

OMAN

دولة

DAILY

Observer

THE EARLIER
YOU KNOW,
THE MORE
YOU CAN DO

ANALYSIS
DEMENTIA

RESEARCH AS A LIFE-CYCLE
INTERVENTION

4

VOL. 45, NO. 251
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

2010000387405

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO
PRESIDENT OF EGYPT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on the anniversary of the 23 July Revolution. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed best wishes to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi and the Egyptian people on this glorious anniversary. His Majesty lauded the depth of the mutual historical relations and areas of cooperation and partnership. His Majesty wished Egypt prosperity and stability, as well as the realisation of further developmental, economic, and investment achievements.

HM SENDS MESSAGE
TO PM OF ARMENIA



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, dealing with the bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was handed over by Hamoud bin Salim al Tuwaih, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and Oman's Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia, when he was received by Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, at the headquarters of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the capital, Yerevan.

CROSS-BORDER CYBER
NETWORK BUSTED

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has dismantled a cross-border cyber fraud network comprising 5 Asian nationalities on Wednesday. The cybercriminals operated their fraudulent activities from 33 locations, including private homes, hotel rooms and rest houses in the Wilayat of Suhar, receiving international cash transfers in 21 currencies, the ROP said on X. The ring targeted victims from the Sultanate of Oman and other countries around the world while the ROP carried out secretive investigations and continued monitoring of these fraudulent activities. The ROP carried out simultaneous raids at all the locations and rounded up 380 criminals and seized over 1,800 electronic devices used by the gang for cyber fraud operations.

Shabab Radio celebrates 23 years since its launch

MUSCAT: Shabab Radio will celebrate today its 23rd anniversary since the launch of its broadcast on July 23, 2003, continuing its media journey as the first specialised Arabic-language FM radio station in the Sultanate of Oman. It has become one of the most listened-to radio stations in the Sultanate of Oman, according to a survey conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and

Information in 2022, featuring a voice that keeps pace with changes and remains close to the new interests of youth through a modern style and renewed content. Since its inception, Shabab Radio has paid special attention to the issues of Omani youth, stemming from its belief in their pivotal role in the path of construction and development, and embodying the care given by the Government of the Sultanate

of Oman to this segment as the primary pillar for the country's future, in alignment with the targets of Oman Vision 2040, which places youth at the core of its priorities. Over the course of 23 years, the radio station has sought to be a media platform close to the youth, expressing their aspirations, tracking their interests, and discussing their issues through diverse media

content encompassing cultural, social, sports, artistic, and economic programmes. It has also been keen to highlight the energy, achievements, and creativity of Omani youth in various fields, opening avenues for them to interact and participate over the airwaves and across various social media platforms, alongside keeping pace with key national events and keeping the listener at the heart of the national scene. DETAILS ON P5

WAR HAS ALREADY COST WASHINGTON \$37.5 BILLION

Iran’s infrastructure will
be hit if ships hit: Trump

US President Donald Trump vowed on Wednesday to destroy an Iranian bridge or power plant every time Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, raising the stakes after Ansar Allah in Yemen threatened a second vital energy route. Seven tankers have changed course in the Red Sea to avoid the Bab el Mandeb strait since the Ansar Allah threat on Tuesday to block Saudi oil exports, highlighting a new risk to global oil supplies from the intensifying conflict. In response to Trump's threat to Iran's infrastructure, an Iranian military source cited by Tasnim news agency said Tehran would retaliate against infrastructure in the region. Iran's near-total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf has stoked inflation around the world, and the new risk to shipping from the Ansar Allah, who control areas near the Bab el Mandeb strait, pushed oil prices to a near six-week high. Brent crude futures hit more than \$95 a barrel before easing back to nearer \$93. US gasoline prices, which have weighed on Trump's poll ratings ahead of midterm elections in November, have climbed back over \$4 a gallon. As the war nears the five-month mark and November legislative elections approach, Trump has faced intense political pressure to end the conflict, which is unpopular even with segments of his base. Critics have pointed to the cost of the war, which Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday had soared to \$37.5 billion, defending a request for tens of billions in additional funding for the military. But Trump himself has bucked the pressure, saying: “We’re not finished at all... we’re not leaving right now. Meanwhile, the US military struck Iran’s Larak Island in the Strait of Hormuz on



Pedestrians cross a busy road at the Islamic Revolution Square in Tehran on Wednesday. - AFP

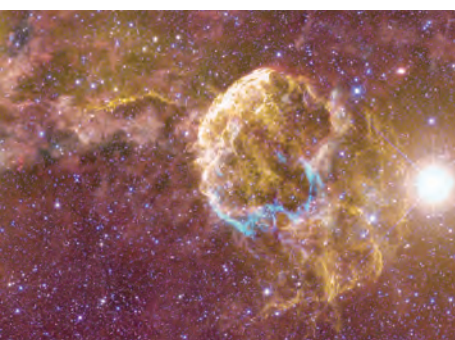
Wednesday, after President Trump warned he was “not finished” with a war. Fighting over the strategic strait led to the collapse of a preliminary deal between the United States and Iran, but top US diplomat Marco Rubio again reiterated Washington's stance that it was willing to find a negotiated agreement with Tehran. “We remain open to working it out in a negotiated way. But right now, they don’t seem to be serious about that,” Rubio said at a Southeast Asia ministers’ meeting in Manila. He insisted that the US was right to strike Iran because it was attacking Hormuz

shipping and planned to rebuild its missile and drone capabilities. Iran strengthened its military in anticipation that its adversaries would break agreements, Army Commander-in-Chief Major General Amir Hatami said. Iranian media also cited parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee spokesperson Hasan Qashqavi as saying Trump was in a “quagmire”. An Iranian health ministry official said 53 civilians had been killed and 592 wounded since late last month. The war has led to the deaths of 18 US service members and injured more than 450 troops. SEE ALSO P6

Scientists puzzled by strange Milky Way planetary system

WASHINGTON: Scientists are documenting a planetary system in the Milky Way galaxy that is so starkly dissimilar to our own solar system that they are struggling to find the proper terminology to describe it. The system includes a red dwarf star about 40 per cent of the mass of our sun that is orbited by a brown dwarf, a celestial body that blurs the line between planet and star. The brown dwarf, in turn, is orbited by a gaseous Jupiter-sized

world, newly discovered using the European Southern Observatory's Chile-based Very Large Telescope. Using our solar system as a definitional frame of reference, a body that orbits another body that orbits a star should be called a moon — or in this case an exomoon, because it is beyond our solar system. But the object that orbits the brown dwarf is unlike any of the many moons in our solar system — all of which are relatively small rocky or icy worlds — in terms of



This system is about 71 light-years away from Earth.

composition and size. So what should we call it? “This will certainly be a matter of debate. In general, most astronomers are fine with the term exosatellite, at least as a placeholder until we formally adopt definitions for objects like the one we found,” said Kevin Hoy, a doctoral student in astrophysics at Universidad Diego Portales in Chile, also affiliated with the exomoon research group YEMS, lead author of the study published in the

journal Nature. “We’re really hitting the limits of how far we can stretch the words we invented to describe the solar system to describe other systems in this case,” Hoy said. This system is about 71 light-years away from Earth. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km). The exosatellite possesses at least 90 per cent of the mass of Jupiter, the gas giant that is our solar system's largest planet. — Reuters

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai with Muhammad Anis Matta in Muscat on Wednesday. — ONA

OMAN, INDONESIA DISCUSS ENHANCING COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry, received on Wednesday Muhammad Anis Matta, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations between the two countries and discussed ways to enhance cooperation in various fields. They also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common interest. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

3 CONVICTED FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO INSULT OTHERS



MUSCAT: The Primary Court of Muscat (Criminal Circle) convicted the three defendants for committing the misdemeanour of using information technology (IT) to insult others, punishable under Article 16 of the Law on Combating Cybercrimes. The Public Prosecution’s investigations revealed that the first and second defendants published a video clip on social media, which included an insult to one of the candidates in the Tenth Majlis Ash’shura elections and questioned his eligibility and ability to perform his duties as a council member in a manner that damaged his reputation and status. Letters exchanged between the second and third defendants were uncovered, including an agreement to buy votes from voters in favour of the second defendant, to undermine the integrity of the electoral process and the freedom of voting. After concluding the investigations, the suspects were referred to the competent court. The penalties include one year’s imprisonment and a fine of RO1,000, with a stay of execution of the remainder of the prison sentence for the first defendant, with only one month to be served.

MoARA issues clarification on Prophet Ayub shrine

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 22

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) in Dhofar has addressed concerns raised on social media regarding the Prophet Ayub shrine at Jabal Itin, which has been under discussion on social media, saying a group of specialists from the Directorate has inspected the site and addressed the issues raised. “Upon receiving such concerns from the general public on social media, our officials immediately visited the site and inspected the facts mentioned in the

messages to resolve the reported issues. It is to be noted that the current site challenges are primarily due to significant visitor congestion during the Khareef season, limited space around the tomb and the shrine, and intense seasonal fog that is causing water retention inside,” a representative from the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs told the Observer. However, while welcoming public feedback, the authority stressed the importance of utilising official communication channels for authentic



The Prophet Ayub shrine is a religious landmark located on the summit of Jabal Itin.

news and information. It further warned that sharing unsubstantiated complaints on social media to incite

public opinion may lead to legal accountability. The Directorate remains committed to maintaining

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, JULY 22

Official operations of the Salalah Eye are set to begin on August 15, introducing a new leisure and tourism landmark in Dhofar Governorate as the Khareef season continues to attract visitors from across Oman and abroad. The attraction is located at the New Al Hafa Souq, one of Salalah’s leading commercial and tourist destinations. The Ferris wheel rises 55 metres above Al Hafa Beach, offering sweeping panoramic views of the Arabian Sea, the surrounding plains and the city’s picturesque coastline. The attraction is expected to provide visitors with a unique recreational experience while further enhancing Dhofar’s appeal as one of Oman’s premier



The operator has set the ticket price at RO 7 per person.

tourism destinations. Each cabin accommodates up to six passengers, making the attraction suitable for families and groups seeking to enjoy the spectacular scenery from above. The operator has set the ticket price at RO 7 per person. The project is expected to draw strong visitor interest during the Khareef season and throughout the year, adding a new dimension to the governorate’s growing portfolio of leisure attractions and supporting efforts to diversify tourism offerings. The launch of the Ferris wheel forms part of broader initiatives to strengthen tourism and entertainment infrastructure in Dhofar, in line with the steady growth of the sector and the governorate’s increasing prominence as a regional travel destination.

Vendors seek space for stalls at Shaat Viewpoint

QASIM AL MAASHANI
RAKHYOUT, JULY 22

SOME HOME-BASED businesses at Shaat Viewpoint are sharing individual display tables as the number of families seeking access to the seasonal market exceeds the space currently available, according to a participating vendor. During a field visit by the Observer on Wednesday, producers were displaying food, incense, handicrafts and other locally made goods in a temporary tent positioned beside a row of newly installed kiosks. A participant said the temporary arrangement had helped accommodate more producers, but the available display area remained insufficient in some cases. She said two families sometimes shared a single table, while other registered producers were still waiting for an opportunity to participate. “We thank the relevant authorities for giving productive families this opportunity,” she told the Observer. “We hope the space can be expanded to accommodate more families, especially as there are registered applicants seeking a place.” The market is organised by the Governor’s Office in the wilayat and provides home-based producers with direct access to visitors travelling to Shaat, one of the main mountain attractions in western Dhofar. The participant welcomed the addition of the new kiosks and the temporary tent, saying they had created an important outlet for households that produce goods from



home and do not operate permanent retail premises. However, she said the need for two producers to share one table illustrated the pressure on the available space and limited the area each family could use to present its products. The issue is not simply the physical size of a selling point. Display space can affect how clearly products are presented, how easily customers can move between sellers and how much stock each producer can offer during busy periods. For home-based producers — commonly referred to in Oman as “productive families” — seasonal markets offer access to customers without the expense of renting and operating a permanent shop. They also allow small producers to test demand, introduce their goods to new customers and generate income from the rise in visitor activity during the Khareef season. That opportunity is particularly relevant at Shaat because the viewpoint lies outside Salalah’s main commercial centres. Providing retail space near the attraction enables a share of visitor spending to reach households and small producers in the surrounding area. Shaat is located in the Wilayat of Rakhyout on Jabal Al Qamar, west of Salalah. Its views over the Arabian Sea and cloud-covered mountains attract visitors during Khareef, when mist and low cloud transform the surrounding landscape. The participant said expanding the allocated area would allow more registered families to take part and give existing participants sufficient room to display their products.

بنك Dhofar
BankDhofar



Lionel Messi,
Official Mastercard Ambassador

Visit [bankdhofar.com](#)

Limited-edition
Messi Mastercard.

Get your branded card
only in 2026



Get your card today
For more information



SHORT TAKES



The workshop was held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family Affairs and Community Development. — ONA

WORKSHOP SEEKS TO ADDRESS FAMILY CASES IN COURTS

MUSCAT: A workshop on “Preparing Social Research for Family Cases in Courts” was held on Wednesday in Muscat.

The event reviewed the most prominent challenges facing social and psychological specialists in divorce and family cases. This aims to contribute to improving the quality of social reports, supporting judicial decision-making, and reaching the best practices in preparing social research that supports judicial and social work.

The workshop, held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family Affairs and Community Development, aimed to develop the skills of preparing social research, raise the efficiency of specialists, and enhance the unification of concepts and the exchange of expertise among the concerned authorities.

Organised by the Supreme Judiciary Council in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, the workshop focused on the practical aspects of preparing social research for family cases. It discussed methodologies for information gathering and analysis, and mechanisms for preparing social reports according to professional foundations that contribute to enhancing the quality of outputs presented to courts. It also included the exchange of practical experiences among participants regarding the most prominent challenges facing social researchers in social work. The organisation of the workshop, which saw the participation of a number of social researchers and specialists from the Supreme Judiciary Council and the Ministry of Social Development, comes within the framework of cooperation, integration, and both sides’ keenness to develop the family justice system and elevate the services provided to families. This aims to enhance the integration between judicial and social aspects and contribute to achieving the best interests of the family and society. — ONA

GROOMING CITIZENS CONSTITUTES KEY TO DEVELOPMENT: MINISTER

MUSCAT: Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, has said that grooming the Omani citizen constitutes a pillar of comprehensive, sustainable development.

