ravaged by decades of conflict, with crumbling infrastructure and floundering public policies, residents already receive water intermittently.

The latest shortages are forcing even "stricter rationing" and more infrequent water distributions, Karim said.

In addition to going door-to-door to raise awareness about water waste, the authorities were also cracking down on illegal access to the water network.

In the province of roughly two million inhabitants, the aim is to minimise the impact on the provincial capital of Kirkuk. "If some treatment plants experience supply difficulties, we will ensure that there are no total interruptions, so everyone can receive their share," Karim said. — AFP

Dreams: The stuff that real lives are made of



RAY PETERSEN

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ACTOR Christopher Reeve, the actor played the original ‘Superman,’ during the late seventies and the eighties. Off-screen he also proved to be a man of steel, after a horse-riding accident in 1995 left him paralysed from the neck down.

Though wheelchair and ventilator-bound, Reeve dedicated his life to paraplegic and disability activism, using his profile to fundraise and promote awareness of disability needs. Reeve spoke of dreams and our need, no matter how dire our circumstances, to stay focused on our possibilities. His mantra, until his passing in 2004, was that “So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then seem improbable and then when we summon the will, they soon seem inevitable.” Reeve left us with what should be an ageless and immutable challenge to dream, but to make our dreams real.

Speaking of dreams, the remarkable Sigmund Freud drew attention to the importance of dreams saying that they “satisfy the unconscious wishes,” which is, I guess true if they are not nightmares and that they are “at their most profound when they seem the most crazy,” which is hardly comforting. Yet he was convinced that “Every dream will reveal itself as a psychological structure, full of significance.” Freud may have been a deep thinker, but I have always found him unsettling and when he makes

such assertions, which cannot be proven or disproven, he evidences genius and madness, prolonging the dilemma of dreams.

We all ponder where these incredibly diverse mental, emotional, even sensory experiences we all have come from? Neuroscience has been at pains for decades, even centuries, trying to understand where dreams originate and while they are widely accepted to be multiple pseudo-sensory, emotional and motoric events since the 1950’s, more recent research has determined that most dream activity originates in the posterior parietal region of the brain, where many of our sensory responses interact to create live activities and responses. For example, a pie looks (sight) great and smells great, so we will take a bite (taste) to see if it all comes together as a pleasant experience in an atypical parietal action of fitting us into our world.

Neuroscience has for decades been trying to link, explain and progress relationships between rapid-eye-movements (REM’s) while we sleep, and our dreams, however, this has proven to be a veritable ‘rabbit warren’ where the research has prompted more questions than answers. For instance, REM/ dream interactions take place predominantly in the small hours shortly before we wake, are infinitely more intense, bordering on theatrical, with a touch of fantasy, almost animated and often ‘scare’ us awake. The depth and integrity of REM-based research is coloured by the fact that subjects must offer

Dreams challenge us, rarely comfort us and remain a divisive enigma

literal documentation of their experiences, which can influence their reliability of those experiences.

Psychological research too, continues, but has thus far failed to conclusively prove any theory why we dream. Their continuity hypotheses contend that dreams and day-to-day waking life are interwoven, with common themes and content, while the alternative, their ‘discontinuity hypothesis,’ supports dream-thinking and being awake, as distinctly dissimilar. These schools of thought appear too far apart to sustain within the same scientific sector and again, probably reflect the unreliability of research subject interpretation and documentation of the meaning, let alone the content, of their experiences.

It’s an uncomfortable fact that those with mental health issues such as schizophrenia and post-traumatic disorders, anxiety and depression, identify significant unsettled daytime bad dream experiences, poor sleep patterns and more nightmares. These have in common that they are deeply personal, involuntary, illogical, often incoherent, yet eerily, in some deep manner, experience related and to awake is rarely to become safe. So, dreams challenge us, rarely comfort us and remain a divisive enigma.

Perhaps then, we should heed Mark Twain’s words: “Don’t dream away your life but live your dream.” Simple, succinct, practical and in harmony with the challenge of Christopher Reeve... a super man.

TECH-FUELLED MISINFORMATION DISTORTS IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

ANUJ CHOPRA

AI deepfakes, video game footage passed off as real combat and chatbot-generated falsehoods — such tech-enabled misinformation is distorting the Israel-Iran conflict, fuelling a war of narratives across social media.

The information warfare unfolding alongside ground combat — sparked by Israel’s strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities and military leadership — underscores a digital crisis in the age of rapidly advancing AI tools that have blurred the lines between truth and fabrication.

The surge in wartime misinformation has exposed an urgent need for stronger detection tools, experts say, as major tech platforms have largely weakened safeguards by scaling back content moderation and reducing reliance on human fact-checkers.

After Iran struck Israel with barrages of missiles last week, AI-generated videos falsely claimed to show damage inflicted on Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport.

The videos were widely shared across Facebook, Instagram and X.

Using a reverse image search, AFP’s fact-checkers found that the clips were originally posted by a TikTok account that produces AI-generated content.

There has been a “surge in generative AI misinformation, specifically related to the Iran-Israel conflict,” Ken Jon Miyachi, founder of the Austin-based firm BitMindAI, said.

GetReal Security, a US company focused on detecting manipulated media including AI deepfakes, also identified a wave of fabricated videos related to the Israel-Iran conflict.

The company linked the visually compelling videos — depicting apocalyptic scenes of war-damaged Israeli aircraft and buildings as well as Iranian missiles mounted on a trailer — to Google’s Veo 3 AI generator, known for hyper-realistic visuals.

The Veo watermark is visible at the bottom of an online video posted by the news outlet Tehran Times, which claims to show “the moment an Iranian missile” struck Tel Aviv.

“It is no surprise that as generative-AI tools continue to improve in photo-realism, they are being misused to spread misinformation and sow confusion,” said Hany Farid, the co-founder of GetReal Security and a professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

Farid offered one tip to spot such deepfakes: the Veo 3 videos were normally eight seconds in length or a combination of clips of a similar duration.

The falsehoods are not confined to social media. Disinformation watchdog NewsGuard has identified 51 websites that have advanced more than a dozen false claims. — AFP

This is easy to solve

MIDDLE East peace, climate change, Ukraine — if Sisyphus were assigned one of today’s global problems, he’d plead to be returned to rock rolling. So let’s focus for a moment on a global challenge that we can actually solve: starvation.

I suspect that some Americans — perhaps including President Donald Trump — want to slash humanitarian aid because they think problems like starvation are intractable. Absolutely wrong! We have nifty, elegant and cheap solutions to global hunger.

Consider something really simple: deworming. I’m travelling through West Africa on my annual win-a-trip journey, in which I take a university student along on a reporting trip and every day we see children plagued by worms that aggravate their malnutrition. Nutrients go to their parasites, not to them.

While worms are worthy antagonists — a female worm can lay 200,000 eggs in a day — aid agencies can deworm a child for less than \$1 a year. This makes them stronger, less anemic and more likely to attend school. Researchers have even found higher lifetime earnings.

In the US, we spend considerable sums deworming pets; every year I spend \$170 deworming my dog, Connie Kuvasz Kristof. Yet deworming the world’s children has never been as high a priority as deworming pets in the West, so we tolerate a situation in which 1 billion children worldwide carry worms.

My win-a-trip winner, Sofia Barnett of Brown University and I are reminded in every village we visit of the toll of hunger. Malnutrition leaves more than one-fifth of children worldwide stunted, countless millions cognitively impaired and vast numbers (especially menstruating women and girls) weak from anemia. Malnutrition is a factor in 45 per cent of child deaths worldwide.

Yet we also see how these deaths can be inexpensively prevented.

In one Sierra Leone clinic, we met a 13-month-old boy, Abukamara, with sores and stick limbs from severe malnutrition. His mother,



A health worker weighs a baby at a clinic in Bombali District, Sierra Leone. — NYT file photo



NICHOLAS D KRISTOF

The writer is an American journalist and political commentator

There are other inexpensive nutritional steps that could save many lives and some are astonishingly low-tech.

Mariatu Fornah, invited us to her village deep in the bush.

The family is impoverished and struggling. The parents and four children share a mattress in a thatch-roof mud-brick hut with no electricity, and no one in the family had eaten that day, even though it was early afternoon.

Fornah is doing what she can. She spent her entire savings of \$3 and traded away a dress to get a traditional herb remedy for Abukamara, and she made the long trek to the clinic to get help. And there she found it — in the form of a miracle peanut paste. The clinic gave her a supply of the peanut paste, one foil packet a day and it will almost certainly restore Abukamara.

This peanut paste contains protein, micronutrients and everything a child’s body needs, plus it tastes good and costs just \$1 per child per day. Known by the brand name Plumpy’Nut or the ungainly abbreviation RUTF, for ready-to-use therapeutic food, it has saved millions of children’s lives over the years.

Trump’s closure of the United States Agency for International Development led to the cancellation of orders for RUTF and 185,535

boxes of it are piled up in the warehouse of Edesia Nutrition, according to the firm’s founder and CEO, There are other inexpensive nutritional steps that could save many lives and some are astonishingly low-tech. Optimal breastfeeding could save up to 800,000 lives a year, The Lancet estimated, with no need for trucks, warehouses or refrigeration. Vitamin A supplementation would save lives, as would food fortification (adding nutrients to common foods). Promoting orange-flesh sweet potatoes over white-flesh ones would help, because orange ones have a precursor of vitamin A. Encouraging healthier crops like beans and millet rich with iron, rather than, say, cassava would help as well.

Investments in nutrition — along with others in vaccines and in treating diarrhea, pneumonia and other ailments — help explain why fewer than half as many children die before the age of 5 now as in 2000.

Yet after leading the world in fighting malnutrition, the US may be surrendering the field. America used to be the world’s leading backer of nutrition, but the US government did not even send a formal delegation to the 2025 Nutrition for Growth summit, a conference held every four years. The US was expected to host the next summit, but now that’s not clear.

