

OMAN

دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

SAFE DRIVES

HAPPY KHAREEF

SUNRISE 05:24 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 03:57 AM

DHUHR 12:16 PM

ASR 03:34 PM

MAGHRIB 07:03 PM

ISHA 08:25 PM

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INBRIEF

HM CONDOLES

EMIR OF KUWAIT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the death of Shaikh Fahad Sabah Al Nasser Al Mubarak al Sabah. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to the Emir and the Al Sabah family. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and grant his family the fortitude to bear the loss.

FUTURE OF MEDIA



The 12th edition of *The Correspondent* explores *Media Now: Power, Platform and Possibilities*, offering a fascinating look at how the media landscape is transforming and what it means for us all. Packed with insightful stories, it's a must-read for anyone wanting to understand these changes. The magazine begins by examining the global media ecosystem, showing how traditional TV and radio are making way for streaming giants like Netflix and Disney+. It also highlights how international news agencies are using data and AI to deliver news faster across borders, illustrating the rapid evolution of news gathering and sharing worldwide.

This edition also focuses on how technology is reshaping media. Stories explore how AI-powered chatbots and deepfakes are raising ethical questions for newsrooms, while algorithms decide which stories get seen, influencing public discourse. The rise of short-form videos on TikTok, Reels and Shorts demonstrates how storytelling is becoming quicker and more viral, challenging long-form journalism formats.

The magazine also tackles serious issues such as misinformation, censorship and the crucial role of community journalism in maintaining trust and democracy. It discusses how careers are evolving with influencer culture, changes in journalism education and increased women's representation in Arab media.

At HM’s behest, Shura to end session on July 13

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the *Majlis Ash'shura* will adjourn its second ordinary session (2024-2025) of the tenth term (2023-2027) on July 13, in implementation of Article 41 of the Council of Oman Law.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the *Majlis Ash'shura*, stated: “The council has witnessed extensive legislative activity in the first half of the tenth term (2023-2027) during its first and second sessions, translating the requirements of strengthening the legislative framework supporting the implementation of Oman Vision 2040. This aligns with its constitutional roles defined by the Basic Law of the State and the Council of Oman Law, reflected in the council’s legislative and oversight work across various sectors.” He emphasised that the council diligently carried out its duties during the second ordinary session, closely monitoring national developments, particularly as Oman began evaluating the achievements of its tenth five-year plan and outlining the eleventh. These developments were tracked through the council’s bureau and standing committees, which provided insights and recommendations to enhance national plans and visions.

Al Nadabi noted that legislative activity peaked during the tenth term, with the council reviewing 39 draft laws and agreements referred by the government across its first and second sessions. This included revising legislation, proposing new laws and amending existing ones to meet the demands of Oman’s renewed renaissance and contribute to national progress.

Additionally, council members actively employed oversight tools, with over 300 monitoring instruments submitted during the two sessions, alongside meetings aimed at strengthening integration and dialogue between the council, the government, state institutions and citizens.

The second ordinary session saw significant legislative work, with 21 government-referred projects (14 draft laws and 7 agreements) and 3 legislative proposals initiated by the council. The session included 14 regular meetings, four of which were dedicated to discussing ministerial statements addressing challenges in implementing development plans. — ONA

US pushes for Gaza truce

THE UNITED STATES is pushing for a truce in Gaza by “sometime next week,” US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday.

The Republican leader was asked by reporters if a ceasefire in the devastating war between Israel and Palestinians could be in place before a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House, set for July 7.

“We hope it’s going to happen and we’re looking for it to happen sometime next week,” Trump responded as he departed Washington for Florida.

The swift resolution of Israel’s 12-day war with Iran has revived hopes for a halt to the fighting in Gaza, where more than 20 months of combat have created dire humanitarian conditions for the population of more than two million.

Trump has previously urged Israel to “make the deal in Gaza,” but on the ground, Israel has continued to pursue its offensive across the Palestinian territory.

Israeli planes and tanks struck heavily in north and south Gaza on Tuesday, destroying clusters of homes, while Netanyahu’s confidant was in Washington, expected to discuss a possible ceasefire.

Thousands of Gaza residents again took flight as Israel issued new orders to evacuate, while its tanks pushed into eastern areas of Gaza City in the north and into Khan Yunis and Rafah in the south, residents said.

Local health authorities said Israeli gunfire and military strikes across the enclave had killed at least 112 people and wounded more than 400 in the past 24 hours, with clusters of houses reported destroyed in Gaza City’s Shejaia and Zeitoun districts, east of Khan Yunis and in Rafah. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. The intensified operations came after days of mounting calls for a ceasefire, with Trump among those urging Israel to strike a new deal to halt the war and bring home the hostages still held in Gaza. — AFP



A Palestinian holds a child at the site of an Israeli strike on a house that took place on Monday, in Zawayda in the central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. — Reuters

WHO sounds alarm bells: Loneliness makes many people sick

GENEVA: One in six people worldwide is affected by loneliness, which, along with social isolation, can lead to physical illness, contributing to 871,000 deaths worldwide annually, a World Health Organization (WHO) commission has said.

Loneliness increases the risk of strokes, heart attacks, diabetes, depression, anxiety and suicide, the WHO said.

Lonely teenagers are 22 per cent more likely to achieve lower grades

than their peers, while lonely adults face greater challenges in finding or keeping a job.

The impact is not only individual but also societal, with billions in costs to healthcare systems and losses in employment.

THE ROLE OF MOBILE PHONES AND LIVING ALONE

The commission's co-chair, Vivek Murthy, defines loneliness as “a painful, subjective feeling that

many of us experience when the relationships that we need do not match the relationships that we have. And social isolation, by contrast, is an objective state of having few relationships or interactions”.

One in three older people and one in four adolescents are estimated to be socially isolated, according to the report.

Causes include illness, poor education, low income, a lack of opportunities for social interaction,

living alone and the use of digital technologies.

Murthy noted that humans have communicated for millennia not only through words but also through facial expressions, body language, tone of voice and silence.

These forms of communication are lost when people rely solely on mobile phones and social media.

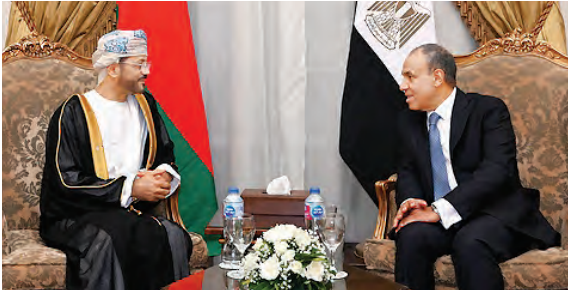
The WHO highlighted Sweden as a positive example. The country has implemented a national strategy

against loneliness, as reported by Swedish Social Minister Jakob Forssmed. Sweden recognises that loneliness is not just an individual problem but one that affects society as a whole. Efforts are being made to foster social connections in places like shops, restaurants, neighbourhoods and clubs.

Soon, all children and teenagers in Sweden will receive prepaid cards that can only be used to book group leisure activities. — dpa

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



SAYYID BADR,
EGYPTIAN MINISTER
REVIEW TIES

CAIRO: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a closed bilateral meeting with Dr Badr Abdelaty, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, as part of the 16th session of the Omani-Egyptian Joint Committee in Cairo.

During the meeting, they affirmed the close bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt. They also discussed the strategic development of these relations in various fields, aiming to deepen the common interests of the two brotherly countries and bring further mutual benefits.

The two ministers also addressed a number of regional issues and developments related to the concerns and interests of the two countries at the political and security levels. They emphasised the importance of ensuring coordination, convergence of visions and integration of efforts to address various challenges and issues. This includes containing the causes of conflict and escalation for the benefit of the entire region. — ONA

AGREEMENT INKED
TO EXPAND NAKHAL
HEALTH CENTRE



The agreement falls within the framework of strengthening community partnerships between public and private sectors. — ONA

NAKHAL: The Ministry of Health signed a tripartite cooperation agreement to finance the expansion project of Nakhal Health Centre, adding specialised clinics equipped with integrated medical devices, equipment and office furnishings.

The agreement was signed by Dr Nasser bin Abdullah al Shukaili, Director-General of Health Services in Al Batinah South Governorate, representing the Ministry of Health; Mohammed bin Abubakar al Ghassani, Board Member of Athar Health Endowment Foundation; and Saud bin Hamad al Hadhrami, businessman and project financier. — ONA

URGENT APPEAL FOR
O+ BLOOD DONORS



MUSCAT: The Central Blood Bank in Bausher has issued an urgent appeal to individuals with blood type O+ to donate immediately, as stock levels have dropped to critically low levels. The appeal, released on July 1 by the Ministry of Health, comes amid a noticeable decline in donor turnout during this period.

The blood bank stressed that continued demand for O+ blood has placed immense pressure on current supplies. The bank said an immediate action is needed to restore safe levels necessary for patient care. “We are currently working to raise stock levels to a secure threshold as quickly as possible, to ensure availability for all patients in need,” the statement read.

Members of the public with O+ blood are encouraged to donate at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher, which operates from Saturday to Thursday between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm, and on Fridays from 8.00 am to 2.00 pm.

NETHERLANDS AMBASSADOR BIDS GOODBYE

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Tuesday Stella Kloth, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

Gen Al Numani lauded the



ambassador’s efforts that were exerted to boost bilateral relations and cooperation, wishing her success in her future endeavours. On her turn, the ambassador expressed her appreciation for the cooperation extended to her. She also underscored the depth of bilateral relations between the two countries. — ONA

ROP wins International
Road Federation Award

THE Royal Oman Police (ROP) has won first place in the International Road Federation (IRF) Awards under the Road Safety category, recognising its advanced efforts in enhancing traffic safety through smart technologies and data analysis.

The award specifically acknowledges ROP’s use of artificial intelligence in traffic management, implemented in collaboration with Huawei Oman.

Brigadier Eng Ali bin Suleim al Falahi, Director-General of Traffic, accepted the award on behalf of ROP during the ceremony held in Athens.

This achievement reflects ROP’s pioneering initiatives in developing intelligent traffic monitoring systems, accident data analysis and AI-powered solutions to identify and scientifically address high-risk road areas. These efforts have contributed to reducing accident rates and improving response efficiency, in line with the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to achieving Oman Vision 2040 objectives.

The IRF Awards – presented annually



The award specifically acknowledges ROP’s use of artificial intelligence in traffic management. — ONA

by the world’s leading transportation infrastructure organisation – recognise projects and initiatives that demonstrate tangible impact in developing and improving global road networks and safety standards. — ONA

Tajawob platform: Meeting held to address
enhancing customer interaction

MUSCAT: The first “Response and Integration” meeting was held on Tuesday with the participation of more than 130 employees from central and executive teams across 56 government institutions.

This marks the first such meeting since the official launch of the national platform for suggestions, complaints and reports, “Tajawob”, last February. The platform serves as a technical tool supporting the government’s system in handling complaints, suggestions, reports and inquiries.

This step comes as part of supporting digital transformation and improving the efficiency of operational methodologies adopted in tracking customer interactions with government entities. The system for receiving and processing requests represents a well-established approach in government work and a fundamental pillar in enhancing service quality, transparency and accountability.

The meeting showcased several institutional experiences that demonstrated progress in activating the platform. Among the most notable was Muscat Municipality’s experience, which successfully linked its call centre to the “Tajawob” platform, enhancing integration across reception channels and accelerating processing times. The Royal Oman Police also presented its experience in handling reports immediately and strengthening coordination between field departments and monitoring centres, achieving high performance levels.

Additionally, the meeting



The meeting showcased several institutional experiences that demonstrated progress in activating the platform. — ONA

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included an extended dialogue session where representatives from participating institutions discussed a number of initiatives and development proposals aimed at improving the platform’s operational efficiency, standardising procedures, documenting successful experiences and disseminating best practices — with a focus on leveraging operational data to support decision-making and improve response indicators.

According to statistics published on the platform’s website as of the end of June 2025, government entities received more than 46,000 requests through “Tajawob”, including complaints, inquiries, suggestions and reports, covering over 3,500 government services. This reflects growing public

confidence in official institutional channels and an increased level of engagement with government entities.

This meeting underscores government institutions’ commitment to enhancing integration and coordination in applying approved methodologies for managing customer interactions through modern operational tools like the “Tajawob” platform. The platform helps unify reception channels, improve classification and processing efficiency and enhance follow-up and response quality — aligning with national efforts to improve public services and institutionalise a culture of interactive governance and community participation. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The meeting also included an evaluation of the foundation's digital platforms' performance. — ONA

HEALTH ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION BOARD MEETS

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Athar Health Endowment Foundation convened its second meeting for the year 2025 on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health and Chairman of the Board.

The meeting discussed several key agenda items, including the approval of the minutes from the first board meeting of 2025, follow-up on the implementation of previous meeting recommendations and a review of the progress of the foundation's ongoing projects for the current year. Additionally, the board examined and discussed the external audit report for the previous year, 2024.

The meeting also included an evaluation of the foundation's digital platforms' performance, a discussion on donation amounts collected through the “Friends of Athar” platform, donation devices and other electronic channels, as well as a review of the financial report for the first half of 2025. — ONA

OMAN TO PLAY HOST TO JAPANESE TRAVEL EXHIBITION

KABEER YOUSUF
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The Embassy of Japan in Muscat, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, will be hosting the Japanese travelling exhibition “Manga Hokusai Manga”. This exhibition will showcase manga drawings by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai dating back to the 19th century. The event will take place from July 3 to 22.

Katsushika Hokusai's “Hokusai Manga” is a collection of sketches and drawings that are considered precursors to modern manga and comic books. Originally published in multiple volumes starting in 1814, this work features a wide range of subjects, from everyday life in Japan to fantastical creatures, and is renowned for its dynamic compositions and expressive lines.

These drawings will be presented through the lens of contemporary Japanese comics, providing visitors with the opportunity to delve into the essence and depth of Japanese culture and life through these intricate artworks. The formal opening of the Manga Hokusai Manga Exhibition will take place on Wednesday at the Omani Society for Fine Arts, with the presence of various dignitaries from Japan and Oman.

Hokusai Manga's influence on modern manga is undeniable. Its dynamic storytelling, innovative panelling and expressive linework have inspired many contemporary manga artists. The exhibition includes over 4,000 illustrations covering themes such as people, landscapes, animals, mythical creatures and scenes of daily life in Edo-era Japan.

INITIATIVE LOOKS AT UTILISING TECHNOLOGY TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL STABILITY

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

The Ministry of Social Development launched an initiative under the title ‘Our Safe Home’ to raise awareness of the importance of using advanced technical techniques within the community.

This initiative highlights the impact of family stability on the foundation of a cohesive society. It includes strategies for resolving family disputes, raising children and preventing marital conflicts before they escalate. Additionally, it emphasises the



significance of addressing juvenile issues and identifying potential causes of delinquency. The ministry, specifically the Family Guidance and Counselling Department, oversees this initiative. It involves awareness lectures and training workshops held in various

governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. These activities target different segments of society and families to ensure the message reaches and impacts these groups directly. Through this initiative, the ministry aims to uphold the societal values of Omani families, which are crucial for maintaining stable and cohesive societies. By offering guidance services based on the latest technologies and strategies, the ministry helps families overcome social challenges and create a nurturing environment to address these issues effectively.

Eat safe while travelling

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

THE Ministry of Health (MoH) published an awareness post on its social media platforms as part of its travel and health campaign, providing a set of important health guidelines to help travellers avoid food poisoning while on the move.

This initiative aims to raise awareness and protect travellers from potential health risks, especially during the busy summer season, which witnesses a high volume of domestic and international tourism in the Sultanate of Oman. The advisory comes at a time when family trips and outdoor activities are on the rise, increasing the chances of encountering unsafe food sources if proper precautions are not followed.

The campaign stresses the importance of thoroughly washing hands before and after eating, as this plays a major role in preventing the spread of germs. It also advises washing fruits and vegetables carefully before consumption and recommends choosing thick-skinned fruits, which provide natural protection against external contamination.

The guidelines also warn against eating raw or undercooked foods especially meats and seafood which are among the leading causes of foodborne illness globally. The ministry emphasised the need to eat freshly cooked food immediately after preparation and to store leftovers properly to prevent bacterial growth.