In a statement during the launch of the 3rd edition of the 2026 Military Discipline Programme, Sayyid Saud said, “The programme embodies the ministry’s commitment to invest in the segment of young



SAYYID SAUD BIN HILAL AL BUSAIDY
Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth

people as part of a strategic partnership between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education. The programme seeks to consolidate the values of loyalty, the spirit of belonging to the nation and the principles of national responsibility, with the prime objective of achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.” He explained that the programme offers an integrated system that combines military

training, sports skills and the acquisition of general knowledge — with the aim of shaping the personalities of students, enhancing the level of discipline, propagating the culture of resourcefulness and raising their sense of responsibility.

As many as 1,000 students from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman benefit from the programme this year, said the minister.

— ONA

INDIAN SCHOOLS BoD ADDRESSES CONCERNS

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 22

THE BOARD of Directors of Indian Schools Oman has issued a statement clarifying its decision to resume classes in its schools as the parents and students raised their concerns about reopening Indian schools after the summer vacation, despite the severe summer temperatures in Oman ranging from 45 degrees to 50 degrees Celsius.

Parents say that while in previous years, classes were resumed after the extreme summer heat subsided, this time the schools were opened in mid-July itself, and expatriate organisations have also expressed concern about this.

In a statement, the BoD has said that it places the safety and well-being of every child as its highest priority and that every decision, policy, and initiative is guided by its unwavering commitment to providing a safe, secure, and nurturing learning environment across all Indian Schools in Oman.

“Prioritising student comfort, safety, and health as Indian Schools reopen across the country, the Board has issued a robust safety protocol and the comprehensive directive mandates proactive health measures, safe infrastructure, and modified daily activities to ensure a comfortable learning environment for every child,” the statement said.

However, the representatives of parents have submitted a petition to the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, the Embassy and the Ministry of Education



Parents expressed concern that even if necessary safety measures are put in place, children may be exposed to sunstroke.

demanding extension of the summer vacation to be urgently considered in view of the extreme summer conditions.

“The extreme heat can lead to serious health problems, including dehydration, in students. Parents had expressed concern that even if necessary safety measures are put in place in and around the school, children may be exposed to sunstroke while coming to and from school, while waiting for the school bus,” a worried parent told the Observer. Parents pointed out that other schools usually open in September. However, this time, Indian schools have opened earlier by shortening the summer vacation. Currently, many children are experiencing physical discomfort after coming back from school. Teachers point out that the CBSE had followed the statutory teaching hours even when it had given the previous 50-day vacation, and therefore there is no academic

justification for cutting the vacation.

However, in the backdrop of the heated controversy, the Indian School Board of Directors has also issued strict emergency instructions to schools for the safety of students. The instructions issued include completely stopping school assemblies, sports and other outdoor activities, ensuring that AC’s in the classrooms and school buses are working properly, providing uninterrupted access to cold drinking water to children, not keeping children waiting inside parked buses, and setting up school clinics to deal with emergencies like heat stroke.

“As schools resumed classes in mid-July, we are seeing an attendance of 85 per cent in all the schools. The safety, health, and well-being of our students remain our absolute highest priority,” Syed Ahmad Salman, Chairman of the Board, told the Observer.

Environmental Training Academy to shape Oman’s green leaders

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 22

Strengthening Oman’s commitment to building a highly skilled workforce for the environmental sector, the Environment Authority, represented by the General Directorate of Environment in Al Batinah North, recently launched the second edition of the Environmental Training Academy, an initiative designed to equip young Omanis with the knowledge, practical experience and professional competencies required to lead the country’s sustainability journey.

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, the programme reflects

the Authority’s continued commitment to developing sustainable capacity-building initiatives that bridge academic learning with real-world application. Through an integrated approach, the academy combines technical environmental education, field training and professional development to prepare a new generation of specialists capable of supporting environmental protection and sustainable development across Oman.

The six-week programme is open to graduates and job-seekers from environmental sciences, engineering and related disciplines from higher education institutions across Oman. Participants will



A key component of the academy is a two-week practical placement within leading industrial, consultancy and training.

follow five integrated learning tracks covering leadership and personal development, specialised environmental studies, environmental

research and analysis, career preparation and intensive field training.

A key component of the academy is a two-

week practical placement within leading industrial, consultancy and training organisations, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience and exposure to best environmental practices. Partner organisations include Sohar International Urea and Chemical Industries, Vale Oman Pelletizing Company, Sohar Port Management Company, Shinas Power Company, Sohar Aluminium, Asas Environmental Consultancy, Sohar Institute and Auras Centre.

Eman al Hosni, Project Manager of the Environmental Training Academy in Al Batinah North, said the initiative was founded on the belief that meaningful

impact is measured not by the number of participants but by the opportunities created for young people to transform their ambitions into professional success.

“Our goal has always been to bridge the gap between academic learning and the workplace by providing graduates with specialised knowledge, practical experience and internationally recognised qualifications,” she said.

“This edition offers an intensive six-week journey that combines classroom learning with field experience, enabling participants to develop innovative environmental solutions.”

SPOTLIGHT



THE EARLIER
YOU KNOW,
THE MORE
YOU CAN DO

AS MUCH AS 45 PER CENT OF THE RISKS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO TOBACCO, SOCIAL ISOLATION, PHYSICAL INACTIVITY, AIR POLLUTION, AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND SUGAR

KABEER YOUSUF

DEMENTIA

and Alzheimer’s disease are growing health concerns in Oman, with cases projected to reach 124,800 by 2050. The Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Oman Alzheimer’s Society (OAS) are spearheading support and awareness programmes to tackle these brain diseases. The annual incidence of Alzheimer’s among those over 60 is estimated at 1.5 per 1,000 person-years, with prevalence rising sharply with age. In 2020, dementia accounted for 2.18 per cent of all deaths in Oman.

Dementia is a condition caused by brain diseases and affects memory, thinking and the ability to function. More than 57 million people live with dementia worldwide and nearly 10 million people get newly diagnosed every year. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia and is estimated to account for 60-70 per cent of cases.

World marks Alzheimer’s month in September. The 2026 campaign theme is “The Earlier You Know, The More You Can Do: A Dementia Diagnosis Matters”. It focuses on tackling global stigma and highlighting the benefits of a timely diagnosis.

While there is no cure for dementia, a new announcement by the WHO (World Health Organization) is giving the silver line of hope to those who are at the verge of getting their memories erased or finding it difficult to recognise their dear ones after a certain age.

As much as 45 per cent of the risks can be attributed to tobacco, social isolation, physical inactivity, air pollution and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including high blood pressure and diabetes. Beyond health, dementia affects a person’s independence, dignity and safety.

WHO’s new guidelines reflect the latest evidence and innovations in dementia risk reduction providing proven interventions that can effectively lower dementia risk through early awareness and timely action. They represent an important opportunity to reduce the burden of dementia in the coming decades through stronger integration of services for noncommunicable diseases, mental health and brain health.

“We know more today than ever before about what drives dementia risk, and these guidelines translate that knowledge into action,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, adding that “Countries now have clear, evidence-based recommendations they can put into practice immediately to protect people’s cognitive health.”

The updated guidelines on reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia, providing countries with evidence-based recommendations to help prevent or delay the onset of dementia across the life course, also give recommendations on addressing unhealthy behaviours, managing medical conditions, and reducing exposure to environmental factors that may contribute to cognitive decline and dementia.

Dr Saleha al Jadidi, Consultant Psychiatrist, said that early detection of Alzheimer’s in Oman can be challenging, as significant brain damage may have already occurred by the time symptoms become noticeable and rising figures are also linked to better diagnostic skills among Omani physicians.

Management of cardiometabolic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol can also help reduce dementia risk. Further, hearing aids may be offered as part of risk-reduction strategies. The guidelines recommend several healthy behaviours and lifestyle interventions to reduce dementia risk, including cognitive training and cognitive stimulation and engagement in social activities for adults who have normal cognition or are experiencing mild cognitive impairment.

Oman’s diagnostic services and support are primarily coordinated through major institutions like Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) and regional MoH facilities. Also, the Oman Alzheimer’s Society (OAS), founded in 2013 by Dr Hamed al Sinawi, continues to provide support, raise awareness and advocate for dementia care. The Dementia Friends Programme aims to educate the public and foster understanding in the country.

SHORT TAKES



The health sector in the governorate recently made tangible progress in specialised services.

AL SHARQIYAH NORTH REGISTERS PROGRESS IN HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

IBRA: The health sector in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah North has undergone major growth in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The governorate’s outstanding health system has become a basic pillar of sustainable development by improving the quality of life for more than 320,000 people in the wilayats of Ibra, Al Mudhaibi, Bidiyah, Al Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid, Dima W’attayeen and Sinaw.

The development of the health sector deals with the governorate’s extensive geographical area and the rapid growth in terms of population and urban expansion.

The health sector succeeded in three ways: Bringing the services closer to the population through the establishment of new hospitals and health centres, offering new specialised services that had not been available in the wilayats before and making health services a factor in the stability of groups operating in economic sectors like farming and tourism.

The health sector in the governorate recently made tangible progress in specialised services, including corneal transplants, shoulder joint replacement and eardrum repair. More than 100 surgeries were conducted for the treatment of morbid obesity. This cut down waiting lists and diminished the rate of referral to hospitals outside the governorate. The progress made in the health sector’s infrastructure development included the opening of Al Jarda Health Centre, the expansion of Wadi Bani Khalid Hospital, the completion of construction tasks at the health centres of Ibra and Al Mudhaibi and the start of technical works at the two centres’ medical wings. — ONA

AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE COMPLETES 35% OF FALAJ MAINTENANCE PROJECT

IBRI: Thirty-five per cent of a project for the maintenance of the Falaj system in Al Dhahirah Governorate has been completed.

The project constitutes part of efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to ensure the sustainability of water resources and consolidate their efficiency in serving the agriculture sector.

The project includes the



The project includes the maintenance and restoration of 15 aflaj systems in different wilayats of the governorate.

maintenance and restoration of 15 aflaj systems in different wilayats of the governorate. The tasks include the removal of debris from the course of aflaj, the reconstruction of sidewalls and the implementation of technical and engineering tasks that contribute to the restoration of the irrigation channels in a manner that enhances the flow of water to crops and ensures the sustainable outcome of the farming sector. — ONA

Shabab Radio celebrates its 23rd anniversary today

SHABAB

RADIO will celebrate on Thursday its 23rd anniversary since the launch of its broadcast on July 23, 2003, continuing its media journey as the first specialised Arabic-language FM radio station in the Sultanate of Oman.

It has become one of the most listened-to radio stations in Oman, according to a survey conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information in 2022, featuring a voice that keeps pace with changes and remains close to the new interests of youth through a modern style and renewed content.

Since its inception, Shabab Radio has paid special attention to the issues of Omani youth, stemming from its belief in their pivotal role in the path of construction and development, and embodying the care given by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman to this segment as the primary pillar for the country’s future, in alignment with the targets of Oman Vision 2040, which places youth at the core of its priorities.

On this occasion, Yousuf bin Humaid al Yousufi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Radio Oman, said: “The celebration of 23 years since the launch of Shabab Radio represents an important milestone to recall a rich media journey full of giving and achievement, during which the station managed to solidify

“The station managed to solidify its position as the radio platform closest to Omani youth, and to deliver media content reflecting their interests and aspirations while highlighting their abilities, potential, and creativity in various fields

YOUSUF AL YOUSUF

Director-General, Radio Oman



Shabab Radio has become one of the most listened-to radio stations in Oman.

its position as the radio platform closest to Omani youth, and to deliver media content reflecting their interests and aspirations while highlighting their abilities, potential, and creativity in various fields.” Al Yousufi pointed out that “the successes achieved by the radio station came as a result of the continuous efforts exerted by the successive young national cadres who worked in it,” emphasising that Shabab Radio has maintained its brilliance, renewal, and standing among listeners, remaining one of the most prominent listened-to media platforms in the Sultanate of Oman through its refined and renewed media content that meets its audience’s expectations.

Al Yousufi affirmed that the Ministry of Information continues its constant support for Shabab

Radio, enhancing its ability to perform its media mission and ensuring its continued delivery of qualitative content that aligns with youth aspirations and supports Oman’s renewed renaissance under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Shabab Radio reinforces its presence on various national occasions and events through live coverage, field reports, and special programmes. These have included national occasions, official visits, exhibitions, forums, the Khareef Dhofar Season, the Muscat International Book Fair, National Day celebrations, various sports and cultural events, and other events across the Sultanate of Oman.

“Sabah Al Shabab” (Youth Morning), “Sawt Al Shabab” (Voice of Youth), and “Studio 5” continue to keep pace with daily events and highlight youth initiatives, innovation, culture, arts, and sports, ensuring the radio station remains present in everything that matters to listeners and youth.

The development journey has not been limited to programme content on Shabab Radio, but extended to digital platforms and social media, as Shabab Radio continues to enhance its engagement with its audience across various platforms and produce content suited to modern listening patterns, in line with digital transformation and keeping pace with the evolving aspirations and interests of youth. — ONA

NRAA documents Omani presence in Mombasa

MOMBASA: The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) continues the implementation of its project to document the oral narrative of the Omani presence in the city of Mombasa, Republic of Kenya.

This comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to trace the paths of Omani history beyond the nation’s borders and complete the documentation of the Omani cultural legacy in East Africa. Such efforts contribute to preserving historical memory and enhancing the sources of research and study regarding the historical relations that brought together the Sultanate of Oman and the countries of the African coast.

This project serves as an extension of the Authority’s approach to collecting and documenting various historical sources. The oral narrative constitutes an important tributary that complements the thousands of documents and manuscripts related to the history of East Africa preserved by the Authority. The testimonies of narrators contribute to evoking the details of daily life and historical events that were not recorded in written sources, thereby remaining a living witness to the depth of the Omani presence in the region.

Through a series of field



The field mission has resulted in the collection of a large number of testimonies and valuable historical information.

interviews, the team from the Oral History Department at the Authority is documenting the testimonies of several narrators among the residents of Mombasa. They recall what they experienced or inherited from their fathers and grandfathers regarding events, situations, and stories that embody the Omani presence in the city and the cities of the Kenyan coast, as well as the cultural impact it left on various aspects of political, economic, cultural, social, and urban life.

In this context, Abdulaziz bin Humaid al Mahdhouri, Director of the Oral History Department at the NRAA, stated that documenting the oral narrative in East Africa represents one of the main pillars of the Authority’s projects aimed at completing the historical picture of

the Omani presence outside Oman.

He clarified that the project is not limited to merely collecting narratives; rather, it seeks to preserve them according to a scientific methodology that ensures their sustainability and accessibility for future generations.

This contributes to enriching the national repository of historical sources and supporting specialised academic studies on the shared history between Oman and East African countries.

The field mission has resulted in the collection of a large number of testimonies and valuable historical information documenting multiple aspects of the Omani presence in Mombasa.

These will be added to the documentary and historical repository maintained by the Authority, forming an important reference for researchers and those interested in the history of Oman and its cultural relations with East Africa.