In my journalistic career, I’ve seen children dying from bullets, malaria, cholera and simple diarrhea, but perhaps the hardest to watch are kids who are starving. Their bodies have sores that don’t heal, their hair falls out and their skin peels. By that point, even nourishing food doesn’t always bring them back.

What is most eerie is that such children don’t cry or protest; they are impassive, with blank faces. That’s because the body is fighting to keep the organs functioning and refuses to waste energy on tears or protests.

Their heads don’t move, but their eyes follow us silently, presumably wondering if we will care enough to ease their pain.

Mr. Trump, will we? — The New York Times

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova in action during her semifinal match against Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka. — Reuters

VONDROUSOVA OUSTS SABALENKA TO REACH BERLIN FINAL

BERLIN: Marketa Vondrousova powered past world number one Aryna Sabalenka 6-2 6-4 at the Berlin Open on Saturday to book a place in her first final since she won Wimbledon in 2023.

Czech Vondrousova controlled the tempo from the outset with surprisingly big serving on grass as she wrapped up the win in one hour and 20 minutes. She broke the Belarusian twice in the first set while saving both break points she faced.

The second set saw the players trade early breaks and Sabalenka saved two break points to stay in touch at 3-2, before the match settled into a rhythm at 4-4. Sabalenka, who saved four match points against Elena Rybakina on Friday, could not repeat that escape as Vondrousova broke for 5-4 and served it out on her first match point with an ace.

"I feel like on grass you have to take risks, you know, and that was the point; I was like, okay, let's try. The match would continue otherwise, so you have to go for it. I was feeling really well today so, yeah, I'm just very happy," Vondrousova said.

"I didn't play for a long time, so I'm just so happy to be back healthy and so grateful to play these matches. When I saw the field, I was like, okay, let's try to win the first round, and now this is happening. So thank you guys for the support."

While Sabalenka struggled to find consistency, racking up 30 unforced errors, Vondrousova stayed measured and composed throughout, limiting her own tally to 12. She will play either Russian Liudmila Samsonova or Chinese qualifier Wang Xinyu in Sunday's final. Despite previous wins over Sabalenka, this was Vondrousova's first career victory against a reigning number one. Currently ranked 164, the Czech has battled injuries since July 2024 and entered Berlin unseeded after missing three months this season with a shoulder injury.

Oman into quarterfinal of Youth Beach Handball



Oman's performance was enough to secure fourth place in Group A

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

THE OMAN U-17 beach handball team imprinted their name in the history as they secured historic slot in the quarters of the 2025 IHF Men's Youth Beach Handball World Championship in Hammamet, Tunisia. This accomplishment occurred in the team's first ever appearance at the world finals as they now proudly joined the top eight teams in the world Oman's young boys sealed their place in the quarterfinals after an impressive run in the main round including a stunning victory over reigning champions Croatia by 2-1.

Despite the defeats against European heavyweights including Germany and Hungary on Friday, Oman's performance was enough to secure fourth place in Group A and to meet against Brazil who ended as group leader in group B in a tight quarterfinal clash. The current edition of the IHF Youth Beach Handball World Championship is the tournament's largest to date as 32 teams are vying across the men's and women's categories. Oman's journey to the top eight in their debut showcased the proper planning by the Oman Handball Association (OHA) and the coaching staff for providing the required environment to the players to

deliver a competitive spirit in the global stage. In the main round, Oman's thrilling 2-1 victory over Croatia, one of the title favorites, secured their advancement to the quarterfinals.

Despite back-to-back defeats against Germany and Hungary on Friday as both matches ended by 2-0, the Omani players displayed a fighting show and tactical discipline earned the admiration of fans and officials alike. Oman met Brazil late on Saturday in the quarterfinals in a tough encounter. Brazil are among the nominated teams to clinch the title. The Brazilian players delivered a solid display as they finished first in Group B after a dominant performance throughout the tournament. From group A, Germany ended as topper and then followed by Spain while Hungary and Oman in third and fourth places respectively while Tunisia, Thailand and Argentina joined the group leaders Brazil from Group B. The quarterfinal winners will proceed to the semifinals bringing them one step closer to global glory.

A MOMENT OF PRIDE
The head of Oman's delegation and Oman Handball Association (OHA) board member, Mohammed al Zahoori, expressed deep pride in the team's progress in the global event.

"We are proud and honored to see Oman's flag raised among the world's best. Reaching the quarterfinals is a major milestone for Omani beach handball and a direct result of the hard work by the players, coaching staff and the backing of the Oman Handball Association."

"This achievement reflects not only the team's dedication but also the Association's long-term vision and strategic investment in youth development," he ended The young players voiced proudly on their excitement and determination to carry the momentum forward. Oman's Yazan al Buraiki hopes were that this achievement should encourage for more support and continuity for youth beach handball in Oman.

"We have seen the difference between us and some of the top nations and many of whom have ongoing leagues and programs. Hence, we look for the same development in order to be more stronger in the next participations," he concluded Mohammed al Hosni said it is a huge honor to be here. "Advancing to the quarterfinals in our first world championship is a dream come true. We are proud to represent Oman at this level." His teammate, Imad al Ghailani said that we will give everything during our clash against Brazil.

"This experience is invaluable and we are learning from every match."

Oman U-16 continues intensive training camp in Buraimi

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The Oman U-16 national basketball team is continuing its intensive training sessions with enthusiasm and discipline as part of its closed domestic training camp at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex, which runs until June 24. The camp is part of the team's serious preparations for the Gulf Zone Asian Qualifiers, which will take place in the Kingdom of Bahrain from July 7 to 12. Only two teams from the Gulf will qualify for the final Asian Championship.

The training camp is led by Tunisian coach Zouheir Al Ayachi, supported by national coach Ali al Balushi, as part of a comprehensive preparatory programme ahead

of the external training camp in Bahrain, set to begin on June 26.

The technical staff is intensifying the team's daily training sessions, which include both morning and evening practices. These sessions focus on developing individual and collective skills, improving technical performance in both offense and defense, and enhancing tactical coordination. The coaching team has also divided the players into practical groups to implement tactical strategies and foster on-court chemistry.

AYACHI 'WE'VE DEVELOPED THE TEAM'
In a statement, Coach Zouheir Al Ayachi emphasised that the domestic camp in Al Buraimi is a critical phase in the team's



Al Buraimi training camp is a critical phase in the team's preparation journey

preparation journey. He noted that the efforts made over the past months are beginning to bear fruit. This closed camp in Al Buraimi is part of a comprehensive plan to develop the players both technically and physically. We've focused heavily on refining individual skills and improving players' performance in team situations, both offensively and defensively. We've seen noticeable progress in several players who are beginning to show strong tactical awareness on the court, said Ayachi.

Ayachi praised the high morale and commitment of the players, saying, The players are very dedicated and truly eager to improve, which is very encouraging for us as a technical team. We are currently preparing them mentally

and physically for the qualifiers in Bahrain. We know it will be a tough challenge against teams like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which have long-term development programmes and strong resources. But we believe in our ability to deliver a strong performance and compete for one of the two qualification spots. He concluded by saying, we hope the external camp in Bahrain will provide one final opportunity to enhance tactical cohesion. We also call on the Omani public to support these promising young players who represent the future of basketball in the Sultanate of Oman. It's worth noting that the current training camps are part of a comprehensive plan developed by the coaching staff and approved by the OBA Board of Directors.

SHORTTAKES



Florian Wirtz

LIVERPOOL SIGN WIRTZ FROM BAYER LEVERKUSEN

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool completed the blockbuster signing of Germany forward Florian Wirtz from Bayer Leverkusen on Friday in a deal which could reportedly rise to a Premier League record fee. It was reported in England that the Premier League champions will pay an initial £100 million (\$134 million) for Wirtz, comfortably surpassing their own record outlay. A further £16 million in performance-related add-ons would make it a British record deal. However, reports in Germany suggested the fee could be even higher, starting at 130 million euros (£111 million, \$149 million) with add-ons taking it to 150 million euros. One of European football’s elite young stars, Wirtz has been hailed as one of the “best in the world” by former Leverkusen coach and ex-Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso, who is the new boss of Real Madrid.

“I’m really excited to have a new adventure in front of me. This was also a big point of my thoughts: that I want to have something completely new, to go out of the Bundesliga and to join the Premier League,” Wirtz told the club’s website. “In the end, we want to be successful. Last season they won the Premier League so my goal is for sure to win it again and also to go further in the Champions League. I’m really ambitious.” The 22-year-old played a crucial role in Leverkusen’s greatest season as they claimed a first-ever Bundesliga title and the German Cup in 2023/24 without losing a single game under Alonso. Their only defeat that season, during which Wirtz was crowned Bundesliga player of the year, came in the Europa League final to Atalanta, denying Leverkusen a memorable treble. Bayern Munich restored their grip on the German game last season, with Leverkusen a distant second, and Wirtz is joining an exodus from the BayArena. Netherlands defender Jeremie Frimpong has already made the move from Leverkusen to Liverpool last month. After largely keeping their powder dry in the transfer market during Arne Slot’s first season in charge, the Reds are splashing out to strengthen a side that romped to a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title. Bournemouth left-back Milos Kerkez is poised to make the move to Anfield in a £40 million deal. Liverpool have also been linked with Newcastle striker Alexander Isak and Crystal Palace centre-back Marc Guehi. — AFP



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) shoots the ball against Indiana Pacers guard Ben Sheppard (26). — Reuters

