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The Observer is bringing out an online supplement on FIFA World Cup 2026, which will be published on [www.omanobserver.om](#) at 12 pm daily.

IN BRIEF

HM SENDS GREETINGS TO US PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Donald J. Trump of the US on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the US president, wishing the American people further progress and prosperity and the bilateral relations more development and growth. — ONA

HM GREET'S LEADERS OF ALGERIA, CAPE VERDE, VENEZUELA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria on his country's independence anniversary.

His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the Algerian president, praying to Allah the Almighty for the return of this occasion and similar ones with the brotherly Algerian people having achieved all their aspirations for progress and prosperity. HM also sent a cable of greetings to President José Maria Neves of Cape Verde on his country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president, wishing him continued success in leading the people of Cape Verde to achieve further progress and development across all sectors.

HM has sent a cable of greetings to Delcy Rodriguez, Acting President of Venezuela, on the occasion of her country's Independence Anniversary. HM expressed his best wishes for continued progress, development, and stability for this friendly nation, hoping for continued growth of cooperation and friendship relations between the two countries to serve their common interests.

DHOFAR COMES ALIVE AS EARLY KHAREEF VISITORS ARRIVE



Dhofar's appeal is a combination of sea, mountains, mist, wadis, springs, viewpoints and open family spaces.

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 4

DHOFAR'S Khareef season is beginning to find its rhythm, with visitors from across Oman and neighbouring Gulf states arriving gradually in Salalah as the governorate enters its most important tourism period of the year.

Vehicles from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar were visible this week in Salalah and around several coastal and tourism areas.

Omani visitors, however, continue to form the largest share of early movement, reflecting khareef's enduring role as

a domestic family season as well as a regional summer attraction.

The first days of the season are usually a period of gradual build-up rather than full peak activity.

Visitor movement is now beginning to appear around beaches, waterfronts, cafés, accommodation areas and family spaces, while the heavier flow is expected to gather pace through July and August.

Field visitors by the Observer showed early movement around Al Mughsail, Al Dahariz, Al Haffa and other coastal areas, as well as towards mountain viewpoints and natural sites that draw families during the khareef months.

TURN TO P2

OMAN PRESERVES GENETIC HERITAGE OF ARABIAN HORSES



YUSEF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, JULY 4

The Sultanate of Oman has successfully conducted an experiment to freeze the genetic collection of semen from pure Arabian horses after three years of research. This breakthrough opens a new avenue for preserving distinguished breeds and developing artificial insemination programmes in the equestrian sector.

The project was led by the Oman Center for Animal and Plant Genetic Resources (Mawarid), affiliated with the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA), in collaboration with the Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Directorate-General of Veterinary Services and the Muscat Stud For Pure Arabian Horses.

During the project, more than fifty semen collections were carried out from genetically selected horses, resulting in over 2,000 samples preserved at temperatures as low as -196°C using liquid nitrogen.

The work team successfully performed four artificial insemination procedures using the frozen semen, resulting in healthy foals.

TURN TO P2



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2006	2008	20010	2014	2018	2022	2026
						
Shareholder and Development Agreement signed	First Unit Handover	625	1,257	2,154	2,538	3,272

OMAN

FROMPAGE1

Dhofar comes alive as Khareef visitors arrive

Dhofar’s appeal during the season is not built around a single destination. It is the combination of sea, mountains, mist, wadis, springs, viewpoints and open family spaces that gives the governorate its distinctive place in Gulf tourism.

At a time when much of the region faces high summer temperatures, Salalah and its surrounding mountains offer a different climate and landscape. Light drizzle, low clouds, green slopes and coastal scenery have long made Dhofar one of the few summer escapes in the Arabian Peninsula with a natural monsoon identity. Coastal areas are expected to play a central role in the early weeks of the season. Al Mughsail remains one of the governorate’s most recognisable sites, with its beach, Marneef Cave, natural blowholes and views over the Arabian Sea. Inside Salalah, Al Dahariz, Al Haffa and Awqad offer a different layer of the visitor experience. These waterfront and beach areas link the city to the sea, providing open spaces for families, evening walks, cafés and informal gatherings.

The growing importance of waterfronts is also changing how visitors experience Salalah. The city is no longer seen only through its mountain routes and natural springs, but also through its seafronts, family spaces, markets and urban attractions.

Mountain and natural sites will gain more attention as the season deepens. Wadi Darbat, Ittin, Ain Razat, Ain Jarziz and other viewpoints and green areas remain central to the khareef image, particularly for visitors seeking mist-covered landscapes and cooler weather.

For many families, khareef is a slow-moving experience rather than a single event. Mornings are often spent near the sea, afternoons in the mountains and evenings in Salalah’s cafés, markets and public areas. This pattern gives the season wider economic value across several sectors. Local businesses are already preparing for stronger activity.

A tourism operator in Al Mughsail said visitor activity had started gradually, with stronger movement expected in the coming week as more families arrive from Oman and neighbouring Gulf states. He said many facilities were completing seasonal preparations to receive visitors during the peak period.

For Dhofar’s local economy, the gradual start matters. khareef is not only a weather season; it is a commercial window that supports accommodation, food and beverage activity, transport, retail, entertainment and small tourism services across Salalah and nearby wilayats.

The scale of the season has continued to grow in recent years. Khareef Dhofar attracted more than 1.07 million visitors in 2025.

Oman preserves genetic heritage of Arabian horses

This proves the potential for employing modern biotechnology to improve breeds and reduce health risks associated with direct mating. The project’s organisers stated that the new genetic collection provides a long-term scientific framework for preserving animal genetic resources, supports genetics research and veterinary technologies, and opens the door to future investments in Arabian horse services and biotechnology. One foal was named Mawarid in recognition of the centre’s research role.

Connecting Oman and Japan with the art of making Bonsai

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 4

Kanta Hirota, aka the ‘Bonsai Man’ as he is fondly called, who was in Muscat last week hosting live bonsai demonstrations on Bonsai, amused the audience with his hands that created Bonsai with quick moves and clockwise precision.

The live bonsai demonstrations that he held across Muscat in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan and the National Museum of Oman at venues including the National Museum and Takara Restaurant, was an attempt to promote bonsai as “living art” and a medium for cross-cultural connection. He also explored Japan’s oldest art which found new roots in Oman’s soil during his few days in Muscat. He was so impressed by

the resilience of local junipers in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, that he is planning to return to study how Japanese techniques can adapt to Oman’s climate and apply them to local trees.

“Bonsai is living art. If you want to touch it, first refine yourself. Pass on good energy with your hands,” he advocates. “This little tree stands still with centuries of stories to unfold and its twisted trunk speaks of storms weathered, its delicate branches of patient hands that have shaped them over generations. Every curve is intentional, every leaf a testament to discipline, artistry and time.”

He’s right. A bonsai is not a stunted tree. It is a landscape compressed and a juniper twisted by imagined storms. Branches shaped by hands that will never meet the next pair of hands. According to him, unlike



Demonstrations that he held across Muscat were an attempt to promote bonsai as “living art”.

a painting, it is never finished. Summer in Oman means it needs to be watered three times a day. “If you forget once, and centuries of care can end” he emphasised.

The most telling moment of his trip wasn’t on stage, but was in

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. “There are wild junipers there,” Hirota says. “Some look a thousand years old. Surviving on almost no water.” That changed something. “When I saw those trees on a harsh mountain, I became convinced Bonsai has great potential in Oman.” Now he speaks of frankincense, Oman’s iconic tree, shaped by Japanese hands. A cultural bridge in a pot. The climate is hard, he admits. “Oman’s heat needs study.” He will keep coming back to learn it.

Visitors to the three venues where he held a live demo asked if bonsai is like ikebana, Japan’s flower art. Hirota shakes his head. “In ikebana, when you cut the flower, its life ends. The arrangement is complete.” Bonsai is the opposite. “We prune so it can live longer, become healthier. Every stage is complete for that

moment. Then it grows again.”

Hirota, the master artist from Japan’s historic Toju-en Garden in Omiya Bonsai Village, Saitama, entered the art of Bonsai accidentally. Hirota’s own story doesn’t start in a garden. It starts in a fashion high school. “My relative used to run a bonsai nursery. He was going to close it. Somehow, he took me in and my next task was to make it more appealing and make profit,” he recalls.

Within a few months, there were people crowding the shop again as he approached it with the belief that bonsai is not about stunting a tree unlike ordinary gardening. It is about creating harmony between nature and human imagination, good and bad, past and present, capturing the essence of a full-grown landscape within a single pot.

PDO to sign 3 million CSR agreements today



These projects embody four key pillars of the PDO’s corporate approach, aligning with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Khoula Hospital and establishing a new accident and emergency unit at Al Jazir Hospital, among other projects. These projects embody four

key pillars of the PDO’s corporate approach, aligning with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by supporting national development,

promoting sustainability and social impact, and strengthening the human capital development pillar through investment in education, youth empowerment, and skills development.

This also reflects the company’s ongoing corporate transformation towards a more comprehensive and impactful role.

The company’s leadership continues to solidify a responsible approach that balances operational performance with national responsibility, and leads initiatives with a long-term impact. — ONA

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 4

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN recorded an average temperature of 33.9°C and an average relative humidity of 54.7 per cent during July 2025, according to the latest climate indicators released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data reflect Oman’s typical summer conditions, with high temperatures accompanied by elevated humidity levels across much of the country.

According to the NCSI, weather conditions varied across the governorates due to Oman’s diverse geography. Coastal areas experienced higher humidity, making temperatures feel even hotter, while inland regions recorded higher daytime temperatures under comparatively drier conditions.

The climate statistics provide an important reference for government institutions, businesses and the public in planning seasonal activities and implementing appropriate precautionary measures during the summer months.

The NCSI noted that climate data also support key sectors, including public health, energy, agriculture,

Experts say that continuous monitoring of temperature and humidity trends is essential to understanding climate patterns and strengthening national efforts to enhance environmental sustainability and climate resilience.



water resources and transportation, by providing reliable information for operational planning and long-term policy development.

Experts say continuous monitoring of temperature and humidity trends is essential for understanding climate patterns and strengthening national efforts to enhance environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

Higher humidity levels can significantly increase heat stress, particularly for outdoor workers and those engaged in physical activity during peak daytime hours. Authorities continue to advise the public to follow heat safety measures, including staying well

hydrated, limiting direct exposure to the sun during the hottest parts of the day and taking extra precautions to protect vulnerable groups.

The NCSI continues to publish comprehensive environmental, economic and social statistics, reinforcing Oman’s national data ecosystem and supporting evidence-based policymaking in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The latest climate indicators underscore the importance of official weather statistics in enhancing public awareness and helping institutions and individuals better prepare for seasonal weather conditions across the Sultanate of Oman.

Two killed, five injured in car rollover in Qarn Al Alam

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

Two people were killed and five others injured from the same family when a vehicle overturned in the Qarn Al Alam

area on the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road (Adam-Haima), the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has announced on X.

The ROP said that the police aviation carried out a medical evacuation for two Saudi

nationals, while five others were transported via an ambulance to Nizwa Hospital after the accident.

A source at Nizwa Hospital reported that the five injured children received medical care at the hospital with minor to

moderate wounds and they were discharged on Saturday afternoon. The bodies of the deceased were repatriated to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in coordination with the Saudi Embassy in Oman.

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SHORT TAKES

The achievement reflects the growing international presence of Omani professionals.

Shaima al Hashmi wins ‘Cybersecurity Woman for 2026’ award

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

Shaima bint Juma al Hashmi, Cybersecurity Lecturer at the Muscat Branch of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), has won the “Cybersecurity Woman of the Year 2026” award during a ceremony held in the city of Feldkirch, Principality of Liechtenstein.

The award was presented under the auspices of Liechtenstein’s Minister of Home Affairs, Economy and Sport as part of the global awards programme organised by the International Cybersecurity Alliance, with the participation of leading cybersecurity experts and specialists from around the world.

Al Hashmi received the award following an international competition evaluated by an independent jury, which assessed nominees based on a comprehensive set of professional and scientific criteria, including societal impact, innovation, contributions to the advancement of the cybersecurity sector, academic and research achievements, and initiatives aimed at strengthening digital security and developing human capabilities in this vital field.

The achievement reflects the growing international presence of Omani professionals and highlights the remarkable accomplishments of Omani women in specialised technical fields, particularly cybersecurity, which continues to witness rapid regional and global development amid increasing efforts to strengthen digital systems, enhance information security, and address evolving cyber threats.

The “Cybersecurity Woman of the Year 2026” award is an international recognition programme that honours outstanding female leaders in cybersecurity, highlights women’s impactful contributions to the sector, promotes innovation, and encourages best practices that support the development of a secure and sustainable digital environment.

Study for GCC storage zones for food reviewed

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) participated via videoconference in the extraordinary meeting of the GCC Agricultural Cooperation and Food Security Committee.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources headed the Omani delegation at the meeting.