Mombasa and the Kenyan coast abound with numerous historical landmarks that confirm the depth of the Omani presence, ranging from historical forts, mosques, and archaeological cemeteries to old neighbourhoods and markets, as well as ports, boats, and traditional sailing ships. — ONA

The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees in Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
2/2026	Communication Campaign for Oman Vision 2040 Achievements	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	6 / 8 / 2026

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the project, Tender and Local Content Authority from the following website: Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

Third

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

Fourth

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone:

etenderhd@ita.gov.om

+96824402200

WAR

SHORT TAKES



US President Donald Trump salutes during a dignified transfer solemn event for US service members killed during operations in the Middle East, at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. — AFP

TRUMP ATTENDS RETURN OF KILLED US SOLDIERS

DELAWARE: US President Donald Trump attended a ceremony for four US service members who returned to American soil in flag-draped caskets on Wednesday after being killed in Iranian attacks in the Middle East. The ceremony, known as a “dignified transfer” of the bodies, comes amid growing frustration with the US-Israeli war with Iran.

The war has cost US taxpayers at least \$37.5 billion, has led to the deaths of 18 US service members and injured more than 450 troops. It has killed thousands of Iranians. Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers have raised questions about the war, which has boosted global oil prices and shows no signs of ending. Since the war started in February, Trump has offered differing objectives for the war.

The US president travelled to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware for the ceremony. “We’re going to honour them. For me it’s one of the hardest things to do as a president. But it has to be done,” Trump said before leaving for the ceremony. Asked what he would tell the families of the fallen, Trump said: “All I’m going to say is, we love you. We love your child, and that’s what they are to them. They’re their children. There’s no games, no nothing.” — Reuters

MORE RED SEA SHIPMENTS DISRUPTED



DUBAI: Four more tankers changed course in the Red Sea on Wednesday after the Ansar Allah group in Yemen threatened the southern route out, highlighting a new risk to global oil supplies from the intensifying war between the US and Iran. Oil prices rose to a near six-week high on Wednesday, with Brent crude futures up 2.45% at \$93.24 a barrel at 1323 GMT, after hitting \$95.47 earlier. US gasoline prices, which have weighed on President Donald Trump’s poll ratings ahead of midterm elections in November, have climbed back over \$4 a gallon. The war has killed thousands of people and Iran’s restrictions on energy shipments from Gulf states have driven inflation worldwide. — Reuters

Trump threatens revenge

FIGHTING LED TO THE COLLAPSE OF A PRELIMINARY DEAL

A US missile struck the Iranian island of Larak in the latest attack to target the Islamic republic's islands	Saudi Arabia's civil defence agency issued a brief warning calling for residents of the city of Dammam	The Jordanian army said it intercepted four Iranian missiles, while two others fell in an open area	Iran denied the existence of any secret nuclear complex at Kolang mountain after Trump threatened to strike	Sirens sounded in Bahrain, with the interior ministry urging people to remain calm and head to the nearest safe place
---	--	---	---	---

US President Donald Trump threatened to knock out one Iranian bridge or power plant in return for each attack on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, warning he was “not finished” with a war that has already cost Washington \$37.5 billion. Fighting over the strait led to the collapse of a preliminary deal between the United States and Iran, and Tehran has reimposed its blockade on the strategic conduit for oil and gas shipments, firing on vessels that seek to transit. The blockade has rattled markets and sent oil prices climbing, adding to the pressure on Trump to find an off-ramp to a conflict that has hit Americans’ pocketbooks heading into closely-fought midterm elections.

“Any time the Islamic Republic of Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, whether it be by Missile, Rocket, Drone, or any other device or weapon, the United States will bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT,” Trump wrote on social media, reiterating his longstanding threat to go after Iranian infrastructure.

But top US diplomat Marco Rubio maintained Washington is still willing to find a negotiated agreement with Tehran. “We remain open to working it out in a negotiated way. But right now, they don’t seem to be serious about that,” Rubio said at a Southeast Asia ministers’ meeting in Manila.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei had previously said that diplomatic exchanges with Washington through mediators were continuing.

On Wednesday afternoon, a US missile hit Larak island in the strait, Iran’s Tasnim news agency reported, saying the extent of the damage was being investigated. Trump has faced intense political pressure to end the conflict, which is unpopular even with segments of his political base as it nears its five-month mark. Critics have pointed to the cost, which Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday had soared to \$37.5 billion, defending a request for tens of billions in additional funding for the military. But Trump himself has so far bucked the pressure, saying on Tuesday: “We’re not finished at all... we’re not leaving right now.”

The US military said it had launched an eleventh consecutive night of strikes against Iran, saying it targeted military sites to “further degrade Iran’s ability to threaten commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz”. Trump had said earlier

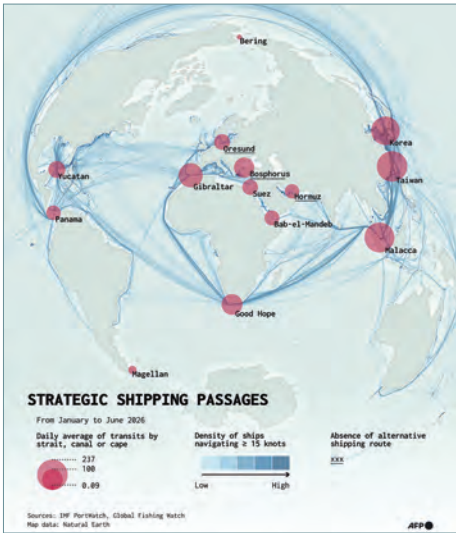


A motorist parks his bike in front of a wall mural along the street in Tehran. — AFP

that the next US target could be an underground complex known as Pickaxe Mountain, a site near Natanz where Western intelligence agencies suspect Iran is building an undeclared nuclear enrichment facility.

Iran threatened reprisals, with the military command saying it would “consider it as an expansion of war” if such an attack were carried out, threatening strikes on “all the interests of America, the allies and supporters”, the state broadcaster reported. Foreign ministry spokesman Baqaei, meanwhile, insisted that “Washington’s obsessive focus on Kolang Kouh where no nuclear activity is taking place is nothing more than a fabricated pretext for aggression, destruction, and sabotage”. The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Rafael Grossi, said that inspectors “should be there already” in reference to Iran, saying it was important that the IAEA check on Iran’s stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

The threats came as Tehran pressed its assault on targets in US-allied Gulf states. Kuwait’s army said its air defences were engaging drones from Iran, while Jordan said it had shot down four Iranian missiles and four drones. Air alert sirens also sounded in Bahrain, with



SHORT TAKES



Demonstrators hold signs in support of ousted Venezuelan president Nicholas Maduro outside the courthouse in New York City. — AFP

VENEZUELA’S OUSTED LEADER MADURO BACK IN US COURT

NEW YORK: Venezuela’s ousted president Nicolas Maduro appeared before a New York court on Wednesday, his third public hearing since the US military captured him in a stunning night-time raid in January. The former leader, 63, and wife Cilia Flores have been held in a Brooklyn jail since the US military operation, awaiting trial on drug trafficking, firearms and other charges.

In a court filing late on Tuesday, prosecutors and defence lawyers proposed a June 2027 trial date, which Judge Alvin Hellerstein could confirm at the Wednesday hearing focused on procedural matters. The United States in April allowed Venezuela to pay for Maduro’s and Flores’s legal defence, something previously barred by US sanctions.

Maduro has declared himself a “prisoner of war” and pleaded not guilty to the four counts he faces: “narco-terrorism” conspiracy, cocaine importation conspiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices. Venezuela is now led by Maduro’s former vice president, Delcy Rodriguez, while the United States effectively controls the country’s oil exports, with proceeds going into special accounts overseen by Washington. — AFP

INDIA STUDENT PROTESTS KEEP UP PRESSURE ON GOVT



Demonstrators hold placards during a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru. — AFP

NEW DELHI: Crowds of supporters of India’s online “cockroach” movement grew on Wednesday at a New Delhi protest site, with their campaign for accountability and reform following examination scandals getting a boost inside parliament from opposition lawmakers. The protesters have refused to leave the Jantar Mantar site in the heart of the Indian capital, with crowds swelling to several thousand people on Wednesday.

The protesters, most of them young students, got a major boost after opposition parties threw their weight behind their movement, staging a sit-in outside the prime minister’s residence. Rahul Gandhi, a senior leader of the Congress party, is asking the government to apologise for the police crackdown on tens of thousands of protesters.

The opposition Samajwadi Party staged a protest in the parliament premises, with leader Akhilesh Yadav saying Modi has remained silent on an issue which affects every young Indian. The CJP movement, which has millions of followers on social media, emerged in May as a satirical response to Chief Justice Surya Kant reportedly likening young people to “cockroaches” and “parasites”, sparking outrage. — AFP

HUNGARY’S ORBAN SAYS GRAFT CASE IS ‘PRETEXT’ TO TARGET HIS PARTY

BUDAPEST: Hungary’s nationalist ex-prime minister Viktor Orban on Wednesday accused prosecutors of conducting a sham investigation into corruption allegations to justify seizing his Fidesz party’s databases a day earlier.

“By yesterday, I had come to realise what this was all about,” Orban told journalists in front of the party’s headquarters on Wednesday. “What happened was that this served as a pretext to seize Fidesz’s servers,” he added. “This is a politically

motivated legal proceeding designed to render Fidesz — which has clearly survived even this heavy political defeat and is growing stronger — legally unviable.” He rejected a suggestion from a journalist that investigators had the right to take action. “In my view, if a political party’s server... is seized by the government of a rival political force, that is a problem... I don’t think I need to explain this,” he said.

Meanwhile, Hungary’s prosecutor general said on

Wednesday he would step down following pressure from Prime Minister Peter Magyar.

Gabor Balint Nagy said in a statement he was resigning “solely to safeguard the interests of the prosecutorial service”. “The functioning and independence of the prosecutor’s office must not, under any circumstances, be compromised by the disgraceful, politically motivated struggles surrounding the prosecutor general,” he said. — AFP

Ukraine vows to step up counteroffensive actions

THE NEW commander-in-chief of Ukraine’s armed forces, Mykhailo Drapatyi, said on Wednesday he had been tasked with stepping up counteroffensive actions and launching new operations inside Russia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday tapped Drapatyi, 43, for the top military job, replacing Oleksandr Syrskyi, 60, in the biggest shake-up of Ukraine’s military leadership since Russia’s attack in 2022. The move followed the ousting in a wider government reshuffle last week of tech-savvy reformist Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, 35, which brought out into the open the deep divisions in Ukraine’s defence leadership.

“The President of Ukraine has set clear objectives for us: to continue and intensify offensive operations in all domains, to plan new operations behind enemy lines, to develop our military and its technologies, and to build up the capabilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” Drapatyi said on Facebook. Ukraine has stepped up attacks on Russian energy infrastructure and logistics this year in a bid to undermine Moscow’s war effort.

Major General Ihor Skybiuk, a former commander of the air assault forces, will become the new head of the General Staff, Drapatyi said. Drapatyi, a respected and experienced commander, is described by many as a general from a new generation. Syrskyi has faced harsh criticism for a rigid command style that some service members have said resulted in unjustifiably high troop losses.



Smoke rises from a Wildberries warehouse on fire after an attack in Krasnodar, Russia. — Reuters

“The President of Ukraine has set clear objectives for us: to continue and intensify offensive operations in all domains, to plan new operations behind enemy lines, to develop our military and its technologies and to build up the capabilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

MYKHAILO DRAPATYI

On the streets of Kyiv and other cities, rare wartime protests had called for Syrskyi’s dismissal and for Fedorov to be reinstated. “Zelensky heard the protesters,” said Ilona Ivchenko, 40, a human resources manager who lives in Kyiv. “I support Syrskyi’s dismissal, and Drapatyi’s appointment was the right choice.” In a post on X confirming his departure, Syrskyi highlighted his battlefield track record and reforms, including retaking more than 700 sq km of Ukrainian territory this year. “I am handing over to my successor an army that is not only holding the defence but is also on the offensive - with initiative, with structure, with people who know how to beat the enemy,” he said. Despite Russian advances slowing this year, its troops are still pressing on in strategic areas of eastern Ukraine.

Zelensky said that he and Drapatyi had decided how Syrskyi and

outgoing General Staff chief Andrii Hnatov would continue to serve Ukraine’s military efforts, without giving further detail. Fedorov welcomed Drapatyi’s appointment, though his own fate remains unclear. Zelensky said on Tuesday he offered him a “decent post” in the state apparatus, but Fedorov has previously said he only wants his old job back. A source told Reuters it was not likely that Fedorov would be reappointed. Zelensky has appointed Yevhenii Khmara as acting defence minister.

Drapatyi takes charge at a time of growing social and political tensions over Ukraine’s wartime leadership and he will face a raft of challenges, including the sensitive issue of recruitment. “A practical, effective mobilisation process was identified as a priority,” Zelensky said on X. Asked about the reshuffle, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he did not think it would lead to changes on the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has agreed to export drones to the United States to participate in the Pentagon’s Drone Dominance programme, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Wednesday. The agreement comes as Kyiv and Washington have been negotiating a wider drone deal for Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles, whose success in the war against Russia has driven high demand from other countries to learn from their experience and purchase models for testing. Six Ukrainian companies have received permission to export about 100 drones each, the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. — Reuters

JAPANESE CITIES SUFFER HEAT ‘DISASTER’



TOKYO: Japanese cities are experiencing “cruelly hot days”, a new meteorological term devised this year to warn people of intense heat above 40°C, with emergency officials describing the soaring temperatures on Wednesday as “a disaster”. Heatstroke alerts were issued across almost the whole country and emergency officials said at least 14 people had died from heat-related causes in the past week.

Three central cities logged scorching temperatures on Tuesday above the new threshold, called “kokushobi” and which translates to “cruelly hot day”, according

to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA). Large areas, including the central hub of Nagoya and communities near Tokyo in the east, were enduring temperatures approaching or above 40°C on Wednesday.