Additionally, the ministry warned against consuming food sold by street vendors, as such items may be prone to contamination or poor storage conditions, posing a serious health risk to travellers. It also stressed the importance of ensuring that dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese are pasteurised and properly stored to ensure safety.

Dr Mona Mohammed, an emergency medicine physician, affirmed that food poisoning is one of the most common health issues among travellers, especially when



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visiting countries with different hygiene and food safety standards. She stressed the importance of following the ministry's recommendations such as handwashing before and after meals and avoiding raw meats and undercooked seafood, noting that these simple actions significantly reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Dr Mona also emphasised the importance of recognising the symptoms of food poisoning and knowing when to seek medical care. Common symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps and nausea. While these may be mild in some cases, travellers should be alert to more serious signs that require immediate medical attention. These include a fever above 102°F (38.9°C), persistent diarrhoea lasting more than three days without improvement, or frequent vomiting that prevents fluid intake,

potentially leading to dehydration. Signs of dehydration include a dry mouth and throat, dizziness upon standing, and reduced or absent urination. She pointed out that certain groups are more vulnerable to severe complications from food poisoning, including children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems. These groups should be especially diligent in following preventive measures. Dr Mona recommended taking three main steps: stop giving the patient any food, encourage them to drink plenty of fluids to replace lost liquids and prevent dehydration and quickly transfer them to the nearest health centre or hospital for medical care. She emphasised that although food poisoning is common, it can be prevented and its effects minimised by adhering to health guidelines and spreading awareness.

ROP warns public against fraudulent social media scams

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 1

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has warned the public against fraudulent individuals exploiting video communication platforms to impersonate official figures and government employees in a bid to deceive citizens and residents.

According to the advisory, scammers pose as police officers or government personnel during video calls, using fake visuals and names to create an illusion of authenticity. These individuals request sensitive personal or financial information,

often under the pretext of verifying identities or legal matters, and may threaten their targets with fabricated legal consequences if they do not comply. The ROP stressed the importance of verifying the identity of any caller through official channels before responding to such requests. It urged the public to remain vigilant and not to disclose personal details or documents without ensuring the legitimacy of the communication. “Protecting your information is a shared responsibility,” the advisory stated, highlighting the growing



ROP urged the public to remain vigilant and not to disclose personal details or documents without ensuring the legitimacy of the communication.

sophistication of online fraud schemes targeting unsuspecting individuals.

The police reiterated its commitment to combatting cybercrime and urged anyone

encountering suspicious calls or messages to report them immediately through official communication channels. Meanwhile, a citizen was arrested for rental scam involving fake property advertisements. According to the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the suspect posted false listings for houses, apartments and rest houses for rent across various governorates. He allegedly received advance payments via bank transfers from victims to confirm bookings that were never fulfilled. Legal procedures against the suspect are currently underway.

SPOTLIGHT

SAFE DRIVES

HAPPY KHAREEF



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

AS DHOFAR transforms into a lush green haven during the Khareef Dhofar Season, thousands of visitors from across the region flock to Dhofar’s cool, misty mountains and coastal charm. But while the weather and landscape are a welcome escape from the summer heat, they also create unfamiliar driving conditions — especially for those unused to foggy, rain-slicked roads.

Traffic authorities and safety experts are once again urging caution, as accident rates tend to spike during the season due to poor visibility, slippery surfaces and challenging mountain routes.

“Dhofar during Khareef is beautiful but also deceiving,” says driving instructor Fatima. “People come from dry, desert regions and are often unprepared for wet, winding mountain roads that demand different driving skills”.

The Dhofar terrain includes steep ascents and sharp turns that can become hazardous when wet or foggy. Standing water in low-lying areas reduces tyre traction, turning even short drives into risky journeys.

Essential safety tips “Always drive slower than you think you need to,” advises Frank Higgins, a Health, Safety and Environment expert. “Most incidents occur because drivers underestimate how little grip tyres have on wet roads or how poor visibility can become in dense fog”.

Higgins, who leads seasonal road safety workshops in Dhofar, offers these key tips:

Slow down gradually

when visibility drops or roads get slippery.

Keep your AC on to prevent window fogging.

Use dipped headlights in fog and rain; avoid fog lights in rain as they can reflect off wet surfaces.

Maintain a larger following distance than you would on dry roads.

“If visibility drops to near zero, don’t force it,” Higgins warns. “Pull over safely, switch on your hazard lights and wait it out. Rushing through thick fog is a recipe for disaster”.

HAZARD LIGHTS
A frequent mistake during Khareef is the misuse of hazard lights.

“Hazard lights should only be used when your vehicle is stopped or in an emergency,” says a Royal Oman Police (ROP) traffic officer. “Using them while driving confuses other motorists”.

Prep before the trip
Check tyres, brakes, oil and wipers to ensure your vehicle is ready. Keep the windshield washer reservoir full for clear visibility. Carry warm clothes, water and emergency supplies. Refuel before leaving town, as stations may be scarce on mountain roads.

Mind the mountains
Khareef’s mountain roads are breathtaking but require caution. Avoid sudden lane changes and overtaking unless absolutely necessary.

“Patience and focus are the best tools in your car,” says another instructor. “Enjoy the journey — but remember, the safest arrival is the best destination”.

As Dhofar welcomes thousands of guests this season, road safety remains vital. Drive smart, stay alert and let Khareef be remembered for its beauty — not for accidents.

Fog,
rain and wet roads
require extra caution
Slow down; use
headlights correctly
Prepare your
vehicle fully before the
trip
Avoid risky
overtaking
on mountain
roads

SHORT TAKES



Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon and several senior officers were briefed about the exercise

ASDS CHAIRMAN INSPECTS ‘DECISION-MAKING 12’ EXERCISE

MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS), on Tuesday inspected the progress and activities of the annual strategic exercise ‘Decision-Making 12’.

The chairman and several senior officers were briefed about the exercise. The participants gave an explanatory presentation about the exercise and how it interacts with international issues and various national scenarios.

Meanwhile, several retired commanders from the Sultan’s Armed Forces and other military and security units also viewed the strategic exercise ‘Decision-Making 12’. Upon their arrival at the National Defence College (NDC), they were received by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC), at the presence of Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS). — ONA

SAHAM FRUIT FESTIVAL FEATURES DIVERSE ACTIVITIES



The festival supports local producers by providing a direct marketing platform

SAHAM: Saham Fruit Festival kicked off in the Wilayat of Saham, Al Batinah North Governorate on Tuesday. The event is organised by the Office of the Wali of Saham in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the wilayat.

The festival aims to support local producers by providing a direct marketing platform to sell their agricultural products, promote sustainable farming practices and raise community awareness about their economic and environmental importance. It also showcases the fruits and agricultural crops cultivated in the farms of the wilayat.

Held at Saham Public Park, the festival features a variety of activities, including stalls for displaying and selling local fruits, specialised workshops on modern agricultural techniques and educational seminars focusing on best farming practices. — ONA

CDAA READY FOR KHAREEF DHOFAR SEASON

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has affirmed its readiness to provide services to citizens, residents and visitors during Khareef Dhofar Season 2025.

The Authority stated that it has approved its operational plans for the season, which include reinforcing existing centres and establishing additional response points along the roads leading to Dhofar Governorate in Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and Al Wusta governorates. These measures aim to ensure prompt responses to reports received through the Operations Centre and local civil defence and ambulance centres across the governorates.

The Authority called on institutions, companies and property owners to comply with safety and civil protection requirements by conducting necessary maintenance on facilities and adhering to preventive measures to help reduce accidents.

Additionally, the Authority will



CDAA will intensify its monitoring efforts by inspecting facilities, addressing violations and taking appropriate legal action when necessary.

intensify its monitoring efforts by inspecting facilities, addressing violations and taking appropriate legal action when necessary.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority continues to raise awareness among all segments of society through its

official social media platforms, various media outlets, awareness brochures and organised events. It also deploys field teams for awareness and guidance across different locations, commending the prominent role of the media in promoting preventive culture. — ONA

Public safety alert issued as first rain hits Salalah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 1

AS the first light rains of the khareef season sweep across Dhofar Governorate, a new environmental initiative is sounding the alarm on a hidden hazard: dangerously slippery roads.

The Nature Conservation Society in Dhofar, currently being established, has issued a public safety alert warning motorists that roads are most treacherous during the first rain after a long dry spell - precisely when many drivers least expect it.

“Rain mixes with accumulated oil, dust and grime on road surfaces, creating a thin, nearly invisible film that severely reduces traction,” the group explained. “This makes roads extremely slippery - often even more dangerous than during heavy rain.” The khareef season, unique to Dhofar, brings cool temperatures, mist and gentle rain from June to September, turning the governorate’s arid landscapes into lush green hills and misty coastlines. This transformation draws large numbers of visitors to Salalah and surrounding areas, making traffic safety a growing concern.

For tourists and newcomers unfamiliar with khareef conditions, the first rains may seem mild but can lead to serious accidents without proper caution.

The initiative has issued three key safety tips to help reduce accident risks: These are: Reduce speed as soon as it begins to rain, maintain a greater distance between vehicles and drive with extra caution and avoid sudden braking.



During khareef, responsible driving saves lives, protects families and ensures that everyone can enjoy the monsoon safely

Although still in its registration phase, the Nature Conservation Society in Dhofar is already engaging the community through road safety and environmental awareness campaigns. Its mission aligns with Oman Vision 2040, promoting civic participation and sustainability in all sectors.

The society aims to become a local hub for environmental stewardship, protecting Dhofar’s unique ecosystems and

emphasising public safety as a core element of sustainable tourism.

With thousands of cars expected in Dhofar over the coming weeks, the group’s message is clear: Khareef is a season of beauty, but it demands caution. Responsible driving saves lives, protects families and ensures that everyone can enjoy the monsoon safely.

Whether you’re a local resident or a first-time visitor, prepare well, drive carefully and respect nature.

‘Sports Spark’ programme to keep children busy during summer

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) has unveiled a variety of sports activities for Omani and expatriate children, aimed at keeping them engaged during the summer months.

The annual indoor sports event, titled Sports Spark, will take place from July 18 to August 16 in OCEC Halls 1 and 2. Children will participate in their favourite sports and fun activities throughout the day, according to OCEC management.

“We are excited to host the annual indoor sports event for children during the summer months. This year’s programme includes football, basketball, pickleball, badminton, cricket and fast-growing activities like e-gaming, among others,” said Eng Said bin Salim al Shanfari, CEO of OCEC.

“The initiative reflects OCEC’s commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles and making sports accessible to all.” Last year’s event attracted over 30,000 participants, and Sports Spark 2025 is returning with an even wider range of



The annual indoor sports event will take place from July 18 to August 16 in OCEC Halls 1 and 2.

activities.

“The event aims to promote fitness and well-being during the hot summer months by providing the community with access to high-quality, air-conditioned facilities and a variety of sports,” said Al Shanfari.

Teams, individuals and clubs can book facilities with multiple time slots available throughout the day. Parents can also register their children for a summer camp until July 5, while corporations can provide access to the facilities for their employees, promoting fitness and well-being in the workplace.

“This isn’t just about transforming our exhibition halls into a sports haven; it’s about promoting summer activity and fitness across all age groups. For an entire month, the OCEC will be a place for people to play, move and connect, with summer camps for kids, corporate challenges, tournaments, and more. It’s not just about hosting an event; it’s about forming habits, creating access and demonstrating the benefits of sports for your body, mind and community. I invite everyone to discover the best that Sports Spark has to offer,” Al Shanfari added.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



CHINESE CITIES
FIGHT FLOODS
UNLEASHED BY
RECORD RAIN

BEIJING: A record summer downpour in China’s central province of Hubei dumped more than a month’s worth of rain in just 12 hours on the city of Xianfeng, prompting authorities on Tuesday to move 18,000 people to safety, shut schools and suspend bus services.

Gushing brown torrents washed away cars in the city of 300,000 deluged on Monday night, local media videos showed online, as more than 350 mm of rain fell in one area. State media said more than 18,000 were shifted to safety, while water and power supplies were disrupted, prompting the closure of schools and suspension of bus services.

Chinese meteorologists blame climate change for heavier and more frequent rain, saying communities in mountainous areas are particularly vulnerable to flash floods, while rural areas lack forecasting capabilities.

“Accurately forecasting the intensity and exact location of heavy rain remains challenging, especially with climate change and the complex terrain of rural areas,” said Meng Gao, a specialist in climate modelling at Hong Kong Baptist University. Floods on Monday in the central province of Henan killed three people, with five missing after more than 220 mm of rain fell on two rural towns in three hours, state broadcaster CCTV said. — **Reuters**

INDIA CHEMICAL
FACTORY BLAST TOLL
RISES TO 36

BENGALURU: The death toll from a powerful explosion at an Indian chemical factory has risen to 36, as search and rescue operations continued for a second day on Tuesday, officials said.

The blast in Sangareddy in India’s southern Telangana state on Monday turned parts of the building into rubble. Industrial disasters are common in India, with experts blaming poor planning and lax enforcement of safety rules.

State Chief Minister Revanth Reddy visited the site on Tuesday, with a video released by his office showing piles of twisted metal in the wreckage of the factory.

Reddy said there were 143 people at the factory when the explosion happened. “Rescue operations are going on” he told reporters, confirming that 36 people have died. “We fear that several people might be under the debris and others might have run away”.

Reddy’s office said a committee was investigating the cause of the explosion.

“The incident has unfortunately resulted in the loss of human life,” factory owner Sigachi Industries said in a statement. The company supplies pharmaceutical, food, cosmetics and chemical industries. This factory made components to help make medical pills. — **AFP**

EX-PM IN DISTRESS

Hasina denies crimes against humanity



“Bangladesh’s fugitive ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina has denied accusations that she committed crimes against humanity, her state-appointed defence lawyer said. According to the UN, up to 1,400 people were killed between July and August last year. Prosecutors have filed five charges against Hasina in connection with these events – abetment, incitement, complicity, facilitation, conspiracy and failure to prevent mass murder – all of which constitute crimes against humanity under Bangladeshi law. — **AFP**

MALNUTRITION LEVELS UP

Food supplies to Sudan refugees could dry up



Food aid to help Sudanese refugees in four neighbouring countries could end within the next couple of months without an urgent injection of new funding, a World Food Programme official said, warning of rising malnutrition levels. Over 4 million refugees have fled Sudan’s more than two-year civil war to seven neighbouring countries where shelter conditions are widely viewed as inadequate due to chronic funding shortages. — **Reuters**

SWELTERING HEAT

Japan had hottest June on record



Japan experienced its hottest June on record, the weather agency said, as climate change prompts sweltering heat waves across the globe. “Japan’s monthly average temperature in June was the highest for the month since statistics began in 1898,” said the Japan Meteorological Agency. With strong high-pressure systems in June staying in the region, the average monthly temperature was 2.34 degrees Celsius higher than the standard value, the agency said. — **AFP**

Iran says reconstruction a priority after ceasefire

TEHRAN: One week after a ceasefire halted hostilities with Israel, Iran’s government said rebuilding damaged cities is now a top priority.

Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh said on Tuesday that reconstruction efforts are already under way, with a damage assessment committee operating within her ministry’s crisis team and a national recovery plan in place.

Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref also met with executives from the state investment company to discuss reconstruction financing,

according to a government statement. In a speech, Aref invoked Iran’s recovery following the first Gulf War with Iraq in the 1980s. “We must demonstrate quickly that we are capable of rebuilding on all fronts in the post-war period,” he said.

The conflict began on June 13

when Israel launched air strikes across Iran, citing concerns over Tehran’s nuclear programme. Iran responded with missile and drone attacks, with the United States joining into bomb three key nuclear sites. A ceasefire took effect on June 24. — **dpa**

Blow for Thai’s govt as
court suspends PM

THAI’S Constitutional Court on Tuesday suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn

Shinawatra from duty pending a case seeking her dismissal, in a major setback for a government under fire on multiple fronts and fighting for its survival. The court accepted a petition from 36 senators accusing Paetongtarn of dishonesty and breaching ethical standards, based on a leak of a sensitive telephone call with Cambodia’s influential former leader Hun Sen that was intended to de-escalate a territorial row and tense troop buildup at their border.