The meeting, which brought

together the ministers and officials responsible for food security affairs across the GCC states, deliberated on mechanisms to strengthen Gulf integration in the food security sector. The discussions reviewed a proposal to conduct a study for the establishment of strategic storage zones for food, pharmaceuticals and other essential supplies.

This initiative is intended to enhance the preparedness of GCC member states in addressing

dynamic developments and contingency scenarios, while also reinforcing supply chain sustainability.

The meeting also addressed a proposal to develop a joint Gulf framework for food security support among GCC countries, and to hold a workshop for specialists from member states to review the study plan, exchange national expertise and experiences, and formulate the necessary conceptual

frameworks to support the project’s implementation and the realisation of its objectives.

This meeting is held within the context of the GCC member states’ collective efforts to advance joint Gulf action, further develop the food security system and elevate the level of coordination and integration in a manner that contributes to achieving food security and sustainability for the Council’s member countries. — **ONA**

Cool Al Hamra mountains and events attract visitors

AMAL AL RIYAMI
MUSCAT, JULY 4

AS TEMPERATURES rise across the Sultanate of Oman during the summer season, Eastern Mountain in the Wilayat of Al Hamra is attracting visitors seeking cooler weather and outdoor experiences, supported by a range of seasonal activities designed to enhance the area’s tourism appeal.

The summer programme was opened in Eastern Mountain and will continue until August 30. It offers a variety of cultural, entertainment, and community activities suitable at different age groups. The events include children’s recreational activities, live stage programmes, family seating areas, dedicated spaces for local products and productive families, as well as opportunities for small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs to showcase their businesses.

Visitors can also enjoy camping areas and mountain trails that provide an experience combining nature, recreation and community engagement,

The summer programme continues until August 30.

contributing to a more diverse tourism offering in the area. The growing activity at the site reflects wider efforts to strengthen tourism destinations across Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and increase their attractiveness to both visitors and investors.

Eng Sulaiman bin Hamad al Sunaidy, Director-General of Al Dakhiliyah Municipality, said, “The governorate continues implementing a number of projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing tourism destinations, improving natural

sites, and upgrading facilities and services in line with the increasing tourism movement and its contribution to economic development.”

He noted that Eastern Mountain has witnessed increasing attention due to its natural and climatic advantages, as well as its connection with several tourism attractions across Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, helping diversify visitor experiences. Al Sunaidy added: “One of the major ongoing projects is the Eastern Mountain

Oasis project, which has exceeded 60 per cent completion and is expected to become a significant addition to tourism and recreational infrastructure upon completion.

According to him, current work includes the completion of service and investment facilities, an outdoor theatre, shaded areas, landscaping works and final finishing stages, while ensuring that development plans remain aligned with the mountainous nature of the site and environmental considerations. He further stressed that the project is expected to support local added value through the involvement of local institutions and companies, creating broader opportunities for small and medium enterprises and strengthening economic activity in the area.

As tourism activity continues to grow, Eastern Mountain is steadily strengthening its position as one of Al Dakhiliyah’s emerging destinations, combining natural attractions with development initiatives aimed at enriching the visitor experience.

Al Sabti addresses BOS Summer Business Reception in London

STAFF REPORTER
LONDON, JULY 4

The British Omani Society (BOS) successfully hosted its annual Summer Business Reception on July 2 at the BOS headquarters in Mayfair, London. The reception formed part of the Society’s 50th anniversary celebrations, bringing together senior government representatives, business leaders, healthcare professionals, and members of the UK and Omani communities.

This year’s reception took place against the backdrop of the recently announced UK-GCC Free Trade Agreement and focused on opportunities for enhanced cooperation between the UK and Oman, particularly within the healthcare sector and broader

strategic industries.

Chris Breeze, Chairman of the BOS Business Subcommittee and Managing Director of Ellipse Projects UK, welcomed guests to the event, and introduced the Guest of Honour, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health of the Sultanate of Oman, who delivered a keynote address on prospects for healthcare cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom.

He highlighted the priorities of the Omani health sector in light of “Oman Vision 2040,” which rests on the following pillars: strengthening health system governance and advancing private health sector development; reinforcing public health and enhancing the quality of care with an

The reception formed part of the Society’s 50th anniversary celebrations.

emphasis on early prevention; ensuring sustainable health system financing; advancing digital health through digital transformation and artificial intelligence technologies; and investing in human resources for health development.

Al Sabti also addressed

the Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, announced in May 2026, describing it as a strategic lever for deepening the partnership between the two countries, with promising implications for the future of

cooperation in pharmaceutical manufacturing, innovative medicines, scientific research, pharmaceutical security, and digital health.

The panel was followed by an opportunity for guests to connect at the BOS Summer Business Reception, co-hosted by the Society’s Omani counterpart organisation, the BOS. Richard Stanford, Chair of the BOS, welcomed guests to the reception and reflected on the Society’s 50-year history of supporting a wide range of areas of collaboration, including commercial partnerships between the UK and Oman.

“This year we are celebrating our Golden Jubilee at the British Omani Society; our countries share a deep and enduring friendship. Our aim is to

ensure that the close links endure for generations to come. We work across a wide range of areas, structured around four core strategic themes: Culture and People; Business and Skills; Environment and Sustainability; and Youth and Next Generation.

Today’s forum focusing on the healthcare sector is a powerful demonstration of that bond in action. The recently signed UK-GCC Free Trade Agreement is a significant opportunity for the UK and Oman in a wide range of areas.

Today we have highlighted the opportunities in healthcare to build lasting collaboration, at a time when demand for healthcare innovation is set to grow significantly.

SPOTLIGHT

HOW AI SUMMER PROGRAMMES ARE TURNING DIGITAL ADDICTION INTO FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

AI

MORE PARENTS ARE AWARE OF PREPARING CHILDREN FOR THE DIGITAL WORLD

AI CAN ENHANCE LEARNING RATHER THAN REPLACE HUMAN THINKING

AI SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A TECH TREND BUT INSTEAD AS A NEW FORM OF LITERACY

KIDS MUST LEARN CODING, ROBOTICS AND GAME DEVELOPMENT

SUMMER SCHOOLS HELP CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND CRITICAL THINKING

FROM SCREEN TO SKILLS

وزارة الإعلام
Ministry of Information

ANNOUNCEMENT OF E-AUCTION

The Ministry of Information announces an online auction for the sale of vehicles via the Mazad Oman platform ([www.mazad.om](#)), according to the following statement:

Statement	Inspection Location	Date and Timing of Inspection	Date of Commencing the Bidding Electronically
Vehicles	Madinat Al Ilam	Monday July 6, 2026 Tuesday July 7, 2026	From Wednesday 08/07/2026 Until Thursday 09/07/2026
	Directorate General of Information in Dhofar Governorate	From 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM	

To view the terms and conditions and register, please visit the website [www.mazad.om](#)

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SIHAM AL SAIDI

FOR many parents, summer has become a season of anxiety rather than relaxation. As schools close their doors, children often spend countless hours on tablets, smartphones, and online games. What was once considered harmless entertainment has increasingly become a challenge, leaving families searching for meaningful ways to redirect their children's attention.

One clear example is that rather than fighting technology, a growing number of parents in Al Batinah North Governorate are choosing to embrace it wisely.

This summer, the Directorate-General of Youth, Culture and Sports in Al Batinah North, through its Department of Culture and Arts, has witnessed remarkable demand for its 'Our Summer: Leadership and Innovation 2026' programmes. Among the most popular workshops are those introducing children and teenagers to artificial intelligence, digital storytelling, smart content creation, digital arts, and creative innovation.

The idea is simple yet powerful: to transform children's fascination with digital devices into productive learning experiences that prepare them for the future.

According to Bakhita al Quraini, Head of the Culture Department, high registrations reflect a growing awareness among families of the importance of preparing children for a rapidly evolving digital world.

"The turnout this year has been exceptional. From the first days of registration, we noticed tremendous enthusiasm from parents who recognise that artificial intelligence has become an essential part of the future," Al Quraini said.

"What has been equally inspiring is the children's excitement. They are naturally curious about AI because technology is already embedded in their daily lives. Our programmes are designed to channel that curiosity into creativity, innovation, and meaningful learning instead of passive screen use."

She explained that the workshops encourage participants to become creators rather than consumers by introducing them to AI-assisted storytelling, digital

content production, creative design, and problem-solving in an enjoyable, hands-on environment.

Parents attending the registration sessions described the programmes as an opportunity to convert excessive screen time into purposeful engagement.

"We cannot completely separate our children from technology," Fatima al Hosni, a mother of 4 children, said. "Instead, we should teach them how to use it creatively and responsibly. These workshops give them exactly that opportunity."

Another father, Ali al Saidi, believes that artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a core skill for future careers.

"Our children are already spending hours online. If even part of that time is dedicated to learning AI, digital design, or creative thinking, it becomes an investment in their future rather than wasted time."

Education specialists also argue that AI should no longer be viewed merely as a technological trend but as a new form of literacy. They encourage parents to guide their children towards programmes that combine creativity, ethics, and innovation while helping them understand how AI can enhance learning rather than replace human thinking.

Experts recommend enrolling children in programmes covering AI-assisted content creation, digital storytelling, graphic design, animation, coding, robotics, game development, entrepreneurship, environmental innovation, and digital arts. These experiences cultivate creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking — the very competencies expected of tomorrow's workforce.

Beyond technical knowledge, such initiatives also offer something increasingly valuable: genuine human interaction. Instead of spending the summer isolated behind screens, participants work in teams, exchange ideas, present creative projects, and develop confidence through practical experiences.

In an era where artificial intelligence is reshaping every aspect of life, perhaps the greatest gift parents can give their children is not simply limiting screen time, but transforming it into learning time. Through such initiatives a seasonal challenge is becoming an opportunity to nurture a generation of creative thinkers, responsible innovators, and future leaders.

Our children are already spending hours online. If even part of that time is dedicated to learning AI, digital design, or creative thinking, it becomes an investment in their future rather than wasted time.

ALI AL SAIDI

SHORT TAKES



A general view shows traffic moving along a main road in Bamako. — AFP

MALI HIT BY NEW WAVE OF ATTACKS

BAMAKO: Tuareg allies hit Mali with fresh coordinated attacks, striking multiple towns and a prison just months after hobbling the country's military junta with a similar wave of assaults. The fighting, which started around 5:00 am, comes after the Al Qaeda-linked JNIM and Tuareg FLA separatists in late April captured the strategic northern town of Kidal and killed Mali's defence minister.

On Saturday, they carried out their latest offensive in the northern towns of Gao, Anefis and Aguelhok, plus the central town of Sevare and at a prison in Kenieroba near the west African nation's capital. The Malian army confirmed the rebel assaults on the four towns and Kenieroba on Saturday, asserting that "these attacks were vigorously repelled" and that "the situation is completely under control."

However, sources consulted by journalists indicated that fighting was still ongoing at midday.

The towns of Anefis and Aguelhok are the last remaining locations where Mali's army maintains a presence in the northern Kidal region, following the April attacks. In the northern town of Gao, a strategic town key to controlling the region, residents said they heard gunfire and "loud blasts" near an army camp. "For now, the objective appears to be seizing and securing the north before moving further south", an associate at the Strategic Research Institute of the International Academy for the Fight Against Terrorism said.

In the central town of Sevare, which houses a large army base and an airport, "explosions rang out... around 5:00 am, though their origin is not yet known. Shortly thereafter, several aircraft were spotted flying over the area", a security source said. — AFP

UK'S STARMER WARNS SUCCESSOR TO KEEP ON INT'L STAGE

LONDON: Britain's outgoing prime minister Keir Starmer warned his probable successor Andy Burnham in an interview that he cannot ignore international turmoil and just concentrate on the country's domestic problems. In his first interview since announcing his resignation on June 22, Starmer said his successor as leader of the ruling Labour Party could not spend less time on turbulent international affairs. So far, former Manchester mayor Burnham is the only

candidate to take over the centre-left party. He could be in office by mid-July.

"Whoever's my successor is going to face the same global conflict. We keep saying, and it's true, we're in a more dangerous and volatile world than we've been in for probably most of my lifetime. That's not just a phrase, that's reality," Starmer said.

"There's often this discussion — what's the right balance between dealing with international affairs and dealing with domestic affairs?"

They're one and the same thing," Starmer said. "If you're prime minister and you care what bills are going to be like in any household around the country, you have to care about finding a lasting solution to the situation in Ukraine, you have to care about what happens in the Strait of Hormuz." Starmer said he had "never had any personal animosity" towards Burnham and that he would "do everything I possibly can to make sure" that the next government succeeds. — AFP

US marks 250th anniversary

MILLIONS OF AMERICANS celebrated the country's 250th birthday on Saturday — a landmark celebration that comes at a time of deep political division, with a president determined to put his stamp on the festivities. Washington's traditional fireworks display on the National Mall — lined with monuments celebrating the nation's Founding Fathers — has been super-sized and is being touted as the biggest ever.