Pacers thrash Thunder, send NBA Finals to Game 7

THE Indiana Pacers, rallying around injured star Tyrese Haliburton, crushed the Oklahoma City Thunder 108-91 on Thursday to force a decisive game seven in the NBA Finals. Haliburton, cleared to play with a right calf injury only a couple of hours before tipoff, scored 14 points with five assists and two steals in a solid contribution to a comprehensive team effort. “We just wanted to protect home court,” Haliburton said. “We didn’t want to see these guys celebrate a championship on our home floor. “Backs against the wall, we just responded,” he added. “So many different guys chipped in, total team effort. I’m really proud of this group.” Obi Toppin led the Pacers scoring with 20 points off the bench as Indiana’s reserves out-scored Oklahoma City’s bench 48-37. Andrew Nembhard added 17 points and Pascal Siakam had 16 points and 13 rebounds as the Pacers, who had lost the last two games to stand on the brink of elimination, leveled the best-of-seven championship series at three games apiece. Haliburton, who said he’d do everything

he could to play after limping through most of game five, showed virtually no sign of his injury as the Pacers grabbed the game by the throat in the second quarter and never let go. Indiana led by 22 points at halftime and by as many as 31 early in the fourth quarter. “Well, we were going home if we didn’t come out and give everything we have and leave it all out on the floor,” said T J McConnell, who had 12 points, nine rebounds and six assists off the bench for Indiana. “Obviously very happy, very proud, but we’ve got to flush it because we have another one on Sunday.” NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led Oklahoma City with 21 points but had eight of the Thunder’s 21 turnovers. Gilgeous-Alexander missed his lone three-point attempt while Jalen Williams — coming off a 40-point performance in game five — missed all four of his three-point attempts on the way to 16 points. The Thunder, winners of a league-best 68 regular-season games — pulled their starters after falling behind by 30 going into the fourth quarter. They’ll be searching for answers as the series heads back to Oklahoma City for game

seven on Sunday — the first game seven in the championship series since 2016. “The way I see it, we sucked tonight,” Gilgeous-Alexander said. “We can learn the lessons and we have one game for everything, for everything we’ve worked for.” The Thunder are seeking their first title since the franchise relocated to Oklahoma City in 2008, having won it all in 1979 as the Seattle SuperSonics. The Pacers, meanwhile, are in search of a first NBA title. They won American Basketball Association titles in 1970, 1972 and 1973 before joining the NBA as part of the ABA-NBA merger in 1976. **ONE GAME** “You know, we’ve got one game,” Haliburton said. “All cards on the table. It’s going to be a lot of fun.” For a few minutes, it looked like the Thunder might roll to the title. The Pacers missed their first eight shots and fell into a quick eight-point hole. But they settled in to connect on six straight attempts and took the lead on a three-pointer from Nembhard midway through the first quarter. — AFP

India star Bumrah strikes before Pope hold firm in 1st Test

LEEDS: India spearhead Jasprit Bumrah struck an early blow before England’s Ollie Pope kept the tourists at bay on Saturday to leave the first Test at Headingley intriguingly poised. At stumps on the second day, England were 209-3 in reply to India’s first innings 471, a deficit of 262 runs. India had been threatening a score in excess of 500 earlier Saturday after Rishabh Pant (134) joined opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and captain Shubman Gill as one of three batsmen to make hundreds in the innings. But a collapse either side of lunch saw India lose their last seven wickets for 41 runs inside 12 overs. England captain Ben Stokes led from the front with an economical 4-66 in 20 overs, while fast bowler Josh Tongue wrapped up the innings on his way to 4-86. Stokes had opted to field first after winning the toss Friday in seemingly ideal conditions for batting.

As a result, his openers now had to face the outstanding Bumrah under grey skies, illuminated by the Headingley floodlights, that favoured the unorthodox fast bowler. And the last ball of the first over of England’s reply saw Bumrah produce a near unplayable delivery that angled in and seamed away to take Crawley’s outside edge, with Karun Nair holding a sharp catch at first slip. England should have been 39-2 when Duckett’s thick outside edge off Bumrah flew to backward point only for Ravindra Jadeja, so often superb in the field, to drop a two-handed catch. Bumrah’s opening spell yielded fine figure of 1-21 in five overs. But with India keen not to overburden Bumrah following a back injury, he only bowled one more over before tea. India resumed on their overnight 359-3, with Gill 127 not out and Pant unbeaten on 65.



Rishabh Pant’s seventh hundred in 44 Tests, and fourth against England, came off 146 balls including 10 fours and four sixes in a typically aggressive innings. — AFP

Gill, in his first innings as India skipper since succeeding the retired Rohit Sharma, surpassed his previous highest Test score of 128 with a classic off-drive for four against Chris Woakes. Pant, by contrast went to a hundred in spectacular style, the wicketkeeper charging down the pitch to Shoaib Bashir before hoisting the off-spinner high over deep midwicket for six despite one hand coming off the bat. The 27-year-old then celebrated his century with an acrobatic somersault. Pant’s seventh hundred in 44 Tests, and fourth against England, came off 146 balls including 10 fours and four sixes in a typically aggressive innings. The pair were in complete command until Gill’s mistimed pick-up shot off Bashir flew straight to deep square leg as the 25-year-old skipper fell for 147, having faced 227 balls including 19 fours and one six. — AFP

SPORTS

FLAMENGO
FLOOR CHELSEA
AT CWC, BAYERN
EDGE OUT BOCA

FLAMENGO produced a brilliant second-half fightback to beat Chelsea 3-1 at the Club World Cup on Friday and qualify for the last 16, while Bayern Munich joined them in reaching the knockout phase with a battling win over Boca Juniors.

In Philadelphia, Pedro Neto gave Chelsea an early lead but Flamengo, roared on by their frenzied supporters who made up the majority of the 54,019 crowd, did not deserve to be behind and came roaring back in the second half.

Bruno Henrique came off the bench in the 56th minute and quickly equalised before setting up former Real Madrid, Manchester City and Juventus defender Danilo to make it 2-1.

Chelsea were stunned, and their hopes of pulling level again were effectively destroyed when substitute Nicolas Jackson was sent off in the 68th minute for a dangerous tackle on Ayrton Lucas.

Wallace Yan then sealed the victory for the Rio de Janeiro club, the Brazilian league leaders, when he made it 3-1 late on.

“It was a special day for me and our club,” said Flamengo coach Filipe Luis.

“We knew we would have chances against Chelsea, because we have one way to play and they know how to follow that path.”

Flamengo have won both matches in Group D and their place in the knockout stage was confirmed later when Esperance of Tunisia defeated Los Angeles FC 1-0 in Nashville.

Youcef Belaïli scored the only goal of the game in the 70th minute in front of a sparse crowd featuring Nicole Kidman.

LAFC, who were last-minute qualifiers after beating Club America of Mexico in a play-off, cannot now progress further.

KANE, OLISE ON TARGET

Chelsea and Esperance each have three points from two games and their meeting in Philadelphia next Tuesday will decide who joins Flamengo in advancing.

“We expected a tough game because Flamengo is a very good team, with good players and a good manager,” said Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca.

“They play very well, and in Brazil they are top of the league, unbeaten for many games, so it was not a surprise for us.”

Flamengo’s win followed Botafogo’s stunning success against European champions Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday, continuing an impressive record for South American clubs at the competition.

But Bayern’s 2-1 win over Boca in Miami was the first time either a Brazilian or



Flamengo’s Wallace Yan celebrates scoring their third goal with Bruno Henrique. — Reuters



Bayern Munich’s Jamal Musiala in action with Boca Juniors’ Carlos Palacios. — Reuters

Flamengo’s win followed Botafogo’s stunning success against European champions Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday, continuing an impressive record for South American clubs at the competition.

Argentinian team had lost in 10 matches since the tournament started. England star Harry Kane did not find the target when Bayern hammered New Zealand’s Auckland City 10-0 in their opening game, but he opened the scoring in Miami with a clinical finish on 18 minutes. Boca’s fans made up most of the 63,587 crowd and brought incredible passion and noise to the Hard Rock Stadium, spurring their team on to equalise in the 66th minute. Alan Velasco found Miguel Merentiel down the right and he powered goalwards, skipping around Josip Stanisic before producing a brilliant finish past Manuel Neuer in the Bayern goal. It looked like South American clubs’

unbeaten record in the tournament so far was going to hold, but with six minutes remaining Michael Olise provided the decisive blow. After a scramble on the edge of the box, Kane found the France international with a delicate lay-off and Olise provided precision control with a superb finish into the corner to send Bayern through to the next round. “Big performance from the guys. We knew it wasn’t going to be easy, we knew we were coming into a hostile environment,” Kane said. “We have seen how tough it has been for European teams to play against the South American teams. I thought we did really well,” added Bayern coach Vincent Kompany.

ANOTHER WEATHER DELAY

Earlier, Benfica crushed Auckland City 6-0 in Orlando to boost their own hopes of progressing and eliminate the tournament’s only Oceania representative. Angel Di Maria’s two penalties bookended the victory for the Portuguese side, with Leandro Barreiro scoring a brace while Vangelis Pavlidis and Renato Sanches got their other goals. The game was the fourth in the past four days to be hit by a weather delay. The match was interrupted at half-time because of a storm, eventually resuming two hours later. A draw for Benfica against Bayern in Charlotte next Tuesday will send them through and eliminate Boca. — AFP

BUSINESS

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The Academy to prepare national talent and equip them with the professional skills needed to work across all logistics services.

New Oman Logistics Academy unveiled

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

OMAN Logistics Academy, a new initiative dedicated to the development of the Sultanate of Oman's logistics services sector, has been established.

The Academy, founded through a public private partnership and in collaboration with specialised international training institutions, aims to prepare national talent and equip them with the professional skills needed to work across all logistics services, including transportation, distribution and warehousing, supply chain management, customs clearance, cargo handling, packing and packaging, railway operations, cold chain transport, as well as logistics technology, contract management and procurement.