The leaked June 15 call triggered domestic fury and has left Paetongtarn’s coalition with a razor-thin majority after a big party abandoned the alliance and accused her of undermining sovereignty, as protest groups threaten more demonstrations to demand a new government.

Paetongtarn’s battles after only 10 months in office underline an intractable power struggle between the billionaire Shinawatra dynasty and an influential establishment backed by the army – a two-decade grudge match that has seen two military coups and court rulings that have toppled multiple parties and prime ministers.

She accepted the court’s decision on Tuesday and apologised over the leaked call, during which she kowtowed before Hun Sen and criticised a Thai army commander, a red line in a country where the military has significant clout.

“My true intention in the leaked conversation, my true intention

Paetongtarn says true intention was to save lives, protect sovereignty as protest groups threaten more demonstrations to demand a new government



Thailand’s Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra speaks next to Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai during a press conference following her suspension by the country’s Constitutional Court at Government House in Bangkok. — **Reuters**

100 per cent, was to work for the country to maintain our sovereignty and save the lives of all our soldiers,” Paetongtarn told reporters.

It has been a baptism of fire for political novice Paetongtarn, who at 37 was thrust into the spotlight last year as Thailand’s youngest premier after the Constitutional Court dismissed ally Srettha Thavisin for a violation of ethical standards.

Paetongtarn, the fourth member of her family to hold the top post, has been struggling to revive a stuttering economy and arrest a sharp decline in popularity, with an opinion poll released at the weekend showing her approval rating sinking to 9.2 per cent in June from 30.9 per cent in March. Thai shares jumped 1.8 per cent after the midday break on expectations that political uncertainty could lead to further cuts in interest rates

by the central bank. Deputy Prime Minister Suriya Juangroongruangkit takes over as caretaker premier while the court decides the case against Paetongtarn, who has 15 days to respond and will stay in the cabinet as the new culture minister following a reshuffle.

Paetongtarn is not alone in her troubles, with influential tycoon father Thaksin Shinawatra, the driving force behind her government, facing legal hurdles of his own in two different courts this month. Polarising tycoon Thaksin appeared at his first hearing at Bangkok’s Criminal Court on Tuesday on charges he insulted Thailand’s powerful monarchy, a serious offence punishable by up to 15 years in prison if found guilty. Thaksin denies the allegations and has repeatedly pledged allegiance to the crown. — **Reuters**



PRINCE
VISITS SHEFFIELD SCHOOL

The Prince of Wales meets pupils during a visit to Meadowhead Secondary School in Sheffield, as part of his visit to the city to mark the two-year anniversary of the Homewards Programme. — **Reuters**

SHORTTAKES



STUDY: US AID CUTS COULD CAUSE OVER 14 MILLION DEATHS

PARIS: More than 14 million of the world’s most vulnerable people, a third of them small children, could die by 2030 because of the Trump administration’s dismantling of US foreign aid, research projected on Tuesday.

The study in the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* was published as world and business leaders met at a United Nations conference in Spain to try to bolster the reeling aid sector.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) had provided over 40 per cent of global humanitarian funding until Donald Trump returned to the White House in January.

Two weeks later, Trump’s then-close advisor — and the world’s richest man — Elon Musk boasted of having put the agency “through the woodchipper”.

The funding cuts “risk abruptly halting — and even reversing — two decades of progress in health among vulnerable populations”, warned study co-author Davide Rasella, a researcher at the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal).

“For many low- and middle-income countries, the resulting shock would be comparable in scale to a global pandemic or a major armed conflict,” he said in a statement.

Looking back over data from 133 nations, the international team of researchers estimated that USAID funding had prevented 91.8 million deaths in developing countries between 2001 and 2021. That is more than the estimated number of deaths during World War II — history’s deadliest conflict.

The researchers also used modelling to project how funding being slashed by 83 per cent — the figure announced by the US government earlier this year — could affect death rates.

The cuts could lead to more than 14 million avoidable deaths by 2030, the projections found.

That number included over 4.5 million children under the age of five — or around 700,000 child deaths a year.

For comparison, around 10 million soldiers are estimated to have been killed during World War I.

USAID funding was found to be particularly effective at staving off preventable deaths from disease.

There were 65 per cent fewer deaths from HIV/AIDS in countries receiving a high level of support compared to those with little or no USAID funding, the study found.

Deaths from malaria and neglected tropical diseases were similarly cut in half. Winnie Byanyima, head of the UN’s HIV programme UNAids, said the funding cuts could lead to an additional 6.6 million people becoming infected with HIV in the next four years. — AFP

GERMANY FINANCING DRONES FOR UKRAINE

BERLIN: Germany has begun financing long-range weapons systems for the defence of Ukraine. According to a report in the conservative German daily *Die Welt*, an initial contract has been signed to pay for the construction of more than 500 Antonov-196 long-range drones.

According to the report, these kamikaze drones have a range of 1,200 kilometres and carry an explosive charge of 50 kilogrammes. This makes them

suitable for attacking so-called softer targets over longer distances that are not specially protected — including storage sites and fuel tanks.

The Ministry of Defence in Berlin did not confirm what exactly is being financed by Germany. The German government has changed its information policy and refers to the need for secrecy when it comes to military aid.

In mid-June, Defence Minister

Boris Pistorius and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed in Kyiv that Germany and Ukraine wanted to jointly enter into the production of long-range weapons systems. Drones, cruise missiles and rockets were mentioned.

The weapons systems are also to be manufactured in both countries at a later date. It is expected that the German Armed Forces could later be increasingly equipped from the programme’s capacities. — dpa

Over 170 charities urge end to Gaza aid system

MORE than 170 non-governmental organisations called on Tuesday for a US and Israeli-backed food aid distribution scheme in Gaza to be dismantled over concerns it is putting civilians at risk of death and injury.

More than 500 people have been killed in mass shootings near aid distribution centres or transport routes guarded by Israeli forces since the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation started operating in late May, according to medical authorities in Gaza.

The GHF uses private US security and logistics companies to get supplies into Gaza, largely bypassing a UN-led system that Israel says had let militants divert aid. The United Nations has called the plan ‘inherently unsafe’ and a violation of humanitarian impartiality rules.

As of early afternoon in Geneva on Tuesday, where the joint declaration was released, 171 charities had signed on to the call for countries to press Israel to halt the GHF scheme and reinstate aid coordinated through the United Nations.

“Palestinians in Gaza face an impossible choice: starve or risk being shot while trying desperately to reach food to feed their families,” the statement said. Groups signing it included Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Amnesty International.

In a response, the GHF said it had delivered more than 52 million meals in five weeks and said other humanitarian groups had “nearly all of their aid looted”.

“Instead of bickering and throwing insults from the sidelines, we would welcome other humanitarian groups to join us and feed the people in Gaza,” the GHF said.

Doctors Without Borders told reporters in an online press briefing on Tuesday that within the last month two of its small primary health centres had received 22 dead and 548 wounded people. Those who died had received fatal wounds to the chest and in abdomen.

“They are not warning shots. They are shots directed towards the people,” said Aitor Zabalgogazkoa, one of MSF’s emergency



People mourn Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Monday, according to Gaza’s health ministry, during their funeral at Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. — Reuters

coordinators in Gaza.

In more than 50 per cent of the mass casualty incidents near food distribution sites, children have been shot and killed, said Rachel Cummings, Humanitarian Director for Save the Children in Gaza.

“Children have told us they want to die... to be with their mother or father who have been killed. They want to be in paradise because there is food and water,” said Cummings.

The Israeli military acknowledged on Monday that Palestinian civilians have been harmed at aid distribution centres in Gaza, saying that Israeli forces had been issued new instructions following what it called “lessons learned”.

Israel has repeatedly said its forces operate near the centres in order to prevent the aid from falling into the hands of Palestinian Hamas fighters.

Meanwhile, a UN official tasked with

monitoring the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip on Tuesday accused Israel of using companies to pursue a “settler-colonial” displacement project aimed at apartheid and genocide.

Francesca Albanese, an Italian legal and human rights academic, said that while political leaders and governments shirked their obligations, “far too many corporate entities have profited from the Israeli economy of illegal occupation, apartheid and now genocide.”

Albanese, who was appointed UN special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian Territories in 2022, has published a report entitled ‘From economy of occupation to economy of genocide.’

Israel has long accused Albanese of lacking fairness, neutrality and impartiality. The Israeli government rejects cooperation with the UN Human Rights Council and its organs. — Reuters/dpa

Europe scorched: France closes schools, Italy reduces work

PARIS/MADRID: Italy banned outdoor work in some regions during the warmest hours, France shut schools and part of the Eiffel Tower and Spain confirmed its hottest June on record as a severe heatwave gripped Europe, triggering widespread health alerts.

The risks of working outside in searing temperatures were highlighted as Spanish trade unions attributed the death of a construction worker near Bologna on Monday to the heat. In Barcelona, authorities were looking into whether the death of a street sweeper over the weekend was also heat-related.

Turkey continued to battle wildfires which forced the temporary evacuation of around 50,000 people on Monday in areas surrounding the city of Izmir, the province of Manisa and Hatay in the southeast.

Europe is the world’s fastest-

warming continent, heating up at twice the global average, according to the EU’s Copernicus Climate Change Service, with extreme heatwaves starting earlier in the year and persisting for longer.

“What is exceptional ... but not unprecedented is the time of year,” said World Meteorological Organization spokesperson Clare Nullis, adding that extreme heat episodes were seen now “which normally we would see later on in the summer.”

Higher temperatures in the Mediterranean Sea tend to reinforce extreme temperatures over land areas, she said.

The Mediterranean Sea hit a record 30 C off Spain, six degrees above the seasonal average, Spanish weather forecaster AEMET said, as a high pressure system trapped hot air above Europe, a phenomenon known as a heat dome.

Spain recorded its hottest



A boy wearing a Brazilian soccer team jersey pours water over his head to cool off during a heatwave, at the Spanish Steps in Rome, Italy. — Reuters

June last month, with an average temperature of 23.6 C, AEMET said.

Indeed, for the continent, the month likely ranks among the five warmest Junes on record,

Copernicus said. England experienced its hottest June since at least 1884, the Met Office said, citing provisional data.

The Red Cross set up an air-

conditioned “climate refuge” for residents in southern Malaga, said IFRC spokesperson Tommaso Della Longa, while in Germany, people hit the ski slopes to avoid heat in the cities.

Extreme heat kills up to 480,000 people annually around the world, according to Swiss Re, which notes this exceeds the combined toll from floods, earthquakes and hurricanes.

The heat was set to peak in France on Tuesday, reaching 40-41 C in some areas, weather forecaster Meteo France said. Nearly 1,900 schools were closed, up from around 200 on Monday.

A Paris-Milan rail service was disrupted because of a mudslide on the French side of the Alps, with full service not expected to be fully restored until mid-July, French rail operator SNCF said. The top floor of the Eiffel Tower closed on Tuesday and Wednesday, disappointing scores of visitors. — AFP

OPINION

Western politics, media bias on US strikes in Iran



BADR AL DHAFRI

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ON JUNE 22, 2025, the United States launched a military operation called ‘Midnight Hammer’ against three nuclear facilities in Iran: Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan. The US claimed the goal was to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. These strikes were the first direct American attack in the recent Iran–Israel conflict, which began earlier that month when Israel carried out its own strikes. Many experts in international law said the American action was illegal. According to Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, the use of force is forbidden unless it is in self-defence after an armed attack or approved by the UN Security Council. In this case, Iran had not attacked the US, and there was no Security Council authorisation. As a result, the strike is widely considered a pre-emptive attack, which is not allowed under international law. Despite this, Western governments reacted with silence or support. Nato’s Secretary-General Mark Rutte claimed the strike did not break international law. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said there was ‘no reason to criticise’ the US action. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called Iran’s nuclear programme a ‘grave threat’ and supported the strikes, even though the UK had no direct role. Only French President Emmanuel Macron said the strikes were illegal, but he still agreed with the idea that Iran’s programme must be stopped.

This is an example of the West applying double standards. When Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022, Western leaders loudly defended international law and national sovereignty. But when the US ignores those same rules, many of these leaders remain silent. The law is treated as flexible depending on who is breaking it. This weakens the idea of justice and fairness in global politics. The Western media also showed bias. In the United States, newspapers like The New York Times and The Washington Post called the strikes ‘necessary’ and ‘inevitable’. They focused more on technical damage than legal or moral questions. They repeated President Trump’s claim that Iran’s nuclear programme was ‘obliterated’, even though later intelligence reports showed the damage only delayed the programme by a few months. CNN, another major US network, highlighted Nato’s defence of the strike, but gave very little space to international law experts who disagreed. Most American media avoided discussing whether the action was legal. They mostly supported the US government’s version of the story. In Europe, some outlets like the BBC and Politico.eu gave more attention to legal issues. They reported Macron’s concerns and included intelligence that questioned US claims. But even they often accepted the wider Western view that Iran is a dangerous state and that stopping its nuclear

The US strikes on Iran must be judged by the same rules we apply to others. Without this, the law becomes just another weapon for the strong and the media should question every government equally

development is justified - even if the method is illegal. There is another issue often forgotten in these reports: Iran is a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and remains under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). At the time of the strikes, the IAEA had not confirmed Iran was building nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, Israel has never joined the NPT and is believed to possess nuclear weapons. This important detail is almost never mentioned in Western coverage. The result is a picture that always shows Iran as a threat and Israel or the US as protectors. This is not balanced journalism. It helps to justify military actions and hides the legal and human consequences. Former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan once said, “If the rule of law is to mean anything, it must apply equally to all.” Today, that rule seems weak. Powerful countries are allowed to act outside the law, while weaker nations are judged more harshly. This harms the credibility of international law and may lead to more conflicts in the future. If the international community wants peace and justice, it must return to fairness. Law should not change based on politics. Media should question every government equally. And strikes like the one on Iran must be judged by the same rules we apply to others. Without this, the law becomes just another weapon for the strong.

UK TO UNVEIL MAJOR IMMIGRATION REFORMS

UK legislation to end the recruitment of care workers from abroad is set to be introduced as part of a raft of immigration reforms. New rules to be laid in parliament on Tuesday will also seek to increase salary and skills thresholds up to degree level for skilled workers, which will cut eligibility for 111 occupations. A new time-limited temporary shortage list will also be introduced until the end of 2026 for below degree level, where recruiting foreign workers is key to build critical infrastructure or industrial strategy. But those workers will no longer be able to bring their families and will not be entitled to salary and visa fee discounts. The legislative measures are the first policy changes to be introduced from the government’s Immigration White Paper to tighten controls and cut migration to the United Kingdom. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said: “We are delivering a complete reset of our immigration system to restore proper control and order, after the previous government allowed net migration to quadruple in four years. “These new rules mean stronger controls to bring migration down, to restore order to the immigration system and to ensure we focus on investing in skills and training here in the UK.” The changes, if approved by members of parliament (MPs) and peers, will come into force from July 22. Further measures from the White Paper such as increasing English language requirements and raising the immigration skills charge are also expected to be in place by the end of the year. The White Paper is aimed at reducing numbers, clamping down on abuses of the system and ending a reliance on cheap foreign labour. Home Office estimates indicate that changes from the plan could reduce the number of people coming to the UK by up to 100,000 per year, when looking at eight of its proposals including on study and work routes and a higher level of English language requirement. But the move to scrap care worker visas has sparked concerns from the sector, with Will Dalton, a national officer for the General, Municipal and Boilermakers union or GMB, one of the largest UK trade unions, describing the decision as ‘potentially catastrophic’ as the care sector was ‘utterly reliant on migrant workers’ and still had more than 130,000 vacancies across the country. The Home Office believes there are 40,000 potential members of staff originally brought over by ‘rogue’ providers who could work in the sector while UK staff are trained up. — dpa

Iran’s resilience, Israel’s disarray: Who won?