President Donald Trump has added a programme of roaring military flyovers — and an unusual campaign-style political rally — for July Fourth, which marks the anniversary of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence. The national holiday comes in the middle of a brutal heatwave, with some 160 million Americans under extreme weather warnings, wreaking havoc with planned block parties and barbecues in towns and cities across much of the country.

With temperatures in the US capital expected to reach 39C — and the heat index soaring to 110-115F, the Independence Day parade in Washington was cancelled. Trump, who turned 80 last month, remains undeterred by the sweltering temperatures. "It's going to be approximately



US Navy destroyer USS Farragut (DDG-99) sails by the Statue of Liberty ahead of the "Sail250" ships gathering event, in New York. — AFP

107 degrees out, and I'm going to go and I'm going to make a really long speech — just to show that I can do anything," Trump said in the run-up to the revelry.

Late on Friday, Trump visited the iconic Mount Rushmore monument in South Dakota for an address under the gaze of four of his legendary predecessors, etched in granite — George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. While he lauded US exceptionalism and praised the country's past leaders, he also said America's identity was under "renewed attack" from domestic "radicals and extremists," saving particular ire for a "resurgence of the

communist menace." It is a theme that the Republican leader has repeatedly hammered home in recent weeks, as the anti-establishment left of the Democratic Party won a string of US primary victories.

On Friday, Trump said there has been an attempt to "beat the American spirit out of us, alienate us from our history" in recent years.

While his language fell short of the more violent anti-immigrant rhetoric he has wielded in past speeches, the underlying message was clear. "You do not have to be born here, but you do have to love what we have built," he said.

For Americans, the 250th

anniversary festivities offer a moment for reflection as well as celebration. After two and a half centuries of triumphs and tragedies, and freedom, civil war and world wars, multiple surveys indicate a nation divided about where it is and where it's going. A Quinnipiac University Poll showed 61 per cent of Americans thought the US was not living up to the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence — though most Republicans think it does, and most Democrats think it doesn't.

Outside Washington, New York is hosting an international parade of tall ships, with Vice-President JD Vance in attendance, flyovers and its own massive fireworks display. In Philadelphia, lines formed early despite the heat to see the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed. Concerts will be staged from Boston to Los Angeles.

For Karisa Tavassoli, an Iranian American educator, the basics of the American dream still ring true. "I have safety, I have freedom of speech, I have freedom of religion, I can wear whatever I want as a woman," she said. "There are many flaws here, but we have something very special that's worthy of protecting." — AFP



HUGE CROWDS THROG TEHRAN FOR KHAMENEI FUNERAL

TEHRAN: Vast crowds of Iranians loyal to the Islamic republic massed in Tehran on Saturday to begin almost a week of funeral ceremonies for slain supreme leader Ali Khamenei, which authorities want to send a message of defiance to the West after the war with the US and Israel.

Clad in black and waving blood-red flags seen as a call for vengeance and justice, mourners

thronged the Grand Mosalla religious complex in the Iranian capital.

There was still no sign of Khamenei's son and successor Mojtaba Khamenei, who has been unseen in public since being named. Other top Iranian officials who survived the war welcomed foreign dignitaries who paid their respects at the coffin on Friday before the complex opened to the public. — AFP

Ukraine attacks as Russia claims key town

MOSCOW: Russia said on Saturday Ukrainian drones hit an oil terminal in Saint Petersburg, struck a port near Finland and fell on the historical Peterhof complex without causing damage. Kyiv's barrage on Russia's second city — President Vladimir Putin's hometown — came amid opposing statements from both sides over who was in control of a key town in eastern Ukraine. Moscow vowed to respond, saying it downed almost 500 Ukrainian drones and 10 of Kyiv's Flamingo missiles overnight.

The Ukrainian attack came after a Russian strike on Kyiv this week killed 30 people. They also hit hours after a Russian attack on the centre of the Ukrainian city of Sumy killed four people, including a child, according to Kyiv. Moscow said it had seized the key town of Kostyantynivka in the east, but Zelensky called the claim a "lie", with Kyiv's army saying fighting was



Firefighters work at the site of one of the biggest Ukrainian poultry farms which was hit by a Russian air strike in the town of Chornobaivka. — Reuters

ongoing. Zelensky also claimed Kyiv struck the Kronstadt naval base in Saint Petersburg.

Leningrad region governor Alexander Drozdenko said the port of Vysotsk, near the border with Nato-member Finland, had been hit. "Debris has been reported in the area of the port

of Vysotsk," Drozdenko said on social media early on Saturday, while saying the "attack was still being repelled." Saint Petersburg governor Alexander Beglov said drones hit "the area of an oil terminal in the Kirovsk district" of Saint Petersburg. "Air defence forces shot down 72 drones, one of which crashed in Peterhof. There were no casualties or damage," he added. The Peterhof Palace is a giant estate of gardens and a palace built in the 18th century under Russian Tsar Peter I.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said air defence had shot down 62 drones headed for the Russian capital. Moscow said one person was killed in the border Bryansk region and another in Russian-annexed Crimea. Authorities in the border Belgorod region said "infrastructure facilities" had been damaged by the attacks, leading to "disruptions to electricity and water supply." — AFP

وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal Tender

Tender No.	91/2026/MHT/HQ-12	Tender Name	Provision of Printing, Manufacturing, and Supply Services for Three Hundred Fifty (350) Warning Signs for Archaeological Sites Affiliated with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 R.O	
Tender Document Sales End Date		21/7/2026	
Last Date for Bid Submission		11/8/2026	
Grade		Fourth	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.

The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.

All companies submitting bids for this tender are required to attach a valid and recently issued Omanization Compliance Certificate from the Ministry of Labour, provided that the certificate is not older than 30 days from the date of issuance.

This certificate is considered a mandatory document, and failure to submit it — for any reason — shall result in the outright disqualification of the bid, without being evaluated technically or financially.

The certificate must also demonstrate the company's compliance with the Omanization percentage required by the Ministry of Labour. If the required percentage is not met, the bid shall be automatically disqualified.

The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids

The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries

For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om or 24402200

For further information

Email : sotic@mht.gov.om
Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

THE COUNTRY BEING A NODE
ON ANCIENT TRADE NETWORKS
BETWEEN MESOPOTAMIA, AFRICA,
ALWAYS HOSTED PEOPLES OF DIVERSE
CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

THE LANGUAGES OF OMAN

DAVID WILMSEN

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN is a civilisation state, meaning that it is embedded in a continuous historical identity, unique cultural qualities, and distinct sociopolitical and geographic conceptualisations that transcend modern territorial borders. For millennia, it was known as a source of luxury materials and a node on trade networks between Mesopotamia, Africa and South Asia. As such, it has always hosted peoples of diverse cultures and languages. This diversity is reflected in its linguistic milieu to this day.

DOMINANT LANGUAGE
Quite obviously, Arabic is the dominant language of Oman of the modern era and Arabic speakers have been in the territories of the south eastern Arabian Peninsula since at latest the first century BC, coming into the majority sometime after all of southern Arabia embraced Islam in the time of the Prophet. The spoken Arabic of Oman is a singular variety of its own, distinct from other spoken varieties of the Arabian Gulf and Yemen. What is more, it was one of the earliest of Arabic varieties to attract the attention of European linguists, who published complete grammars of the Arabic spoken in Nizwa and Al Rustaq and in Dhofar before and just after the turn of the twentieth century.

Omani Arabic thus holds a special place in the discipline of Arabic linguistics, offering a valuable link to the ancient varieties of Arabic of the southern peninsula, from which much of classical Arabic developed. Oddly, after the publication of those early grammars, Omani Arabic was largely lost to linguist inquiry until the last few decades, when, happily, a new generation of young researchers have turned their attention to the riches that are stored within it.

We may say that Arabic is an indigenous language of Oman, but it is not the only one. Oman and Yemen are the ancestral home of another group of Semitic languages, sister languages of Arabic, as historical linguistics would call them.

These are Mehri, with the largest number of speakers, about 100,000, Jibbali (or Shehri), with fifty thousand, being the second largest. Three others Harsusi, Bathari, and Hobyot are endangered, with only small numbers of speakers. A sixth, Soqotri, is found on the Yemeni island of Socotra. These are inappropriately named "Modern" South Arabian languages to distinguish them from Old South Arabian, the language used in

Omani Arabic offers available link to the ancient varieties of Arabic of the southern peninsula, from which much of classical Arabic developed

Oman and Yemen home to Semitic languages like Mehri, Jibbali (or Shehri), Harsusi, Bathari, and Hobyot and Soqotri

Balochi, an Indo-Iranian language spoken by Omanis, who trace their origins to Balochistan

Kumzari, spoken in Musandam, seems to be an amalgam of Persian, Balochi, and Portuguese, with large influences from Arabic, and nowadays some from English, as well

Swahili is a Bantu language containing numerous Omani Arabic lexical borrowings

South Asian languages spoken in the Sultanate of Oman, thanks to residents

writing and probably in speech by the ancient Yemeni civilisations, among them, the Sabaeans, famous for the Queen of Sheba, as she is known.

The "Modern" South Arabian languages were discovered by European scholars only about 20 years after the discovery of Old South Arabian in the early nineteenth century. If Europeans encountered them late, local communities and Arab historians had for centuries known of the monumental writings of the Yemeni civilisations, the script known as 'Musnad'.

But it seems that local phenomena are rarely acknowledged until some westerner happens upon them. Nevertheless, speakers of these languages were almost surely present in the territories that are now Oman well before the Yemeni civilisations emerged and certainly by the time Arabic speakers migrated into those same territories.

Their lifeways, livelihoods, manners, customs and traditions are nearly indistinguishable from the traditional lifeways of their Arabophone compatriates, as they must have been for millennia.

MODERN LANGUAGE
The so-called "Modern" South Arabian languages were never written in a script of their own and speakers of the languages of the present day, who are almost all fluent bilinguals, use the Arabic script when writing.

If you know Arabic and heard them speaking, you may encounter difficulty in understanding their speech, but if you saw a writing in one of the languages, you would easily recognise many lexical and grammatical elements that they share with Arabic.

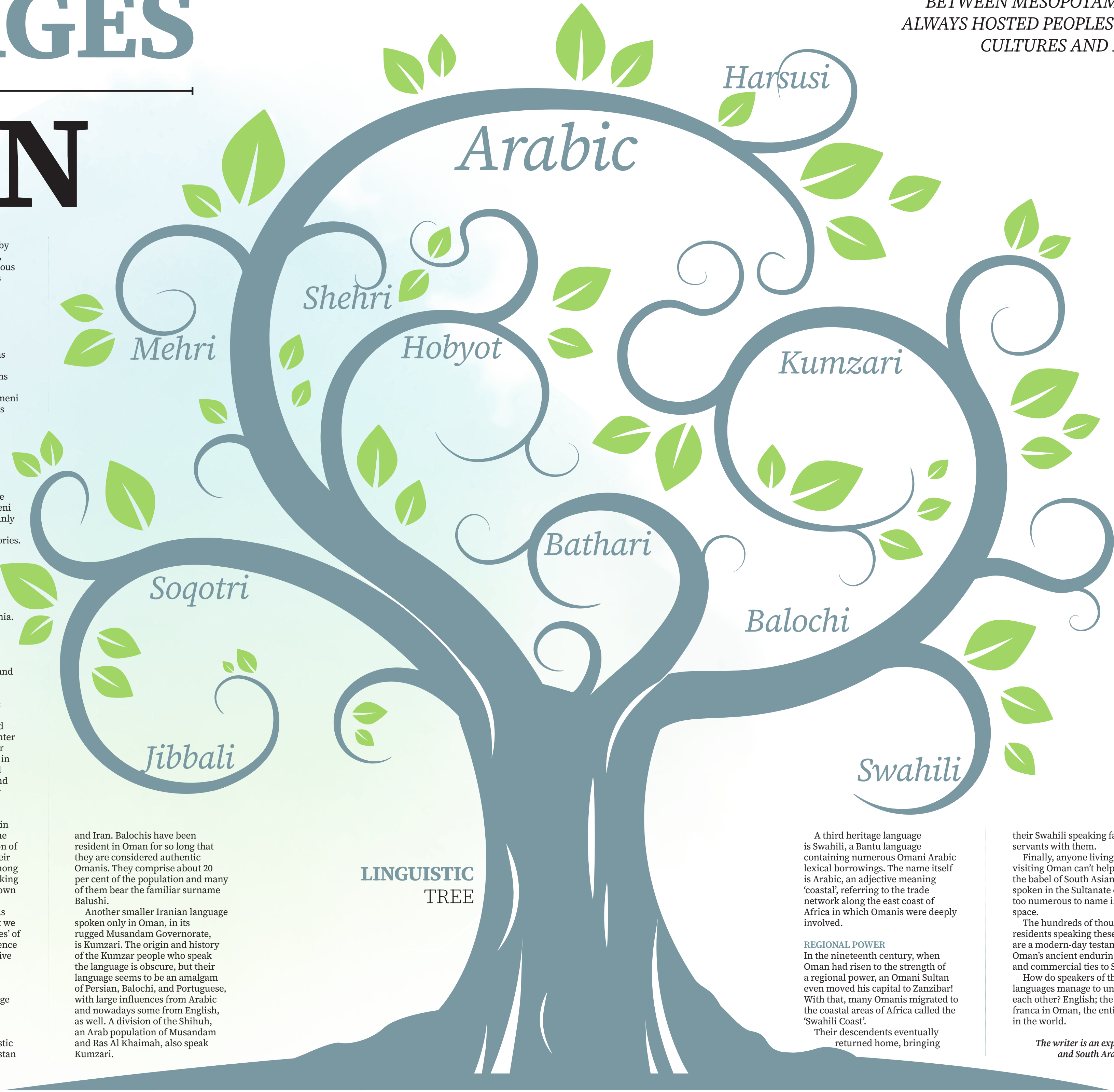
As a linguist who has done some field research with Mehri in and around Salalah, it pleases me greatly that a younger generation of researchers have also turned their attention to these languages, among them local scholars who are making valuable contributions in their own right.