The facility will provide vocational education and training programmes designed to meet the highest global standards. It is expected to close the professional skills gap in the local market, increase Omaniisation rates in the logistics sector through training linked employment programmes, and support Oman's ambitions to become a regional logistics hub in the coming years.

The launch aligns with the government's plans and the broader objectives of the Oman Logistics Strategy (SOLS) 2040, which positions the logistics sector as a key driver for diversifying the national economy and reducing reliance on oil derivatives.

Initial programmes will focus on practical training, short courses, and diploma certifications tailored to industry needs. Future plans include the introduction of advanced logistics technology modules and executive level education.

Oman courts global investors at Russia forum

BUSINESS REPORTER
ST PETERSBURG, JUNE 21

THE Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, concluded its participation in the 28th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), reaffirming its commitment to global economic dialogue and cross-border investment engagement.

Oman spotlighted its integrated business ecosystem and priority sectors under Oman Vision 2040, which aims to foster a resilient and diversified economy.

SPIEF 2025 attracted approximately 20,000 participants from 140 countries, maintaining robust international engagement. The Forum featured more than 150 events, ranging from thematic panels and plenary sessions to business breakfasts and bilateral dialogues.

High-profile attendees included Russian President Vladimir Putin, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, Bahraini royal Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad al Khalifa, and South African Deputy President Paul Mashatile — alongside senior officials from nearly 50 countries, including Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the Central African Republic. Their



Trade and economic cooperation between Oman and Russia continues to deepen.

presence underscored SPIEF's role as a pivotal platform for fostering multipolar economic cooperation.

The Omani delegation was led by Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Faroojiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, who spearheaded a series of high-level meetings and sector-focused engagements.

The delegation's program included participation in key forum sessions, bilateral meetings with institutional investors, and exploratory visits to major corporate pavilions.

This year, Oman's focus centred on promoting investment in four high-potential sectors: luxury tourism, logistics, food security,

and mining — each aligned with national efforts to position Oman as a competitive and future-ready investment destination.

As part of its engagement, Oman organised a dedicated roundtable with leading Russian companies active in these sectors. The session provided a platform to present the Sultanate of Oman's competitive advantages, regulatory reforms, and infrastructure readiness, while facilitating direct dialogue with potential investors and strategic partners.

"Oman is focused on high-value investment, enabling enterprise through streamlined digital platforms, and scaling public-private partnerships—an area where we bring over two decades of

institutional experience. Our business climate continues to strengthen, supported by policy clarity, legal reform, and competitive market access."

She highlighted Oman's upgraded credit rating by Standard & Poor's in 2024 as a signal of fiscal stability and investor confidence, adding that Oman is actively translating these gains into tangible investment momentum across key sectors — from green hydrogen and advanced manufacturing to integrated tourism and logistics.

Trade and economic cooperation between Oman and Russia continues to deepen. As of February 2024, the bilateral trade volume reached RO 30.9 million. Notably, Omani exports to Russia surged from RO 582,602 in 2022 to RO 3.35 million in 2023 — a remarkable 475% increase.

Imports from Russia totalled RO 188.4 million, highlighting the scale and diversification of commercial ties between the two countries.

Oman's participation in SPIEF 2025 aligns with its broader strategy to enhance investor outreach in key international markets, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

By leveraging global platforms such as SPIEF, Oman is actively cultivating a network of institutional investors and strategic partners to catalyse sustainable development and high-impact investment.

Study explores green hydrogen transportation via pipelines in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

OMANI researchers have successfully concluded a key study exploring the potential to repurpose Oman's expansive natural gas pipeline network for the transport of green hydrogen.

The research initiative was jointly conducted by the German University of Technology in Oman (GÜtech) and Oman LNG, in collaboration with EJAAD, the research and development platform of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI).

According to the study, pipeline-based transportation is critical to enabling Oman's future green hydrogen economy, envisioned to produce up to 8.5 million tonnes per annum by 2050. While a significant share of this output is targeted for global export, large volumes are expected to be retained for domestic use — powering the country's decarbonisation goals and clean



Members of the research team.

energy transition.

Green hydrogen production hubs are planned primarily in Al Duqm and Dhofar Governorate, necessitating the development of cost-effective pipeline infrastructure — either newly built or repurposed from existing gas networks.

To identify viable options, Oman LNG partnered with GÜtech to assess the technical and economic

feasibility of retrofitting the country's natural gas pipelines for hydrogen transport.

Mohammed al Mukhaini, General Manager ICV at Oman LNG, stated: "Repurposing Oman's existing natural gas pipeline network for hydrogen transport offers a significant strategic advantage.

The infrastructure is already well-established and socially accepted, reducing both cost and complexity compared to building an entirely new hydrogen network. Our collaboration with GÜtech enables us to explore technically sound and economically viable pathways to support Oman's clean energy ambitions, particularly as the country accelerates toward its 2050 Net-Zero targets."

Prof Najah al Mhanna, Principal Investigator at GÜtech, noted that the repurposing process can be phased based on how hydrogen supply and demand evolve over time.

"Oman's natural gas pipeline

network is well developed, linking the central and northern regions to the south. Retrofitting any segment of this network for hydrogen transport requires rigorous analysis of operating conditions, gas mixtures, and physical properties.

Our study assessed these variables and developed a model to calculate the levelised cost of transporting hydrogen across a range of natural gas-hydrogen blends (from 0–100%) using the existing infrastructure," he explained.

EJAAD played a central role in facilitating the collaboration between Oman LNG and GÜtech. As a key R&D enabler, EJAAD bridges industry and academia, helping drive innovation and progress on strategic national priorities.

This project exemplifies the value of coordinated public-private partnerships in supporting Oman's energy transition and broader economic diversification efforts.

ADVERTORIALS

MAIN GUEST



The Omani pavilion features over 60 companies and institutions spanning industrial, commercial and service sectors.

Oman showcases economic strength at Algiers Intl Fair

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has commenced its participation as Guest of Honour at the 56th edition of the Algiers International Fair, held at the Pine Maritime Exhibition Centre, at the invitation of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria. Heading the high-level Omani delegation is Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. He is accompanied by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Eng Dawood bin Salim al Haddabi, CEO of Madayn, along with other senior officials, business leaders and representatives from government and private institutions.

Oman’s participation underscores the deep-rooted fraternal and economic ties between the two nations, further strengthened by the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Algeria in May, during which he met President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. That historic visit opened a new chapter in bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.

The Omani pavilion features over 60 companies and institutions spanning industrial, commercial and service sectors. Exhibitors represent fields such as pharmaceuticals, transportation, energy, real estate, fisheries, tourism, food and traditional crafts, in addition to numerous small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

An Omani-Algerian Economic Forum will be held on the sidelines, spotlighting investment opportunities in Oman’s logistics, manufacturing and urban development sectors. The forum also aims to promote Oman’s investor-friendly environment, modern infrastructure and competitive legal framework. Al Yousef is expected to meet with Algerian officials and tour several industrial and investment facilities, reinforcing cooperation and exploring commercial partnerships between Omani and Algerian businesses.

Commenting on the participation, OCCI Chairman Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas stated: “Oman’s presence at the 56th Algiers International Fair is a valuable opportunity to strengthen its global economic footprint. It reflects the strong fraternal and trade relations with Algeria and showcases the increasingly active role of the Omani private sector in international forums.”

He added that the Chamber is committed to encouraging participation in global exhibitions to forge sustainable partnerships, open new export markets and promote Omani products abroad. “This engagement not only boosts confidence in our national industries and capabilities, but also opens new growth pathways for Omani firms and entrepreneurs.”

Eng Dawood bin Salim al Haddabi, CEO of Madayn, emphasised the strategic nature of Oman’s participation, noting its potential to unlock trade and investment avenues between the two countries.

Sohar International and Sohar Islamic partner with SalamAir

MUSCAT: In a move to drive cross-sector collaboration and enhance customer experience, Sohar International, together with its Islamic banking window Sohar Islamic, has partnered with SalamAir, Oman’s low-cost airline, to offer exclusive discounts on domestic travel for their customers.

As part of this strategic alliance, credit cardholders will benefit from a 40% discount, while debit cardholders will receive a 15% discount on the price of all SalamAir domestic flights. The offer, valid for travel between July 1 and August 31, 2025, is available exclusively to Sohar International and Sohar Islamic cardholders.

Bookings must be made online via SalamAir’s official website using the promo



Credit cardholders will benefit from a 40% discount, while debit cardholders will receive a 15% discount on the price of all SalamAir domestic flights.

Chery Oman unveils summer campaign

NEW World Autos, the distributor for Chery vehicles in Oman, recently announced an exciting Chery Summer Campaign under the theme ‘Enjoy Summer Drives with Cool Vibes’.

As families prepare for scenic road trips and memorable getaways, Chery brings more value, safety and innovation to every journey with attractive benefits for customers purchasing any Chery vehicle this summer.

The benefits include Free AAA Roadside Assistance, Free Service up to 6 Years/60,000 kms (whichever is earlier), an unparalleled 10 year/1,000,000 km engine warranty (not applicable on Arrizo 5), Free Insurance, Walk-in and Win Raffle with a chance to win a Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra 5G and Test Drive & Win exciting prizes.

Also available is attractive EMI options across the full range. This exclusive campaign that began on 18th May 2025 will last until 17th July 2025. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Chery showroom for exact details.)

Chery has established itself as one of the most forward-thinking automotive brands globally,



Chery brings more value, safety and innovation to every journey with attractive benefits for customers purchasing any Chery vehicle this summer.

backed by strong investments in research and development, including five R&D centers worldwide.

Chery’s vehicles reflect the brand’s commitment to intelligent mobility, safety, energy efficiency and driving comfort. With numerous international awards and patents, Chery’s range in Oman represents a fusion of cutting-edge engineering, refined aesthetics, and exceptional value. The range in Oman includes all-new Tiggo 9, Tiggo 8 Pro Max, Tiggo 7 Pro Max, Tiggo 4 Pro, Arrizo 8, Arrizo 6 Pro and Arrizo 5.