IT IS far too early to determine a victor in the 12-day confrontation between Iran and Israel. Though both sides declared success, the conflict is likely still in its early stages. Supporters on either side tend to view the events emotionally, seeing victory through the lens of allegiance rather than facts. The real measure of success lies in whether either side achieved its stated goals. Israel entered this confrontation with the intention of toppling the Iranian regime in a single night - eliminating top leaders, including the Supreme Leader and the President, and paving the way for exiled figure Reza Pahlavi to assume power. Backed and publicised by the West, Pahlavi himself admitted that these ambitions failed, blaming US President Donald Trump for abandoning the plan. Israel also aimed to dismantle Iran’s nuclear programme and provoke internal uprising. Yet Tehran stood firm, its leadership intact, its nuclear capability preserved, and its people — regardless of their political stance — unified in opposition to what they saw as foreign aggression. However, one cannot ignore the painful blows dealt by Israel. It exposed significant weaknesses in Iran’s air defence, destroyed drone launch sites and carried out deep infiltration operations. That Mossad managed to establish a three-storey drone factory in the heart of Tehran is a staggering indicator of internal vulnerability. And yet, despite this, Iran managed to strike back with unexpected resilience, shaking Israel’s confidence in its famed defence systems and targeting strategic facilities. Disappointingly, several Arab



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The Iranian people deserve recognition. The nation that once resisted the Shah’s tanks has again closed ranks, temporarily setting aside internal disputes to defend national sovereignty

countries acted as a shield for Israel’s defence - serving as a real ‘Iron Dome.’ This episode reinforced a long-standing truth: the world only respects strength. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s decision to accept a ceasefire before fulfilling his grand vision of neutralising Iran’s nuclear ambitions is an implicit admission of failure. The cost of continuing outweighed the potential gains. Israel, for the first time, found itself forced to retreat from a direct military confrontation without achieving its objectives. The war exposed vulnerabilities in its internal cohesion and confirmed that Israel’s deterrence narrative is far from invincible. The idea that it can easily subdue Iran has been severely undermined. While the current round may have ended, the tension is far from over. Israel will remain uneasy as long as Iran holds on to its sovereign decision-making power and nuclear capability. The failure to dismantle the Iranian regime or nuclear facilities, and the rallying of the Iranian people around their leadership, are outcomes that Tel Aviv did not anticipate. Nonetheless, the confrontation revealed alarming security gaps in Iran. The assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in what was claimed to be an Iranian safe zone, the mysterious crash of President Raisi’s aircraft, the killings of nuclear scientists, and the exposure of internal drone factories all point to a deeply compromised intelligence environment. More worrying still is the wider regional context. The silence - or worse, complicity of many Arab states has become strikingly apparent. Israel has not only penetrated these governments politically, but also garnered their open or covert support. Once forced to conceal their

collaboration, some Arab regimes now show it openly, even proudly, though they lack the legitimacy to justify such alignment. It is telling that the ceasefire was reportedly requested by Israel itself, realising that prolonging the battle could lead to collapse from within. With an estimated two million Israelis having emigrated since the beginning of Al Aqsa operation, and rising dissent within the Knesset and public, internal pressures are mounting. The damage in Tel Aviv, despite tight media restrictions, has not been witnessed since 1948. Iran’s strikes successfully targeted key Israeli intelligence and military centres, including the Mossad HQ in Herzliya, military intelligence units and Haifa Port — effectively dismantling Israel’s 20-year deterrence narrative. Had Israel succeeded in its plan to dismantle Iran’s regime and nuclear programme, Netanyahu would have emerged as the architect of a new Middle East, having eliminated the resistance axis and reshaped the region. For now, Iran has managed to halt that trajectory. Above all, the Iranian people deserve recognition. The same nation that once resisted the Shah’s tanks has again closed ranks, temporarily setting aside internal disputes to defend national sovereignty. It is a reminder that legitimacy ultimately stems from the people. So, who won? While Iran’s performance may inspire admiration, one cannot claim it has achieved total victory.

TRANSLATED BY BADR AL DHAFRI

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Living in an era of online lies and fakes



SAMUEL KUTTY

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WITH THE emergence of various digital platforms, journalistic practices have undergone significant changes in recent years. While these changes have introduced innovative forms of communication, they have also created opportunities for disinformation, commonly referred to as “fake news”.

Defining fake news is a contentious issue, although most people recognise the common understanding of what it involves: reports that are deliberately fabricated, often malicious and politically motivated, disseminated on social media and sometimes produced for cash.

Those “fake news outlets”, as we know, do not adhere to the editorial standards and processes that traditional news media employ to ensure the accuracy and credibility of information. It mimics the content and format of legitimate news media while intersecting with various types of misinformation.

However, fabricated stories masquerading as serious journalism are unlikely to disappear, as they have become a lucrative avenue for some writers and a potential means to influence public opinion.

We should anticipate their prevalence during any major event, as evidenced during the Covid-19 pandemic, when misinformation reached unprecedented levels. In wars and conflicts, such stories serve as a primary weapon.

For example, as soon as you get out of

bed and check your phone, a video appears showing what appears to be an air strike, accompanied by a post claiming that missiles have been launched. In moments like this, when tensions are high in the country where you live, it can evoke a sense of panic.

In the recent military confrontations between Israel and Iran, as well as the conflicts between India and Pakistan, the most disturbing aspect was that the battles did not occur solely in the skies or on the ground. Instead, they unfolded on platforms such as WhatsApp, X, Telegram and Facebook, where footage from past conflicts was circulated as breaking news.

Images and videos from Syria, Gaza and Yemen have been misrepresented in this manner, including deepfake videos that portray fabricated speeches by national leaders, which fuel warmongering, provocation, rumours and fears.

A video claiming to show an explosion caused by a Pakistani counter-attack was found to be from an explosion at the main port of the Lebanese capital of Beirut in 2020. The so-called wannabe nationalists in different countries became their wholesalers!

However, when news can spread across the globe in seconds, merely labelling its source does little to stem the flow of misinformation. Few users take the time to verify the origins of the information they share and mainstream media has been known to publish stories that lack accuracy.

Fabricated stories masquerading as serious journalism are unlikely to disappear, as they have become a lucrative avenue for some writers and a potential means to influence public opinion

“In today’s world, it is very easy to create, modify, fabricate and widely share various messages. The information environment is polluted in many ways. Even if the information itself is genuine, it might be used out of context and transformed into a tool for propaganda,” writes HiveMind in the Commons Library newsletter while defining disinformation.

But what significant is that fact-checking by online users has been helpful in correcting people’s misconceptions. As a result, individuals are changing their minds after encountering these debunks, even when the original misinformation aligned with their beliefs.

Agencies like the International Fact-Checking Network have coordinated efforts among their accredited members in verifying the facts before the broadcast of the reports. News agencies such as Reuters, BBC and AFP Fact Check all actively took extra efforts to debunk those false claims.

It is welcoming that Meta in early January, announced a controversial shift in its approach to disinformation, replacing independent fact-checkers on Facebook and Instagram with a Community Notes-style system.

Still, a significant lack of media literacy persists, hindering the ability to evaluate the credibility of news sources. This underscores the urgent need for education focused on identifying fake news. After all, we all need to become more sophisticated consumers of news!

RUSSIA RAMPS UP DRONE STRIKES ON UKRAINE

Russia ramped up drone attacks on Ukraine dramatically in June, an AFP analysis published showed, pressuring the war-torn country’s stretched air defence systems and exhausted civilian population.

Ukraine says it is adapting to the escalating bombardments and has vowed to respond, but the mounting attacks come at a critical moment of the Russian war, which is grinding through its fourth year. Kyiv is appealing to the United States and European allies for more air defence systems to defend its critical infrastructure as talks spearheaded by Washington to secure a ceasefire falter. The AFP analysis of Ukrainian air force data showed that Russia fired 5,438 long-range drones at Ukraine in June — more than in any month since Moscow launched its attack in February 2022.

That figure was up 37 per cent from the total in May, when Russia launched 3,974 drones, according to the Ukrainian air force.

Moscow’s army also fired 239 missiles in overnight attacks, almost twice as many as a month before, the data showed.

The attacks, which trigger air raid sirens in towns and cities across the country and spur civilians to spend sleepless nights in shelters, occurred every night in June.

Russian President Vladimir Putin underscored last month that drones are an increasingly integral part of his country’s military might.

During a televised meeting on armaments convened by the Kremlin, he touted Russian drone units’ attacks on armoured vehicles, fortified positions and personnel.

Putin claimed that up to 50 per cent of all attacks that “destroyed and damaged equipment and facilities” in Ukraine were launched by Russian drone units.

“Their effectiveness is constantly growing,” he said, noting the military was creating a separate drone forces branch. But Ukraine, which has been forced to adapt its defences to fend off Russia’s larger army, is also changing how it deals with increasing Russian drone attacks.

“Ukraine is introducing new developments — interceptor drones — as well as other tools that are deliberately not disclosed,” defence minister Rustem Umerov said last week.

Ukrainian air defence units destroyed 81 per cent of all drones and missiles launched by Russia in May. Even as attacks escalated over June, Kyiv’s intercept rate of drones and missiles increased to 86 per cent. Assessing the impact of the larger Russian drone attacks is complicated in part because Ukraine is secretive about what, if anything, was targeted by Russia or hit.

In June, however, the capital Kyiv was subjected to at least four fatal attacks from drones and missiles that left at least 41 dead, according to emergency services. — AFP

Nuclear proliferation cannot be bombed away

IN 1966, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China not only were the only countries that possessed nuclear weapons, they also had enough wisdom to recognise the dangers posed by nuclear proliferation. Despite their many and deep political differences, they arrived at a consensus to halt the further dissemination of “nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”. Under the resulting 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), non-nuclear states agreed not to pursue nuclear weapons and to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on all their nuclear activities.

In return, the five nuclear states committed to negotiate “in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race ... and to nuclear disarmament”. With 191 signatories, the treaty is the most widely adopted international agreement after the United Nations Charter. The only countries not to adhere to it were India, Pakistan and Israel. Each went on to develop nuclear weapons. North Korea, which initially joined the treaty, later withdrew to build its own nuclear arsenal.

The five original nuclear states did not keep their end of the bargain regarding disarmament. On the contrary, they have been using AI and other technologies to modernise their arsenals. The world’s nuclear warheads total more than 12,000 and have become the pre-eminent sign of a country’s power and prestige.

Just listen to Russia’s leaders. Throughout its war in Ukraine, Russia has brandished its nuclear arsenal as a badge of invincibility. It knows that the risk of a nuclear holocaust will deter all other powers from challenging the country directly. Similarly, because North Korea has armed itself with nuclear weapons, the US has taken a softer approach in dealing with it — relying on diplomacy and economic incentives.

Learn more By contrast, in Libya, Muammar Gaddafi agreed to abandon



MOHAMED EL BARADEI

The author, former vice president of Egypt and director-general of the IAEA, is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Far from curtailing Iran’s ambition to be seen as a regional power, the illegal attack on nuclear and military targets is just as likely to strengthen its resolve

his nascent nuclear programme and ended up dead following a Nato aerial campaign against his regime.

Worse, there is now only one nuclear arms control treaty between Russia and the US; and it is due to expire next February.

The most powerful deterrent for any state is possession of nuclear weapons or membership in an alliance that offers a nuclear umbrella (like Nato).

Around 30 states either have nuclear weapons or enjoy such protection. The rest of the world, meanwhile, must hope that the nuclear powers remain on their best behaviour. The situation is especially fraught in the Middle East, a region plagued by wars, violence, instability and a lack of comprehensive security arrangements.

Add the fact that Israel is the only state in the region known to have nuclear weapons and you have the makings for chronic insecurity.

The wild card, of course, has been Iran. It has endured violence and tumult since the 1950s, when a US- and British-organised coup ousted the country’s first democratically elected government.

In the 1980s, Iraq attacked Iran with the support of Western powers and neighbouring countries determined to crush its fledgling Islamist regime.

Following eight years of brutal violence, with Iraq deploying chemical weapons extensively, the Islamic Republic came to the predictable conclusion that it needs to master nuclear-weapons technology.

After a period of sanctions, then US president Barack Obama decided to pursue diplomacy.

The idea was to use economic incentives and various technical measures to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and pressure it to reveal its past undeclared nuclear activities.

These were the main features of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — China, Russia, France, Britain and the US — plus

Germany and the EU signed in 2015. This framework was functioning as intended, with full compliance by Iran, until US president Donald Trump abruptly withdrew the US from the agreement in 2018.

Arguing that the plan of action was only a stopgap measure, Trump insisted on a deal that would control not only Iran’s nuclear programme but also its “disruptive” activities in the Middle East — including its support for Hamas, Hezbollah and the Ansar Allah in Yemen.

As a result, Iran refused to implement some of the plan of action’s key inspection measures and started to enrich uranium to a level approaching weapons-grade.

When Trump returned to the White House this year, he demanded that Iran “surrender” its right to enrichment altogether.

Following a few rounds of desultory talks between the US and Iran, Israel and the US — lacking credible evidence of a nuclear-weapons programme — launched their illegal attack against Iranian nuclear and military targets.

The ostensible aim was to destroy all of Iran’s nuclear fuel-cycle facilities, though there have also been murmurings about triggering regime change in Iran. This is a stark reminder of the rationale for the similarly illegal military interventions in Iraq and Libya.

The root cause of nuclear proliferation is a state’s sense of insecurity or aspiration to increase its power and influence. Iran’s focus on nuclear capability stems from a yearning to prevent foreign interference, a sensitivity to the region’s security imbalance and a desire to be recognised as a regional power. The only solution to Middle East nuclear proliferation is to engage in dialogue based on mutual respect, meaningful security assurances (which can be achieved through stringent technical and inspection protocols) and economic incentives (be it the threat of sanctions or a promise to lift them).

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Coach Rasheed Jaber, will go under a comprehensive preparatory programme in the upcoming phase

OFA POSTPONES TRAINING CAMP FOR TECHNICAL REVIEW

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

The Oman Football Association (OFA) announced on Tuesday the postponement of the national team's internal training camp which was originally scheduled to begin on Tuesday and run until month end as part of the team's technical programme leading up to the next phase of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road 2026. Based on the announcement, the decision made as part of a comprehensive technical and administrative review by the OFA's technical committee. This review will include complete evaluation on the previous phase, examining past performance strategies, and assessing outcomes to ensure the best possible preparation for the upcoming period.

The OFA confirmed that this decision aligned with ongoing internal administrative actions and is intended to maximise efficiency in planning, readiness and preparation for future commitments. By postponing the camp, OFA will aim to implement a fully integrated vision for the next phase, including refined training periods and enhanced coordination across all departments supporting the national teams.

The coaching staff, led by coach Rasheed Jaber, will go under a comprehensive preparatory programme in the upcoming phase focusing on tactical formations and fitness development.

Oman socca team shine in Budapest championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

THE INTERNATIONAL Women's Socca Championship, held in the Hungarian capital Budapest from June 27 to 29, witnessed an impressive performance by Oman Socca Team, representing the Sultanate of Oman and the Middle East in six side football. The tournament featured eight teams from various European countries: Hungary, Italy, Poland, Belgium, Serbia, Greece, Slovakia, and Oman.

Despite not making it to the podium, Oman socca team received widespread praise. Team captain Hasna al Mousawi was named 'Best Goalkeeper' of the tournament and the team was honoured with the "Fair Play Team" award in recognition of their sportsmanship and discipline throughout the competition, reflecting positively on Omani women's sports on the international stage.

Oman Socca Team was formed through a collaboration between Sport Makers Company, the exclusive representative of Socca in Oman and the Middle East, and was fully sponsored by OQ for Basic Industries. Preparations for the team began on April 28 at Goal One field in Al Athaiba, Muscat, under the leadership of head coach Raed bin Khamis al Hassani, assistant coach Kamel al Balushi, and team manager Hameeda al Jabri.

The team consisted of a group of talented Omani players: Hasna al Mousawi, Mathir al Harthy, Afraa al Mahrouqi, Hanan al Ismaili, Razan al Zadjali, Hiba al Asmi, Tharaa al Ismaili, Jinan al Riyami, Shaima al Zadjali, Lulwa al Ismaili, Nayra al Amri, Safiya al Ghafri, in addition to Lina Griger and Reese Label. Preparations included daily training sessions, friendly matches with academy and college teams and regular beach training.