The new term was designed to draw greater public attention to heat-related warnings, although it does not trigger any official measures nationwide. The JMA has issued heatstroke alerts in 41 out of Japan’s 47 prefectures, urging the public to take steps to stay cool. Almost 11,000 people sought emergency medical care in Japan in the past week. — AFP

BATTLING WILDFIRES

Blaze damages over 150 homes in Algeria



More than 100 people were hospitalised after wildfires reached nearly 150 homes in a small town in north-eastern Algeria. The fires broke out in Seraidi, a town west of the city of Annaba surrounded by forests. Civil protection crews were still battling the blazes on Wednesday morning. A local hospital that most of the hospitalised people were in a “stable and reassuring” condition and more than 150 homes had been affected by the fires. — AFP

PANDEMIC FATALITIES

DRC, Uganda records 1000 Ebola deaths



The Ebola outbreak declared in May has killed more than 1,000 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, the World Health Organization said on Wednesday. In all, 2,473 cases of the deadly virus, including 999 deaths, have been confirmed in DRC, while 20 cases, including two deaths have been registered in neighbouring Uganda, according to a WHO overview. The DRC’s 17th Ebola outbreak was declared on May 15. — AFP

NOVEL ATTRACTION

Louvre heist gallery reopens to public



The glittering, vaulted gallery targeted by thieves at the Louvre last October reopened to the public, becoming a novel attraction for tourists even though its priceless exhibits have been removed. The Apollo Gallery was previously known for displaying the French crown jewels. It became globally famous as the scene of one of the most daring burglaries of recent times. The stolen items have have still not been found despite extensive searches. — AFP

OPINION

Attention has never been a moral instrument



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

LinkedIn
@rumaithaalbusaidi

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

HAVE a friend in Chicago who calls the city home, and last week he told me the sky above it was unlike anything he had seen. The smoke had come down from Canada. Last Thursday the index read 747 on a scale that stops at 500, the worst air of any major city on earth, the skyline went, and the city smelled of a campfire. We talked about the tariffs. Trump had announced that Canada would be billed for the smoke, the cost being incalculable, he wrote, and therefore added to what Canada already owes in tariffs. The irony was not lost on either of us. We had heard him in September, both of us in New York for the UN General Assembly, when he called climate change the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world and a carbon footprint a hoax dreamed up by people with evil intentions. We sat through it in the same room. Interestingly, in May his government voted against a resolution asking states to act on their climate obligations. 141 in favour, 8 against, and America's written objection said the resolution was troubling because it referred to "so-called obligations". The quotation marks are theirs.

The resolution followed an opinion the International Court of Justice delivered a year ago today, unanimously, brought there by Vanuatu, which has been asking since 1991 whether countries that caused global warming owe anything to those left living with it. So an obligation that does not exist in May exists in July, once the smoke is over your own city. Nothing about the fires changed in between. Only the direction of the wind. This brings me to the point that attention has never been a moral instrument but works by proximity; by whether a thing has reached you and how hard it lands. Money consequently follows that trajectory with real loyalty, and we can discuss at length about how Trump's tune has changed but the fact is we are the same here. Take Dhofar, which holds more than 70 per cent of this country's biodiversity, much of it growing nowhere else on earth. The khareef is over it as I write, the monsoon that arrives off the Indian Ocean every year with ghayth, that fine drizzle, and a fog that settles on the mountains for weeks, filling Wadi Darbat until the lake spills over the limestone, bringing flamingos down onto the water in a

When did your rials last go toward conserving the environment or the climate? Mine did earlier this month, offsetting a flight. Have you asked yourself the same thing before proximity forces your hand?

good year, and turning the escarpment green until November takes it back to ochre. It is the most reliable thing we have, which may be exactly why it has never occurred to us to give anything toward it at all. When I ask people what they have contributed to conserving that nature and preserving our natural heritage, for themselves and for those who come after, most go quiet, because the honest answer is nothing, and we both know it while the silence sits there. The argument over who owes what will reach us eventually. It found Chicago last Thursday, and the question worth asking is whether it arrives here while there is still something to fund, or afterwards, when funding becomes compensation and we are left working out who pays. Trump had that argument available to him inside a weekend. Vanuatu has been making it for 35 years. So let me put a smaller question, and answer it first myself. When did your rials last go toward conserving the environment or the climate? Mine did earlier this month, offsetting a flight. Have you asked yourself the same thing before proximity forces your hand?

ANSAR ALLAH'S RED SEA THREAT WOULD TEST A STRETCHED US MILITARY

IDREES ALI AND PHIL STEWART

An Ansar Allah threat to impose a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea could significantly widen the Iran war and strain a US military already focused on stopping Tehran's attacks across the region, current and former US officials said. Yemen's Ansar Allah said on Monday they would not allow ships to load or unload at Saudi ports, potentially blocking Saudi oil exports and choking off an additional 7% of global oil supply. Saudi Arabia, which hosts US forces, has not yet requested military assistance from Washington. But Trump suggested on Tuesday that a move by the group to obstruct shipping in the Red Sea — a vital corridor for global trade — could draw the US in. For the US military, it may not be so simple. The Ansar Allah have earned a reputation as hardened, nimble fighters who have successfully resisted earlier Saudi and US bombing campaigns. Taking them on would mean stretching American resources already focused on fighting Iran and maintaining the US' own blockade of Iranian ports in the Gulf. "You're bifurcating your admittedly fairly robust resources in the region between two active fronts," said Jason Campbell, a former senior Pentagon official. Campbell, now with the Middle East Institute, added that addressing the Red Sea threat could mean shifting US warships from the Gulf closer to Yemen to allow the military to carry out operations against the group and defend against Ansar Allah missiles. The possible entry of the Ansar Allah into the conflict is another example of how the war - first pitched by Trump as a focused bombing campaign that would trigger Iran's capitulation - continues to evolve, worsening a political headache for the US president. And if US Navy vessels and aircraft have to start shooting down Ansar Allah drones and missiles, it could also worsen what experts have warned are diminished stockpiles of US munitions and air defence interceptors. The Pentagon did not respond to a request for comment. "The Ansar Allah have proven many times in the past that they have the ability and willingness to obstruct maritime traffic in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb strait," said Michael Mulroy, a former deputy assistant secretary of defence for the Middle East during Trump's first term. While the US military is the best funded in the world, it still faces resource constraints, officials say, with many of the systems likely needed for Yemen currently being used in the war in Iran. — Reuters

Which country will perch atop the next world order?

THE ERA in which global order rested on a US monopoly over military and economic power and values has finally come to an end, taking Europe's long period of stability with it. The world has become significantly more turbulent and uncertain, and the near future will bring even more instability. In the past, the contours of the world order were clearly reflected in the G7/G8 format, which brought together the leading industrialised countries. But now there are competing formats such as the China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, and the BRICS+ (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and a half-dozen other members, plus ten partner countries)—all consisting predominantly of emerging economies.

US HEGEMONY

American hegemony has given way to a new formulation based on rivalry and competition among several major powers, where there is no longer a fixed, codified set of rules. Instead, there is only economic, technological, and military power, which implies a greater risk of conflict and even war between nuclear heavyweights. This new order is anything but stable. The wars in Ukraine, in the Gulf, and a civil war in Myanmar that no one is even bothering to try to end, attest to that, as does the persistent threat of war between China and Taiwan or on the Korean Peninsula. The two outright wars, coupled with Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, have already had a significant impact on the global economy, owing to higher costs for oil, gas, fertiliser, and other essentials. Many people are dying in both conflicts, and the risk of escalation continues to grow. It is not surprising that Ukraine



JOSCHKA
FISCHER

The author was Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005

If China sticks with its own successful model, it can and will be able to achieve most of its goals eventually through peaceful means

and Iran are attracting the most public attention. But these conflicts also have the character of proxy wars, because their strategic implications cannot be understood without accounting for the historic struggle between the US, the current top power, and China, the rising challenger. China is keeping a low profile—and quietly gaining the upper hand—as the US flails desperately in the Gulf and lashes out at longstanding friends and allies. DUEL OF SYSTEMS This high-level power struggle is a duel between vastly different systems that will shape the 21st century. The US is a highly competitive market economy and the world's oldest democracy, albeit one that is currently besieged by tech-industry oligopolies. China, by contrast, is a centralised state ruled by an all-powerful party that can exercise absolute control over the economy, the military, and society. Within a single generation, it has transformed itself from a desperately poor, underdeveloped country into a realistic contender for the top spot in the world order. That is a colossal success no matter how you spin it. The true masterstroke of Chinese communism came after the madness of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. While maintaining absolute power and party control, Deng Xiaoping allowed a rapidly growing private sector to flourish within the existing state-controlled economy, which eventually surpassed even the US in many industries. The result, enabled by a gigantic domestic market, is a kind of communist hyper-capitalism. China's model stands in stark contrast to that of the Soviet Union, which from the very beginning was an anti-capitalist, primarily ideology-driven enterprise. The Chinese wanted both to maintain

their roots and to emulate the most successful capitalist economy in history; and they pulled it off. This seemingly paradoxical approach has worked wonders and continues to do so. China owes its success to several factors, including a domestic market that allows for massive economies of scale, enormous infrastructure investments, a construction boom, advancing urbanisation, fierce internal market competition, and massive state investments in research and development. The Chinese state has been laser-focused on its strategic objectives, particularly building up and modernising its military and winning the race for global dominance in technologies such as renewables and AI. No one can deny that the Communist Party of China's long-term planning expertise and determination to rise to the top have created an extraordinarily successful dual system. Whether the US will be able to fend off the Chinese challenge to its primacy—as it did against the Soviet Union—remains to be seen. The answer will depend partly on whether it continues to drift away from the democratic capitalist model it perfected. The current lurch toward an authoritarian oligopoly of private tech tycoons and cronyism is a gift to the CPC. But the answer will also depend on whether the Chinese leadership can resist the temptation to resort to violence vis-à-vis Taiwan. If China sticks with its own successful model, it can and will be able to achieve most of its goals eventually through peaceful means. But it will have to avoid the delusion that history unfolds according to laws that the CPC understands. Contingency and poor judgement are always possible, and their costs can be enormous. Just ask Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump. © Project Syndicate 1995–2026

Situations that rarely make headlines



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

THE GLASS ceilings are crumbling. There is no fanfare to mask the sound of destruction. It all falls from within. Five months of constructive dialogue, aggressive politeness, and diplomatic waffle about valued partnership.

The region's cohesion has long been fragile. There are facets of brotherhood and unity and, as in any clan, members who transgress, disagree or dispute.

The disagreements span decades of territorial disputes, control of maritime chokepoints, ideological divides, foreign alliances, and security architecture.

Since the start of the US-Israel war with Iran in February and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, this vital maritime route has become a focal point in a narrative that has shifted many times, resembling an opera buffa in its complexity, yet carrying serious implications.

The various narratives included ending Iran's nuclear programme, degrading its missile capabilities, stopping Tehran's support for Hezbollah and Hamas.

The overlapping aspects of this war can be viewed from diverse angles, geographical perspectives, or intellectual frameworks, yet its political, economic, and security implications remain ongoing.

The Strait of Hormuz has long been a point of tension. Disputes over the control of this narrow waterway have led to historical

standoffs. A long-standing cultural dispute also exists concerning the name of the waterway.

The escalating war with Iran and Tehran's retaliation against neighbouring countries have significantly disrupted energy infrastructure and global oil and gas supplies, intensified inflationary pressures, and increased financial volatility.

Oscillating tensions and security concerns are prompting regional governments to reassess their priorities and boost their defence. Government budgets deteriorate as spending shifts. Imports and exports may contract, resulting in a widening of the trade deficit. Heightened uncertainty can trigger capital outflows, impact sectors such as tourism and retail, and potentially lead to a decline in foreign investment.

These are snapshots of a developing geopolitical moment. The true cost of this 'game of egos' is measured not only in dollars but also in hardships faced by populations around the globe, the weaponisation of the cost of living, and the resulting collateral damage.

To quote the aphorism of Thucydides, '...the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.'

The conflict has so far resulted in thousands of human casualties. Retaliatory strikes and falling debris have caused dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries across neighbouring Gulf nations. The United States

Since the start of the US-Israel war with Iran in February and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, this vital maritime route has become a focal point in a narrative that has shifted many times

military has registered at least 16 service member deaths and over 400 wounded. Official Iranian figures report over 3,400 people killed and over 26,500 injured.

While still navigating diplomatic manoeuvres and maintaining a discourse of calm at home, a deeper, longstanding divide looms among the countries in the region. Any strategy to accommodate ongoing problems is fading. We are facing a rupture in international rules.

The US-Israel-Iran war is reshaping the global scenario. We are already seeing significant shifts in trade patterns and power rivalries.

In addition, a leadership vacuum serves as a catalyst for further conflict. Regional instabilities are often invisible as Gulf states try to protect their status as safe places for business and global travel.

The observation points to alarming structural issues in geopolitics. The house of cards built on fragile foundations may collapse because of internal flaws exacerbated by external factors. The current situation is driven by a dangerous standoff between the main players.

Viewing the conflict as a tale of heroes and villains strips away any romanticised political narratives, revealing the harsh reality that ordinary people should not bear the burden of manufactured wars.

Concealed political and security instability often looks solid until it breaks.

South Africa's data centre 'gold rush' risks resource crunch

KATE BARTLETT

Rapid expansion of data centres has helped make South Africa the continent's biggest digital hub, even as critics warn the industry's appetite for electricity and water could worsen shortages affecting millions of people.

President Cyril Ramaphosa this month hailed the growth of data centres as essential for the country's security and its businesses, while calling for the protection of human rights and the environment amid the boom. As Africa's largest economy, South Africa boasts advanced digital infrastructure, including connections with international sub-sea cables, helping to make it home to 70 per cent of the continent's data centres, which house the computer servers that power everything from cloud computing to artificial intelligence.

Tech giants Microsoft and Amazon have committed billions of dollars to cloud and AI infrastructure in South Africa, where the sector is expected to more than double to \$5 billion by 2031, a report from US-based market research firm Arizton Advisory & Intelligence said in March.

But data centres need large amounts of electricity to run the servers and water to cool the rooms they sit in, and South Africa's recent struggles to provide these basic necessities to citizens due to climate change-related drought and an ageing power grid have exposed potential risks.

Even a small data centre can draw as much power as thousands of households and requires hundreds of thousands of litres of water a day.

In Johannesburg's industrial zone, at a data centre run by South Africa's largest operator Teraco Data Environments, the scene resembles a set from the film "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory": shiny metal pipes, small multicoloured wires, rows of cabinets and a constant, low buzzing sound.

Bryce Allan, Teraco's head of sustainability, said South Africa's data centres are smaller than those elsewhere in the world and require less resource-intensive technology since they do not focus on training AI systems.

He said the market is a far cry from the United States, where residents from Texas to California have campaigned against data centres. New York last week announced a statewide moratorium over worries about their environmental impact.

"The explosion of AI in the States - with gigawatt projects being announced, and the numbers coming through from operators that have decided to use evaporative cooling, and the water resources that they would deplete in doing that - are really creating a problem," he said. "Whenever people hear of AI coming to South Africa, they associate that US example and transcribe it over to here."

While evaporative cooling requires a constant supply of fresh water to keep servers cool, Teraco has claimed it uses closed-loop cooling, which recirculates the water. — Reuters

Reading statecraft through Odysseus

TIME PRESENT and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past."