The flagship SUV in the Chery range, the Tiggo 9 is equipped with a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine, finely tuned to offer a

harmonious blend of power and efficiency. Paired with an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive capability, it delivers a smooth, confident and exhilarating driving experience across Oman’s diverse terrain.

Inside, the Tiggo 9 offers a sanctuary of calm and sophistication. Its seven-seat configuration caters to modern families and adventurers alike, while the multi-layer noise reduction cabin, ventilated leather seats, front seat massage, driver headrest speakers and multi-zone climate control elevate passenger comfort to new levels.

A dual 12.3-inch digital display, AR navigation and voice control headline its tech-forward

interior, bringing convenience and luxury together in perfect balance. The Tiggo 9 is also available with an auto parking feature.

The Tiggo 8 Pro Max is powered by a 2.0L turbocharged engine paired with a 7-speed Dual Clutch Transmission (DCT), delivering robust performance and efficiency. The cabin boasts premium leatherette seats, ambient lighting and a high-definition dual-screen infotainment setup. With Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), including adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assist and blind spot detection, it ensures both luxury and peace of mind. The Tiggo 8 Pro Max is available with EMI starting from RO 112.

OAB wraps up SMEs training roadshow in Nizwa

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has successfully concluded the third leg of its SMEs Development Training Roadshow, held in Nizwa on June 17-18, 2025.

Organised in collaboration with Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Nizwa, under the Bank’s flagship Tumouhi initiative, the event drew wide participation from aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners in Al Dakhiliyah, continuing a nationwide mission to support and empower Oman’s growing SMEs sector. The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Faisal bin Ali al Zeedi (Wali of Manah).

Following successful workshops in Muscat and Suhar earlier this year, the Nizwa event brought together a dynamic mix of sessions covering financial literacy, business strategy, marketing and HR fundamentals.

Designed to offer hands-on



The event drew wide participation from aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners.

learning and real-world insights, the two-day workshop also served as a vibrant networking hub for local entrepreneurs and industry experts.

Shaikh Dr Faisal bin Ali al Zeedi expressed his enthusiasm towards this initiative in supporting the SMEs sector, praising the

government’s steadfast approach and the great attention it pays to this vital sector, given its pivotal role in supporting the growth of the economy and enhancing its diversity.

He emphasised that supporting entrepreneurs and emerging

business owners contributes to creating new job opportunities and enhancing local innovation.

He stated, “This workshop is a true turning point for entrepreneurs. They walk in with ideas, and leave with a plan, equipped with the confidence to take their businesses to the next level. The sessions were practical, relevant, and exactly what small business owners and entrepreneurs would need.”

Sulaiman al Hinai, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at Oman Arab Bank, said, “At Oman Arab Bank, we view SMEs as key drivers of economic resilience and innovation. Through Tumouhi, we’re not just delivering training — we’re creating access, building networks and empowering business owners in every corner of Oman. The response in Nizwa has been incredibly encouraging, and we remain committed to reaching even more regions with the tools and support SMEs need to thrive.”

BUSINESS

KEYINFRASTRUCTURE



The city now has a total leased area of 229,600 square metres and employs around 320 people.

Mahas Industrial City investments surpass RO 41 million

KHASAB: Total investments in Mahas Industrial City in Musandam Governorate have exceeded RO 41.7 million by the end of 2024, according to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The city, located in the Wilayat of Khasab, spans an area of 1.5 million square metres and has seen the completion of key infrastructure works, including a 7-kilometre road network, sidewalks, solar-powered street lighting, water and sewage networks, a water tank, a sewage treatment plant, a guard gate and a protective channel for the main valley.

Mubarak bin Salem al Ghailani, Acting Director-General of Mahas Industrial City, reported that eight new projects were approved in 2024 with investments exceeding RO 2.5 million, covering more than 49,900 square metres. The city now has a total leased area of 229,600 square metres and employs around 320 people.

In 2024, three building permits were issued, along with several map approvals and work permits, all in line with Madayn’s regulatory framework. Eight land surveying requests were also processed.

Al Ghailani also noted that construction is ongoing for the Madayn Pioneer Complex, which is intended to support start-ups and SMEs. Spread over 10,000 square metres, the complex will feature 10 ready-built, expandable factories, external parking and full support facilities.

Mahas Industrial City aims to attract investments in food security, logistics and light to medium industries. Its strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz and proximity to Khasab Port, Khasab Airport and regional markets such as the UAE and Iran offer logistical advantages for investors. — ONA

EXPORTINSURANCEGROWS6% AS OMANBOOSTS NON-OIL SALES

MUSCAT: The total value of insured Omani non-oil exports rose to RO 61.2 million in the first quarter of 2025, marking a 6% increase compared to RO 57.75 million recorded during the same period last year, according to Credit Oman.

Khalil bin Ahmed al Harthy, CEO of Credit Oman, highlighted notable growth across several sectors. Export sales in the building and construction materials sector increased by 24%, reaching RO

27.16 million.

The petrochemicals and plastics sector also posted a strong 45% rise, amounting to RO 9.19 million, while the mining sector saw an impressive 150% surge to RO 570,000.

Meanwhile, the agricultural sector recorded a 96% growth, totalling around RO 5 million.

However, he noted that some sectors such as packaging, fisheries and garments experienced a downturn, reflecting varying

dynamics across industries.

“These results underscore the positive trajectory of the national economy and ongoing government efforts to support economic diversification,” Al Harthy stated.

He added that Credit Oman continues to support Omani manufacturers and exporters by offering comprehensive insurance services and helping overcome market access challenges, particularly in new and international markets. — ONA

RO 11 billion allocated for development projects

THE Sultanate of Oman has made substantial progress in delivering its Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021–2025), with financial appropriations for development projects rising to RO 11 billion—an increase of 72 per cent from the original RO 6.4 billion allocation.

According to the Ministry of Economy, this increase reflects the government’s push to enhance infrastructure, social services, and economic diversification in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

As of the end of Q1 2025, 95 per cent of the plan’s 412 strategic programmes have been implemented, spanning 14 priority areas.

A major portion—around 44 per cent—of the RO 11 billion is directed toward comprehensive projects with economic and social impact across the governorates, including those under the Governorate Development Programme.

KEY SECTORS SEEING PROGRESS INCLUDE:
Health: All six programmes under the health priority are underway. These involve



A major portion—around 44 per cent—of the RO 11 billion is directed toward comprehensive projects with economic and social impact across the governorates.

constructing hospitals and health centres, digital health transformation, and pharmaceutical sustainability.

Education and Youth: 65 of 70 education-related programmes have been launched, including talent development and digital transformation in schools. All youth development programmes are in force.

Social Welfare: 25 of 26 programmes are active, such as housing for low-income

families, disability-inclusive sports initiatives, and financial sustainability in social protection systems.

Governorate and Urban Development: All 29 programmes are being executed, focusing on advanced public services, decentralised investment planning, and smart urban growth.

Private Sector and Investment: All 17 related programmes are operational. These include loan

guarantees for SMEs, policies to elevate SMEs to mid-sized and large enterprises, and efficiency enhancements in oil and gas operations.

ICT and Digital Economy: All 20 programmes have commenced, including national digital strategies, smart cities platforms, broadband expansion, and digital skills training for over 8,200 beneficiaries through the “Makin” initiative.

Economic Leadership and Diversification: Nearly all programmes under these priorities are underway. Highlights include legislation reforms, startup support, and mining sector digitisation.

IN TERMS OF INFRASTRUCTURE, SEVERAL PROJECTS ARE NEARING COMPLETION:
Sultan Haitham City: Phase 1 is 80% complete; Phase 2 stands at 45%.

Master Plans: Urban master plans for Muscat, Salalah, Nizwa, and Haima are 25% complete.

Key Roads: Progress ranges from 25% to over 80% on roads including the Khasab-Dubai route, Adam-Thumrait dualisation, and Al-Nuzha Road upgrade.

Oman’s labour force tops 1.8 million in Q1

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

OMAN’S labour market remained broadly stable in the first quarter of 2025, with the total number of workers reaching 1,808,451, reflecting a marginal increase of 0.2 per cent compared to the same period in 2024, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The report highlights the critical role of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in sustaining employment.

Micro-enterprises, which typically employ fewer than five workers, accounted for the largest share of employment at 37.5 per cent, with 677,860 workers on record.

Small enterprises followed with



The private sector continued to lead employment with 1,409,215 workers.

29.7 per cent (537,079 workers), while large enterprises accounted for 24.3 per cent (438,212), and medium-sized enterprises employed 8.5 per cent (153,094). By economic sector, the private sector continued to lead employment with 1,409,215 workers, although this marked a slight 0.9 per cent decrease from the previous year. The family sector — which includes domestic and informal workers — grew by 4.7 per cent to reach 349,517 employees, while the public sector recorded a modest decline of 0.6 per cent, employing 41,815 workers.

Expatriate workers continued to form a significant portion of the workforce, led by nationals from Bangladesh (622,078, down 9.1 per cent), India (507,956, broadly stable), and Pakistan (314,997, up 8.8 per

cent). These three nationalities alone represent over 80 per cent of the expatriate labour force in Oman.

Meanwhile, the job-seekers’ rate stood at 4.0 per cent in May 2025.

The highest levels of unemployment were observed among young people aged 15 to 24 years, as well as those holding higher diplomas and bachelor’s degrees, indicating a persistent mismatch between education outcomes and labour market needs.

The latest labour market figures come as Oman intensifies efforts to align workforce development with economic diversification goals under Oman Vision 2040. Recent policy directions have focused on improving private sector participation, enhancing vocational and digital skills and supporting small business development to boost job creation.