The team kicked off its tournament campaign with a tough match against the host and defending champion, Hungary, losing 0-2 despite a commendable performance. They bounced back in the second match with a valuable 1-0 victory over Serbia, with the goal scored by Safiya al Ghafri. In the third match, they held Slovakia to a goalless draw, securing a place in the semifinals as runners-up of the group.

In the semifinals, they once again faced Hungary and lost 1-4, with Tharaa al



Oman team was honoured with the "Fair Play Team" award

Ismaili scoring Oman's only goal. In the third-place playoff, they faced Belgium and were defeated 1-3, with Tharaa al Ismaili scoring again.

Coach Raid al Hassani described the experience as exceptional, marking the team's first international appearance. We were fortunate to have this opportunity, which allowed us to witness the high level of professionalism among European teams, both technically and organisationally.

It's something we aspire to apply back home, he said. Regarding the competition, Al Hassani noted the admiration the team received from organisers and fellow teams due to their tactical discipline. Although this was our debut, we received many compliments for our playing style. However, there are

still areas that need improvement, and we plan to address them upon our return to Oman.

On the benefits of participating, Al Hassani emphasised that the championship was a vital step in developing the players' skills and mindset. Direct competition with strong European teams like Hungary, Serbia and Belgium helped elevate the team's mental and physical levels and clearly showed us our strengths and areas for growth. Looking ahead, Al Hassani revealed that the team has a comprehensive plan that includes scouting new talent from schools and academies and participating in both local and international competitions.

"We aim to build a solid foundation of players who can represent Oman in future events," he added.

Porsche Centre Oman signs two-year partnership with OAA

MUSCAT: Porsche Centre Oman is investing in the future of motorsport in the Sultanate of Oman by entering into a multi-year partnership with the country's governing body of motorsport, the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), to help grow motorsports at the grass roots level. To be run under the banner of the 'Porsche Centre Oman Karting Championships Series', the commitment will cover the next two seasons of the championship. It will support motorsport in Oman and actively contribute to the development of future motor racing talent and karting in the Sultanate of Oman.

"We are proud to sponsor a project that aligns with our legacy of motorsport excellence," said Mohamed A R Qassim, Director of

Porsche Centre Oman. The championship series is distinct in that it will consist of classes to cater for both race license holders and leisure karting participants. Porsche Centre Oman will provide full branding, racing suits and financial support for licensed drivers and cash prizes to the podium winners.

"Supporting the next generation of drivers is key to Porsche Centre Oman's vision in the region and this partnership reflects our commitment to youth development and motorsport innovation in the Sultanate of Oman," said Mohamed.

The calendar season will also include a 24-hour endurance race along with other races scheduled to be taking place at the Muscat Speedway, starting with the first round of races in



The partnership was signed by Sulaiman al Rawahi CEO of OAA, and Mohamed A R Qassim, Director of Porsche Centre Oman



Supporting youth sports and building engagement, the basic aim of Porsche Centre Oman's philosophy

September.

"This new championship series for both licensed racers in Rotax Max and leisure karts marks a new era for karting in Oman," said Sulaiman al Rawahi, Managing Director of the Oman Automobile Association (OAA).

"Partnering with Porsche Centre Oman allows us to elevate the level of competition and offer new opportunities for aspiring drivers across the country."

With the partnership running through until the third quarter of 2027, Porsche Centre Oman will provide financial prizes, and equipment such as branded race suits, while a new Instagram channel will also be launched to promote the upcoming series.

Supporting youth sports and building engagement within the community has long been a cornerstone

of Porsche Centre Oman's philosophy. The opportunity to support the burgeoning motorsport industry and empower future generations of Omani race drivers starting at grassroots levels made an alignment with the Oman Automobile Association a natural alliance. Porsche has a long history of supporting motor racing in the Middle East with the Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East being the pinnacle, showcasing 15 seasons of competition across the Gulf. Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East provides the ultimate inspiration for future Omani stars who can now begin their climb up the professional motor racing ladder on leisure karts and then the Rotax Max Challenge as part of the the Porsche Centre Oman Karting Championship Series.

SHORTTAKES



Archive image of RS Venture Boat

PRE-REGISTRATION
OPEN FOR WORLD
SAILING INCLUSION
TITLES



DR KHAMIS
AL JABRI
CEO of Oman Sail

MUSCAT: World Sailing is excited to announce that pre-registration is now open for the first World Sailing Inclusion Championships, taking place at the Mussanah Sailing School at the Barceló Mussanah Resort in the Sultanate of Oman from November 30 to December 8, 2025.

Organised in partnership with Oman Sail, this groundbreaking event marks a major milestone for the sport — the first multi-class, global championship hosted by World Sailing that is designed specifically to include both Para classified athletes and athletes with disabilities who do not meet IPC classification criteria, all racing side by side in an inclusive, high-performance environment.

The championship will feature competition across five categories, including the RS Venture Connect two-person keelboat, which is open to both Para-classified and inclusive category teams using servo control systems; the Hansa 303 single class, which welcomes sailors regardless of classification; the ILCA 6 class, designated for athletes with intellectual impairments and requiring Virtus, Special Olympics, or World Sailing II classification; the RS21 blind fleet racing class, open to visually impaired sailors classified as B1, B2, or B3; and Seated Wing Foiling, an exciting new discipline open to both Para MIG-classified and self-declared inclusive athletes.

Interested sailors, teams and MNAs are invited to complete the pre-registration form to express interest.

Early pre-registration is strongly encouraged as entries will be limited per class, but sailors must note that pre-registration does not confirm entry due to the limited availability of charter equipment in each class and the rotational race formats detailed in the Notice of Race. Pre-registration will guide the organisers in the planning of equipment use, accommodation needs, classification logistics and the overall event structure. This is particularly important given the Notice of Race (NoR) and Sailing Instructions are available now on the World Sailing website and provide full details on eligibility, format, classification, equipment, and entry fees.

Dr Khamis bin Salim al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said: “We are honoured to host the first World Sailing Inclusion Championships. This event is a powerful statement about the importance of inclusion — both in sport and in society. We look forward to welcoming sailors from around the world to Oman for what promises to be an unforgettable championship.”

Hannah Stodel, Para World Sailing Manager, added: “This first edition of such a landmark event promises to be an exciting opportunity to showcase the diversity of our sport. The Inclusion Championships are a celebration of what sailing can be — inclusive, dynamic, and welcoming to all. From grassroots participants to elite competitors, this is a chance to compete on equal terms.”

A dedicated competition site has now launched, where you’ll find more information on equipment, registration and media contacts. It will also host the confirmed entry list, results and all event updates in the lead-up to and during the championships.



Archive image of Hansa303 Boat



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in action during his first round match. — Reuters

DEFENDING CHAMPION TAKEN TO FIVE SETS BY FOGNINI

WOMEN’S TOP SEED SABALENKA EASES PAST QUALIFIER

FOURTH SEED PAOLINI FIGHTS BACK TO REACH SECOND ROUND

NINTH SEED MEDVEDEV AND EIGHTH SEED RUNE GO OUT

HOTTEST OPENING DAY EVER AT WIMBLEDON

Alcaraz, Sabalenka
cruise on Wimbledon’s
hottest opening day

CARLOS Alcaraz survived a major scare in his Wimbledon opener on Monday while Aryna Sabalenka kept her cool to progress on the hottest opening day in the tournament’s history. Temperatures at the All England Club on Monday topped 32 degrees Celsius (89.6 Fahrenheit), surpassing the previous record for the start of the tournament of 29.3 Celsius set in 2001.

Alcaraz dug dip for a 7-5, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 2-6, 6-1 win over 38-year-old Fabio Fognini in a gruelling clash lasting four hours and 37 minutes on Centre Court.

It was first time since Roger Federer narrowly beat Alejandro Falla in 2010 that a defending champion had been taken to a fifth set in the Wimbledon first round.

Alcaraz shrugged off an inconsistent display including 62 unforced errors as the world number two refused to wilt in the heat.

“I don’t know why it is probably Fabio’s last Wimbledon because the level he has shown shows he can still play for three or four more years,” said the Spaniard.

“Playing on Centre Court for the first match of any tournament is never easy. Wimbledon is special and different. I just tried to play my best but I would say that

I could play better.” During the match the 22-year-old rushed to help a spectator who had collapsed in the stands, handing over a bottle of water as medics came to the woman’s aid. Alcaraz, who has never lost in a Grand Slam first round in 18 appearances, faces British qualifier Oliver Tarvet in the second round.

The five-time Grand Slam champion is bidding to become the fifth man in the Open Era to win at least three consecutive Wimbledon titles after Bjorn Borg, Pete Sampras, Roger Federer and seven-time champion Novak Djokovic.

With players and fans searching for shade from the London heatwave, former England captain David Beckham watched the action from the royal box, alongside ex-England manager Gareth Southgate.

Top women’s seed Sabalenka used ice packs to beat the heat during her 6-1, 7-5 victory over Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine on Court One.

The 27-year-old Belarusian is a three-time Grand Slam champion but suffered agonising three-set defeats in this year’s Australian Open and French Open finals.

The world number one has never been beyond the Wimbledon semifinals and missed last year’s tournament with a shoulder injury.

“I felt really great. Super grateful to be healthy and ready to compete and to be through the first round,” said Sabalenka, who next faces Czech world number 48 Marie Bouzkova.

MERCURY SOARS

Two-time Wimbledon finalist Ons Jabeur broke down in tears before retiring from her first-round match against Viktoriya Tomova for an unspecified reason.

Tunisia’s Jabeur was trailing 7-6 (7/5), 2-0 when she brought a premature end to her clash with the Bulgarian world number 111.

Former US Open champion Daniil Medvedev, a Wimbledon semifinalist for the past two years, suffered a meltdown against France’s Benjamin Bonzi.

Bonzi won 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 in three hours and seven minutes, with the fuming Russian smashing his racquet against his chair at the end of the match.

Elsewhere, Danish eighth seed Holger Rune threw away a two-set lead to lose to Chilean world number 143 Nicolas Jarry while former finalist Matteo Berrettini crashed out and Stefanos Tsitsipas retired with an injury.

Former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko was beaten 7-5, 2-6, 6-2 by Britain’s Sonay Kartal. — AFP

Bosch leads South Africa to 328-run win



Corbin Bosch

BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE: South African captain Keshav Maharaj said his team’s 328-win in the first Test against Zimbabwe on Tuesday showed the amount of talent there was in the South African cricket system.

Fast bowler Corbin Bosch took five for 43 as South Africa wrapped up the win on the fourth afternoon at Queens Sports Club, bowling out Zimbabwe for 208 after setting them 537 to win.

Playing in his second Test, Bosch became the fourth South African to score a century and take five wickets in an innings in a Test.

Bosch was one of seven changes from the team that won

the World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord’s in London last month.

“We’ve been a team that has just won something major and we had a lot of youngsters coming in,” said Maharaj at the post-match presentation.

“We know the talent there is in our system. It was just about getting them in the right frame of mind to execute and they showed that throughout the four days.”

Bosch was pipped for the player of the match award by Lhuan-dre Pretorius, who made 153 on debut and at 19 became South Africa’s youngest player to hit a Test century.

“He’s a mature young man and

to see the way he goes about his business in pressure situations is really encouraging,” Maharaj said of the young left-hander.

Pretorius praised the team environment. “It’s a moment I will cherish,” he said. “The message in the change room was, be yourself and back yourself.”

Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine admitted that the lack of a third seam bowler had hurt his team after fiery bowling from Blessing Muzarabani and Tanaka Chivanga had South Africa struggling at 55 for four on the first morning. With no seam back-up, Zimbabwe lost control and South Africa set up their win by recovering to score 418 for nine declared. — AFP

SPORTS



Manchester City's Ruben Dias in action with Al Hilal's Nasser Al Dawsari. — Reuters

Al Hilal knock Man City out of CWC in huge shock

SAUDI ARABIAN side Al Hilal sent English giants Manchester City crashing out of the Club World Cup on Monday, snatching a shock 4-3 victory in extra time in the biggest upset of the tournament so far.

The match finished 2-2 at full-time but at the end of an eventful extra-time Marcos Leonardo grabbed the winner and pulled off one of the greatest upsets in Middle Eastern football history.

The Saudi club advance to the quarter-finals where they will face Brazilian club Fluminense, ensuring a non-European team will reach the last four.

City had taken the lead in the ninth minute in controversial fashion, Bernardo Silva finishing after Rayan Ait-Nouri's cross.

Al Hilal players protested Ait-Nouri had controlled with his arm in the build-up but the goal stood.

City had plenty of

opportunities to extend their lead before the break but a combination of poor finishing and inspired goalkeeping from Moroccan goalkeeper Yassine Bounou kept the lead at a single goal.

Al Hilal offered several reminders of their threat on the break but City even more chances with Jeremy Doku volleying straight at Bounou who moments later reacted superbly again to keep out a Bernardo effort.

CITY PUNISHED

The question as to whether City would live to regret not converting those chances was answered within a minute of the resumption.

Former City full-back Joao Cancelo's low cross was parried out by Ederson, Malcolm pounced but saw his shot blocked by Ruben Dias only for the ball to loop to Marcos Leonardo to head home the

equaliser.

Six minutes later and the City's high defensive line was exposed by a long ball from Cancelo which Brazilian Malcolm raced on to and he showed power and pace as he broke away before coolly slotting past Ederson.

The Saudi fans in the crowd went wild while Pep Guardiola responded immediately with a triple substitution with midfielder Rodri and defenders Nathan Ake and Manuel Akanji introduced.

That brought some much needed stability to a shaky back line but City needed improvement at the other end too and it came, albeit in it scruffy circumstances.

The Al Hilal defence were unable to deal with a Bernardo corner and Erling Haaland pounced to steer home the lose ball and make it 2-2.

City piled on the pressure as they looked for the winner but yet again Bounou proved their

The Saudi fans in the crowd went wild while Pep Guardiola responded immediately with a triple substitution with midfielder Rodri and defenders Nathan Ake and Manuel Akanji introduced.

nemesis as he denied Akanji and Ruben Dias and even when he was beaten by Haaland, substitute Ali Lajami produced a magnificent goal-line clearance.

Guardiola took off Haaland and introduced Egyptian forward Omar Marmoush as the game went into extra-time.

But for all City's depth, Al Hilal had a deep well of spirit to draw upon and just four minutes into the opening period Al Hilal regained the lead when Kalidou Koulibaly rose superbly to meet a Ruben Neves corner with a brilliantly angled header.

City responded with a goal of real quality when Rayan Cherki's brilliantly floated ball towards the back post was poked home masterfully by Phil Foden, at full stretch and from the tightest of angles.

But incredibly Al Hilal responded again to restore their lead — Sergej Milinkovic-Savic's header was saved by Ederson but Marcos Leonardo followed

in to bundle the ball over the line. As the celebrating Al Hilal fans poured out of the stadium, the Brazilian striker let his emotions pour out.

"I've had a difficult time in the last two months. My mother spent 70 days in the ICU," he said.

"Today she's fine, thank God. When I scored those two goals, I thought of her. She was able to watch the match".

City skipper Bernardo Silva said his team had paid the price for being unable to deal with Al Hilal's counter-attacking.

"We scored three and could've scored five, six. It was all about controlling when we lost the ball, controlling the transitions, don't let them run, and they ran way too many times," he said.

"With one, two passes there was always a feeling of danger coming from them. When we allow teams to run like this we always suffer a lot, and today was the case," he said. — AFP



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KEYDEVELOPMENT



Heading Oman's delegation is Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, joined by Ahmed bin Ja'afar al Musallami, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, along with several senior officials.

OMAN TAKES PART
IN GLOBAL
FINANCING REFORM
TALKS IN SPAIN

SEVILLE: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, currently underway in Seville, Spain. The conference aims to explore reforms to the global financial system and tackle key development funding challenges.

Heading Oman's delegation is Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, joined by Ahmed bin Ja'afar al Musallami, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, along with several senior officials.

The multilateral gathering seeks to introduce innovative and effective financing mechanisms that can support development efforts, particularly in emerging and developing countries.

The widening economic gap between the Global North and South has made such reforms more urgent.