Along with Oman's indigenous Semitic languages are a few that we might call the 'heritage languages' of Oman, owing to their long presence on Omani soil and in the extensive trade networks that the Omanis have been plying for ages.

Prominent among these is Balochi, an Indo-Iranian language spoken by Omanis who trace their origins to Balochistan, encompassing the southern province of Pakistan and linguistic areas spilling over into Afghanistan

and Iran. Balochis have been resident in Oman for so long that they are considered authentic Omanis. They comprise about 20 per cent of the population and many of them bear the familiar surname Balushi.

Another smaller Iranian language spoken only in Oman, in its rugged Musandam Governorate, is Kumzari. The origin and history of the Kumzar people who speak the language is obscure, but their language seems to be an amalgam of Persian, Balochi, and Portuguese, with large influences from Arabic and nowadays some from English, as well. A division of the Shihuh, an Arab population of Musandam and Ras Al Khaimah, also speak Kumzari.



A third heritage language is Swahili, a Bantu language containing numerous Omani Arabic lexical borrowings. The name itself is Arabic, an adjective meaning 'coastal', referring to the trade network along the east coast of Africa in which Omanis were deeply involved.

REGIONAL POWER
In the nineteenth century, when Oman had risen to the strength of a regional power, an Omani Sultan even moved his capital to Zanzibar! With that, many Omanis migrated to the coastal areas of Africa called the 'Swahili Coast'. Their descendents eventually returned home, bringing

their Swahili speaking families and servants with them. Finally, anyone living in or even visiting Oman can't help noticing the babel of South Asian languages spoken in the Sultanate of Oman, too numerous to name in this short space.

The hundreds of thousands of residents speaking these languages are a modern-day testament to Oman's ancient enduring cultural and commercial ties to South Asia.

How do speakers of these many languages manage to understand each other? English; the lingua franca in Oman, the entire Gulf and in the world.

The writer is an expert in Omani and South Arabian dialects

OPINION

Why can't you be like your cousin?



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

MISS A was preparing for her English exam when a thought crossed her mind: “What if I score less than my brother, who did the same test last year? It was past midnight, and she was halfway through her second cup of strong black coffee when she found herself getting anxious about her score and the upcoming job interview that would follow, asking herself if she would be able to get a job as a teacher, like her cousin.

Being compared to others may sound familiar to many people, and it is often spoken with good intentions, a parent hoping to encourage better grades, stronger discipline, or greater ambition. The comparison may involve a sibling, a cousin, a neighbour’s child, or even a stranger whose achievements have become family folklore. Parents frequently believe that comparison serves as motivation. Yet psychology tells us that repeated comparison can have consequences very different from those intended.

Human beings naturally compare themselves with others. Psychologists refer to this as social comparison. In moderation, it can help us evaluate our abilities and set goals. However, when it becomes constant and comes from significant figures such as

parents, it may shape a child’s self-worth in unhealthy ways.

A child who repeatedly hears that another child is smarter, more successful, or more obedient may begin to conclude that they are simply “not good enough.” Instead of inspiring improvement, comparison may create shame, resentment, or feelings of inadequacy. Some children become anxious perfectionists. They may feel that love and acceptance depend upon achievement. Every examination or school performance becomes a test not only of ability but also of personal worth. Such children grow into adults who continue to compare themselves with colleagues, friends, and even strangers on social media.

Other children respond differently. Rather than trying harder, they give up. If they believe they can never match the person to whom they are being compared, motivation disappears. They start thinking, “Why study if my older brother always comes first?”

Comparison can also affect family relationships, leading to siblings’ rivalry and resentment toward the “successful” child who is constantly being used as the standard. Ironically, the child being praised may also suffer, feeling intense pressure to maintain an image of perfection.

In moderation, social comparison can help us evaluate our abilities and set goals

Modern psychology emphasises the importance of a growth mindset, the belief that abilities can develop through effort, practice, and learning. While comparison focuses attention on other people’s achievements, growth focuses attention on personal progress.

Instead of saying, “Look how well your friend did,” parents might ask, “How have you improved since last year?” Rather than comparing exam results with others, families can celebrate effort, persistence, and small achievements.

Remember that children differ in their strengths. One child may excel academically, another socially, another creatively, and another athletically. Expecting all children to succeed in the same way ignores the diversity of human abilities.

A child who feels valued is more likely to take risks, learn from mistakes, and develop confidence. A child who constantly feels measured against others may spend much of life chasing an impossible standard.

The child next door may indeed be talented. But the child sitting at your own dinner table needs something far more valuable than comparison: the belief that they are seen, understood, and appreciated for who they are.

POPE URGES EUROPE TO DO MORE ON MIGRATION

ROBERT MESSER

During his visit to the Italian Mediterranean island of Lampedusa on Saturday, Pope Leo XIV emphasised Europe’s special responsibility in dealing with migration. Migration presents European societies with a ‘historic challenge,’ the head of the world’s approximately 1.4 billion Catholics said.

Given its history and culture, Europe possesses “unique potential” and therefore bears a responsibility. The continent is in a position to tackle the situation holistically, “by combining emergency aid with a long-term strategic plan.” This plan should welcome, protect, support and integrate migrants, whilst ensuring that “no one is forced to emigrate,” said Leo.

He stressed that the dignity of every individual must always be upheld in the process. Leo XIV is currently visiting Lampedusa, becoming the second pope to do so after his predecessor Francis, who visited the island in 2013. The small island between Sicily and the North African coast has for many years been regarded as one of the hot spots of migration from Africa to Europe.

Every year, tens of thousands of people venture on the dangerous journey across the central Mediterranean. Many risk their lives in the process - or even lose them.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the route across this part of the Mediterranean is still considered the deadliest migration route to Europe. Since 2014, the organisation has recorded more than 26,000 deaths and missing people in the central Mediterranean.

He pointed to a lack of concern for the common good and corruption in the countries of origin, a global economic system that causes poverty and exclusion, and fears that fuel prejudice and contempt.

The notion that these problems were of no concern to Europe, as well as criminals profiting from the suffering of migrants, also contributed to this situation, he said.

During his visit, Pope Leo blessed a commemorative plaque in honour of Francis, after whom a key arrival point for Mediterranean migrants will henceforth be named. The pier, previously known as Molo Favaloro, will now be called Molo Papa Francesco. This move is intended to commemorate the late pope’s commitment to refugees.

The pier is one of the most symbolic arrival points for migrants in the central Mediterranean. approximately 150-metre jetty. — **dpa**

Schools must teach students to protect the environment

THE BROADCASTER and documentary maker, Sir David Attenborough, who turned 99 on May 8, has spent a lifetime reminding us of a basic truth: every breath we take and every mouthful of food we eat depends on the natural world. His message is that human life and nature are inseparable, and that when the natural world is damaged, we all suffer. He has often described the oceans as Earth’s most vital ecosystem.

Healthy seas support marine life, help regulate the climate and play a central role in feeding the world. If the oceans fail, the effects will not remain at the shoreline. They will spread through weather systems, food supplies and economies. Protecting the seas is therefore not a narrow environmental concern. It is a matter of survival. Attenborough’s belief is simple: people do not protect what they do not understand. That is why schools have such an important role to play. If children study different animals, trees, insects, rivers and seas, they are more likely to value them later in life. Environmental care should not be treated as an optional subject or an occasional school project. It should be part of education from the start, alongside the other lessons that shape a child’s view of the world. This matters because the damage is already visible.

Climate change and the loss of rare wildlife are no longer distant warnings. They are realities we can see around us. Yet Attenborough has never argued that the future is lost. Through initiatives such as the Earthshot Prize - an environmental award created by Prince William in 2020 - he has supported practical ideas that can be shared and expanded. His view is realistic but hopeful: the problems are serious, but solutions exist if people are



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

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Schools should help children learn about the natural world. They need more than facts about pollution and climate change.

If young people grow up understanding that a healthy environment and wildlife are not simply an interesting distraction but a necessity, they are more likely to defend it as adults

willing to act. There are encouraging signs in Oman. The government has taken steps to protect wildlife and preserve natural spaces, and those efforts deserve recognition. Some time ago, I visited the Al Mouj golf course and was shown a small pond surrounded by reeds. It had been protected by law and several birds were nesting there, including some rare and endangered species. As we walked towards the water, our guide mentioned that he had once seen an Osprey in the area. The bird appeared overhead.

It swooped down towards the sea with great speed, then rose again with a fish in its talons. It was a brief moment, but a memorable one. It showed how much beauty and balance can remain when people choose to leave space for nature.

That is the lesson: schools should help children learn about the natural world. They need more than facts about pollution and climate change. They need to develop a

sense of wonder when looking at their natural environment and a responsibility to protect it.

If young people grow up understanding that a healthy environment and wildlife are not simply an interesting distraction but a necessity, they are more likely to defend it as adults.

The task is straightforward to describe, though perhaps more difficult to carry out. Use less plastic. Reduce harmful chemicals. Waste less. Respect all living things. And above all, teach the next generation that the natural world is not separate from human life, but the foundation on which it depends. Equally important is the protection of plants and trees. Forests and green spaces are vital to maintaining clean air, healthy soils and a stable climate.

Deforestation in some countries, especially in South America, must be stopped before more damage is done.

Do we sleep, slumber, siesta, or snooze too much?



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

WHO KNEW that a ‘golden age’ of Arabic/Islamic scholars existed from the ninth to the twelfth centuries in sleep analysis? Five prominent scholar physicians delved where few had gone before and made discoveries that have proven remarkably accurate with the passage of time.

Ahmed S Bahammam, an academic at the University Sleep Disorders Center of King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has completed research entitled ‘How Golden Age Arab-Islamic Scholars Revolutionised Sleep Physiology and Dream Analysis.’ Not the catchiest of titles, but not least because we spend, according to Mathew Tucker (2025), “a third of our lives sleeping,” it tempted me... The Arabic/Islamic perspective of sleep, according to Bahammam, is derived from theological principles, with the Holy Quran describing sleep as a sign from God, and that within sleep, you are growing in his grace. This apparently encouraged a generation of medieval Islamic scholars towards empirical investigation of the phenomenon.

These intellectuals had commonality not only in their topic of research, but as the research identified, displayed a level of sophistication that confounds contemporary practitioners, establishing “foundational principles that influenced medical practice for centuries.” Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al Razi (865-925), or Rhazes, as he was known more widely, pioneered

sleep while at the Baghdad Bimaristan, a pioneering place for the sick, a forerunner of today’s teaching hospitals, where many of the foundations of patient care were established. Rhazes holds prominence across all of medicine due to his ‘Kitab al Hawi fi al Tibb,’ revered as a comprehensive medical compendium, with a significant focus on sleep disturbances. His clinical observations on sleep paralysis and insomnia are still required reading in many doctoral courses.

Ibn al Jazzar (910-988), Head of the Kairouan Medical School, authored the Kitab al Nawm wa al Sahar, the Book of Sleep and Sleeplessness, in which he provided early clinical descriptions of hypersomnia and other sleep-related disorders, through clearly documented observations. These focused on the daytime sleepiness of torpor, narcolepsy, hypersomnia, and cataplexy and their possible links to epilepsy. Bahammam writes: “al Jazzar’s writings reveal an astute clinical awareness of sleep disorders and sudden motor disturbances, demonstrating the sophistication of Islamic treatment of complex neurological conditions.”

Abul Faraj ibn Yakub ibn Ishaq al Quff al Karaki (1233-1286), known as Ibn al Quff, was the leading medieval physician and surgeon of his time. Born in Jordan, he was a 13(th) century Arab physician-surgeon. Al Quff made important contributions to the art of healing, particularly the benefits of sleep in surgical recovery. He authored books and

Five prominent scholar physicians delved where few had gone before and made discoveries that have proven remarkably accurate with the passage of time

commentaries in medicine, particularly surgery, with the primary surgical textbook being his ‘Kitab al Umda fi al Giraha,’ the Basics in the Art of Surgery.