SYSTEMIC FAILURE

Regulator orders Air India to remove officials



New Delhi’s civil aviation regulator has ordered Air India to remove three officials from their roles over “systemic failures”, according to a directive, as the carrier comes under scrutiny after a deadly crash in Ahmedabad.

The instruction from the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation did not detail whether it was linked to the June 12 crash, which killed all but one of the 242 people on board. — AFP

PRICE INFLUENCE

Toyota to raise US auto prices by \$270



Japanese carmaker Toyota Motor said on Saturday it will raise prices for some vehicles sold in the United States by an average of \$270 starting in July. The automaker’s decision follows US President Donald Trump’s imposition of a 25% tariff on imported vehicles and auto parts.

A Toyota spokesperson, however, denied the tariff directly influenced the price increase. — Reuters

NEW PLAYER

China is moving towards exporting energy



Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin, one of the most influential men in Russia’s energy sector, said on Saturday that China was seeking complete energy independence and that in the foreseeable future it could become a major energy exporter.

China’s economic and military rise over the past 45 years is considered to be one of the most significant geopolitical events of recent times, alongside the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union. — Reuters

OPINION

Khareef: Turning a seasonal surge into year-round SMEs growth



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The writer is the head of business and politics section at Oman Observer.

EACH YEAR, as the summer monsoon cloaks Dhofar in mist and greenery, the governorate emerges as one of Oman's most iconic seasonal attractions. The khareef, a three-month period stretching from June to September, transforms the southern landscape into a lush destination that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors from across Oman and the wider Gulf region. Beneath the beauty and climate, however, lies a deeper economic reality. Khareef is not only a tourism season; it is an economic window — one that fuels demand across multiple sectors, from hospitality and transport to food services, retail and local crafts. Yet this opportunity remains largely untapped when it comes to building long-term, sustainable value for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Dhofar. While khareef stimulates a flurry of entrepreneurial activity, much of it is fleeting. Dozens of food stalls, mobile cafes, car rental services, and vendors of frankincense, honey and traditional goods appear during the season — only to vanish as soon as the rains subside. The issue is not the lack of economic activity, but rather the absence of a system to carry these businesses forward. Sustainability remains the missing piece. Without proper financial tools, business training, or integration into the broader tourism value chain, most seasonal enterprises in Dhofar fail to evolve into permanent businesses.

This creates a cycle of economic fragmentation: entrepreneurs enter the market enthusiastically during khareef but are unable to maintain operations or income streams during the off-season. Several challenges hinder the sustainability of these seasonal SMEs. First is the volatility of income. The short earning period leaves little room for reinvestment or recovery from losses. Second, most of these businesses lack formal structures, such as licensing, accounting systems, branding, or strategic planning. They tend to be informal, family-run efforts with minimal business continuity. Third, access to finance remains a critical barrier. Although the Development Bank and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development provide support, the approval cycles and criteria often do not align with the short-term, urgent nature of seasonal ventures. Moreover, these SMEs typically exist outside formal procurement chains. Hotels, tour operators and large-scale events rarely source from local micro-businesses, missing an opportunity to create inclusive growth. Finally, there are clear gaps in skills, particularly in marketing, digital engagement and customer service, which limit competitiveness and scalability. Addressing these gaps requires a shift in how we think about khareef — not merely as a tourism season, but as an economic platform. If designed strategically, khareef can become a launchpad for business

If designed strategically, khareef can become a launchpad for business formalisation, local branding and supply chain integration. What is needed is a multi-layered response that connects finance, digital infrastructure, training and policy reform.

formalisation, local branding and supply chain integration. What is needed is a multi-layered response that connects finance, digital infrastructure, training and policy reform. One such initiative could be a dedicated khareef SMEs Support Fund — designed to offer short-term loans with flexible repayment terms aligned to seasonal cash flows. Access to this fund should be linked to basic business planning, ensuring that enterprises receiving support have a minimum framework for continuity. Equally important is digital visibility. A unified online platform mapping all khareef vendors, along with digital payment solutions and booking systems, could greatly expand reach and consumer confidence. When tourists and residents can find, rate and buy from SMEs online, the market no longer ends with the season. Another priority is integrating SMEs into the formal tourism value chain. Hotels, resorts and large-scale festivals could partner with local producers and service providers — be it in catering, souvenirs, or logistics — thus creating consistent demand for local products. Municipalities and business chambers can also play a role by designating temporary but well-organised commercial zones — such as khareef bazaars — equipped with infrastructure, sanitation and marketing support. These zones can become centres of economic activity and provide an incubator-like environment for microenterprises to test, refine and scale.

ATTRACTIVE INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT STIMULATES GROWTH IN OMAN



DR DAVIS KALLUKARAN

The writer is Managing Partner of Crowe Oman.

THE Sultanate of Oman's ongoing efforts to enhance its financial and economic position by managing its financial commitments and by reducing its public debt, have led to a steady improvement in its credit ratings and have improved investor confidence in the Omani economy. Consequently, these positive indicators have also created an attractive investment environment

that stimulates growth across various economic sectors in the country. Oman's economy has achieved a surplus of RO 540 million against the budgeted deficit of RO 640 million for the financial year 2024 and the GDP at constant prices rose by 1.7%, to reach RO 38.305 billion in 2024 compared to 2024. Further, Oman has reduced its public debt by RO 660 million which stood at RO 14.6 billion by the end of 2024 compared to the previous year. Percentage wise the external debt of the Sultanate of Oman is 38% of the GDP which is far below, compared to our GCC neighbours, Bahrain which is estimated at 134% of the GDP at the end of 2024 followed by Qatar at 41% and Kuwait at 39% (2023). UAE with 32% and Saudi Arabia with 25 % (2023) are closely behind. In line with Oman's progress, the credit rating agencies have given a positive outlook for Oman which is quite encouraging and promising. By the end of September 2024, S&P had upgraded Oman's credit rating from "BB+" to "BBB-", thus restoring its investment-grade status after years of downgrades due to the financial crisis associated with falling oil prices and the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly other credit rating agencies like Fitch and Moody's had also revised Oman's outlook from stable to positive. It is very important to understand that a credit rating of BBB- is better than BB+. BBB- is considered investment grade, while BB+ is considered non-investment grade or speculative grade. Generally, higher ratings indicate a lower risk of default and a greater capacity to meet the country's financial obligations. Factors affecting credit ratings vary for governments, corporate bonds, including economic conditions, political stability, industry dynamics and company-specific factors.

Lessons from Norway's local content journey

LIKE MANY resource-rich countries, Norway faced a dilemma upon discovering oil in the North Sea during 1969: Would black gold bring long-term prosperity or lead to the infamous resource curse which has plagued other economies? Over five decades later, Norway stands as a global outlier. The country not only avoided the worst effects of oil dependency; it transformed it into a springboard for world-class industries, a sovereign wealth fund exceeding \$1.6 trillion, and one of the most resilient and inclusive economies on Earth. That success came from deliberate non-linear policy decisions, bold experimentation accompanied by planning alongside unique Norwegian pragmatism. Today, as other nations seek harnessing their natural resources towards sustainable development, that model remains vital.

FROM FISHING NETS TO OFFSHORE RIGS Norway was first known for cod rather than crude which put its economy at a staggering modest state with limited industrial depth supplemented by a welfare state. Regardless of this, Norway had several preconditions while almost every other country was facility-lacking. The shipbuilding industry and maritime traditions of the country had ensured there was already a skilled workforce available. Additionally, good public administration, strong legal systems and a democratic political society allowed for governance that was not only decentralised. Thus far, Norway did not allow international companies unfettered access to its resources. It ensured that oil would be administered on Norwegian terms. LOCAL CONTENT AS A NATIONAL NECESSITY Ensuring "local content", which aims for oil to benefit businesses



Norway's governance strategy is one of the major reasons for its successful growth. — Reuters

and workers, both regarded its government and domestic private sector businesses incorporated fully within the blueprint of Norway's petroleum policy. From day one, it was made clear by the government that there wouldn't be voluntary absence of participation from bulk employing local institutions alongside actionable efforts from employed domestic oil companies. Licences while exploring and producing oil had prerequisites that foreign firms had to enter joint ventures with local companies, purchase materials needed for the operations from local suppliers and facilitate learning stepwise processes towards operating in their own countries' service firms. This move was not protectionist. It strengthened facilities that drive economies centrally located to these benefits. Its time-based revisions were seen throughout history: • 1970s–1990s: There were very aggressive rules regarding procurement in oil field licensing alongside harsh provisions targeting local content framework implementation based on licensing strategies. • 1990s–2000s: More focus was placed on domestically adaptable

features while placing fewer restrictions overtaken into increased attention paid towards fuels competitiveness during this era on performance unbundling. •Today: Domestic acceptance of contracted services enabled the removal of barriers, allowing Norwegian companies to complete revelatory market expansions. Their explosive growth in supplying previously untapped markets was facilitated by globalisation and strategic investment, turning primary localities into dynamic host regions. These regions housed underground exploration ventures supported by hosting contracts, even as some operating agreements failed. Nevertheless, the deepening of reserve bases, once inaccessible, became possible through advanced integration and strategic planning — unlocking endless opportunities for multilevel business leveraging and sustainable profit generation. The early success story is Statoil, now known as Equinor. Created in 1972, it allowed Norwegian engineers and managers to gain direct experience from foreign firms by getting a stake in every oil licence. This embedded expertise within the country instead of merely extracting profits from it. GOVERNANCE Norway's governance strategy is one of the major reasons for its successful growth. Instead of fostering corrupt or bloated systems, Norway focused on building capable lean institutions to manage oil: • The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy set overall policy. • The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD) regulated operations with technical precision. • Petoro managed the state's direct financial interest in oil fields. These institutions were all marked by unique professionalism that differentiated them from politically meddled resource-rich nations guided by non-expert decisions.