T S Elliot, Four Quartets 1: Burnt Norton.

Watching a recent adaptation of Homer's Odyssey, I was struck by how a poem composed nearly three millennia ago continues to illuminate the dilemmas of contemporary statecraft. It reminded me that the greatest works of literature are not merely stories about the past; they are lenses through which we understand the present and anticipate the future.

The influence of Homer's epics extends far beyond the study of classics. Alexander the Great is said to have carried a copy of the Iliad throughout his campaigns, seeing in Achilles the embodiment of heroic ambition and military glory. Whether every detail of that tradition is historically precise matters less than the larger truth: literature has long shaped political imagination before politics shapes history.

Civilisations rarely live by laws alone. They live by stories.

Every nation carries a narrative that explains who it is, why it exists and what role it believes it is destined to play. Those narratives become strategic assets. They shape how leaders perceive threats, how societies define success and how governments respond to moments of uncertainty.

Russia frequently presents itself through a narrative of historical continuity and the restoration of great-power status. China speaks of national rejuvenation after a century of humiliation. The United States continues to draw strength from stories of exceptionalism, frontier expansion and democratic mission. Iran's strategic discourse is deeply rooted in narratives of sovereignty, resilience and civilisational endurance.

Oman, too, possesses a story.

It is the story of a nation that has repeatedly renewed itself without losing its identity; a nation whose renaissance is not a single historical



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

event but a continuing process; a country that has consistently insisted upon preserving the sovereignty of its own choices in a turbulent region. Its diplomacy reflects this narrative — not indecision, but deliberate strategic autonomy; not passivity, but the conviction that influence is often greatest when exercised through credibility, dialogue and trust.

Understanding these narratives often explains behaviour that appears irrational if viewed solely through economics, military balances or diplomatic communiqués. States do not simply pursue interests; they pursue identities. They seek to remain faithful to the stories they tell themselves.

This is precisely where the Odyssey becomes unexpectedly relevant.

The Iliad, its twin epic, celebrates Achilles' battlefield courage. The Odyssey offers a different philosophy altogether. Odysseus survives because he understands that wisdom often outperforms strength. He negotiates when confrontation would be disastrous. He conceals his intentions when transparency would expose weakness. He waits patiently when others rush forward. He adapts constantly to changing circumstances. Above all, he recognises that knowing when not to fight is itself a strategic skill.

Far from being signs of weakness, these qualities constitute a sophisticated form of power. History demonstrates that many successful small and medium-sized states have flourished not through military dominance but through adaptability, commercial openness, diplomatic relevance and institutional credibility. Geography rarely grants such states the luxury of overwhelming force. Instead, it rewards resilience, flexibility and strategic patience.

This observation carries particular significance for Oman.

Situated at one of the world's most strategically sensitive maritime crossroads, Oman has never possessed the option of escaping its geography. Instead, it has mastered the art of managing it. Across millennia, Omani navigators, merchants and diplomats

understood that prosperity depended less on controlling others than on keeping routes open, relationships balanced and trust intact.

Imagine if young Omanis grew up not merely memorising dates, battles and dynasties, but learning to interpret their own history as a strategic inheritance. Imagine Ahmad bin Majid taught not only as an accomplished navigator, but as the embodiment of scientific curiosity, disciplined observation and intellectual courage. Imagine the Indian Ocean understood not simply as the country's maritime frontier but as its natural strategic space — its historical arena of commerce, cultural exchange and international engagement.

Imagine Oman's diplomatic tradition recognised not merely as courtesy or moderation, but as accumulated strategic wisdom refined over centuries of managing competing powers across the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. Imagine the country's long tradition of coexistence understood not merely as cultural tolerance, but as a competitive national asset in an increasingly polarised world.

These are not sentimental reinterpretations of history. They are strategic narratives.

Such narratives quietly shape how future diplomats negotiate, how military officers assess risk, how entrepreneurs identify opportunity and how policymakers define the national interest. Every society inherits historical facts. The decisive question is whether it also inherits the wisdom embedded within them.

Perhaps this explains why Homer's poems have outlived every empire that revered them. They continue to inspire novels, paintings, theatre, films and political thought because they illuminate permanent features of the human condition.

Technology changes. Geography evolves. Empires rise and fall. Human judgement remains remarkably constant.

Foreign policy, ultimately, is less about reacting to today's headlines than about cultivating habits of judgement.

SPORTS

OMAN SWEEP QATAR TO CLAIM 2ND WAVA TITLE



Oman team celebrate with the trophy after the winning in Muscat. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 22

OMAN'S MEN'S national volleyball team were crowned champions of the 2nd West Asia Volleyball Association (WAVA) Men's Volleyball Championship Muscat 2026 after defeating Qatar in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Organised under the umbrella of the West Asia Volleyball Association (WAVA), the regional governing body responsible for promoting and developing volleyball across West Asia.

Inspired by strong home support, Oman delivered a dominant performance to secure a straight-sets victory over Qatar, winning 25-19, 25-15, 25-23.

Oman controlled the match from the start, effective blocking and solid defensive organisation. Falah al Jaradi and Majid al Shibli played key roles in leading the offensive effort as Oman took the first set 25-19.

Oman extended their advantage and comfortably won on the second set 25-15 to move one step closer to the title.



Group photo of the individual award winners. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

Qatar showed greater resistance in the third set and pushed Oman into a closely contested battle. However, the hosts remained composed in the decisive moments, with Mahmoud al Saadi and Falah al Jaradi leading the late charge to secure a 25-23 win.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Abdulrahman bin Humaid al Yahyaei, Chief Executive Officer of Integrated Gas Company, in the presence of Ali Ghanim al Kuwari, President of the West Asia

Volleyball Association, and Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Maqbali, Chairman of the Oman Volleyball Association (OVA).

Al Yahyaei presented Oman with the championship trophy and gold medals as the national team celebrated their historic achievement.

Oman also dominated the individual awards, with Falah al Jaradi named the tournament's Best All-Round Player. Abdullah al Maqbali received the Best Libero

award, Majid al Shibli was selected as the Best Opposite Hitter (Position 2), and Mahmoud al Saadi earned the Best Outside Hitter award (Position 4).

Head coach Nizar al Shukaili praised the collective effort behind the victory, highlighting the commitment of the players and the support of the technical and administrative staff.

"This title was not achieved by the coach alone. It came through teamwork, commitment and the support provided throughout the preparation period," he said.

"The players have great potential and a strong willingness to learn and improve. Despite the absence of some players through injury, the group showed sacrifice and outstanding team spirit."

Al Shukaili added that Oman would use the achievement as motivation ahead of the Asian Championship in Japan and the Arab national teams championship.

Al Jaradi said the team entered the tournament with the ambition of winning the title. "We believed from the first day that we could win the championship," he said. "The final was more difficult than the score suggests, but we played with focus and showed the character of champions."

Oman finish group stage with defeat to Chinese Taipei

Oman's national youth handball team concluded their Group Stage campaign at the 19th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship with a 41-26 defeat to Chinese Taipei on Wednesday evening, ending their hopes of reaching the knockout stage of the continental tournament, which also serves as a qualifier for the IHF Men's Youth World Championship.

Oman will now compete in the placement matches for positions ninth through thirteenth, starting with a meeting against Qatar on Saturday as they aim to end the tournament on a positive note. As the first half progressed, Chinese Taipei gradually extended

their lead by capitalising on Omani turnovers. Oman continued to create scoring opportunities, with Mohammed al Hasani producing an impressive display and helping his team remain competitive. Chinese Taipei eventually ended the first half with an 18-12 advantage.

Oman returned after the break with greater intensity and matched Chinese Taipei for several minutes, showing improved attacking movement and defensive pressure. However, the physical demands of consecutive matches against strong Asian teams affected the team's performance, allowing Chinese Taipei to increase their advantage



Oman team during the Chinese Taipei match on Wednesday.

and secure a 41-26 victory.

Head of Delegation Amir al Dughaishi said the result was unexpected after the team's improvement throughout the tournament.

"We honestly expected a stronger performance against Chinese Taipei. The players had shown encouraging progress from one match to another, but unfortunately they were not at their usual level," he said.

"Our preparation period was relatively short. The head coach joined the team only about a month before the championship, which was not enough time to build a fully competitive squad. We have talented young players, and with proper preparation this group can

achieve much better results in the future," he added.

Goalkeeping coach Aref al Balushi described the championship as a valuable learning experience for the players.

"The result is disappointing, but the players have gained valuable international experience against some of Asia's strongest teams. These matches will contribute significantly to their development," he said.

Oman will now focus on the placement round, where the coaching staff hopes the players can build on their experience in Zhuzhou and produce stronger performances in the remaining matches.

SHORTTAKES



England's Morgan Rogers. — Reuters

CHELSEA SIGN ROGERS IN RECORD BRITISH DEAL

BENGALURU: Chelsea have signed England international Morgan Rogers from Aston Villa on a contract until 2033, both Premier League clubs said on Tuesday, with British media reporting the deal was worth £117 million (\$157 million), making him the most expensive British player.

Neither club disclosed financial details, but Sky Sports reported the package surpassed the reported fee of up to £116 million Manchester City paid Nottingham Forest for midfielder Elliot Anderson earlier this month.

Chelsea's previous record signing was Ecuador midfielder Moises Caicedo, who joined from Brighton & Hove Albion for £115 million in 2023.

"I'm so excited," said Rogers in a club statement. "For me, Chelsea are the biggest club in London and a club I've always admired since I was a kid.

"I'm really excited about the project with the new manager, the players we've got and where the club is heading. That's why I'm here and I can't wait to get started."

Rogers, who can play on the wing or as an attacking midfielder, leaves Villa after two years, having helped them win the Europa League in May. He scored in the 3-0 final victory over Freiburg as Villa claimed their first major European trophy since 1982.

The 23-year-old scored 31 goals in 125 appearances for Villa after joining from Middlesbrough in 2024, earning his England debut later that year.

Rogers featured in seven of England's eight matches as they finished third at the World Cup and enjoyed his most prolific domestic campaign last season, scoring 10 Premier League goals.

Chelsea, who finished 10th in the Premier League last season, begin their league campaign away to Fulham on August 24. — Rreuters

LIVERPOOL have a few areas that need to be strengthened in the transfer market after losing key players and suffering injury setbacks, the Premier League club's manager Andoni Iraola said.

Liverpool have signed Jeremy Jacquet and Victor Munoz, but lost Mohamed Salah, Andy Robertson and Ibrahima Konate, while Hugo Ekitike, Conor Bradley and Giovanni Leoni are sidelined through injury.

"I think it's difficult to say a number (of players needed) when the market is open, and you have to be always open to new options to improve the squad," the Spaniard told reporters in Chicago on Tuesday.

"There are obvious situations that we know where we need to sign players. A winger, for example - we definitely need to sign a winger.

"But there are other situations that we will have to analyse what the market gives you, what's the cost, how we also see the players we have. We have some tricky positions where we have injured players that we trust but is still not the ideal situation."

Salah, Konate and Robertson's departures have also left Liverpool with a dearth of experience in their squad.

Goalkeeper Alisson is another veteran whose future at Anfield is uncertain, but Iraola said he was keen to keep the Brazil international.

"I think he's someone that definitely will help us in this process of adaptation of the new signings, of the new players, the young players," he added.

"We need the references like Virgil (van Dijk), like Alisson, like Joe Gomez, players that have been here for a long time. And I'm sure we will have this help, yes."

Liverpool begin their pre-season preparations with a match against Sunderland in Nashville on Saturday, before taking on Wrexham, Leeds United, AS Monaco and Como.

They play their first game of the Premier League season away to Newcastle on August 23. — Reuters

Liverpool have obvious gaps: Andoni Iraola



AFC Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola. — Reuters

Evenepoel wins Tour de France individual time-trial

THONON-LES-BAINS: Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel stormed to victory in Tuesday's 26.1km individual time-trial at the Tour de France to shave valuable seconds off Tadej Pogacar's overall lead.

Belgian Evenepoel, 26, blasted over the stage 16 course along the shores of Lake Geneva 28 seconds quicker than reigning champion Pogacar in second.

Everyone else finished more than a minute back, with Dane Mattias Skjelmose taking third at 1min 04sec on the course from Evian-les-Bains to Thonon-les-Bains in the French Alps.

That performance by the world and Olympic time-trial champion -- on Belgium's national holiday -- cut four-time Tour winner Pogacar's overall lead to 4min 32sec.

"It's amazing, it was a very nice TT (time-trial), a lot of people on the side of the road," said Evenepoel.

"My whole family from both sides being here, my parents came just today. My wife is here with her parents and the siblings as well.

"And also on the Belgian national day is pretty special -- I read this morning it's been a while since Belgium won on National Day, so I'm proud to be the one."

It was Evenepoel's second



Evenepoel in action during stage 16 individual time-trial. — Reuters

successive stage victory after he triumphed on Sunday's mountainous 15th stage.

It was his fourth Tour stage victory overall, and his third in time-trials.

He also extended the gap to third-placed Isaac del Toro to more than two minutes.

But it was a miserable day for Evenepoel's Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe team-mate Florian Lipowitz.

Two days after two-time former

winner Jonas Vingegaard crashed out of the Tour while sitting second overall, German Lipowitz went down hard on a bend and was forced out of the race.

He had been fifth overall until that point and had set the fourth fastest time in the three intermediate time-checks.

But several minutes after he crashed, Lipowitz was escorted to a medical vehicle holding his left arm.

"That's very unfortunate, it's like a bittersweet pill to swallow with this victory, so I wish him all the best and I hope it's not too bad," Evenepoel said of his team-mate.

Both Pogacar and Del Toro had a scare going through the same bend where Lipowitz fell but managed to stay upright.

Pogacar also had a word for Lipowitz, who had pushed him relatively closely in April's Tour of Romandie and was third last year behind the Slovenian and former two-time winner Jonas Vingegaard.

"He's been riding super solid and (the) third week I think would suit him really well," said Pogacar.

"He's a good kid, Florian. I'm sad to see him leave the tour.

"I hope he can recover fast and wish him the best."

- 'Mixed emotions' -

From the moment Evenepoel

began his time-trial, it was clear he was on course to do something special.

Once the top 10 contenders began their races against the clock, Skjelmose set the fastest time, well ahead of the best of the rest.

Lipowitz, Del Toro and French teenage prodigy Paul Seixas were only a handful of seconds behind at the three time-checks.

But when Evenepoel went through the first, it was clear that he was riding at a different pace.

Only Pogacar could stay within potential touching distance but he was seven seconds down at the first time-check, with Skjelmose 22sec back.

Those gaps ballooned to 14sec and 56sec by the second time-check.