Ibn Sina (980-1037) was the Royal Court physician in Bukhara and Vizier, known as the “Prince of Physicians,” and the most prominent of sleep researchers, developing the pneumatic theory of sleep finding that sleep was a vital and active process necessary in maintaining energy, documenting the earliest references to what are known today as sleep apnea, stages of sleep, and rapid eye movements. His ‘Al Qanun fi al Tibb,’ his ‘Canon of Medicine,’ carries an aura of prescience and discovery, applauded worldwide.

Ala al Din Abu al Hasan Ali Ibn Abi al Hazm al Qarshi al Dimashqi (1213-1288), or Ibn al Nafis, practiced in Damascus and advanced understanding of sleep physiology by demonstrating that internal brain faculties remain active during sleep while external senses are suspended. Ironically, this was researched alongside his pulmonary circulation research, on which he was a prolific author, writing the ‘Sharh Mujaz al Qanun,’ the ‘Sharh Tashrih al Qanun,’ and the encyclopedic 80-volume ‘Al Shamil fi al Tibb,’ that are as specific today as they were then.

An average person will sleep more than 25 years, or 9,500 days, an immense 227,000 hours sleeping, and a further 50,000 hours of dozing, according to Gemma Curtis’s studies (2026). So... Ahmed, do we sleep too much?

IRAQ’S FILM INDUSTRY SEES SLOW REVIVAL

CHRISTY-BELLE GEHA

In the heart of old Baghdad, legendary movie theatres stand abandoned and shrouded in dust, bearing witness to Iraq’s once-vibrant cultural scene.

A few kilometres away, director Ali al Bayati oversees his camera operators as they adjust their lenses for a scene in his upcoming horror film, which he hopes to showcase internationally as a new generation of Iraqi film-makers drives an industry comeback.

Momentum is building, bolstered by recent international recognition for the Iraqi film ‘The President’s Cake’, which captures life under crippling sanctions during Saddam Hussein’s rule.

“Reviving the cinema sector in Iraq is not easy, but it is not impossible either,” Bayati said. For decades, Iraq’s cultural and cinematic scenes flourished.

Film production in Iraq began in the 1940s - notably with titles co-produced with Egypt - reaching its peak in the 1950s.

Among the most celebrated productions of that era was Kameran Hosni’s film ‘Said Effendi’ (1956), a work recently restored as part of the Iraqi Cinematheque project supported by France, and screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2025.

Baghdad’s old movie theatres that once drew film enthusiasts are now barely standing, with their faded walls, old doors and broken signs.

Dilapidated shops crowd the entrance to the Granada Cinema, with clothes hanging directly on the street. Other theatres have been repurposed as warehouses, with a few old movie posters still clinging to their walls.

In recent years, a fragile stability has begun to revive the Iraqis’ appetite for entertainment and has returned focus to Baghdad’s cultural scene.

Authorities seized the opportunity last year, launching an initiative to support 58 film projects.

But the funding pool is just \$4 million, an amount that would fund only a single project in other countries, said Wareth Kwaish of the government-led initiative.

Authorities are also working to recover Iraq’s historic cinema archive in the country and abroad.

And Baghdad has signed cinematic cooperation agreements with France to support its film industry. Still, the industry remains short on funding and support, making every production a gamble.

Film-makers rely on small grants, said Bayati, who hopes to market his movie in the US and European countries and is among those who benefited from government funding.

The key for him is gaining the trust of Iraqi audiences to “generate revenues that would lead to sustainability in work and production”, he said.

Most Iraqi moviegoers today frequent multi-screen theatres in shopping malls where Hollywood and Egyptian movies dominate the screens, rather than the classic venues. — AFP

The world’s robber baron

IN A REMARKABLE commentary published at the end of June, a former leading economist in the Trump administration acknowledges (and endorses) what many have suspected: The function of Trump’s foreign economic policy is to act like a 21st-century robber baron.

The original robber barons were greedy industrialists who grew rich through monopolistic practices in the US during the Gilded Age. In the late 19th century, men like John D Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie built massive fortunes by suppressing competition and charging exorbitant prices in industries such as oil and steel.

They were called robbers because exploiting your consumers to enrich yourself is probably the most denigrated business practice in the world.

Yet that is precisely what the US has been doing over the past year and a half, boasts Stephan Miran, chair of President Donald Trump’s Council of Economic Advisers until February 2026, who now serves on the board of the US Federal Reserve. Miran applauds this approach, arguing that it is working wonders for the US (never mind foreigners!).

Miran does not state his case this clearly, of course. Couching his argument in technical terms that obfuscate the full implications of his argument, he appeals to economists’ idea of the “optimum tariff,” which states that a country can make itself better off by applying protective import levies.

Of course, such a strategy works only if a country is large enough to wield market power in the world economy — that is, if it acts as a monopolist. An optimum-tariff policy is the country-level equivalent of the strategy perfected by Rockefeller’s Standard Oil in the 1880s.

By reducing demand for the goods sold by its trade partners (and equivalently reducing the supply of its own exports on world markets), the optimum tariff shifts world market prices in favour of the home economy, essentially making foreigners pay a large chunk of the tariff.

When the tariff is set at the right level, whatever the country loses on the gains from trade is more than



DANI RODRIK

The author is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School

The US trade policy based on the optimum-tariff argument amounts to a naked assertion of economic power designed to harm others. It is also economically self-defeating and will inevitably backfire.

made up for in monopoly rents. The losers are the country’s trade partners (and the world economy as a whole).

Although this is the archetypal beggar-thy-neighbour dynamic, Miran thinks it is a great deal for the US, because it kills two birds with one stone.

Aside from the monopoly rents, the policy allows the federal government to reduce the inefficiencies associated with domestic taxes. Tariffs generate revenues for the treasury, which can be used to offset the revenue losses from reducing other taxes, such as those on income.

The economic logic, in his mind, is impeccable.

One difficulty is that despite its size and apparent market power, the US may not have as much ability to make foreigners pay the tariffs as Miran thinks. Recent evidence suggests that the bulk, if not all, of US tariffs are passed on to domestic consumers.

But the real problem with Miran’s argument lies elsewhere. It beggars belief to suggest that, in this day and age, it makes sense for a major power to extract tribute from other countries so blatantly.

In offering his cold calculus, Miran seems not to have considered the loss in reputation and credibility that the US has suffered by acting like a robber baron. The fall in stature to international pariah may not be easy to price in dollars and cents, but it is substantial, nonetheless.

Miran may not care about America’s standing in the world, but his economic argument is also ultimately self-defeating. When economists discuss the optimum tariff, they typically hasten to add that it does not work in the long run. After all, more than one country can play the same game.

The European Union and China each account for roughly similar shares of world trade as the US. When the US jacks up its tariff to improve its terms of trade, the world’s other trading powers can do the same. And since retaliation offsets the terms-of-trade effects but magnifies the loss in the gains from trade, it can be an effective deterrent.

Miran claims that there was

no retaliation when Trump first imposed his tariffs, which he sees as a strike against those economists who claimed the optimum tariff would fail. But while it is true that the European response was muted, China did in fact retaliate against the “Liberation Day” tariffs. Vowing to match every further tariff increase on the US side, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce said: “China will fight till the end if the US side is bent on going down the wrong path.” The US and China eventually lowered their tariffs.

Ironically, Miran’s willingness to say the quiet part out loud virtually ensures that others, including the EU, will choose to retaliate if the US persists with its optimum-tariff logic.

It is one thing to claim that you are raising tariffs because of national security concerns or because you want to reinvigorate domestic manufacturing.

These are plausible domestic-policy objectives, even if one may disagree about the usefulness of import tariffs in achieving them. But it is quite another thing to say, as Miran does, that the goal is to squeeze monopoly rents out of foreign countries by manipulating their terms of trade. When that is so clearly presented as the objective, others will respond accordingly.

I was among those who argued against retaliation a year ago, because I believed Trump to be impervious to the damage high tariffs would do to the US economy.

The logic of retaliation works only if political leaders understand the economic consequences of high tariffs and care about the gains from trade.

The paradox is that by replacing Trump’s illogic with an economic logic that now fully justifies retaliation by other countries, Miran’s argument undermines itself.

A trade policy based on the optimum-tariff argument amounts to a naked assertion of economic power designed to harm others, including long-term allies in Europe and East Asia. Such an approach provides, at best, short-term gains at the expense of soft power and global leadership. It is also economically self-defeating and will inevitably backfire.

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FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



Ghana fans After the match. — Reuters

Queiroz blames immaturity
for Ghana exit

KANSAS CITY: Ghana's lack of experience and inability to stay calm under pressure were decisive factors in the 1-0 defeat by Colombia that sealed their World Cup elimination, manager Carlos Queiroz said after the round-of-32 loss.

Jhon Arias scored Colombia's only goal in the 14th minute, shortly after the African team were forced into a defensive reshuffle when right-back Marvin Senaya went off injured and was replaced by Alidu Seidu.

* "I felt really quickly that some of the Ghanaian players were fearful. They were not cool, calm, and collected when the pressure hit," Queiroz said.

* "It's a very young team. We need more experience, we



CARLOS QUEIROZ
Ghana coach

need time for some players to win what we call maturity," the 73-year-old Portuguese manager added.

* "When you play this kind of competition at this level, you cannot only count on the enthusiasm of the youths," he said.

* Queiroz said Colombia were the better team on the night and deserved to move forward.

* "The goal came too early for us ... It took some time for us to adjust and recover from that substitution, and the goal came at the moment we were trying to resettle our team," Queiroz said.

* The Ghana coach acknowledged his side improved in the second half, but were never in control of the match.

— Reuters

Arab hopes rest on
Morocco and Egypt

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 4

THE dream of seeing an Arab nation lift the Fifa World Cup trophy remains alive after Morocco and Egypt secured their places in the knockout stage of the 2026 Fifa World Cup, raising hopes across the Arab world that another historic chapter could be written on football's biggest stage.

Morocco, whose remarkable run to the semi-finals at the 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar transformed perceptions of Arab and African football, have once again demonstrated their ability to compete with the world's elite. Meanwhile, Egypt have returned to the knockout stages for the first time in decades, inspired by the leadership and experience of global superstar Mohamed Salah.

Speaking to the *Oman Observer*, experienced Omani football coach Abdulaziz al Riyami believes both nations possess the quality, experience and tactical discipline to extend their campaigns and challenge for unprecedented success.

"Morocco and Egypt are among the strongest Arab teams in this tournament because they possess high-quality professional players performing at the highest level, together with the tactical maturity needed to compete in knockout football," coach al Riyami said.



ABDULAZIZ
AL RIYAMI
Omani football coach

complete concentration and intelligent game management. Morocco must remain balanced in every department, but if they maintain their defensive discipline, mental strength and physical commitment, another historic run to the semi-finals—or perhaps even beyond—is a realistic possibility rather than merely an ambitious dream."

EGYPT'S DISCIPLINE

Coach Abdulaziz al Riyami also reserved praise for Egypt, whose disciplined displays have seen the Pharaohs return to the knockout rounds after a long absence. "Egypt reached the Round of 16 thanks to an organised and highly disciplined campaign. Their thrilling victory over Australia on Friday night demonstrated the team's fighting spirit and tactical commitment."

He believes Egypt's success has been built around head coach Hossam Hassan's pragmatic philosophy. "The team's success comes from excellent defensive organisation, collective commitment, limiting mistakes at the back and capitalising on opponents' errors. Every player understands his role, and that collective discipline has been fundamental."

Offensively, al Riyami identified the partnership between Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush as Egypt's greatest weapon. "The understanding between Salah and Marmoush gives Egypt genuine attacking quality. They are capable of converting even limited opportunities into decisive goals, making them dangerous against any defence in the competition."

However, he warned that maintaining defensive concentration will be essential if

Egypt are to continue progressing. "In the knockout rounds, Egypt must avoid conceding early goals and force opponents into physically demanding contests. If they continue to manage matches intelligently and the small details work in their favour, they have every opportunity to emerge as one of the tournament's biggest surprise packages."

WHY OTHER ARAB TEAMS FELL SHORT

While Morocco and Egypt continue flying the Arab flag, al Riyami reflected on the disappointing campaigns of several other Arab and Asian representatives. "Among the tournament's nine Asian participants — including Arab sides Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Iraq — only Australia and Japan managed to progress beyond the group stage before both exited in the Round of 32.

According to Al Riyami, several technical factors contributed to these early eliminations. "The first challenge was the considerable gap in physical intensity and match tempo. Teams such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan struggled to cope with the speed, athleticism and relentless pressure imposed by Europe's and South America's strongest nations."

He also pointed to a lack of tactical flexibility. "Several teams were unable to adapt once they fell behind. Defensive mistakes proved costly, while tactical adjustments during matches were often insufficient to change the momentum. This was reflected in the heavy defeats suffered by some teams during the tournament."