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

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Contact: 78773250.
Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

■ SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in Diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

INDIAN male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager.
Contact: 00968 78099493

INDIAN Male, 4 years of experience in web development in a product based company. Looking for a suitable position as software developer.
Contact: + 968-99226403
suhail23599@gmail.com

INDIAN Male / CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & BCOM/ 10+ years of Experience/ Currently Working as Finance Manager, Looking for Senior Management Roles in Finance.
Contact: 78611653.
Email: jobcpacma@gmail.com

INDIAN male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role.
Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

SENIOR MEP engineer
20+ years experience in design, supervision & execution.
Available with NOC & D/L. Contact: 99148940.
Email: jobluk.om@gmail.com.

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet).
Contact: +968 98510880.
.....
Indian Male, Storekeeper / Document Controller 2+yrs of experience in GCC, Completed BCA, ready to join immediately.
Email: swamierzhasouth@gmail.com
GSM: +968 71818173



■ SIT. WANTED

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects.
Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control.
Having Omani Driving Licence.
Contact: 78002582 .
Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation.
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Contact: 79791746, Email: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

GRADUATED female candidate seeking finance, HR, Accounts, Data entry related jobs. Contact details as follows:
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LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit.
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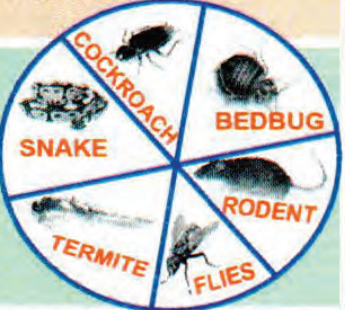
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ART/LIFE



T R A V E L

EXPERIENCE NIZWA AFTER DARK: HOW OMAN'S HISTORIC CITY BECAME A SUMMER EVENING ESCAPE › 20

MUSEUM

Stuff of dreams: Amsterdam's 'Art Zoo' mixes art and taxidermy



A FEARSOME stuffed crocodile hangs menacingly from the roof, mouth wide open, sharp teeth ready to strike: welcome to the Art Zoo, the new offbeat museum opening in Amsterdam.

Aiming to elevate taxidermy to high art, Art Zoo opens on Thursday in the heart of the Dutch capital, in a famous building from the 17th century, a period that inspired the two artists that created the show.

"Our work is inspired by 17th century sculptures and painters from the Golden Age, the Dutch painters who painted animal scenes," said artist Ferry van Tongeren.

In that period, Dutch Golden Age painters drew inspiration from brightly coloured parrots, big cats and exotic animals captured in distant colonies and brought back to Europe to great amazement.

They were often painted in theatrical poses, wings spread or neck extended, which the artists tried to replicate with their stuffed displays.

A stuffed swan with wings deployed in defensive posture is a nod to "The Threatened Swan" by Golden Age master Jan Asselijn, currently hanging in the Rijksmuseum nearby.

"It's a sculpture of a skinless animal but it's still a sculpture and we create the drama, we create the story," Van Tongeren said.

He has been working with colleague Jaap Sinke for more than a decade as taxidermy-artists — a world away from the advertising industry where the two men met more than 20 years ago.

Sinke, 52, said he had always enjoyed the varied nature of being an artist.

"You're a little bit sculptor, you're a little bit surgeon, you're a little bit hairdresser and you're a little bit painter," he said.

"I think it's nice to combine all those crafts into one," added Sinke.

In other exhibits, majestic tigers are displayed poised to attack, while birds of prey grip long snakes in their claws.

To head off criticism from animal lovers, the artists have prominently displayed a sign with their "Golden Rule."

"None of the animals in our taxidermy artworks were taken from the wild or bred specifically for the Art Zoo Museum. All died of natural causes, under the care of zoos and breeders." — AFP

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



LIFESTYLE

A woman smiles as she holds bunches of lychees at a purchasing point in Luc Ngan district of Vietnam's Bac Giang province. — AFP



FASHION

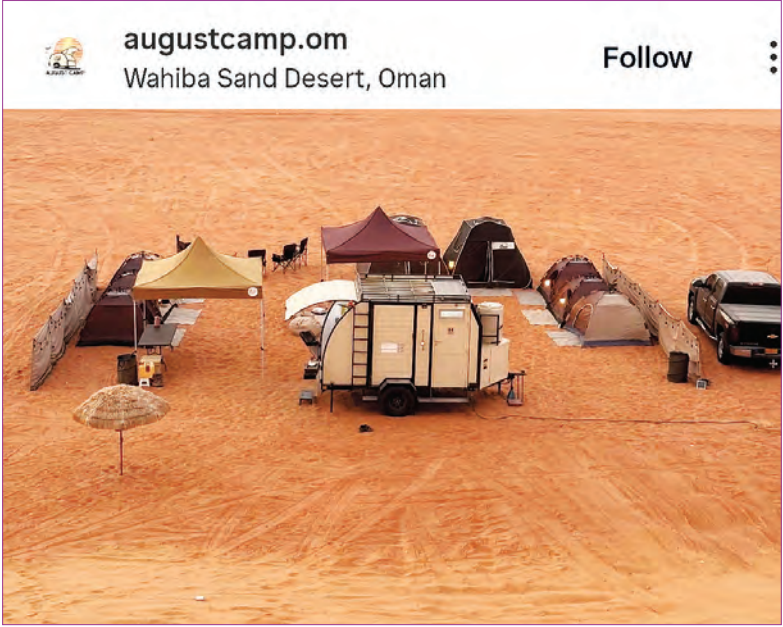
Donald Tang, Executive Chairman of Chinese fast-fashion retailer Shein, gestures as he speaks during the Viva Technology conference dedicated to innovation and start-ups at Porte de Versailles exhibition centre in Paris. — Reuters



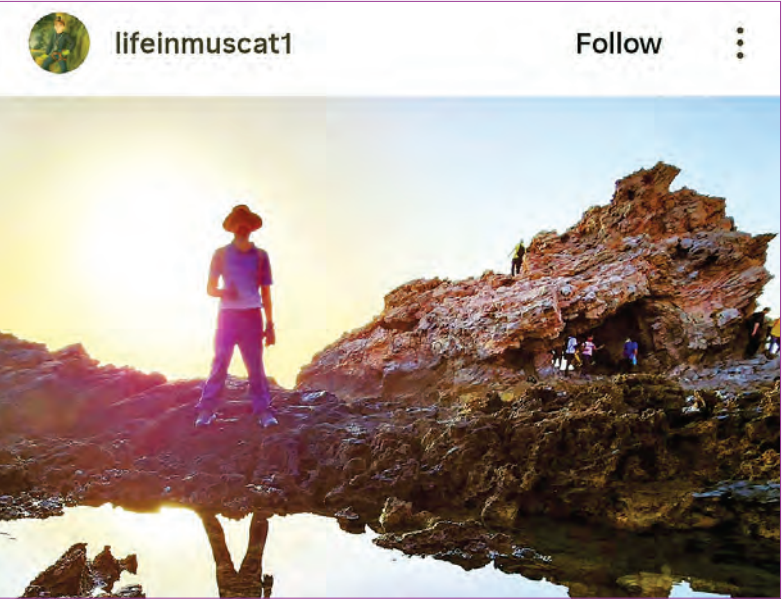
MUSIC

Gracie Abrams performs at the 2025 Songwriters Hall of Fame Inductions and gala in New York City. — Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Fun in the Sand



Beauty of Remote Places

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Amsterdam honours its own Golden Age sculpture master



IMPOSING but delicate marble sculptures of Graeco-Roman-style figures grace the vaulted corridors of a huge palace. But this isn't Florence or Rome. This is Amsterdam.

As part of celebrations to mark 750 years since the founding of the Dutch capital, the city is unveiling from Wednesday an exhibition dedicated to Artus Quellinus, the 17th century "sculptor of Amsterdam."

Virtually unknown outside Flanders in present-day Belgium where he made his name, the city has Quellinus to thank for the decorations on the Royal Palace that dominates the city's iconic Dam Square.

Quellinus "lifted our sculpture to a new level" with a fresh style, Dutch art historian Bieke van der Mark said.

Born in Antwerp in 1606, Quellinus sculpted with marble, as well as ivory and clay.

His style, heavily influenced by Flemish baroque painter Reubens, was a complete novelty for the Protestant Netherlands, used to a more

sober style at the time.

His subjects — mythological figures, chubby angels and animals — are perhaps a nod to the great masters he would have seen while an apprentice in Rome.

"Like (17th century Italian master Gian Lorenzo) Bernini, he masters the way the flesh looks, and hands," said Van der Mark.

"It's really fantastic," said the 46-year-old, pointing to a statue of the God Saturn devouring his son, whom he holds in his huge veiny hands.

Organised by the Amsterdam Royal Palace and the Rijksmuseum, this is the first-ever retrospective devoted to Quellinus, displaying more than 100 of his works from national and international collections.

"We spent quite some time to select and to collect, to bring together all these very special works... to show Quellinus at his best," said curator Liesbeth van Noortwijk.

"Because I think he's an artist that deserves that." —AFP



The Best TV Shows of 2025, So Far

THE FIRST half of 2025 saw the return of strike-delayed hit shows, like "Severance", "The White Lotus" and "The Last of Us," that took turns dominating the cultural conversation. But only one of them made our top TV list.

Read on to find out which one and to see which other series, new and old, scripted and nonfiction, impressed our television critics the most (listed alphabetically).

‘ANDOR’

A prequel series to "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" (2016) — and arguably the most acclaimed "Star Wars" story of any kind since that film — "Andor" offered one of TV's deepest explorations of the political realities and human costs of rebellion. Its two-season run wrapped up in May.