Among the central themes are restructuring global financial governance and enhancing funding tools to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A highlight of the event is the adoption of the final declaration — the Seville Commitment. This policy document signals renewed global consensus on the need to reshape international financing policies and frameworks for sustainable development. The conference continues over the coming days, offering a platform for countries to collaborate on more inclusive and impactful development financing. — ONA

Oman unveils Advanced
Air Mobility Sandbox

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 1

OMAN'S Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) recently unveiled its Sandbox AAM Oman 2025 Programme at the prestigious Paris-Le Bourget International Air and Space Show (SIAE), a key initiative that charts Oman's ambitions to integrate Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) into its national transportation strategy.

The initiative represents an important regulatory innovation led by the CAA to trial real-world AAM operations — including urban air mobility (UAM) such as air taxis, cargo drones, medical evacuation services and surveillance missions — within live, controlled environments.

Positioned as Oman's official testing ground for emerging air mobility technologies, the Sandbox AAM Oman 2025 Programme is designed to establish a comprehensive framework for safe operations, encompassing regulatory protocols, technical infrastructure and ecosystem development.

Helping facilitate Oman's participation at the Paris show was GUAMobility – Global Urban Air Mobility, a France-based consulting firm that specialises in future-ready transportation solutions.

“As coordinator of this



Officials representing the Ministry, CAA, GUAMobility and other stakeholders at the Paris event. (Picture credit: GUAMobility)

initiative, GUAMobility is proud to support the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the CAA in this visionary approach, positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a key player in future air mobility,” the consultancy stated in a post.

According to officials, the Sandbox Programme will serve multiple strategic objectives. It will enable the testing of AAM technologies under real-world conditions in a secure, designated Geozone.

It will also support the development of an innovative and adaptive regulatory framework for advanced aerial operations.

In parallel, the initiative

seeks to open market access for industry players and startups to trial and deploy AAM solutions in Oman and the wider region.

A core component of the programme is the creation of a national Geozone — an experimental airspace where start-ups, research institutes and private-sector operators can conduct trials under CAA oversight.

These trials may include drone deliveries, air ambulance services, inter-city passenger transport and surveillance missions.

To support the large-scale deployment of AAM, the initiative also aims to advance the legal, technical and infrastructural groundwork

necessary for full integration.

This includes the development of vertiports, airspace coordination systems, traffic management protocols and robust cybersecurity measures.

Several pilot projects are already envisioned as part of the Sandbox Programme.

These cover areas such as urban and inter-city air transport, aerial logistics and cargo, medical emergency response, security and surveillance operations, and the establishment of innovation incubators dedicated to AAM research and development.

The programme also fosters collaboration among key stakeholders, including government entities, global aerospace leaders like Boeing and Phoenix Space, consulting partners such as GUAMobility, academic institutions and technology start-ups.

The CAA, working closely with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, housing authorities and urban planners, is currently drafting regulatory and operational guidelines to govern the safe rollout of AAM technologies.

A key long-term ambition of the initiative is to position Oman as the host of the ICAO AAM World Forum in 2026, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's emerging leadership in regional and global air mobility innovation.

Oman unveils Hadatha Centre to promote cybersecurity innovation

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in collaboration with the National Centre for Information Safety and Sultan Qaboos University, has opened the Hadatha Centre for Cybersecurity Industry. The inauguration ceremony was chaired by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, with HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, and other senior officials in attendance as well.

The Hadatha Centre will enhance research, innovation and development in cybersecurity and position Oman as a regional hub for digital security. It will create a thriving academic community that attracts innovation and stimulates cutting-edge solutions. Eng Badr



The Hadatha Centre seeks to advance cybersecurity innovation, supporting Oman Vision 2040 goals of economic diversification, digital sovereignty and youth empowerment.

bin Ali Al Salhi, Director-General of the National Centre for Information Safety, said: “The launch of the Hadatha Centre for Cybersecurity Industry comes in line with the National Cybersecurity Industry Programme.

“The centre will create specialised national capabilities, guard digital sovereignty and drive economic diversification in a sector envisioned to be worth more than \$10 trillion worldwide by 2030.”

Eng Al Salhi continued further: “Supported by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and universities, the centre will provide financial and technical assistance to aid students and researchers in developing local solutions and tech start-ups, promoting national security and economy.”

One of the key priorities of the centre is to create a culture of innovation for Omani youth by providing them with the facilities and resources so they can contribute to the sector.

Through the development of the National Cybersecurity Industry Programme, the centre will facilitate coordination between academic institutions, government departments and private sector

stakeholders.

The initiative also aims to stimulate investment in the cybersecurity field, supporting economic and social development while localising technologies in line with global trends.

It will prioritise skills development among young Omanis, enabling them to produce competitive, locally developed cybersecurity products suitable for export to regional and international markets.

Dr Mohammed bin Mani' Baitsuwailim, Associate Professor at the College of Engineering, and Director of the Communications and Information Research Centre at Sultan Qaboos University, commented, “The centre is a research nucleus that supports student projects and fuels innovation in cybersecurity.

“It is playing a vital role in preparing students for the employment sector and business entrepreneurship, while building national capacities that can

propel digital development and sustainable growth in Oman in the long term.”

“A comprehensive cybersecurity programme will take effect in September 2025 for an entire school year. It will provide worthy students with useful concepts through practical training and professional workshops. The participants will then proceed to conduct individual research under the mentorship of experienced scholars from the technical committee of the centre, who have extensive experience in cybersecurity technologies,” Dr Baitsuwailim added.

This initiative supports Oman Vision 2040 through the promotion of economic diversification, digital sovereignty and human capital development. Hadatha Centre reflects a focus on innovation, skills and entrepreneurship that aligns with the vision to build a sustainable knowledge economy and make Oman a regional technology leader.

ADVERTORIALS

ROADTRIP



Starting in Oman, the convoy will cross into the United Arab Emirates before powering on to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

JETOUR IGNITES
“THINK FUTURE”
MIDDLE EAST DRIVE
FROM OMAN

MUSCAT: Jetour flagged off the highly anticipated “Jetour Middle East Drive”, an ambitious regional expedition that will see eight Jetour SUVs — led by the breakthrough T2 PHEV and T2 — traverse six GCC nations under the rallying theme “Think Future”.

Starting in Oman, the convoy will cross into the United Arab Emirates before powering on to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. More than a road trip, the landmark campaign underscores Jetour’s unwavering commitment to deliver innovation, performance and cultural connection to customers throughout the Middle East.

“This drive is our bold declaration of intent,” said Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD Automobiles — the exclusive distributor of Jetour in Oman.

“By taking the T2 and T2 PHEV across every border in the GCC, we are proving, in real time, that Jetour is ready for tomorrow’s mobility challenges — combining hybrid durability, cutting-edge technology and an explorer’s spirit with the everyday comfort our customers demand”.

A ROAD TEST LIKE NO OTHER

- **Eight Vehicles, One Vision:** A mixed fleet of T2 and T2 PHEV SUVs, purpose-built for seamless city driving and rugged off-road adventure.
- **6 Countries, 10,000+ Kilometres:** A dynamic, on-road laboratory demonstrating Jetour’s strength, efficiency and reliability across diverse terrains and climates.
- **“Travel+” Strategy in Motion:** The journey embodies Jetour’s philosophy of weaving advanced technology into culturally rich, adventure-driven experiences that inspire drivers to explore more.

POWERED BY PARTNERSHIP

Recognising the ecosystem of innovation behind the brand, Jetour invited strategic partner Huawei on stage during the Muscat ceremony to honour two standout team members with Tokens of Appreciation for amplifying Jetour’s voice and values across the region.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the convoy exits Oman’s borders, daily updates will capture real-time performance data, driver stories and scenic highlights, available on Jetour’s official social platforms and regional microsite.

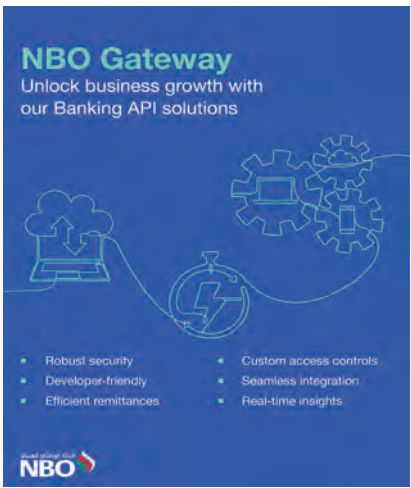
The “Think Future” campaign sets the tone for forthcoming product launches and experiential activations that place Middle Eastern drivers at the forefront of Jetour’s global road map.

NATIONAL
BANK
OF OMAN
LAUNCHES
API GATEWAY

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has officially launched its Application Programming Interface (API) Gateway, marking a significant step towards advancing Oman’s digital banking landscape.

The secure platform enables seamless integration between the customer’s systems and NBO’s channels, offering real-time access to a wide range of banking services.

Commenting on the launch, Mohamed bin Yahya al Jabri, Assistant General Manager & Head of Global Transactions, said, “The



launch of the NBO’s API Gateway represents a significant step in our strategic drive to empower Oman’s digital economy.

By providing secure, real-time access to our banking services, we are not only enabling connections; we are utilising innovation and driving automation at unprecedented speeds.

This initiative lays the foundation for a dynamic financial ecosystem targeting key sectors such as SMEs, e-commerce, fintech and large-scale infrastructure projects”.

Own a Chery sedan with
summer benefits

NOW is a good time to own any Chery sedan from the range and enjoy benefits like free AAA roadside assistance, free service up to 6 years/60,000 km (whichever is earlier. Not available on all models), 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 May 18, 2025 will last until July 17, 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).

Smart, stylish and built for modern living, the all-new Arrizo 5 is designed to enhance every journey. Equipped with a highly efficient 1.5L engine, it delivers the perfect mix of performance and fuel



Also available is attractive EMI options across the full range.

savings. Whether navigating city traffic or heading out for a weekend drive, the intelligent CVT (Continuously Variable Transmission) ensures smooth, responsive acceleration.

Its advanced suspension system adds extra stability and comfort, giving you a refined and confident ride every time you get behind the wheel. The Arrizo 5 is now available with an EMI starting from RO 61.

The Chery Arrizo 6 PRO is where technology meets elegance. Engineered with a powerful turbocharged

engine, it offers exhilarating performance while maintaining fuel efficiency.

The smooth CVT gearbox ensures a relaxed, effortless drive, ideal for both everyday commutes and longer road trips. Inside, premium features and intelligent safety systems work together to create a secure, comfortable and connected environment for you and your passengers.

The Arrizo 6 is now available with an EMI starting from RO 79.

Redefine your expectations with the Chery Arrizo 8, a

premium sedan that blends cutting-edge technology with head-turning design. Its bold front grille, sleek LED headlights and sculpted aerodynamic profile speak volumes about its modern character.

Available in both 1.6L and 2.0L turbocharged variants, the Arrizo 8 offers dynamic performance with advanced TDI (Turbocharged Direct Injection) technology that maximises power while keeping fuel consumption in check. The Arrizo 8 is now available with an EMI starting from RO 115.

OMAN AIR APPOINTS NEW DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MUSCAT: Oman Air has announced the appointment of Eng Hamood al Alawi as Deputy Chief Executive Officer. This strategic appointment marks a significant step in the airline’s transformation journey and underscores its commitment to building a strong pipeline of Omani leaders in the aviation sector.

Hamood bin Musbah al Alawi joins Oman Air from Oman Airports Management Company, where he served as Acting Chief Executive Officer and played a pivotal role in launching the airport’s own transformation programme.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Chairman of Oman Air, said “The appointment of Hamood al Alawi is a proud moment for the airline and the country’s aviation sector. He has demonstrated exceptional leadership in his role at Oman Airports Management



ENG HAMOOD
AL ALAWI

Oman Air Deputy
Chief Executive Officer

ambitions”.

Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air, added, “Hamood al Alawi is a strong leader with sound judgement and a deep understanding of the aviation industry. His appointment strengthens our leadership team at a critical time in our growth journey.

Company and we are confident that he will bring the same vision and drive to the national airline.

This is a clear outcome of our succession planning strategy and reflects our commitment to cultivating Omani talent and ensuring our leadership reflects the national values, priorities and

I look forward to working closely with him as we proceed on our transformation agenda and deliver long-term sustainable value for the country”.

Holding a Bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Leeds, UK, Hamood al Alawi brings over two decades of diverse leadership experience across the government and private sectors, with a strong track record in asset management, corporate transformation and commercial performance.

He has held senior roles with Shell International in the Netherlands, led flagship-cost efficiency initiatives for Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and served as a member of the Executive leadership team at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, where he headed a unit responsible for a RO 1 billion strategic project.

Petroleum Development Oman opens Muscat Taafi Centre

MUSCAT: Muscat Taafi Centre, the main specialised facility in Oman to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals recovering from addiction, was officially opened in the Wilayat of Al Amerat. The inauguration took place under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat.

The project is part of Petroleum Development Oman’s (PDO) social investment initiatives, implemented in partnership with

Al Jisr Foundation and the Ministry of Health; and aligned with national efforts to strengthen mental health and infrastructure.

The Centre delivers integrated care across three core stages: detoxification, rehabilitation and aftercare.

The initiative is considered one of PDO’s most significant community health contributions. PDO not only provided financial support amounting to RO 2.5 million, but



The project is PDO’s social investment initiatives, implemented in partnership with Al Jisr Foundation and the Ministry of Health.

also oversaw the project through its Project Management Consultancy team to ensure its delivery to the highest standards, on time and within the approved budget.

With a total capacity of 130 beds, the facility includes 96 beds for men and 34 for women. It houses a detoxification unit, outpatient clinic, forensic medicine department, pharmacy and administrative offices.

The Centre also features a multipurpose hall, vocational

training and craft workshops; and recreational facilities of physiotherapy programme such as a swimming pool and a fitness centre.

Eng Mohammed bin Ali al Aghbari, PDO’s External Affairs, Government Relations and Communications Manager stated, “The launch of the Muscat Rehabilitation Centre represents an important step in advancing mental and behavioural healthcare services in Oman”.

BUSINESS

NEWROUTE



The launch was marked by an official ceremony at Muscat International Airport.

OMAN AIR LAUNCHES DIRECT FLIGHTS TO AMSTERDAM

MUSCAT: Oman Air inaugurated its first-ever direct flight to Amsterdam on Tuesday, establishing a new air bridge between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The service will operate four times a week.

This new route expands Oman Air’s European network to 11 destinations, including Paris, Frankfurt, Munich, Milan, Rome, Zurich, Istanbul, Trabzon, Moscow and London.

The launch was marked by an official ceremony at Muscat International Airport, attended by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism; HH Sayyid Dr Faris bin Turki al Said; Stella Kloth, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Oman; and several officials from public and private sectors.

Al Busaidy noted that this connection will strengthen Oman’s positioning as a prime destination for European travellers. He highlighted the Netherlands as a key tourism market for Oman, whose visitors are increasingly drawn to Oman’s natural beauty and cultural depth.

Oman Air CEO Kon Korfiatis described the route as a strategic addition, opening new travel options for guests across Europe and beyond.

The Amsterdam launch also coincides with Oman Air’s official entry into the oneworld airline alliance. It is the first new destination announced under the alliance, which offers passengers access to over 900 destinations worldwide and greater connectivity for travel to and from Oman. — ONA

BROOKFIELD BUYS MAJORITY STAKE IN OMAN TOWER COMPANY

MUSCAT: Brookfield Global Investment Fund has acquired a majority stake in Oman Tower Company, a leading independent operator of telecommunications towers in Oman, with a network of more than 2,450 sites across various governorates.

Brookfield is the world’s second-largest owner of telecommunications towers, managing a portfolio of over 315,000 towers globally. With assets under management exceeding \$1



trillion, it is also one of the biggest foreign investors in the GCC. Since entering the region in 1997, it has built a \$15 billion portfolio

spanning infrastructure, real estate and private equity.