Another decisive factor, he explained, was the shortage of players regularly competing in Europe's elite leagues. "Unlike Morocco and Egypt, whose squads include numerous players performing week after week in Europe's top competitions, many players from Asian domestic leagues lack exposure to football at the highest intensity. That experience becomes invaluable during a World Cup, where every decision, every movement and every mistake can determine the outcome."

وزارة الثقافة والرياضة والشباب

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

No.	Tender	Project Category	Last Day to Purchase Tender Documents	Last Date of Tender Submission
1	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SALALAH SPORTS COMPLEX DHOFAR GOVERNORATE (include sports centers) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2027 TO 31st DECEMBER 2028	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	18/07/2026	17/08/2026
2	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO KHASAB SPORTS COMPLEX MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT LIMA) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2028 TO 31st DECEMBER 2028			
3	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SEEB SPORTS STADIUM MUSCAT GOVERNORATE (INCLUDING SPORTS HALL AT SEEB SPORTS CLUB) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2027 TO 31st DECEMBER 2028			
4	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO AL AMAL CLUB MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2027 TO 31st DECEMBER 2028			
5	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL SERVICES, CIVIL, CLEANING AND PEST CONTROL SERVICES TO SULTAN QABOOS SPORTS COMPLEX AT BAUSHER FROM 1/1/ 2027 TO 31/12/ 2028			
6	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX DAHIRAH GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2027 TO 31st DECEMBER 2028			
7	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRA SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2027 TO 31st DECEMBER 2028			
8	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION SERVICES FOR SULTAN QABOOS YOUTH COMPLEX FOR CULTURE & RECREATION, SALALAH DHOFAR GOVERNORATE			
9	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL AND AIR-CONDITIONING UNITS TO MINISTRY BULINGAT AL KHUWAIH FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2027 TO 31st DECEMBER 2027			
10	CLEANING SERVICES TO ENTIRE CAMPUS AND FACILITIES TO MINISTRY'S VARIOUS BUILDINGS AT MUSCAT GOVERNARATE FOR THE PERIOD OF 1ST JANUARY 2027 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2027	Services		
11	MAINTENANCE OF LANDSCAPING WORKS TO MINISTRY'S BUILDINGS AT MUSCAT GOVERNAREATE FOR THE PERIOD OF 1ST JANUARY 2027 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2027			

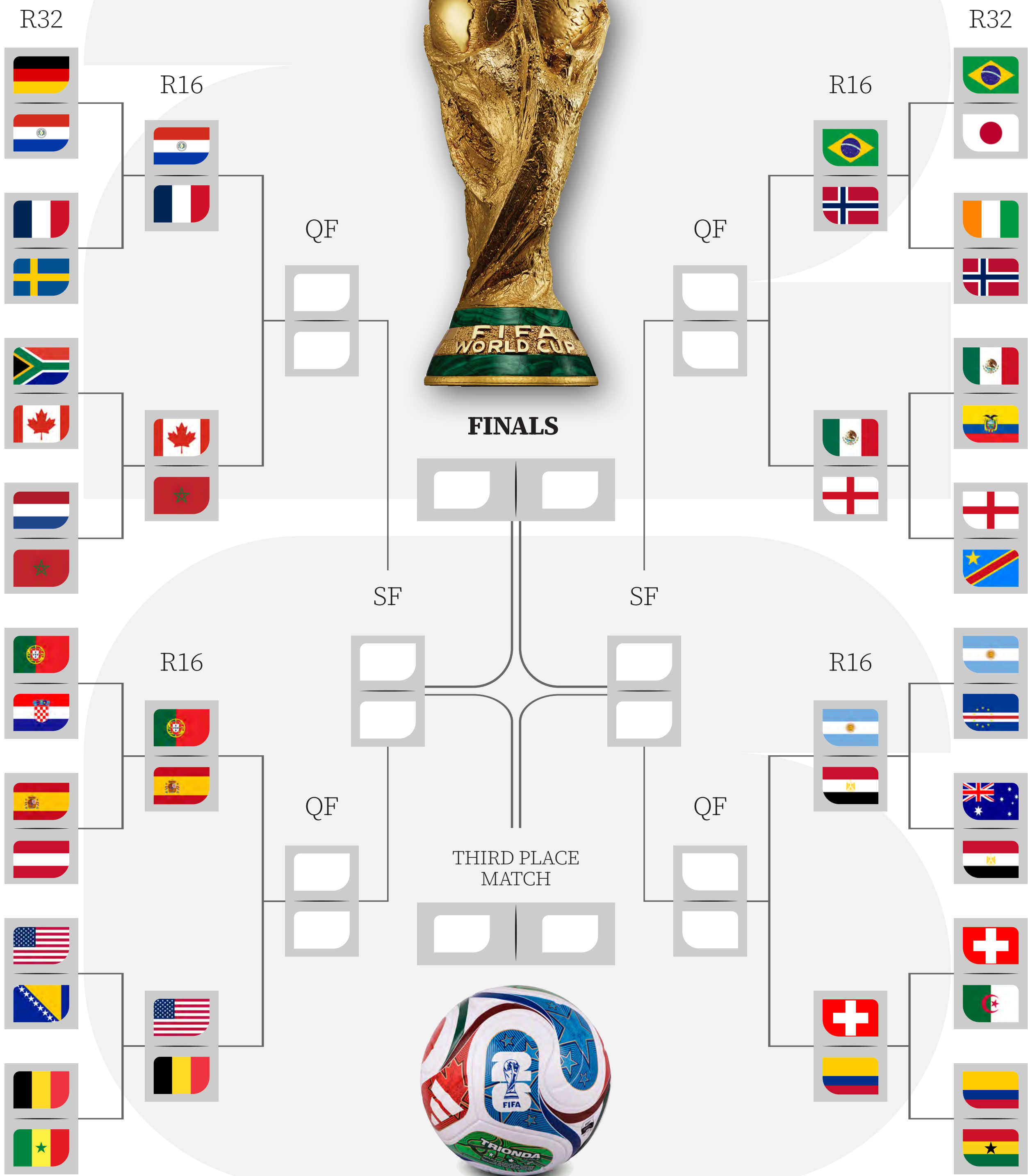
Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om



KNOCKOUT TIME!





FIFA WORLD CUP 2026



AUSTRALIA GOALKEEPERS WERE IN DARK ABOUT SHOOTOUT SWITCH

“The coaches made a decision, and as far as it goes, Matty and I are here to do the job of whatever



Ryan was similarly in the dark, saying: “No, no, I wasn’t told before the match.” Former Australian goalkeeper Mark Bosnich said he was “astounded” by the move, while another goalkeeping icon Mark Schwarzer added: “I personally believe that the goalkeeper who’s playing should

"Beach was in terrific form and now we will never know if that form translates to a saved goal in the penalty shootout," he said in a column for The Australian newspaper. "Again, this is on the coaching staff and as far as I am concerned this is another fail."



“With Australia in a penalty shootout for World Cup survival surely someone in the Socceroos brains trust should have said ‘do

"Okay, it didn't work, so we can look at many things in the reasons behind it, but with Maty's experience, and I think if you look at his record in saving penalties," Popovic said. — AFP

FIFPRO warns of racist abuse



“Players shoulder the expectations of a nation, but this must never come at the cost of their safety, dignity or wellbeing, nor should abuse be dismissed as part of

“There must be meaningful consequences for those responsible and a collective commitment from groups, including law enforcement, social media platforms, media, fans and the public, to reverse this trend.”

- Reuters

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BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Recent years have seen more trade missions, business delegations and participation by Omani companies in Tanzanian exhibitions.

Oman-Tanzania trade rises to \$350 million

MUSCAT: Trade between Oman and Tanzania has increased from \$140 million to \$350 million over the past three years, highlighting growing economic ties as both countries seek to deepen cooperation in trade, investment, logistics and tourism.

Saud bin Hilal al Shidhani, Oman's Ambassador to Tanzania, said the relationship between the two countries, built on longstanding historical and cultural links, is entering a new phase of economic cooperation supported by strong political commitment and increased engagement between their private sectors.

He said recent years have seen more trade missions, business delegations and participation by Omani companies in Tanzanian exhibitions, creating opportunities for partnerships and investment.

"Tanzania has become an important gateway for Omani companies seeking access to East African markets", he said, noting that the country's strategic location on the Indian Ocean and membership of both the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community provide access to a regional market of hundreds of millions of consumers.

Al Shidhani said Omani investment in Tanzania has expanded significantly following the signing of agreements on double taxation avoidance and reciprocal investment protection in 2024.

Investments now span oil and gas exploration, mining, industry, agriculture, fisheries, airport management, transport and quarantine facilities, while Tanzanian investors have also shown increasing interest in Oman's property market because of the Sultanate of Oman's stable and attractive investment climate.

According to the ambassador, closer cooperation between Omani and Tanzanian ports could strengthen trade flows and re-export activity linking the Gulf with East Africa, while the embassy in Dar es Salaam continues to connect investors, facilitate business partnerships and promote investment opportunities in both countries. — ONA

MBSAT signs space pact with France's Telespazio

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 4

OMAN'S Mohammed Al Barwani Satellites (MBSAT) LLC, the space and satellite communications arm of the Mohammed Al Barwani Group, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Telespazio France, one of Europe's leading providers of satellite communications and space data services and solutions. The pact was signed during the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France last week.

"This partnership represents a new step towards the development of satellite communications services, the exploration of new opportunities in the space sector and the strengthening of cooperation between Oman and France", Muscat-based MBSAT said in a post.

"It supports the digital economy as one of the key objectives of Oman Vision 2040, while also opening wider opportunities across markets in the Middle East and Europe", the company further added.

Said al Jabri, Chief Executive Officer — MB LLC, stated: "This partnership reflects MB Group's strategic vision to diversify our investment portfolio and expand into innovative, future-focused industries.

France is a global leader in the space and satellite services sector, making it an ideal market for building strategic partnerships and accessing world-class expertise. At the same time, this collaboration aligns with Oman's national aspirations to strengthen its position in the global space economy, while fostering local capabilities and creating long-term value for the Sultanate of Oman".

Ammar al Rawahi, Space Expert at MBSAT added: "This collaboration marks a significant step in strengthening international space



Representatives from the two sides signing the MoU in Paris recently.

”*This partnership represents a new step towards the development of satellite communications services, the exploration of new opportunities in the space sector and the strengthening of cooperation between Oman and France.*

MBSAT

partnerships.

Together with Telespazio and leading French space companies, we are strengthening satellite communications solutions, services and applications while enhancing the region's attractiveness for space partnerships and investments. It reflects the private sector's commitment to supporting Oman's national priorities and shaping a stronger regional space economy".

Telespazio — a joint venture between Leonardo (67%) and Thales (33%) — is one of the world's leading players in satellite services.

Using its technological expertise, gained over more than thirty years of experience in the field of infrastructure for satellite operations, Telespazio France plays a leading role in the field of space services.

MBSAT was established in 2024 to develop sovereign satellite capabilities for Oman and the wider region.

Earlier this year, the company announced a partnership with Astranis, a leader in small geostationary communications satellites, to support Oman's first dedicated MicroGEO satellite.

The contract with Astranis is part of a \$200 million investment made by MB Group towards Oman Vision 2040 programmes in this sector, which includes the dedicated MicroGeo satellite, ground stations and other infrastructure investments.

Astranis' dedicated network would provide the Sultanate of Oman with sovereign control over its digital infrastructure, it said at the time.

Beyond satellite ownership, MBSAT aims to provide secure broadband connectivity, enterprise and government communications and other space-based digital services, while supporting the Sultanate of Oman's ambition to build a domestic space industry and expand its presence in the global space economy.

National Energy Centre hails Oman-France agreements

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

The National Energy Centre (NEC) welcomed the signing of a package of economic and investment agreements between Oman and France during the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France. NEC emphasised that these agreements reflect the strength of the long-standing bilateral relations between the two countries and open new horizons for cooperation in strategic sectors, particularly water and energy.

In this context, the National Energy Centre takes pride in its participation in the National Sustainable Water Alliance (NWA), a strategic consortium comprising the National Energy Centre, National Trading Company, SUEZ International and Water Investment Company.

The consortium has been



The National Sustainable Water Alliance has been awarded a 15-year contract to operate and maintain water and wastewater services in Oman for Nama Water Services.

awarded a 15-year contract to operate and maintain water and wastewater services in Oman for Nama Water Services, demonstrating a successful partnership that combines national capabilities with international expertise to support the development of Oman's water sector.

The project is one of the largest water sector initiatives in the region and represents SUEZ's largest operational contract in the Middle East.

It covers water and wastewater services across the Governorates of Muscat, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South, serving approximately 2.3 million people.

Abdullah bin Rashid al Badi, Chairman of the NEC, stated that this partnership represents an advanced model of collaboration between national institutions and international partners, reflecting the confidence that the Sultanate of Oman enjoys in attracting high-quality investments and building strategic alliances.

He noted that the project will contribute to knowledge transfer, the development of national talent and the implementation of global best practices in water utility management and operations, thereby supporting sustainable development and aligning with

the Sultanate of Oman's national priorities for the water sector.