"Prequels are often where dramatic tension goes to die," James Poniewozik writes. "How invested can you be in a story whose outcome you already know? The genius of 'Andor,' created by Tony Gilroy, is to make that knowledge an asset."

‘ASURA’

Written and directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda (Shoplifters), this Japanese period drama is visually sumptuous and emotionally meticulous in its depiction of four sisters grappling with controlling men and their complex relationships with one another.

The series "is the full package: a detailed, human-scale domestic drama with plenty to say, fascinating characters to say it and the stylishness to make it sing," Margaret Lyons writes. "The downside is that other shows feel paltry and thin in comparison. The upside is everything else."

‘EXTERIOR NIGHT’

The first television series by great Italian film-maker Marco Bellocchio, "Exterior Night", revisits the 1978

kidnapping and killing of politician Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. (Bellocchio explored those events previously in his 2003 film "Good Morning, Night."

"Moro's abduction and death was a watershed moment in the 'years of lead,' when politically motivated bombings, shootings, kidnappings and assassinations convulsed Italy and other European countries," Mike Hale writes. "But it is a story that can speak to anyone who has a sense of living in perilous times. As a character in 'Exterior Night' says, a society can tolerate a certain amount of crazy behaviour, but 'when the crazy party has the majority, we'll see what happens.'"

‘MURDERBOT’

In this comic sci-fi thriller, based on the novel "All Systems Red" by Martha Wells, Alexander Skarsgard plays a jade robot that is charged with protecting a crunchy space commune but would rather just watch pulpy soaps.

"The real killer app of the story, adapted by Chris and Paul Weitz, is the snarky worldview of the artificial life form at its centre," Poniewozik writes. "Skarsgard gives a lively reading to the copious voice-over, but just as important is his physical performance, which radiates casual power and agitated wariness. Murderbot is odd, edgy, unmistakably alien, yet its complaint is also crankily familiar. It just wants to be left in peace to binge its programmes, like Chance the Gardener if he had guns in his arms."

‘THE PITT’

With its "24"-like hour-by-hour structure, "The Pitt" infuses the familiar pleasures of a medical show with fevered intensity and narrative references to the pandemic and contemporary social issues.

"'The Pitt' generated old-school melodrama out of a simple understanding: The E.R. is where people end up when something goes wrong, either with the body individual or with the body politic," Poniewozik writes. "And what is

wrong with the American corpus? Buddy, take a number; the waiting room is full."



‘SEVERANCE’

In its second season, this trippy workplace drama deepens its mysteries and expands its emotional palette as the mentally "severed" employees, their loved ones and their bosses battle (sometimes literally) over competing agendas and the future of Lumon Industries. The show finally returned in January, nearly three years after the end of Season 1.

"Its makers seem to have used every second of the absence productively," Poniewozik writes. "The season takes new turns while remaining the most ambitious, batty and all-out pleasurable show on TV, an M.C. Escher maze whose plot convolutions never get in the way of its voice, heart and sense of humour." — NYT

FEATURES



A PARADISE FOR COFFEE LOVERS

When you walk along the reconstructed walls of Nizwa's old village, it quickly becomes clear that coffee culture is thriving here. In recent years, the area has transformed into a cafe lover's dream, with around 20 different cafes, each offering its own flavour and vibe. Oman has a long-standing tradition of coffee — Omani coffee is typically brewed with cardamom and served in small cups, often accompanied by dates. But in Nizwa, this tradition is paired with contemporary trends. Coffee shops here take inspiration from some of Europe's most popular coffee destinations, blending culture with modern flair. For instance, some cafes have seating on renovated balconies of traditional houses, offering views over the bustling streets, while others are rooftop venues with panoramic sights of the city landscape. Themes range from traditional Omani decor to modern minimalism, with each place providing a different ambiance that keeps even the most discerning coffee enthusiast intrigued.

Moreover, the menus reflect a fusion of influences: from Turkish-style brews to Italian espresso and specialty drinks featuring local ingredients. Many cafes combine their coffee offerings with inventive snacks and desserts like cardamom-infused cakes, date-flavoured pastries, or even a coffee-flavoured ice cream. Sitting in these spots, whether by a historic balcony or on a rooftop, you get a chance to soak in the cool evening air while sipping a beautifully crafted drink and observing locals and travellers mingle — a truly vivid experience of Oman's warm hospitality and evolving cafe scene.



UNIQUE FOOD EXPERIENCES

Nizwa's remodelled old village isn't just about ambience — it's become a culinary hotspot, with options that cater to all tastes. If you spot a giant chicken logo, that's a sign of one of Oman's emerging fast-food brands focusing on fried chicken and burgers — perfect for a quick, satisfying meal after a day exploring. But beyond the familiar, there are many more surprises here. Pizzerias and pasta joints now flank traditional Omanis eateries, offering a blend of international comfort food with local twists. One of the most exciting aspects of dining in Nizwa at night is the variety. You might stumble across a place serving traditional Omani dishes like shuwa (slow-cooked lamb) next to establishments serving international favourites infused with local spices. For example, one of my personal favourites is a small ice cream shop that offers a spicy, fruity gelato — a flavour combination I've yet to see anywhere else, certainly worth trying more than once. That's part of Nizwa's charm: the willingness to blend the old with the new, creating something truly special. Whether it's savoury or sweet, the food scene here caters to all appetites, with options sure to surprise and delight.

TAKE A LONG HIKE ALONG THE WALLS

One of the best ways to experience Nizwa at night is by taking a walk along the renovated city walls. Depending on your pace, the full circuit can take roughly 15 to 20 minutes — but within that span, you'll encounter a variety of views. Depending on your pace, the full circuit of the wall walk might take around 15 to 20 minutes. But within

that span, you'll encounter a variety of views — from lush farms and traditional houses to beautifully restored inns and lookout points. Each stop offers a fresh perspective: some reveal intricate details of old stonework, others provide sweeping vistas of the surrounding plains and mountains. It's an educational walk, too; many parts of the wall have plaques or signs explaining their history and significance. A guided tour can make this experience even more enriching. Local guides, well-versed in Oman's history and traditions, can share stories about Nizwa's past as a bustling trading hub, its importance as a cultural centre, and the stories behind each tower and gateway. If you're feeling adventurous, don't limit yourself to the main route — explore the narrow alleys, discover hidden courtyards and stumble upon quaint workshops or local homes that give an authentic flavour of Nizwa life.

This walk isn't just about sightseeing; it's a fantastic way to get some exercise while absorbing the city's atmosphere at night. The cool evening air, the sounds



of distant chatter and occasional music, combined with views of old architecture illuminated softly under the night sky, all contribute to an experience far more atmospheric than daytime visits. It's a gentle reminder that Nizwa isn't only about history, but also about living culture that continues to thrive after sunset.

FANTASTIC NIGHT EXPERIENCES

As the city cools down, Nizwa's lively night scene reveals many hidden gems. For example, visiting the Nizwa Islamic Information Centre is a worthwhile stop; it often offers free Islamic literature, brochures and books about Oman in various languages. It's a great chance to learn more about the country's faith, traditions and history in a relaxed setting. One personal highlight is the local shop that combines a cafe with a marketplace for silverware and traditional crafts. It's a modern spot that honours tradition, where you can sip your coffee while browsing beautifully crafted jewellery and silverware, all set within a stylish but culturally rooted ambience. Kids aren't forgotten either: the night is filled with fun activities such as scooter rides, buggy adventures, or interactive games, making it an ideal destination for families. For those seeking entertainment, several cafes host live music sessions or cultural performances in the evenings, creating a lively and welcoming vibe. The narrow streets and open plazas turn into bustling hubs where friends gather to chat, laugh and enjoy the cool night air. Many recommend hanging around until late to truly soak up the local atmosphere — a feeling of community that's both authentic and infectious. While Nizwa can be quite hot during the daytime, the evenings offer a cooler, more comfortable opportunity to explore. Thanks to the many air-conditioned cafes, cultural centres and shaded alleys, visitors can comfortably enjoy all that the city has to offer without



succumbing to the heat. Even in the midst of Oman's scorching summers, there's a way to experience Nizwa's charm — just adapt your plans to the cooler evening hours. If you're contemplating a trip to Oman's interior, don't dismiss Nizwa as only a day-time destination. It's a place that's worth experiencing after sunset — a city where history, culture, food and community come alive under the stars.

EXPERIENCE NIZWA AFTER DARK:
HOW OMAN'S
HISTORIC CITY
BECAME A SUMMER
EVENING ESCAPE

BY YERU EBUEN

AS THE WARM sun dips behind the mountains, Nizwa transforms into a lively hub of activity. The ancient walls, once silent guardians of the old city, now glow softly under the evening sky, and the air fills with the inviting aroma of fresh coffee, spices and grilled delights. Narrow alleyways beckon explorers with their charming twists and turns, revealing hidden cafes and vibrant markets that come alive after sunset. The atmosphere is relaxed yet buzzing, a perfect escape from the daytime heat. While many may think of Nizwa as a year-round destination for history and culture, recent renovations have added a new layer of enjoyment, making the city surprisingly appealing even during the hotter summer nights. A visit here under the stars offers a different, memorable experience that Oman residents and visitors alike should consider at least once. Nizwa's ongoing renovations, especially of its historic city walls, are a significant part of its revitalisation. Over the past decade, efforts initiated around 2010 have gradually transformed the old city into a more accessible and attractive place for residents and tourists. These improvements have made it easier to stroll along the walls, offering spectacular views and easy access to various neighbourhoods, markets and cultural sites. The walls, now open and well-maintained, serve as a pathway to explore the city's old districts, with sections showcasing traditional Omani architecture, ancient watchtowers and charming gateways — all of which have been thoughtfully preserved and restored. Now, let's explore why Nizwa should be on your list for summer nights, especially if you're after a unique experience.