Eng Majid bin Amer al Kharousi, CEO of Oman Tower Company, called the deal a “strategic partnership” that marks a turning point in the company’s growth journey. “This partnership is more than just an investment; it’s a springboard for scaling our operations, improving governance and aligning with national priorities for digital infrastructure and sustainability,” he said. — ONA

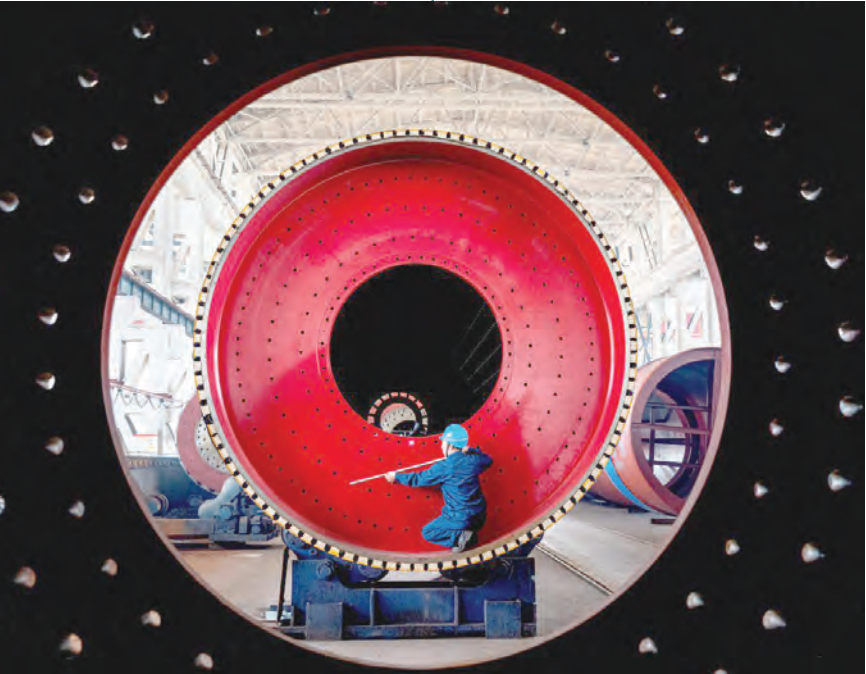
Tariff risks muddy global outlook for factories

WORRIES over future US tariffs are clouding the outlook for factories across much of Asia and Europe, according to surveys released on Tuesday which nonetheless showed some were able to shrug off the uncertainty and keep growing.

Among the bright spots, Japan’s manufacturing read-out showed growth for the first time in 13 months, South Korea’s activity contracted at a milder pace and China’s Caixin PMI index also expanded in June - confounding an official survey that showed activity shrinking for a third straight month.

In Europe, Ireland, Spain and the Netherlands were among the star performers even as the wider euro zone read-out was broadly flat and Britain continued to contract, albeit more slowly.

Analysts said the underlying softness in surveys highlights the challenges facing businesses and policymakers as they try to navigate US President Donald Trump’s moves to shake up the global trade order with sweeping tariffs.



An employee measures a newly manufactured ball mill machine at a factory in Nantong, Jiangsu province, China. — Reuters

uncertainty.

In manufacturing, India was a significant outlier in the region last month, as activity accelerated to a 14-month high, driven by a substantial rise in international sales that helped spark a record-breaking spurt in hiring.

DEADLINE

Negotiators from major US trading partners are rushing to reach deals with Trump’s administration by a July 9 deadline to avoid import tariffs jumping to higher levels.

While China is continuing its negotiations for a broader trade deal with the US, Japan and South Korea have so far failed to win concessions on the tariffs imposed on their mainstay export items like automobiles.

The 27-member European Union is embarking on new talks in Washington later this week.

The euro zone HCOB manufacturing Purchasing Managers’ index, compiled by S&P Global, edged up to 49.5 in June from 49.4 in May, its highest level since August 2022 - but still remaining below the 50 mark denoting growth in activity. — Reuters

Innovation hackathon launched to advance digital transformation

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

AL DHAHIRAH Governorate has launched one of its most ambitious digital initiatives to date, ‘Al Dhahirah Tech Innovation Hackathon,’ a three-day event aimed at empowering youth to develop innovative solutions to real-world challenges. Organised by the Office of the Governor and held under the auspices of Musallam bin Ahmed al Maashani, Wali of Dhank, the event is being hosted at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences and has drawn over 200 participants from across Oman.

Designed as a cornerstone of the governorate’s vision to build a dynamic and inclusive digital society, the hackathon brings



Salem bin Ali al Mahrouqi

together university students, entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts to work collaboratively on technological solutions addressing service, environmental and

developmental issues.

The initiative highlights Al Dhahirah’s strategic focus on fostering innovation, strengthening digital capabilities and engaging youth in shaping the future of their communities.

Speaking to the Observer, Salem bin Ali al Mahrouqi, Director-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs in Al Dhahirah Governorate and Chairman of the Hackathon’s Supervisory Committee, described the event as a key platform to advance the governorate’s digital transformation agenda.

“This hackathon reflects our commitment to creating a culture of innovation,” he said. “It supports youth creativity, encourages entrepreneurial thinking, and leads

to scalable, incubatable solutions tailored to the needs of the local community.”

Al Mahrouqi added that digital transformation in Al Dhahirah Governorate has become a tangible reality, driven by a series of targeted initiatives that integrate technology across various aspects of life.

“This event brings together creative minds to chart a brighter, tech-enabled future for the governorate,” he noted.

The opening ceremony featured a video presentation highlighting Al Dhahirah’s performance in the Digital Transformation Excellence Assessment, overseen by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The governorate recorded notable progress,

underscoring its dedication to innovation-driven governance.

The presentation also covered key statistics, including participant demographics, accepted challenges and evaluation benchmarks.

A panel discussion followed, featuring Eng. Othman al Mandhari, CEO of Innotech, shared global best practices in modern construction automation. He emphasised the importance of adopting advanced technologies such as 3D printing in building smart, sustainable cities.

Additional speakers included Khalisa al Jahwari, who addressed the role of digital transformation in emerging economies, and Badr al Rahbi of Doorly, who discussed technology’s impact on Oman’s real estate market.

WARNING GRADE

Germany lowers gas security alert level



Germany has lowered the gas supply security level to early warning grade from alarm level, economy Minister Katherina Reiche said on Tuesday.

Germany’s gas supply is secure and the conditions for the alert level according to its emergency plan no longer exist, Reiche said. It was not necessary for the government to refill the country’s gas storage facilities through its trading hub. — Reuters

CONSUMER PRICE

Pakistan June inflation rises 3.2%



Pakistan’s consumer price inflation rose 3.2% year-on-year in June, the statistics bureau said on Tuesday, broadly in line with the finance ministry’s projection of 3% to 4% issued a day earlier.

On a month-on-month basis, prices increased 0.2% in June, reversing a 0.2% decline in May.

The data comes after Pakistan’s central bank kept its key interest rate unchanged at 11% in June. — Reuters

DIGITAL SERVICES

Canada applauded for scrapping of tech tax



E-commerce giant Amazon said on Tuesday it “applauds” Canada’s decision to scrap its digital services tax in order to salvage trade talks with the United States, calling it a win for the online retailer’s customers.

The digital services tax, enacted last year, would have seen US technology giants such as Amazon on the hook for a multibillion-dollar payment in Canada by Monday, analysts have said. — AFP

OPINION

Is GCC economic union finally within reach?



MOHAMMED BIN ISSA AL BALUSHI

The writer is an economic affairs adviser in Oman

At a pivotal moment in the history of the Arabian Gulf, a familiar question resurfaces with renewed urgency: Will vision become reality? Driven by ambition, hope, and a shared longing, the Gulf finds itself once again contemplating a historic leap — has the time come for full economic union?

Against a backdrop of geopolitical turbulence and accelerating regional shifts, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has a rare opportunity to reimagine its collaborative framework through a bold economic union — one that aligns with the demands of a transforming global landscape.

Economic integration is no longer a ceremonial ambition or a rhetorical gesture; it is a strategic necessity, demanded by evolving realities and fuelled by emerging opportunities.

The Gulf remains uniquely positioned to foster border-transcending integration projects capable of generating collective gains.

This optimism is not unfounded. It rests upon a solid institutional foundation that has withstood the tests of four decades — demonstrating resilience, cohesion, and the readiness to evolve from procedural cooperation to strategic integration.

The GCC has proven to be far more than a coordination platform; it is a stabilising force

that has unified stances and managed internal divergences during defining moments.

Today, the pillars of economic union are more mature than ever — poised to move from rhetoric to execution, provided there is collective will and decisive leadership.

First: The GCC member states share a remarkably homogenous social, cultural, political, and economic fabric grounded in a sense of shared destiny. This collective identity offers any integration initiative both emotional legitimacy and practical viability for swift implementation.

Second: While economic capacities vary, the diversity of resources and strengths represents an untapped strategic advantage. When harnessed through well-designed projects, this diversity can yield high returns, elevate value chains, and create a ripple of sustainable and supportive economic opportunities across the region.

Third: The legal and regulatory frameworks across the GCC are already closely aligned — paving the way for coordinated policy-making and harmonised standards. This alignment lays the groundwork for a unified and competitive Gulf investment environment backed by a shared legal structure.

Fourth: It is no secret that Gulf energy exports continue to rely heavily on the Strait of Hormuz—one of the world’s most congested

Economic integration is no longer a ceremonial ambition or a rhetorical gesture; it is a strategic necessity, demanded by evolving realities and fuelled by emerging opportunities.

and geopolitically sensitive maritime corridors. This reality places the stability of oil and gas flows in constant jeopardy amid any regional disruption.

Fifth: In this context, Oman’s Port of Duqm is emerging as a pivotal logistics hub at the crossroads of Gulf energy interests and supply chains.

Free from chokepoints and directly connected to global trade routes, Duqm offers a strategic platform for regional economic security and long-term integration.

The way forward does not require reinventing the foundation — it requires activating what already exists, deploying underutilised tools, and channelling differences towards a unifying goal that reflects the aspirations of the region’s people rather than the divergences of its systems.

The groundwork is laid, the experience is deep, and the political will is visibly coalescing.

There is no doubt that the region’s leadership, with strategic foresight, recognises the significance of this historical juncture. What was once an elusive dream on the margins of possibility now stands as an overdue imperative — a chance to build a cohesive Gulf future, safeguarded by sovereignty, enabled by partnership and endorsed by its people.

BUILDING OMAN’S SPORTS ECONOMY FROM THE GROUND UP



ENG SAID BIN SALIM AL SHANFARI

The writer is the CEO of OCEC

In a recent article by Oman Observer about the Tejarah Talks podcast, Pankaj Khimji, Adviser for Foreign Trade & International Cooperation at MoCIIP, shared a thought that really stuck with me: “Unless we develop our grassroots or sports culture, whether it’s in schools, in the maydans, or on the beaches of Oman, unless we promote this in our

families or schools, we’re not going to be able to get into the real business of sports.”

It’s a powerful reminder. That quote — and the podcast episode as a whole — made me reflect on where we are as a country when it comes to sports. Yes, we’re starting to attract major international events, but we must be equally ambitious in growing a culture of everyday sport and physical activity, especially for our children.

In many ways, this reflects exactly what we try to do at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). Of course, we’re proud to host international competitions — whether it was the Fifa World Cup screenings in our gardens in 2022 or the World Veteran Table Tennis Championships in 2023.

But just as important are the everyday experiences: each summer, we transform our exhibition halls into an indoor sports hub, offering people a fun and affordable space to stay active and beat the heat.

Oman is naturally made for sports tourism. We’ve seen how our sister companies, like Oman Sail, are leading the way with events such as the upcoming World Sailing Inclusion Championships in 2025. But none of this happens in isolation.

We need everyone — event organisers, schools, businesses, hospitality partners and tourism boards — to come together to build something bigger.

We’re fortunate to have a landscape that many countries envy: dramatic mountains, open beaches, warm winds and a year-round climate perfect for all kinds of activity. But to truly take advantage of this, we need to engage the most important player: our communities.

Getting children into sport isn’t just about fitness. It’s about teamwork. It’s about leadership. It’s about learning to stay focused, persevere, and enjoy the journey. And ultimately, it’s about making sport a bigger part of our national identity — an investment that also helps us attract global events.

That’s why initiatives like Sports Spark matter. If we want to see Omani athletes on international podiums — or see Oman feature more prominently on the global sports calendar — it all starts with access. It starts with a child picking up a racket or kicking a ball in a space that welcomes them.

The evolving face of Oman’s fisheries sector

OMAN’S fisheries industry, a pillar of the country’s economic diversification efforts, stands at a strategic crossroads, balancing the preservation of its traditional artisanal sector with ambitions to modernise and expand its industrial and aquaculture capabilities.

The sector is divided into three distinct streams: artisanal, industrial, and aquaculture. Among them, the artisanal or traditional fishery dominates, accounting for a staggering 89% of the Sultanate of Oman’s marine capture production in 2023.

According to official data, more than 60,000 licensed full- and part-time fishers operated over 27,000 vessels, landing around 706,000 tonnes of fish valued at nearly \$1.14 billion that year.

The artisanal fleet mainly targets small and large pelagic species — such as sardines, anchovies, kingfish, tunas and Indian mackerel — alongside demersal fish like sea bream and groupers.

Fishers also harvest sharks, rays and crustaceans including spiny lobster and shrimp. Their tools range from fixed and drift nets to hand lines and beach seines.

However, the sector faces mounting challenges: low education levels, limited income, and rising competition from illegal and unlicensed operators.

While artisanal fishing remains an open-access activity aligned with national welfare goals — supporting employment in coastal communities — it is increasingly strained. Overfishing of species such as kingfish, abalone, lobster, and shrimp has pushed stocks to unsustainable levels.

Despite legal protections and regulatory frameworks, enforcement remains weak. Illegal trawling within restricted zones and the continued use of banned gear such as encircling nets persist, often unchecked.

The industrial fisheries sector, once dominated by foreign trawlers, saw a dramatic shift after 2011 when the government banned these vessels over repeated regulation breaches. By 2023,



The artisanal fleet mainly targets small and large pelagic species.

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DR KHALID AL SUBHI

The writer is a researcher at the Center of Excellence in Marine Biotechnology, Sultan Qaboos University

Oman’s industrial fishing fleet had rebounded modestly to eight locally operated longliners, and fishing nets producing 76,480 tonnes of primarily large pelagic fish such as yellowfin tuna.

The total fish production, however, still exploits just around 40% of the sustainable yield from Oman’s waters, suggesting untapped potential. The Arabian Sea, in particular, holds promise — not only for traditional fish species but also for lanternfish, offering opportunities in fishmeal and fish oil production.

In response to fluctuating global oil markets and dwindling reserves, Oman launched its National Fisheries Development Strategy (2013–2020) under its broader goal to diversify away from hydrocarbons. With oil and gas comprising over 68% of national revenue in 2015, the urgency to develop non-oil sectors became clear.

The fisheries sector was identified as a key growth area, and the Eighth and Ninth Five-Year Plans emphasised foreign investment, infrastructure development and private sector participation.

The government’s vision included an expanded aquaculture industry, new offshore fisheries,

and greater control over fish stock sustainability.

Export controls introduced in 2020 aimed to stabilise domestic prices and reduce import reliance — resulting in fish exports (including aquaculture) dropping to 34% of total production, down from 60% during 2011–2016.

Still, implementation hurdles remain. Inadequate port infrastructure, inefficient inshore fleets, underdeveloped markets and the artisanal sector’s limited offshore capacity are major impediments.

Despite ambitious goals, the hybrid policy that emerged reflects a compromise: promoting both a wealth-maximisation model via industrialisation and a welfare-maximisation model through sustained artisanal support.

This pragmatic dual-track strategy aims to modernise the sector without abandoning its socio-economic roots.

While the original goal of fully transforming artisanal fisheries into a high-tech industrial powerhouse has been tempered, Oman continues to build a more diversified and resilient fisheries economy, anchored by tradition, but steering toward innovation.

ART/LIFE



CONSERVATION

Most world heritage sites at risk of drought or flooding: UN



ALMOST THREE quarters of the globe’s cultural and natural heritage sites are threatened by too little or too much water, the UN’s cultural agency said on Tuesday.

As a result of rising temperatures, extreme weather events including hurricanes, droughts, floods and heatwaves have become more frequent and intense, scientists warn.