The project also supports Oman's national priorities to enhance the efficiency of water networks and reduce water losses from approximately 34 per cent to 11 per cent by 2040, strengthening water security, improving service quality, and advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 towards building a smart and sustainable water sector.

Al Badi added that the National Energy Centre's contribution to establishing and supporting the National Sustainable Water Alliance (NWA) is fully aligned with the Centre's vision of fostering effective strategic partnerships, enabling high value investments, and strengthening local content, thereby supporting sustainable economic development and reinforcing Oman's position as a regional hub for strategic projects and international partnerships.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The Board reviewed Meethaq’s performance during the reporting period, Sharia audit reports and reports related Sharia-compliant investment pools.

MEETHAQ’S SHARIA SUPERVISORY BOARD APPROVES REPORTS

MUSCAT: The Sharia Supervisory Board of Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat held its third meeting of 2026 at the Bank’s Head Office. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Mubarak al Abri, Chairman of the SSB, together with the members of the Sharia Supervisory Board and representatives from the Sharia Audit and Compliance Department.

During the meeting, the Board reviewed Meethaq’s performance during the reporting period, Sharia audit reports and reports related to Sharia-compliant investment pools.

The Board also examined a number of products, services and initiatives submitted for review and Sharia opinion, reaffirming its role in ensuring that all activities and operations remain fully compliant with Islamic Sharia principle. The Board approved a number of resolutions and discussed opportunities to further enhance Meethaq’s products and services in line with evolving customer expectations and market developments.

The Sharia Supervisory Board meeting is held regularly throughout the year and serves as an important platform for the exchange of views, information and expertise among Board members regarding various business activities, particularly those related to products, services and financing operations offered by Meethaq Islamic Banking to its customers.

The Sharia Supervisory Board comprises distinguished scholars and specialists in Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary economics. The Board is responsible for reviewing and approving products, services, activities, investments, operations and transactions prior to implementation, as well as conducting post-implementation reviews through the Internal Sharia Audit function to ensure compliance with the Sharia rulings, resolutions and fatwas issued by the Board.

Meethaq Islamic Banking continues its efforts to provide innovative banking products and services that are fully compliant with Islamic Sharia principles, supported by a comprehensive Sharia governance framework and effective oversight mechanisms that ensure adherence to best practices and industry standards in Islamic banking.

Further reinforcing its leadership in Islamic banking services, Meethaq has received several prestigious awards, including Best Islamic Investment Bank in Oman from Islamic Finance News, Market Leadership Award within Global Islamic Finance Awards, among others.

BYD: Official partner of Khaleeji 27 tournament

BYD, the world’s leading manufacturer of New Energy Vehicles, has reached a new agreement to be the Official Automotive Partner of the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) and the Khaleeji 27 tournament.

The announcement marks BYD’s first official sponsorship of a major Gulf football event and a significant milestone in the brand’s commitment to the region and expansion in one of its key strategic markets. The partnership is based on strong alignment between Khaleeji 27 and BYD, which will take place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, between September 23 and October 7.

One of the Gulf region’s most celebrated sporting events, it brings together teams from eight nations, along with their communities and generations of fans, through a shared passion for football.

BYD shares this spirit of connection and progress, using innovation and advanced new energy technology to create a better mobility experience for people across the world. Together, AGCFF and BYD aim to deliver a tournament experience that celebrates excellence, inspires fans and reflects the ambition of a region moving confidently towards the future.

As Official Automotive Partner, BYD will give fans, media and guests the opportunity to try its range of models in a dedicated on-site test-drive area. BYD will also engage with supporters through interactive displays and experiences in the official fan zone.

The agreement was formalised at a signing ceremony held in Doha, Qatar, on June 29, 2026 and attended by key executives and officials from Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation and BYD, including Jassim bin Sultan al Rumaihi, Secretary General of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation and Stella Li, BYD Executive Vice President.



The announcement marks BYD’s first official sponsorship of a major Gulf football event.

On this occasion, Jassim bin Sultan al Rumaihi, Secretary General of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation, said: “This cooperation reflects mutual trust and a shared vision aimed at developing the tournament and strengthening its fan engagement. This partnership with BYD also underscores AGCFF’s ongoing commitment and continuous efforts to attract leading brands with significant influence in the region.

BYD will join the sponsors of this prestigious Gulf sporting event to help deliver an exceptional edition of the tournament, given the noble values, diverse significance, marketing appeal and immense popularity that it represents.

He added: “This partnership with BYD, a strategic partner distinguished by its commitment to supporting sports and major events, will play a fundamental role

in supporting and advancing football at all levels. It will strengthen our efforts to enhance, elevate and further develop this tournament while increasing its impact. We are excited about a successful tournament that reflects everyone’s passion for Gulf football”.

BYD Executive Vice-President Stella Li commented: “We’re proud and excited to be the Official Automotive Partner of the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation and Khaleeji 27. Football has a unique ability to bring people together and Khaleeji is one of the strongest expressions of unity, passion and pride across the Gulf region. At BYD, we share this spirit of progress and excellence.

Through innovation and our new-energy technologies, we’re committed to supporting a better future for the Middle East region and creating meaningful experiences for fans, customers and communities”.

SEZAD – SQU summer internship concludes

MUSCAT: Every Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) student who took part in the 2026 SEZAD – SQU summer internship said they would recommend the programme to other SQU students, according to initial survey results from the pilot.

Nearly 70% also said they could imagine building a career in Al Duqm after graduation, while host companies gave the programme an average rating of 4.7 out of five.

All participating employers backed extending future placements to one month. Eighteen SQU students travelled to the Special Economic Zone

at Duqm (SEZAD) this summer for two weeks with companies based on the zone.

The group came from the Colleges of Engineering; Agricultural and Marine Sciences; Science; Arts and Social Sciences; and Economics and Political Science.

The pilot was held under the guidance of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Prof Salim bin Hamoud al Harthy, SQU’s Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs & Community Service.

Students completed placements with OQ8, ASYAD Drydock, Oman Tank Terminal Company, SIMAK, Port of Duqm, ASYAD Container Terminal, Renaissance Services and Crowne Plaza Duqm. Alongside their placements, students took part in the Live. Work. Play. Challenge.

Student feedback returned often to the time spent with managers and mentors. Participants said the internship helped them understand how industries in Al Duqm operate and how many career options are forming across the zone.

Petrochemicals, logistics,

fisheries, environmental management, hospitality and operations all featured among the fields students said they could imagine pursuing after graduation.

Eng Ahmed Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, said: “The internship gave students direct contact with working life in Al Duqm. Time with companies helped them understand how different industries operate and meet the people building careers here, while giving our tenant companies an early opportunity to get to know talented young Omanis before they enter the job market”.

OAB CEO participates in Arab Bank strategy sessions

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced that its Chief Executive Officer, Sulaiman al Harthy, recently participated in strategic leadership sessions hosted by Arab Bank in Amman, Jordan.

The sessions brought together senior executives and banking leaders from across the region to exchange perspectives on the evolving financial landscape, emerging opportunities and the future of banking in the Middle East.

The engagement reflects the longstanding relationship between Oman Arab Bank and Arab Bank, built on shared values, mutual trust and a common commitment to supporting sustainable economic growth and financial sector development across the region.

The strategy sessions provided an important platform for dialogue around key industry priorities,



The engagement reflects the longstanding relationship between OAB and Arab Bank.

including digital transformation, customer experience, sustainable finance, operational resilience and

regional economic trends. Discussions also explored opportunities for deeper

collaboration and knowledge sharing to support the continued advancement of the banking sector.

The participation comes shortly after Arab Bank’s support of Oman Arab Bank’s successful Additional Tier 1 (AT1) capital issuance, reinforcing the strength of the relationship between the two institutions. The landmark transaction marked an important milestone in Oman Arab Bank’s capital management strategy, further strengthening the bank’s capital position and supporting its long-term growth ambitions.

Commenting on the occasion, Sulaiman al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Arab Bank, said, “Our participation in these strategic sessions reflects the value of strong regional partnerships and the importance of collaborative thinking in shaping the future of banking.

We are proud of our longstanding relationship with Arab Bank and deeply appreciate their support in our recent AT1 capital issuance.

Such partnerships play a vital role in strengthening financial institutions, fostering innovation and enabling sustainable growth across the region. As the banking industry continues to evolve, ongoing dialogue and cooperation among regional leaders will remain essential to creating long-term value for our customers, shareholders and the wider economies we serve”.

Oman Arab Bank remains committed to strengthening regional partnerships and leveraging strategic collaborations that support innovation, resilience and sustainable growth, while continuing to deliver value-driven banking solutions to its customers and stakeholders.

SHORTTAKES



The Singapore route is expected to strengthen business, tourism links between the two countries.

OMAN AIR LAUNCHES TASHKENT AND SINGAPORE SERVICES

MUSCAT: Oman Air has launched its first direct flights to Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan and Singapore, expanding its international network as the national carrier seeks to strengthen connectivity with Central Asia and Southeast Asia.

The airline will operate two weekly flights between Muscat and Tashkent, while the Singapore service will operate four times a week throughout the year. The new routes form part of Oman Air’s strategy to broaden its international network and reinforce Muscat International Airport’s role as a regional aviation hub.

Sayyidah Wafa bint Jabr al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Uzbekistan, said the Muscat-Tashkent route had been introduced in response to growing demand for travel between the two countries.

She said Uzbekistan’s rich Islamic heritage, historical landmarks and four-season climate make it an attractive destination for family tourism, adding that the new service is expected to encourage greater tourism, trade and investment while strengthening economic and cultural ties.

The launch of the Tashkent route also reflects growing interest in Central Asia as both a tourism destination and an emerging business market.

Oman Air also inaugurated its Muscat-Singapore service, operating four weekly flights, providing direct connectivity to one of Asia’s leading financial and aviation centres.

The airline said the Singapore route is expected to strengthen business and tourism links between the two countries while offering travellers easier access to Southeast Asia through one of the region’s major air transport hubs.

The addition of Tashkent and Singapore continues Oman Air’s network expansion as the carrier focuses on improving international connectivity, supporting the tourism sector and facilitating trade and investment in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

Sahl Hamran project now into completion phase

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 4

ONE of Dhofar’s long-delayed housing projects is moving into a new completion phase, with Dhofar Municipality now overseeing the remaining works at the Sahl Hamran housing project in the Wilayat of Salalah after years of stalled progress.

A municipal source said the project has been transferred to Dhofar Municipality and retendered, with the new phase focused on completing what remains of the existing development rather than launching a new housing scheme.

The scope includes completion of 240 housing units for citizens, internal roads, sewerage networks, maintenance of buildings constructed in earlier phases and drainage infrastructure to protect the site from rainwater, seasonal runoff and wadi flows.

A project signboard at the site identifies Dhofar Municipality’s General Directorate of Projects and Technical Affairs as the project owner and Wara Construction Co — Oman as the contractor.

It describes the work as the “completion of construction of 240 housing units for citizens at Hamran — Salalah”, reinforcing the municipality’s position that the current phase is intended to complete the remaining part of a long-standing project.

That distinction is important. Sahl Hamran is not a new housing announcement. It is a delayed public housing file now being brought back into active implementation, with the main challenge shifting from award



The project has been transferred to Dhofar Municipality and retendered, with the new phase focused on completing what remains of the existing development (Picture for illustration).

procedures to visible progress on the ground.

The municipal source said the coming works will prepare the site for actual residential use, not simply finish building structures.

This includes completing essential services that had remained pending, particularly roads, sewerage and stormwater drainage.

The drainage component is expected to be a key part of the new phase, given Dhofar’s seasonal climate and the site’s exposure to rainwater accumulation and wadi flows.

Earlier delays left some previously built structures exposed for years to humidity, erosion and incomplete infrastructure.

For beneficiary families, the project has carried a social weight far beyond its construction value. It is tied to housing stability, access to basic

services and the completion of a public commitment that has remained unresolved for years.

The Observer’s archives show that the project dates back nearly two decades. A previous report said the housing scheme was linked to Royal Directives issued in 2006, while later tendering covered hundreds of housing units before the project was held back by procedural, technical and land-related challenges.

In 2017, the project was described as a RO 15.6 million housing development comprising 300 units over an area of 420,000 square metres. The wider plan at the time included roads, sewerage, a water treatment facility, electricity poles and public amenities.

More recently, tender-related data showed that award procedures had been completed for a RO 4.33 million project

covering 240 housing units for citizens in Sahl Hamran, Salalah, as part of a wider package of development and service projects across the Sultanate of Oman.

The difference between the earlier and current figures reflects the present completion scope, which concerns the remaining works now placed under Dhofar Municipality’s supervision.

According to the municipal source, implementation is expected to begin in the near future after completion of the remaining procedures, with the contractor set to start work at the site.

For Dhofar, the importance of Sahl Hamran lies not only in the number of units, but in whether a delayed public project can be technically corrected, properly supervised and delivered with the infrastructure required to make it liveable.