That was the uphill part of the course and was where Evenepoel gained most of his time.

On the following descent and then a flat run to the finish, he gained only eight seconds on Skjelmose, 10 on Seixas and 13 on Pogacar.

"I think it was a really good execution from start to finish, he had good control," said Red Bull sporting director Klaas Lodewyck.

"It's mixed emotions, let's say. We're over the moon with the win from Remco, but the loss of Lipo was a big blow for the team." — AFP



AMERICANS WATCH RECORD WORLD CUP FINAL

NEARLY

63 million Americans tuned in to watch Spain beat Argentina in the Fifa World Cup final on Sunday, shattering viewership records and underscoring soccer’s growing appeal in the US after decades of efforts to broaden its audience. Held in New Jersey, the final remained scoreless until Spain broke through in the 106th minute to secure a 1-0 victory.

Fox’s English-language broadcast attracted 38.9 million viewers, while Comcast’s Telemundo and its Peacock streaming platform pulled in another 23.9 million viewers for the Spanish -language coverage, the companies said. The combined audience far exceeded the 22.3 million US viewers who watched the 2022 World Cup final in Qatar.

The strong viewership capped what analysts said was a solid run for the tournament’s broadcasters, with Fox and Comcast paying roughly \$485 million and \$600 million, respectively, for rights packages that included the World Cup, according to media reports. Several knockout-stage matches also outperformed recent championship games in other major US sports.

The Round of 16 meeting between England and Mexico drew nearly 45 million viewers, well above the roughly 27 million who watched Game 7 of Major League Baseball’s World Series, when the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Toronto Blue Jays in extra innings and the nearly 25 million who tuned in for Game 5 of the NBA Finals, where the New York Knicks ended a 53-year title drought by defeating the San Antonio Spurs. While the figures remained below the nearly 126 million

viewers who watched Super Bowl LX, when the Seattle Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots, they marked a significant milestone for a sport long overshadowed in the US by American football, basketball and baseball.

The tournament, co-hosted by the US, Canada and Mexico for the first time, benefited from prime-time kickoff slots for American audiences. Fans were also drawn by what could be the final World Cup appearances of a generation’s biggest stars, including Argentina’s Lionel Messi and his long-time Portuguese rival Cristiano Ronaldo. The last time the US hosted the tournament was in 1994. Fox One, which had the English-language streaming rights in the US, recorded 2.8 million sign-ups in June, its strongest month since the service’s launch in August and more than double the 1.1 million sign-ups generated during NFL Playoffs in January, according to industry tracker Antenna.

Soccer’s popularity among Hispanic audiences also drove strong turnout on Spanish-language broadcaster Telemundo.

“Ratings have blown past internal forecasts for both networks and it’s not close,” said Vicente Navarro, managing partner at soccer-focused marketing firm GotDigital. Navarro said a marquee 30-second advertising spot in the knockout-stage matches cost as much as \$1 million, more than double 2018 levels. Major advertisers included PepsiCo, Home Depot, Anheuser-Busch and Coca-Cola, according to market intelligence firm SensorTower.

For comparison, a 30-second Super Bowl advertisement typically costs about \$8 million or more.

WATER BREAKS PROVE LUCRATIVE FOR FOX Beyond the ratings, the tournament also proved lucrative for broadcasters, helped by new so-called hydration breaks that split matches into four segments and created additional advertising opportunities. Some experts said the extra ad slots helped offset TV rights costs and drew interest from beverage and food brands. Fox, led by Lachlan Murdoch, is expected to make at least \$250 million from hydration-break advertising alone, according to a June report by the Hollywood Reporter. Telemundo did not run ads during those breaks.

“The new inventory definitely creates more spending for the World Cup,” said Luke Stillman, a managing director at research firm Madison and Wall. “It would be surprising if the structure wasn’t a permanent fixture now going forward, and therefore the broadcast rights are going to be more valuable going forward.” Still, it remains unclear whether some of the tournament’s Americanised elements, including a major halftime show that drew comparisons with the Super Bowl and led to a 27-minute interval, well beyond soccer’s sacrosanct 15-minute halftime period, will endure. Fifa also announced the World Cup champions will for the first time receive a ring in a nod to “one of the most recognisable American sporting traditions.”

The next World Cup will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco in 2030, followed by Saudi Arabia in 2034. Both tournaments are likely to feature less favourable kickoff times for US viewers, which could weigh on future ratings.

— Reuters

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,111.416

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$89.51
BRENT \$94.48
LIGHT \$87.38



SHORT TAKES



The event implements a decision taken by GCC industry ministers in April.

Oman forum adopts decision to promote five joint GCC industrial projects

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 22

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted a workshop to promote five priority joint-Gulf industrial investment opportunities to the region's private sector, part of a wider drive to deepen industrial integration among GCC states and reduce the bloc's reliance on imports.

The event, held on Wednesday, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Federation of GCC Chambers, implements a decision taken by GCC industry ministers in April approving the outcomes of a study that identified the five opportunities and mandated their promotion to Gulf businesses.

The five projects span industries described by organisers as strategically valuable: the manufacture of high-pressure seamless pipes for the oil and gas sector, single-use sterile surgical instruments, high-purity copper cathodes, silicon wafers for semiconductors and multi-parameter patient monitoring devices.

They emerged from a screening process that analysed 26 potential investments and shortlisted 15 before settling on the final five, according to a presentation by Lamia al Shanfari of the GCC General Secretariat. She said the wider initiative aimed to strengthen industrial integration, cut import dependence, raise the competitiveness of Gulf industry and create quality jobs.

Blue economy to drive diversification in Al Wusta

AL WUSTA Governorate is strengthening investment across fisheries, ports, logistics and tourism as part of efforts to develop its blue economy and support Oman's economic diversification strategy, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The governorate is leveraging its extensive coastline, abundant marine resources and strategic location to build an integrated maritime economy that enhances the value of fish products while creating new investment and employment opportunities.

According to ministry data, Al Wusta remained Oman's leading fish-producing governorate in 2024, with production reaching around 226,000 tonnes, accounting for 25 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman's total fish output and valued at more than RO 100 million.

The sector supports more than 4,670 registered fishermen, alongside 2,357 fishing boats and 124 artisanal fishing vessels, underlining its importance to the local economy.

Israa bint Abdullah al Hadi, Fisheries Development Specialist at the ministry, said modern maritime infrastructure has played a key role in expanding the sector.

"The governorate's maritime assets, including its extensive coastline, rich fish stocks and strategic location, have strengthened the fisheries sector, making it one of the key pillars of the blue economy", she said.

She highlighted the role of



Al Wusta remained Oman's leading fish-producing governorate in 2024, with production reaching 226,000 tonnes.

The governorate's maritime assets, including its extensive coastline, rich fish stocks and strategic location, have strengthened the fisheries sector, making it one of the key pillars of the blue economy.

Duqm Commercial Port and Duqm Multipurpose Fishing Port in improving fish landing, processing, storage and marketing, while strengthening logistics services and connecting Omani seafood to regional and international markets.

Al Hadi said integrating investments across fisheries, ports, logistics and tourism creates a connected economic system that maximises the value of marine resources, improves the competitiveness of products and services; and attracts further investment.

The approach also generates direct and indirect employment in fishing, seafood processing, transport, marketing and support services, while contributing to sustainable economic growth.

She added that the blue economy is strengthening

local content by encouraging greater use of national products and services; and creating opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in areas such as boat maintenance, logistics, seafood processing and marine tourism.

The ministry plans to expand fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing projects while continuing to develop Al Duqm's maritime and logistics infrastructure.

Future initiatives will also focus on enhancing supply chains, encouraging research and innovation in maritime industries and attracting additional investment linked to the Port of Duqm and the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, reinforcing Al Wusta's position as one of Oman's leading blue economy hubs in support of Oman Vision 2040.

ACME links Oman and India in green fuels strategy

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 22

Indian renewable energy developer ACME Group believes its expanding portfolio of long-term green fuel export agreements will create strategic synergies between its projects in India and Oman, as the company advances construction of its flagship green ammonia project at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The latest milestone follows the signing of two major export agreements under India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, further strengthening ACME's position as one of the first developers globally to secure long-term commercial offtake for green hydrogen derivatives.

Under the first agreement, ACME will jointly develop a 405,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) green ammonia project in the Indian state of Odisha to supply to IHI Corporation of Japan for distribution in the Japanese market.

The project has also been selected under the Japanese government's Contract for Difference (CfD) programme, administered by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), which provides financial support to enable long-term imports of low-carbon ammonia into Japan.



Construction is progressing across multiple components of ACME's integrated green ammonia project at Duqm. (Picture for illustration only).



GURSHARAN JASSAL
Country Head of ACME Oman

Paradip facility in eastern India. The green methanol will be produced to comply

Separately, the company has signed a 10-year agreement with Mitsubishi Gas Chemical Company (MGC) to supply 100,000 TPA of green methanol from its

with European Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin (RFNBO) requirements and the International Maritime Organization's standards for low-carbon marine fuels, supporting the decarbonisation of the global shipping industry.

The agreements build on ACME's earlier achievement of securing long-term green ammonia offtake from its Oman project, reinforcing the developer's strategy of establishing an integrated international production and export platform.

Speaking to the Observer,

Gursharan Jassal, Country Head of ACME Oman, said the company's projects in Oman and India should be viewed as complementary elements of a broader global strategy rather than as standalone developments.

While each project has been structured independently, they have the potential to benefit from shared logistics, diversified export routes and access to multiple international demand centres, particularly for green ammonia, he said.

Such an integrated approach would strengthen supply chain resilience while enhancing ACME's ability to serve growing demand across Asia, Europe and other emerging green fuel markets, he said.

According to Jassal, the latest agreements with Japanese companies reflect growing international confidence in ACME's green hydrogen platform and demonstrated increasing market acceptance of commercially scalable green fuel projects.

At Duqm, construction is progressing across multiple components of ACME's integrated green ammonia project, spanning renewable energy generation, hydrogen production facilities and export infrastructure.

Phase 1 is designed to produce 100,000 TPA of green ammonia.

The first phase will be powered by a 450 MWAC solar photovoltaic plant supported by an 800 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS), with no wind generation planned at this stage.

Site preparation, engineering, procurement and construction activities are advancing steadily and will provide the renewable electricity required for green hydrogen production, said Jassal.

Development of the project's dedicated export jetty is also progressing on schedule.

Engineering and marine works are being undertaken in close coordination with the relevant authorities, with emphasis on safety, design integrity and readiness for future ammonia exports.

Production from the first phase has already been fully allocated under existing offtake commitments, leaving no surplus green molecules for domestic use.

However, ACME is evaluating opportunities for local consumption during subsequent expansion phases, subject to market demand, infrastructure availability and the evolution of Oman's regulatory framework.

Potential applications include supplying emerging industrial sectors and supporting the development of downstream green hydrogen derivatives within the Sultanate of Oman, he added.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Andrus Lall had travelled to Oman for tourism when he suffered a major fall from a height of approximately six feet while visiting a wadi.

ASTER ROYAL AL RAFFAH HOSPITAL SAVES ESTONIAN IN COMPLEX SURGERY

MUSCAT: Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, Muscat, has successfully managed and treated one of the most challenging orthopaedic trauma cases seen in recent times, involving a 65-year-old patient from Estonia who sustained multiple severe injuries during a tourist visit to Oman.

Andrus Lall, a consultant with Andren Konsult Construction Company from Rakvere, Estonia, had travelled to Oman as a tourist when he suffered a major fall from a height of approximately six feet while visiting a wadi. The accident caused multiple critical injuries, including a D6 thoracic spine fracture and a rare, severely comminuted floating acetabular fracture extending into the iliac crest, an injury pattern rarely encountered in elderly patients.

The case became significantly more challenging because the patient was markedly obese and had multiple existing medical conditions including diabetes mellitus and hypertension, all of which substantially increased the risks associated with prolonged surgery, anaesthesia, blood loss, wound healing and postoperative recovery.

Initially treated at a government hospital, the patient was later referred to Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital for definitive specialised trauma care. The timely transfer to a tertiary trauma centre proved critical in enabling advanced surgical planning and multidisciplinary management.

Following extensive evaluation, the orthopaedic team led by Dr Kalyan Srungavarapu and Dr Sandesh Shetty, Consultants in Orthopaedic Surgery, formulated a highly specialised single-stage surgical plan.

The complexity of the case was amplified not only by the fracture configuration and the patient’s obesity, but also by logistical and communication barriers, as the patient was alone in a foreign country with limited local family support and significant language difficulties during treatment and recovery.

The surgery, clinically categorised as a Complex Hip Reconstruction (CHR), involved multiple advanced procedures performed in a single sitting.

The team first carried out open reduction and internal fixation (ORIF) of the acetabular fracture to stabilise the shattered pelvic anatomy.

This was followed by structural bone graft reconstruction to restore bony integrity and finally a complex total hip replacement to restore joint function and mobility. The procedure lasted nearly six hours and required meticulous surgical precision, multidisciplinary coordination, prolonged anaesthesia management and transfusion of two units of blood.

Vodafone Oman unveils ‘Dhofar Full of Wonder’ Khareef campaign

MUSCAT: As thousands of visitors prepare to make their journey to the Sultanate of Oman’s southern greens, Vodafone Oman is returning as main sponsor of Khareef Dhofar Season 2026 for the second consecutive year, with its biggest programme yet, “Dhofar Full of Wonder”.

Building on last year’s success, the season-long campaign promises new experiences, enhanced connectivity, entertainment, business initiatives and digital engagement across the governorate.

Running from mid-July until the end of August, the campaign is bringing Vodafone closer to visitors across key Khareef destinations, including Al Gharf, Al Haffa and Ittin, through a lively programme spanning entertainment, culture,



The campaign is bringing Vodafone closer to visitors across key Khareef destinations.

iCAUR 03T now available with summer rewards

REDEFINING the spirit of city exploration, the highly anticipated iCAUR 03T is moving into the spotlight across the Sultanate of Oman with a competitive edge through the brand’s ongoing summer rewards campaign.

Designed to inject a bold “Born to Play” energy into daily commuting and weekend getaways, the all-electric lifestyle SUV is currently available with high-value seasonal advantages.

Running until July 31, 2026, the ongoing initiative features a comprehensive premium ownership package, delivering one-year comprehensive insurance, free registration and a complimentary service package for 2 years or 30,000 km (whichever comes first), ensuring complete peace of mind with zero initial maintenance costs during the peak summer months.

The iCAUR 03T breaks traditional automotive moulds with its distinctive “J-Style” design philosophy, sporting a rugged, boxy silhouette crafted precisely for youthful, style-conscious drivers who view every journey as an experience.