Seventy-three per cent of all 1,172 non-marine sites on the Unesco Heritage List are exposed to at least one severe water risk — including water stress, drought, river flooding or coastal flooding, Unesco said.

“Water stress is projected to intensify, most notably in regions like the Middle East and North Africa, parts of South Asia and northern China - posing long-term risks to ecosystems, cultural heritage, and the communities and tourism economies that depend on them,” it added.

Cultural sites were most commonly threatened by water scarcity, while more than half of natural sites faced the risk of flooding from a nearby river, the Unesco study showed.

In India, the Taj Mahal monument in Agra, for example, “faces water scarcity that is increasing pollution and depleting groundwater, both of which are damaging the mausoleum,” the study said.

In the United States, “in 2022, a massive flood closed down all of Yellowstone National Park and cost over \$20 million in infrastructure repairs to reopen.”

The report gave four more examples.

Iraq’s southern marshes — the reputed home of the biblical Garden of Eden — “face extremely high water stress, where over 80 per cent of the renewable supply is withdrawn to meet human demand”, it added.

And competition for water is expected to increase in the marshes, where migratory birds live and inhabitants raise buffalo, as the region grows hotter in coming years.

On the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Victoria Falls — originally called Mosi-oa-Tunya (“the smoke that thunders”) before it was renamed by Scottish explorer David Livingstone — has faced recurring drought and is sometimes reduced to a trickle.

In Peru, the pre-Colombian city of Chan Chan and its delicate 1,000-year-old adobe walls face an extremely high risk of river flooding, Unesco said.

In China, rising sea levels driven in large part by climate change are leading to coastal flooding, which destroys mudlands where migratory waterbirds find food, it added. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model presents a creation for KidSuper Menswear Spring-Summer 2026 collection show as part of the Paris Fashion Week in Paris. —AFP



FILM

English actor Jonathan Bailey poses for a photo during a red carpet event to promote the film “Jurassic World: Rebirth” in Seoul. —AFP



ART

Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto, designer of the Expo 2025 Grand Ring, poses with models, drawings and photographs that encompass his work at a press preview for an exhibition at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. —AFP

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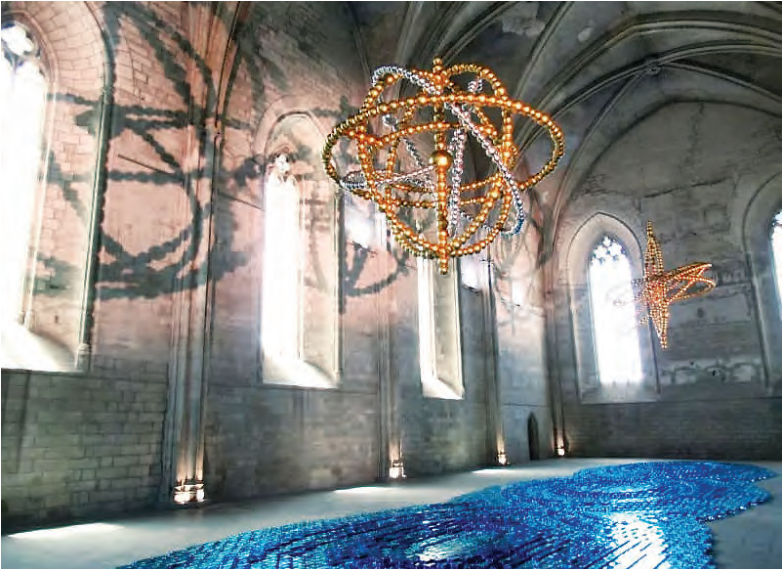
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We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Artist floods Avignon with thousands upon thousands of glass beads



FRENCH SCULPTOR
Jean-Michel Othoniel has transformed the southern French city of Avignon into a dazzling installation with thousands of hand-blown glass beads.
Not even the artist himself knows exactly how many beads were used. Othoniel says he has realised his most comprehensive and ambitious project to date for Avignon.
Under the title “Cosmos or the Ghosts of Love,” the 61-year-old is exhibiting his work at ten locations in the historic city, including chapels, museums, and public spaces, according to the organisers. The exhibition began on Saturday and will continue until January 4, 2026.
Othoniel is showing a total of 240 works, 160 of which are being exhibited in France for

the first time.
The centrepiece is the city’s famous medieval papal palace. Othoniel is exhibiting in 15 halls and chapels of the Unesco World Heritage Site, including the former bedroom of the pope.
Particularly monumental is the 10-metre-high astrolabe – a historical instrument for determining the positions of stars – which towers over the palace’s courtyard of honour.
Equally spectacular is the giant sculpture on the world-famous Saint Bénézet bridge.
Othoniel, internationally known for his playful, poetic glass bead sculptures, made a name for himself at Documenta IX in 1992 – at that time with organic forms made of sulphur – before beginning his collaboration with the glass-blowers of Murano in Italy. — dpa



Creating a world with stencils

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabiyousef](#)

WHEN Covid-19 confined the world indoors, few anticipated it would ignite a remarkable creative revolution. For Aliya Ziyad, a Year 12 student at Indian School Al Maabela, this unexpected pause became the catalyst for an extraordinary artistic journey she had never imagined.

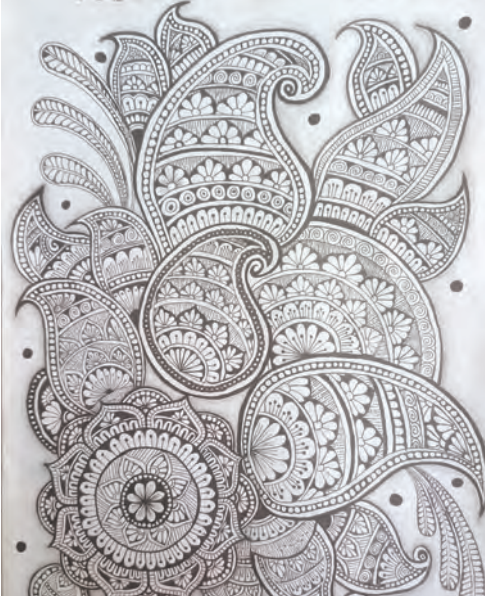
At first, Aliya’s world was turned upside down, watching mesmerising images on television and dreaming of recreating them. Her curiosity grew into an unwavering passion – how could she transform simple stencils into vibrant masterpieces? With perseverance and determination, she overcame her doubts, turning her ideas into record-breaking reality.

Starting from scratch, Aliya immersed herself in the world of stencil art, emulating everything she observed. Her early sketches, born amidst online lessons and lockdowns, began attracting attention. What started as mere experimentation gradually flourished into a remarkable artistic career, earning her fame not only across Oman but internationally.

Today, Aliya’s name is synonymous with mastery in Mandala art, Arabic calligraphy, doodle art, and fabric painting. Her work resonates with art enthusiasts throughout Oman, inspiring admiration with each piece. Without formal training, she taught herself through online tutorials, turning digital guidance into tangible art.

Her portfolio is truly extraordinary: over 300 portraits, each painstakingly crafted through stencil art. Her subjects include prominent figures such as His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Indian politician Pinarayi Vijayan, international film stars, business magnates like M A Yusuf Ali, Jawaharlal Nehru, and numerous cultural icons from around the globe. Many of her artworks are heartfelt gifts to visitors in Oman, poignant tokens of admiration.

Aliya’s talent has earned her accolades such as the India Book of



Records, along with international honours from the World Book of Records and the Asia Book of Records. Her achievements stand as a testament to her dedication and innate artistic flair.

Recently, her innovative fusion of traditional folk art – Theyyam and Kathakali – using vivid acrylic colours has captivated many in Oman. Her painting vividly depicts Theyyam, a festival from North Kerala celebrated for its fierce facial expressions and vibrant face paint, capturing its essence of strength and spirituality. The bold reds and whites evoke both passion and divine energy, transforming her work into a cultural celebration.

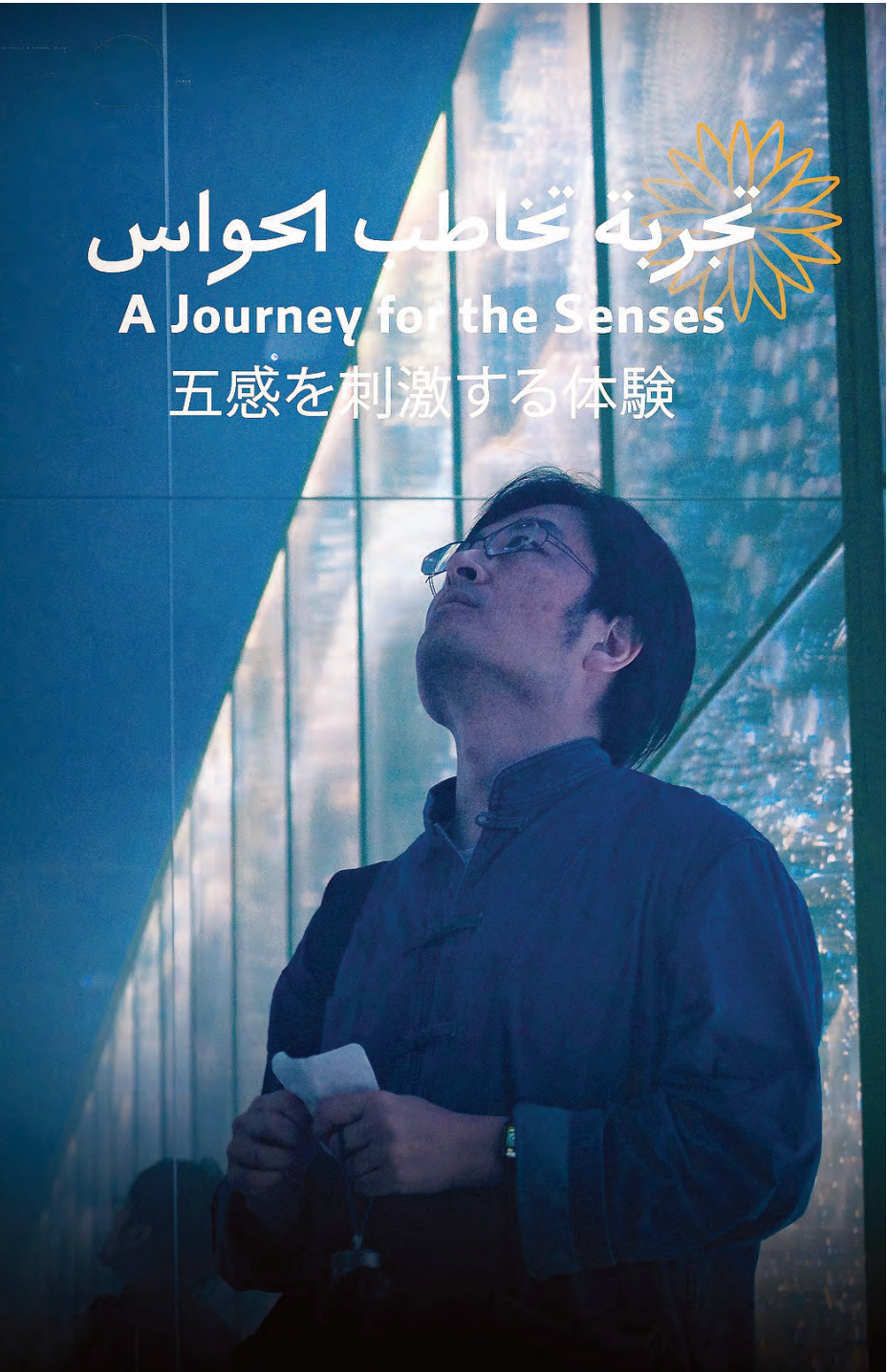
What is most impressive is her

ability to finish many of her works within just a few days – each piece a stunning illustration of talent, commitment and deep cultural pride.

Born to Ziyad and Jumi, passionate social workers in Muscat, Aliya is not merely an artist – she is an inspiring, multi-talented young woman. Her sister, Amina, currently pursuing MBBS in Egypt, is also active in extra-curricular and cultural activities, reflecting a family rooted in service, creativity and ambition.

Aliya’s story exemplifies how dreams, nurtured with perseverance and passion, can blossom into inspiring realities – proof that art truly has the power to create entire worlds.

FEATURES



THE OMAN FONT: CELEBRATING HERITAGE IN A DIGITAL AGE

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IN TODAY'S world, one might assume that a language as rich and ancient as Arabic would be omnipresent — in books, online content, and digital tools. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Arabic accounts for less than 1% of global scholarly publications, and digital content in Arabic makes up only about 0.5–1% of all online material. With over 237 million native speakers, this represents a significant underrepresentation. This gap underscores the urgent need to bring Arabic fully into the digital era.

Fortunately, some organisations recognise this challenge and are actively working to bridge the gap. Among them is Ebanah, an Oman-based company dedicated to empowering the Arabic language and celebrating its cultural richness through innovative technology. Their vision is clear and compelling: Arabic is not merely a language of history — it is a vital component of our modern world, deserving to thrive and evolve across all digital platforms.

One of Ebanah's most notable projects is the Oman Font. Inspired by traditional Omani manuscripts and calligraphy, this font is more than just aesthetically pleasing — it serves as a statement of cultural identity. The team meticulously examined hundreds of ancient manuscripts, carefully analysing their distinctive letter shapes and stylistic features, before crafting a font that preserves the authentic look and feel of Omani calligraphy while adapting it into the digital realm.

The significance of creating a dedicated Oman Font extends



well beyond visual appeal. Custom fonts play a crucial role in shaping national identity. A unique typeface becomes a symbol of cultural pride, providing a visual language that embodies a country's history, values, and aesthetic sensibilities. For instance, when Apple launched the Siri voice assistant in 2017, the company invested in custom fonts to align with Siri's branding style, thereby reinforcing a consistent brand identity that users could recognise and trust (Source: Apple Annual Report, 2017). Similarly, the Google Noto font project was developed to support all languages, ensuring visual consistency across diverse scripts and fostering inclusivity.

Having a country-specific font like Oman's helps to craft a visual narrative that is distinctly its own. It can inspire pride among citizens and serve as a powerful branding tool for national campaigns, tourism, and international diplomacy. When Oman showcased its culture at Expo Osaka 2025, the Oman Font was prominently featured — a deliberate choice that underscored the country's commitment to seamlessly blending tradition with modernity. As Salim al Mnathari, CEO of Ebanah, explains, "Typefaces are more than tools for writing; they are visual expressions of identity and heritage." A custom font thus functions as a linguistic signature, maintaining consistency across all official and promotional materials and bolstering Oman's global image.

Branding experts hold that fonts are integral to visual identity. According to branding consultant David Airey, "A typeface can evoke emotions, inspire trust, and influence perceptions about a brand or nation. It's not solely about readability — it's about what that typeface communicates on a deeper, emotional level" (Source: DavidAirey.com). For nations, a bespoke font can

reinforce their narrative, showcase cultural depth and distinguish them in a crowded global landscape.

Looking to the future, the importance of the Oman Font is only set to increase. As countries increasingly utilise digital platforms to promote their unique identities, custom fonts are becoming an essential asset. They help create recognisable, cohesive branding that can be employed across websites, official documents, advertising campaigns and social media. Furthermore, this initiative is likely to inspire other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Arab nations to develop their own digital typefaces, fostering regional cultural pride.

Moreover, the Oman Font project aligns with broader global trends emphasising localisation and authenticity. A 2020 report by McKinsey & Company highlighted that consumers increasingly value brands and entities that respect cultural heritage and demonstrate authenticity in their visual presentation (Source: McKinsey & Company, "The Future of Localisation"). A distinctive font rooted in Oman's calligraphic tradition encapsulates this trend, making the country's digital presence both authentic and relatable.

The ongoing evolution of digital typography, artificial intelligence-driven design tools, and a heightened focus on cultural preservation suggest that custom fonts will become even more central to national branding. They will serve not only as identifiers but also as ambassadors of culture, history, and innovation. In this context, Oman's initiative is more than just a font — it is a statement of intent: that Oman's rich cultural heritage will continue to evolve and flourish in the digital age, shaping its future identity and global perception.