Perfectly striking a balance between daily urban utility and trend-setting aesthetics, the 03T eliminates the boundaries of classic electric vehicles through its advanced Range Extended Electric Vehicle (REEV) technology.

By utilising a high-efficiency onboard engine purely as a generator to feed the electric motors, it achieves a total driving range of over 750 km.

On the road, the 03T pairs its youthful charm with breathtaking mechanical capability. It pushes out an extraordinary 429 HP and 505 Nm of torque, enabling



The all-electric lifestyle SUV is currently available with high-value seasonal advantages.

the vehicle to rocket from 0 to 100 km/h in a mere 4.8 seconds for sports-car-level responsiveness.

This rapid electric acceleration is paired with an intelligent i-AWD system that continuously monitors driving conditions, instantly reallocating power across the axles to optimise traction and structural stability whether threading through tight Muscat city traffic or cruising open coastal highways.

Uncompromising occupant safety forms the bedrock of the 03T’s architecture. Built around a pioneering all-aluminium multi-cavity cage body, the framework provides 30 per cent greater rigidity than standard steel structures.

It features a segment-exclusive, one-piece

die-cast aluminium tower top structure that acts as a reinforced safety shield.

Combined with armor-style battery protection and a sophisticated multi-point airbag system, the SUV is purpose-built to exceed rigorous global safety standards, ensuring total passenger security. Inside, the cabin transforms into a highly connected tech-haven that simplifies the modern driving experience.

Front and centre is the advanced L2+ Intelligent Driving Assistance System, which leverages a grid of over 20 smart sensors, millimetre-wave radars and high-definition cameras to run full-speed range adaptive cruise control and traffic jam avoidance.

NBO, Oman Air to deliver exclusive travel rewards

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Air to introduce an exclusive cashback campaign of up to 55 per cent for its customers on eligible flight bookings using NBO Visa Cards.

The MoU was signed by Maha bint Saud al Raisi, Assistant General Manager – Head of Product at NBO and Surya Kuchibotla, Vice President – Retailing, Ancillary and E-Commerce at Oman Air.

Lasting until July 31, 2026, customers who book Oman Air flights online using NBO Retail Visa Credit Cards will receive 55 per cent cashback in the form of NBO Reward Points, while those who book their flights using NBO Retail Visa Debit and



The MoU was signed by Maha Saud al Raisi and Surya Kuchibotla.

Prepaid Cards will receive 5 per cent cashback in the form of NBO Reward Points, subject to the campaign’s terms and conditions.

Maha bint Saud al Raisi, Assistant General Manager –

Head of Product at NBO, said: “At NBO, we continuously seek opportunities to enhance the value we deliver to our customers through strategic partnerships.

Our collaboration with Oman Air strengthens our commitment to offering rewarding travel solutions by combining exclusive campaign benefits with the premium travel and lifestyle privileges already available to our Visa Cardholders.”

From his end, Surya Kuchibotla, Vice President – Retailing, Ancillary and E-Commerce at Oman Air, said: “We are delighted to partner with National Bank of Oman to provide customers with greater value when travelling with Oman Air. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to enhancing the travel experience while rewarding our mutual customers.”

SHORTTAKES



The initiative is expected to strengthen the village’s tourism appeal.

MISFAT TOURISM PROJECT REACHES 39% COMPLETION

MUSCAT: A neighbourhood development project in Misfat Al Abriyeen in Al Hamra has reached 39 per cent completion, with the initiative expected to strengthen the village’s tourism appeal and generate greater economic returns from the sector.

The project, implemented by the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate at a cost of more than RO 810,000, aims to upgrade public services, improve visitor facilities and preserve the heritage character of one of Oman’s best-known tourism destinations.

The development includes the construction of a glass bridge linking the village entrance to the valley, a pedestrian walkway with safety barriers, upgraded pathways, traditional lighting, directional signage and designated parking areas.

Shaikh Sulaiman bin Said al Azri, Wali of Al Hamra, said the project reflects cooperation between government entities, the private sector and the local community to promote sustainable tourism.

He said infrastructure and tourism services are continuing to be upgraded to improve the visitor experience and enhance Misfat Al Abriyeen’s appeal in local and international markets.

The next phase will focus on closer coordination among stakeholders to support additional tourism and development projects, reinforcing the village’s position as a model for sustainable tourism, he added.

Abdulrahman bin Saleh al Abri, a member of the Misfat Al Abriyeen Tourism Team, said the village offers guided tours, cultural and agricultural experiences; and visits to attractions including the Omani Honey House, Misfat Al Abriyeen Museum and Bait Al Siraj.

He said the village has eight licensed tourist lodges and also offers mountain camping and adventure programmes. Promotion continues through the Visit Misfat platform, highlighting the village’s heritage, natural attractions and tourism experiences. — ONA

Oman streamlines OFW hiring with unified system

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 22

THE Sultanate of Oman has introduced a centralised medical examination and visa processing system for Filipino workers, a move aimed at accelerating recruitment, improving service quality and strengthening worker protection as Oman continues to rely on overseas labour to support key sectors of its economy.

The new system, introduced by the Ministry of Labour and effective from May 18, 2026, requires Filipino workers to complete medical examinations and visa processing through a designated centre before employment visas are issued.

The changes were outlined in Advisory No 42 issued by the Philippines’ Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), which said the initiative is designed to streamline the recruitment process for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) bound for the Sultanate of Oman while improving the efficiency of pre-departure services.

Under the new procedures, workers must register with an accredited medical centre before completing the required medical examinations and visa formalities.

The designated centre will serve as a one-stop facility providing biometric fingerprint registration, medical examinations, employment contract processing, document attestation and other pre-departure services.

It will also conduct orientation sessions on workers’ rights and obligations in Oman while assisting applicants in opening bank accounts and securing Omani mobile phone



Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) stand by outside the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines. Image for illustration only. — Reuters

numbers before deployment.

In an interview with Oman Daily Observer, Alice Visperas, Labour Attaché at the Migrant Workers Office (MWO) in Oman, welcomed the initiative, saying it reflected the shared commitment of both governments to improve labour mobility while protecting workers.

“The MWO-Oman welcomes this initiative of the Ministry of Labour of the Sultanate of Oman, in coordination with the relevant authorities. It demonstrates our shared commitment to ensuring that the deployment of Filipino workers remains safe, orderly, efficient and responsive to the needs of both workers and employers”, she said.

Visperas said the office would continue working closely with Omani authorities and other

stakeholders to ensure the smooth implementation of the new procedures.

“With proper preparation and compliance with the new procedures, Filipino workers can look forward to a smoother deployment process and a better start to their employment in the Sultanate of Oman. We remain committed to working closely with our Omani counterparts and stakeholders to ensure the smooth implementation of the new system while safeguarding the welfare and protection of our overseas Filipino workers”, she said.

The advisory noted that the official checklist of required medical examinations has yet to be published through the OVMC Oman portal. However, information currently available indicates that applicants will be



ALICE VISPERAS
Labour Attaché at the Migrant Workers Office (MWO) in Oman.

New US 25% tariff hits billions of dollars in Brazilian exports

SAO PAULO: A new 25% US tariff will hit a range of Brazilian goods on Wednesday, including farm machinery, wood products, ethanol and apparel, escalating tensions in an already strained relationship between the two most populous countries in the Western Hemisphere.

The tariff is the first levied under the Trump administration’s new strategy of using the Trade Act of 1974 to investigate what it considers unfair trade practices.

The White House’s blanket assertion of emergency powers to levy high tariffs against most global partners was struck down by the US Supreme Court earlier this year.

The new tariff threatens between \$7 billion and \$11 billion of Brazilian



A worker inspects a shoe on a production line at Brazilian footwear factory in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — Reuters

exports to the US, according to estimates from Brazil’s government and National Confederation of Industry (CNI), respectively.

That amounts to roughly 18% to 26% of Brazil’s exports to the US.

To soften the domestic effect of the tariffs, the US exempted several key imports, including beef, coffee, aircraft and plane parts.

Brazil is the first country hit with a tariff after a year-long Section 301 investigation into unfair trade practices, even though the US has consistently had a trade surplus with Brazil.

“This is the irony of the US measures”, said Welber Barral, a former Brazilian foreign trade secretary, noting the bilateral trade balance.

Washington has argued tariffs are necessary to counter what it calls unfair trade practices, from electronic payment services to ethanol market access and illegal deforestation.

The tariffs take effect just two days before a temporary 10% global tariff expires and after a Supreme Court ruling struck down previous 50% US duties on Brazilian goods that forced exporters to seek new markets.

FOOTWEAR LAYOFFS

For many sectors, the adjustments have already been painful. Brazil’s footwear industry, which counts the US as its top foreign market, has already downgraded its export outlook for the year to an

expected 7.1% drop, compared with its previous forecast for a 3.6% drop.

The US buys one in every five shoes exported from Brazil, according to the Brazilian Footwear Industries Association (Abicalçados).

“There is no other market capable of replacing the US”, said Toni Hajel, owner of exporter TH Shoes and head of the footwear industry union in Franca, a key hub for footwear production in Sao Paulo state.

He said about 40% of the area’s exports, or 650,000 pairs a year, are sold to the US.

The new tariffs will make those sales unviable, he added, forcing producers to lay off workers unless Brazil renegotiates the duties or secures a footwear exemption.

— Reuters

ECONOMIC DATA

UK inflation eases in June



Inflation in the United Kingdom slowed to a 15-month low of 2.6 per cent in June as lower food and fuel prices eased cost pressures, official data showed on Wednesday.

The reading was below economists’ expectations of 2.7 per cent and down from 2.8 per cent in May. The Office for National Statistics said falling diesel prices were among the main drivers of the decline. — Reuters

TRADE PERFORMANCE

Japan exports extend growth



Japan’s exports rose 19.3 per cent year-on-year in June, marking a tenth consecutive monthly increase as a weaker yen and strong demand from AI-related data centres boosted shipments.

Imports climbed 25.4 per cent, leaving the country with a trade deficit of 406.9 billion yen. The Bank of Japan is widely expected to leave interest rates unchanged next week. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold nears two-week high



Gold climbed to its highest level in nearly two weeks as investors awaited next week’s US Federal Reserve meeting and monitored tensions in the Middle East.

Spot gold gained 0.9 per cent to \$4,113.73 an ounce, while US futures rose 1.1 per cent. Other precious metals rise as well. Higher oil prices and expectations of steady US interest rates also supported bullion. — Reuters

OPINION

Aligning learning with labour market demands is key



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

OVER the past three decades, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have made significant investments in higher education by establishing universities and specialised colleges across a broad range of academic disciplines. This expansion has produced a growing number of university graduates who contribute to both the public and private sectors. At the same time, the Gulf region has one of the youngest populations in the world.

According to the GCC Statistical Centre, approximately 23.5 million people aged 15–34 lived in the GCC in 2024, accounting for 38.2 per cent of the region's total population. This youthful demographic represents both a major opportunity for economic development and a challenge for policymakers seeking to create sufficient employment opportunities.

Despite improvements in educational access, many Gulf graduates encounter obstacles when entering the labour market. The most pressing challenge is finding suitable employment, particularly in academic fields where graduate numbers exceed available jobs.

Many young people also continue to favour public-sector careers because they generally offer greater job security, higher salaries, and better benefits than private-sector employment. This preference often results in graduates waiting for government vacancies instead of pursuing opportunities in private companies.

Another important issue is the mismatch between university education and labour

market needs. While higher education institutions have expanded considerably, some still emphasise theoretical learning more than practical skills.

Modern employers increasingly seek graduates with expertise in digital technologies, artificial intelligence, technical professions, modern management and problem-solving. Consequently, many graduates require additional professional training before becoming fully prepared for employment.

Competition from expatriate workers further complicates the employment landscape. In many industries, foreign employees possess greater work experience and are willing to accept lower wages, making it more difficult for local graduates to compete despite government workforce localisation policies.

Salary expectations also contribute to the challenge, as many graduates expect relatively high starting incomes, whereas private-sector employers often offer lower initial salaries than government institutions.

Entrepreneurship presents another area where progress remains limited. Although GCC governments provide financial support, training, and incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), many graduates continue to prefer traditional employment.

Concerns about financial risk, limited business experience, customer acquisition and long-term sustainability discourage many young people from launching their own ventures.

Rapid technological change is

Many young people also continue to favour public-sector careers because they generally offer greater job security, higher salaries and better benefits than private-sector employment. This preference often results in graduates waiting for government vacancies instead of pursuing opportunities in private companies.

transforming labour markets across the world, requiring graduates to continuously upgrade their skills. Artificial intelligence, automation, digital technologies and e-commerce are replacing some traditional occupations while creating entirely new career opportunities.

Continuous learning, professional development and digital competence have therefore become essential for long-term employability.

In addition to employment-related challenges, Gulf youth face increasing financial and social pressures. Furthermore, many employers seek candidates with prior work experience, making it difficult for recent graduates to secure their first job.

Employment patterns are also changing. Freelancing, remote work, startup ventures and the gig economy are becoming increasingly important throughout the Gulf.

However, many young people have not yet fully embraced these flexible career options or developed the entrepreneurial and digital skills needed to benefit from them.

Recognising these challenges, GCC governments have introduced initiatives to better align education with labour market demands. These include strengthening vocational education, expanding workforce nationalisation programmes, encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation.

Looking ahead, the future success of Gulf graduates will depend not only on obtaining university degrees but also on developing lifelong learning habits, digital literacy, multilingual abilities, creativity, adaptability and entrepreneurial thinking.

China’s steel sector looks weaker than it is, reverse for iron ore

CLYDE RUSSELL

China’s steel sector presents something of a dilemma in trying to work out if it is soft and likely to continue to weaken, or whether it is actually performing quite strongly given the subdued state of the world’s second-biggest economy.

The data certainly suggests an industry that is at best just keeping its head above water.

Steel production was 83.67 million metric tonnes in June, up 0.4 per cent from the same month in 2025 but down slightly from 84.36 million in May, according to official data released last week.

If a positive spin is being sought, steel output on a daily basis was 2.79 million tonnes per day in June, the highest since March and up slightly from May’s 2.72 million.

But production for the first half of 2026 was 499.95 million tonnes, down 3 per cent from the same period last year.

This makes it likely that 2026 steel output will stay below 1 billion tonnes for a second year, given that mills tend to have lower production in the second half of the year.

The problem for the steel sector is that China’s economy is operating at different speeds across the various steel-consuming sectors.

Construction, which accounts for about one-third of demand, is still weak, with first-half property investment dropping 18 per cent from the same period in 2025, construction starts falling 23.4 per cent and property sales by floor area by 11.6 per cent.

There are other signs of concern as well, with vehicle sales dropping 4.1 per cent in the first half of the year after rising 11.4 per cent in the same period in 2025.

China’s electric vehicle sector has been a star performer in recent years and exports continue to perform strongly with rising demand as global consumers switch away from diesel and petrol cars amid the ongoing price volatility and supply uncertainty from the Iran war. But domestic sales momentum has faded.

Manufacturing exports are also holding up, with gains for solar panels in June despite the removal of an export tax rebate.

Prices for steel have also been largely steady for the past year, with benchmark Shanghai rebar contracts ending at 3,104 yuan (\$458.49) a tonne on Monday, near the middle of the range between 3,051 yuan and 3,275 yuan that has prevailed so far this year. — Reuters

Vacancies drop to 5-year low as firms delay hiring

VACANCIES in the UK have slumped to their lowest level in more than five years as firms put recruitment on hold in the face of economic uncertainty and soaring wage costs.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said vacancies fell by 19,000 quarter-on-quarter, to 707,000, in the three months to May, which is the lowest since the three months to April 2021.

The ONS said the drop in vacancies was significant across retail and hospitality sectors and smaller employers, while the largest fall in the quarter was in professional services. The lowest figures show Britain’s rate of unemployment edged lower to 4.9 per cent in the three months to April, down from 5 per cent in the three months to March.

The number of workers on payrolls fell by 53,000 during April, to 30.3 million, but the more timely flash estimate showed a rise of 2,000 in May, though the ONS stressed this is subject to revision.



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

Wage growth remained unchanged at 3.4 per cent in the three months to April after recently easing back, and continues to outstrip inflation rising by 0.3 per cent, after taking Consumer Prices Index inflation into account.



A man walks past a job centre in Manchester, Britain. — Reuters

self-employment”, while the vacancies decline signalled firms are “becoming more cautious about taking on new staff”. The ONS said its vacancies survey showed some firms are putting recruitment on hold.

The Government increased employee national insurance contributions in April last year, while firms have also been hit by above-inflation rises in the minimum wage. Employee-heavy sectors such as retail and hospitality have been hit particularly hard by the changes.

Long-term unemployment: The number of people in long-term unemployment has risen to its highest level in a decade.

There are now 474,000 people in long-term unemployment, according to the ONS, which accounts for anyone who has spent more than twelve months out of work. This is the highest level since January 2016.

An additional 129,000 people have been classed as long-term unemployed since Labour came to power in July 2024, highlighting the extent to which former chancellor Rachel Reeves’s tax rises have damaged the jobs market.

The recent surge in prolonged joblessness is particularly

concerning as economists believe that the longer a person remains out of work, the more challenging it is for them to find a job.

This risks weakening growth as unemployment holds back productivity, reduces tax revenue and hinders consumer spending.

The chief executive of Learning and Work Institute, Stephen Evans, said: “The risk is that should the economy pick up, they’ll find it more difficult to get back to work.

Nipping long-term unemployment in the bud really is massively important for the prospects of the economy, as well as for those individuals.”

Evans warned that for young people, even short periods of unemployment can be severely damaging to their career prospects. Official figures show that the rate of unemployment for 16 to 24-years-olds recently climbed to 16.2 per cent, its highest level since January 2015. The latest official figures show the number of 18-to 24-year-olds in long-term unemployment has more than doubled since 2016.

Economist at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Fergus Jimenez-England said young people were bearing the brunt of the nation’s cooling job market.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PEST CONTROL
OMAN CO. L.L.C.**

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

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

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

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

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

DESKTOP support
engineer, 6+
years experience,
skilled in
Windows/ Server/
Ubuntu, Network
configuration,
M365 & Google
workspace admin.
Contact: 99639710,
jay.prajapati5655@
gmail.ci

SENIOR Logistics
Coordinator
seeking
opportunity. 8
years' experience
in Import,
Export, Customs
Clearance &
Freight.
PH +968 92267276

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

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

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

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

Driving School
Special offers for those
wishing to learn driving in
(Aziba - Khwair
Qurum - Ruwi
Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072

WJ Towell Group Company

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

**Quality car rentals
at competitive prices.**

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

SIT. WANTED

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

OMAN DAILY

Observer

**FREE*
CLASSIFIEDS**

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

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

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

FOR RENT

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

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

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN
male B.Tech
Mechanical
engineer with
3+yrs experience
as Project
engineer in
project execution,
commissioning,
Auto CAD.
Currently in
Oman seeking
job. Contact: +968
75174368

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
[izdihar_info](https://www.instagram.com/izdihar_info) [izdihar.info](https://www.facebook.com/izdihar.info)

ازدهار
izdihar



ART/LIFE



FILM SCOOP SPIDER-MAN RETURNS WITH NEW MYSTERIES



Actor Tom Holland attends the Italian premiere of the film “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” in Rome, Italy. — **Reuters**

Tom Holland says *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* tells a different kind of superhero story — one that focuses on vulnerability, community and the importance of asking for help.

“The movie kind of serves as this cautionary tale about living a life alone, the importance of community and how sometimes the bravest thing to do in life is to ask for help”, Holland said in New York.

“It’s definitely more grounded; it’s grittier, it’s more emotional, but that doesn’t mean we sacrifice the humor and the fun”, he added.

Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, the film is set several years after the events of *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. Peter Parker is still dealing with the consequences of Doctor Strange’s spell, which erased everyone’s memory of both his identity and his existence.

Among those affected are Peter’s girlfriend, Michelle “MJ” Jones-Watson, played by Holland’s real-life wife Zendaya and his best friend Ned, played by Jacob Batalon. Neither remembers their relationship with Peter.

As *Spider-Man* navigates this new reality, he forms an unlikely alliance with vigilante *The Punisher*, played by Jon Bernthal, marking another crossover from Marvel’s *Daredevil* and Netflix’s *The Punisher*.

Despite initial tension, the two eventually develop a bond.

“I think it’s always interesting when you have two characters who are just trying to push everything away”, Bernthal said. “That’s sort of the opposite of what being a human being is... all of a sudden you find yourself caring about someone you swore you never would”.

The *Punisher* is one of several familiar Marvel characters appearing in the film. Others include Florence Pugh’s Yelena Belova and Mark Ruffalo’s Bruce Banner, also known as the Hulk.

One mystery continues to fuel fan speculation: the identity of the character played by *Stranger Things* star Sadie Sink.

“Now that I have to talk about it all day, it is a little bit more difficult than I thought”, Sink said of keeping the role secret during the promotional tour.

Cretton, who previously directed *Shang-Chi* and the *Legend of the Ten Rings* and served as executive producer on Marvel’s *Wonder Man*, hopes audiences resist trying to solve every mystery before release.

“Trying to figure out the puzzle beforehand is fun and exhilarating and creates anticipation”, he said. “But I do hope that people don’t look too hard, because the experience of watching it on the big screen in a room full of people — it’s great to still have a lot of surprises for them”.

Spider-Man: Brand New Day arrives in theatres on July 31. — **Reuters**

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



HOLLYWOOD

Actor Tom Holland and actress Zendaya pose during a fan event promoting the upcoming film *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* in Mexico City, Mexico. — **AFP**



DANCE

Guatemala’s National Ballet performs in Guatemala City to celebrate the company’s 78th anniversary. — **AFP**



CULTURE

South Korean dancers perform during the opening ceremony of the 48th Unesco World Heritage Committee session in Busan, South Korea. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

HONG KONG FILM LEGEND PATRICK TSE DIES AT 89



Hong Kong film legend Patrick Tse Yin. — AFP

Hong Kong film legend Patrick Tse Yin died at the age of 89, his children announced on Monday.

His daughter, actor Jennifer Tse, said on Instagram that he died peacefully in hospital with his family beside him following a period of declining health.

An actor, director and producer, Tse became a household name during a career spanning seven decades. Born Tse Ka-yuk in Guangdong, he moved to Hong Kong as a child. He also directed and produced films through his own Tse Brothers company.

Rejected by an acting course in 1953, Tse caught filmmaker Poon Bing-kuen's attention and made his screen debut as the lead in *Save Your Water Supply* in 1954.

Known as "Fourth Brother", Tse became a recognisable Cantonese leading man. The Hong Kong Film Archive

described his screen image as suave and carefree, qualities that remained associated with him throughout his career.

He later appeared in the 2001 comedy *Shaolin Soccer* and received a lifetime achievement honour from the Hong Kong Film Awards in 2019.

In 2022, Tse won Best Actor at the Hong Kong Film Awards for his performance in *'Time'*, becoming the oldest recipient of the award. It was a late-career high.

His son, Cantopop star Nicholas Tse, said his father devoted his life to entertainment and hoped to bring audiences joy.

Nicholas recalled his father's belief that "the show must go on", asking fans not to cry or be too sad when remembering him.

"He would think that's not dashing enough", he wrote.

— AFP



Ivorian Fashion designer Loza Maleombho poses for photograph in her workshop. — AFP

Ivory Coast fashion designers storm the international stage



FAVOURED by Beyonce and Aya Nakamura, Ivory Coast's fashion industry is gaining international attention through social media.

Its leading designers, however, have no intention of leaving Abidjan to build their careers abroad.

Beyonce's stylist contacted Abidjan-based designer Loza Maleombho after discovering her handmade creations on Instagram. Following years of discussions, the US superstar wore Maleombho's black-and-white print jacket, fastened with gold Baoule mask clasps, in her 2020 music video "Already".

The jacket reached 70 million YouTube viewers.

"It was truly indescribable", the 40-year-old designer said.

Maleombho, who has also dressed Beyonce's sister Solange and singer Kelly Rowland, began using local materials because she felt African cultural codes, textiles and aesthetics were underrepresented in international fashion.

Her preferred materials include jute and traditional woven fabrics such as cotton Baoule pagne and cotton-silk Kita pagne, whose origins stretch back to the Ashanti Kingdom across present-day Ivory Coast and Ghana. Her designs combine tradition with modern

elegance.

Abidjan has become a leading African fashion hub as expanding middle classes and e-commerce broaden designers' customer base. Unesco estimates that demand for African fashion products will rise by 42 per cent over the coming decade.

Designer Elie Kuame, whose fashion house in Cocody is approaching its 20th anniversary, is another champion of African creativity. Pagnes account for half the fabric he uses, while his dazzling dresses are carefully sewn, beaded and embroidered in his Abidjan workshop.

The weaving traditions behind these colourful textiles, practised by several Ivorian communities, are recognised by Unesco as part of the world's intangible cultural heritage.

Kuame insists his creations are not "haute couture", an exclusive, legally protected category governed by France's haute couture trade association. "We have no desire to be certified by a French trade association", he said.

Instead, Kuame created his own label of excellence, Born in Africa and founded Abidjan Fashion Week, one of about 30 platforms across the continent where African designers present collections to buyers, media and fashion enthusiasts.

Although he participates in

Paris and New York fashion weeks, Kuame remains based in Ivory Coast. "My aim is to contribute to developing the industry here", he said.

Fellow Ivorian designer Ibrahim Fernandez describes fashion as Africa's "soft power", arguing that its designers are every bit as capable as their international counterparts.

Their creations can cost from several hundred to several thousand dollars, placing them beyond the reach of most people in a country where the minimum monthly wage is about \$130. Nevertheless, their studios create jobs, showcase Ivorian creativity and generate national pride.

This summer, Fernandez exhibited at Parisian department store Galeries Lafayette during an event celebrating African design. He has dressed rappers Youssoupha and Black M, as well as Malian-born Aya Nakamura, the world's most-streamed Francophone singer.

For Nakamura's May concert at the Stade de France, Fernandez and fellow Abidjan designer LaFalaise Dion created a sparkling dress adorned with cowrie shells, pearls and gemstones. She wore it before more than 70,000 spectators.

"It was incredible, an unexpected moment, a moment of joy", Fernandez said. — AFP

FEATURES



THE OMANI ARTIST BEHIND VIRAL PERFUME BOTTLE ART

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

BEFORE the first drop of perfume escapes the bottle, Riyam al Mamari has already told a story on its surface.

For the Omani artist, a perfume bottle is never just glass. It is a canvas waiting to bloom with delicate flowers, drifting butterflies and intricate brushstrokes that transform a familiar luxury object into a one-of-a-kind work of art. In recent months, videos of her hand-painting perfume bottles, particularly those from Oman’s internationally celebrated fragrance house Amouage, have captivated thousands online, turning an intimate creative process into a viral celebration of craftsmanship, beauty and national pride.

Yet the journey began long before social media discovered her work.

“My passion for drawing started in childhood”, Riyam says. “It was my way of spending time and expressing my thoughts and emotions”. What began as a childhood pastime gradually evolved into a lifelong pursuit. Through years of practice, studying different artistic styles and experimenting with new techniques, art became woven into the fabric of her everyday life.

That spirit of experimentation remains at the heart of her work. Rather than limiting herself to paper or canvas, Riyam paints on pottery, sketchbooks, glass and almost any surface that invites imagination. Each material, she believes, speaks its own language.

“I don’t believe creativity belongs to one material”, she explains. “Every surface has its own character and challenges; and that keeps the experience exciting while helping me grow as an artist”. Among all those surfaces, perfume bottles presented an especially intriguing challenge. The idea itself was inspired by Omani, Arab and

international artists, but Riyam was determined to leave her own unmistakable signature. Her compositions are often filled with blossoms and butterflies, symbols she associates with beauty, gentleness, renewal and nature. Every bottle becomes a carefully balanced composition, blending her artistic vision with clients’ preferences to ensure no two pieces are ever exactly alike.

Painting on curved glass demands extraordinary patience. Every brushstroke must account for reflection, transparency and precision, qualities that have reshaped not only her technique but also her philosophy of creativity.

“The experience taught me the importance of patience and attention to the smallest details”, she says. “It also strengthened my belief that art can exist in everything around us”. The unexpected popularity of her videos has become another turning point. While she never anticipated the widespread attention, the enthusiastic response has expanded her audience, boosted her confidence and opened doors to new collaborations.

Like many emerging Omani artists, Riyam acknowledges that standing out in an increasingly vibrant creative landscape requires constant growth. But she also sees unprecedented opportunities as Oman embraces the arts and digital platforms connect local talent with audiences far beyond its borders.

Her ambition now reaches beyond individual commissions. She hopes to exhibit locally and internationally, develop collections with a distinctive artistic identity and collaborate with brands that value craftsmanship.

For Riyam al Mamari, even a perfume bottle can become more than a vessel for fragrance. In the hands of an artist, it becomes a keepsake where Oman’s artistry lingers long after the scent has faded.



RIYAM AL MAMARI

Omani artist Riyam al Mamari has captured hearts online with her intricate hand-painted perfume bottles, transforming luxury objects into artistic expressions while continuing a journey of creativity across different surfaces and mediums.