Nama awards 900 million water services contract

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

Nama Water Services has awarded a 15-year contract worth approximately RO 900 million to improve the efficiency and sustainability of water and wastewater services, in one of the largest performance-based agreements of its kind in the Middle East.

The contract covers Muscat, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South Governorates, serving more than 2.3 million people, equivalent to around 43 per cent of Oman’s population. It was awarded to a consortium comprising France’s Suez, the Oman Infrastructure Fund (RIKAZ), National Trading Company and the National Energy Centre.

The agreement forms part of Nama Water Services’ institutional transformation programme, shifting towards a performance-based operating model designed to improve asset management, reduce water losses and enhance long-term service sustainability.



QAIS BIN SAUD
AL ZAKWANI
CEO, Nama Water
Services

While the consortium will be responsible for operations, Nama Water Services will continue to oversee governance, regulation and performance management.

Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, Chief Executive Officer of Nama Water Services, said the agreement represented a significant milestone in modernising the sector.

“This project represents an advanced stage in the company’s institutional transformation journey and reflects its vision to reshape the water sector management and operation model according to a global system based on performance, innovation and sustainability.

This will enhance asset management efficiency, strengthen the resilience of the

water system and establish a new generation of smarter, more sustainable and future-ready services”, he said.

He added that the project places strong emphasis on knowledge transfer and workforce development, with an Omanisation target exceeding 83 per cent, while also strengthening local content and creating additional value for the national economy.

Under the agreement, the consortium will operate and maintain 240 groundwater wells, manage a 10,700-kilometre potable water network, distribute around 470,000 cubic metres of drinking water each day, upgrade four desalination plants and operate more than 400,000 smart water meters.

Wastewater operations include the management of 22 treatment plants with a combined treatment capacity of 280,000 cubic metres per day, a 3,000-kilometre sewerage network and 400 kilometres of treated water pipelines for reuse.

The contract is built around 33 key

performance indicators covering operational efficiency, service quality and infrastructure performance.

Al Zakwani said one of its principal objectives is to reduce non-revenue water from 34 per cent to 11 per cent by 2040 through advanced leak detection, predictive maintenance, digital monitoring systems and data-driven asset management.

He said the adoption of operational intelligence, smart technologies and predictive analytics would improve decision-making, increase network reliability and establish a more proactive approach to managing water and wastewater assets.

Nama Water Services said the agreement supports the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by improving water security, strengthening critical infrastructure and introducing global best practices in utility management, while ensuring long-term operational sustainability for one of the country’s most essential public services.

ENERGY TRADE

Iran eyes Japan oil sales



Iran has begun discussions with Japanese companies on resuming crude oil exports under a US sanctions waiver issued as part of ongoing talks between Tehran and Washington.

The waiver expires on August 21, with prospective buyers seeking a longer extension and assurances over shipping security. Japan halted Iranian oil imports in 2019 after the United States tightened sanctions. — Reuters

FOOD MARKETS

Global food prices ease



Global food prices edged lower in June as declines in cereals, sugar and dairy products outweighed increases in vegetable oils and meat, the Food and Agriculture Organisation said.

Its Food Price Index averaged 130.3 points, down from 130.8 in May but 1.7 per cent higher than a year earlier. The agency maintained its forecast for global cereal production at 2.983 billion tonnes in 2026. — Reuters

TRADE FLOWS

EU-US trade reaches record



Trade in goods between the EU and the US reached a record €875 billion last year despite tariff tensions, according to a study by the German Economic Institute. EU exports rose 7.7 per cent to €580 billion, although the report said the figures masked weaker manufacturing performance.

Exports of EU cars and vehicle parts to the US fell 20.4%, with Germany recording a sharp decline. — Reuters

OPINION

Verifying local content data in development projects



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

AS Oman continues to advance the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, local content has become a strategic pillar for achieving sustainable economic growth, strengthening national capabilities and enhancing private sector participation.

Development projects across key sectors are expected not only to deliver infrastructure and services but also to create lasting economic value by supporting local businesses, creating employment opportunities and developing national expertise.

Achieving these outcomes, however, depends on one critical factor: the accuracy and credibility of local content data. Local content verification is the process of confirming that the economic value reported by projects has genuinely been retained within the national economy.

It involves validating reported figures against supporting evidence, reviewing procurement records, confirming workforce data and ensuring that expenditures comply with the country's local content framework.

Without a rigorous verification process, reported achievements may be inconsistent or overstated, limiting their usefulness for policymakers, investors and other stakeholders.

Reliable local content data enables governments to accurately measure the impact of development projects on the economy. It provides evidence of how investments contribute to job creation, supplier development, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) growth and the expansion of local industries. More importantly, verified data supports informed policy decisions, helping authorities identify

sectors that require additional investment and refine future local content strategies.

Despite its importance, verifying local content remains a challenge. Different organisations often apply varying interpretations of local content definitions, leading to inconsistent reporting.

For example, products assembled locally using imported components may be classified differently by different contractors. Such inconsistencies highlight the need for standardised definitions, reporting templates and calculation methodologies that ensure transparency and comparability across projects.

Another challenge lies in the quality and availability of supporting documentation. Effective verification depends on access to contracts, invoices, payroll records, supplier certifications and procurement documents.

Incomplete or poorly managed records can delay verification and reduce confidence in reported results. Strengthening digital record management and integrating procurement systems can significantly improve data quality and audit readiness.

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in addressing these challenges. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, business intelligence platforms, digital dashboards and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are transforming the way local content data is verified.

Automated validation processes can identify anomalies, detect inconsistencies and compare information across multiple databases in a fraction of the time required for manual reviews. This enables verification teams to focus their efforts on higher-risk transactions while improving efficiency and accuracy.

Local content verification is the process of confirming that the economic value reported by projects has genuinely been retained within the national economy. It involves validating reported figures against supporting evidence, reviewing procurement records, confirming workforce data and ensuring that expenditures comply with the country's local content framework

A robust verification framework follows a structured approach. It begins with establishing clear verification objectives and criteria, followed by collecting reported data and supporting evidence. Auditors then conduct document reviews, analytical testing and sample verification, supported where necessary by site visits and stakeholder interviews.

Findings are documented, discrepancies are addressed and recommendations are provided to strengthen future reporting practices.

Risk-based verification has also emerged as an effective strategy, particularly for large development portfolios. Rather than reviewing every transaction, resources are concentrated on high-value contracts, strategic suppliers and projects with greater reporting risks. This targeted approach improves assurance while making efficient use of available resources.

Equally important is building institutional capability. Continuous training for project managers, procurement professionals, finance teams and contractors helps improve understanding of reporting requirements, documentation standards and verification procedures. Strong governance, combined with skilled professionals and modern technology, creates a culture of accountability and transparency.

As Oman continues to diversify its economy and increase investment in strategic sectors, credible local content verification will become even more significant. It is more than a compliance exercise — it is a strategic tool for measuring national value creation, strengthening public confidence and ensuring that development investments deliver tangible economic and social benefits.

TOMORROW’S SOLAR CHALLENGE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PANELS WEAR OUT?

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

Solar power has become one of the defining technologies of the global energy transition. As countries race to install more photovoltaic (PV) systems, attention has focused on generating clean electricity and reducing carbon emissions.

Yet another question is beginning to emerge: what happens when today's solar panels reach the end of their lives?

Most solar panels are designed to operate for around 25 to 30 years. The earliest large-scale installations are now approaching retirement, meaning millions of panels will soon require replacement.

While solar energy is often viewed as one of the cleanest sources of electricity, managing end-of-life panels is becoming one of the industry's next major sustainability challenges.

Globally, the volume of discarded solar panels is expected to rise sharply over the coming decades. Estimates suggest annual solar panel waste could exceed one million tonnes by 2035 and surpass ten million tonnes by 2050 as first-generation installations are decommissioned.

For Oman, the issue may still seem distant, but planning today could help avoid environmental challenges while creating new economic opportunities tomorrow.

The Sultanate of Oman is rapidly expanding its renewable energy portfolio through large-scale solar developments and distributed installations. As more panels are deployed, so too will the need for systems that can recover valuable materials once they reach the end of their operational lives.

Fortunately, solar panels are far from ordinary waste. Glass typically accounts for around three-quarters of a panel's weight and can often be recovered.

Aluminium frames are readily recyclable, while silicon, silver, copper and other valuable materials can also be extracted using specialised recycling processes. Some commercial recycling technologies are capable of recovering the vast majority of these materials for use in new products.

Recovering these resources offers more than environmental benefits. Recycling reduces the need for virgin raw materials, lowers manufacturing emissions and helps strengthen supply chains for clean energy technologies.

As global demand for minerals used in renewable energy continues to grow, recycled materials are expected to become increasingly valuable.

Dhofar’s growth is a national imperative



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer

DHOFAR should not be read through one season, however important that season is to Oman's tourism identity.

The governorate's larger value lies elsewhere. It is one of the clearest tests of whether Oman can turn the strengths of its governorates into visible, sustainable and measurable economic growth. That is not a local question. It is a national economic question.

Oman Vision 2040 places the development of governorates and sustainable cities within the country's long-term transformation. The point is not simply to distribute projects across the map.

It is to build an economy in which each governorate can use its comparative advantage to attract investment, create jobs, support local enterprise and contribute more clearly to national diversification.

Dhofar has enough assets to make that argument serious. It has a major port on the Indian Ocean, a free zone, an industrial city, agricultural and fisheries potential, a recognised tourism identity, rich heritage and a strategic location close to wider maritime and regional trade routes.

Few governorates combine this range of economic assets in one place.

The issue, therefore, is no longer whether Dhofar has potential. It clearly does. The more important question is whether these assets are sufficiently connected to each other and whether they are producing enough value for the local and national economy.

Port of Salalah shows the scale already present. In 2025, the port handled 4.3 million TEUs and 26.4 million tonnes of general cargo. These are not tourism figures.

They point to Dhofar's role as a logistics platform with relevance

The governorate has the assets. The next test is whether they can be connected into a clearer, measurable economic model.

beyond the governorate itself.

Salalah Free Zone, Raysut Industrial City and Al Mazunah Free Zone add further weight to that picture.

Together, they show that Dhofar's economy cannot be reduced to visitors, hotels and seasonal demand. It has an industrial, logistical and trade dimension that deserves a more integrated development conversation. But assets alone do not create a growth model.

A port becomes more valuable when it is linked to manufacturing, cold-chain logistics, exports and local suppliers. A free zone becomes more meaningful when it creates contracts, skills and opportunities around it.

Tourism becomes stronger when it supports small businesses, food producers, transport operators, heritage sites and year-round services. Agriculture and fisheries become more strategic when they are connected to processing, branding, distribution and export markets.

This is where the next stage of Dhofar's development must be judged. The governorate does not need another general statement about potential. It needs a sharper economic framework that asks practical questions.

How much local value is being created? How many sustainable jobs are linked to new projects? How many SMEs are entering supply chains? How much of the governorate's production is being processed locally before it leaves the market?

How far are tourism, logistics, industry and food security being planned as one ecosystem rather than separate files?

These questions matter because balanced development cannot remain a slogan.

It must be measured through

outcomes: investment converted into operations, projects converted into jobs, infrastructure converted into productivity and local advantages converted into competitive sectors.

Dhofar's opportunity is not to compete with Muscat, Suhar or Al Duqm. Oman does not need one centre of growth. It needs several centres, each built around real economic strengths.

Suhar has its industrial and port base. Al Duqm has its strategic heavy-industry and energy platform. Muscat remains the administrative and services centre.

Dhofar's role should be defined by its own combination of logistics, food, tourism, heritage, industry and access to the Indian Ocean. That requires coordination more than promotion.

The governorate's assets must be connected through better planning, stronger data, clearer investment pipelines, targeted skills programmes and deeper participation by local firms.

The measure of success should not be how many projects are announced, but how many become productive, how many create local contracts and how many strengthen Oman's wider diversification agenda.

This is also why Dhofar matters beyond Dhofar. If the governorate can turn its port, free zone, industrial base, natural resources and tourism identity into a stronger year-round economy, it will offer Oman a practical model for balanced growth.

It will show that development in the governorates is not only about improving services, but about creating economic centres that can stand on their own strengths.

Dhofar does not need to prove that it has assets. The evidence is already visible.

Its next test is to organise those assets into value.

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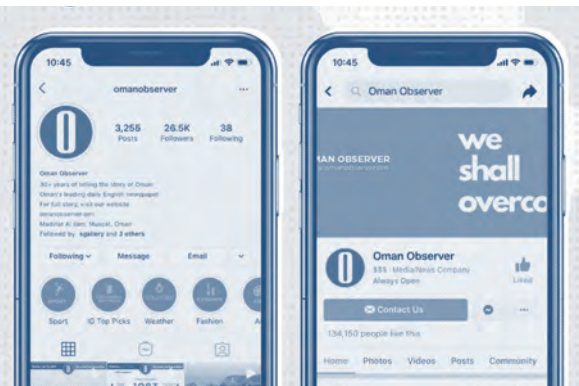
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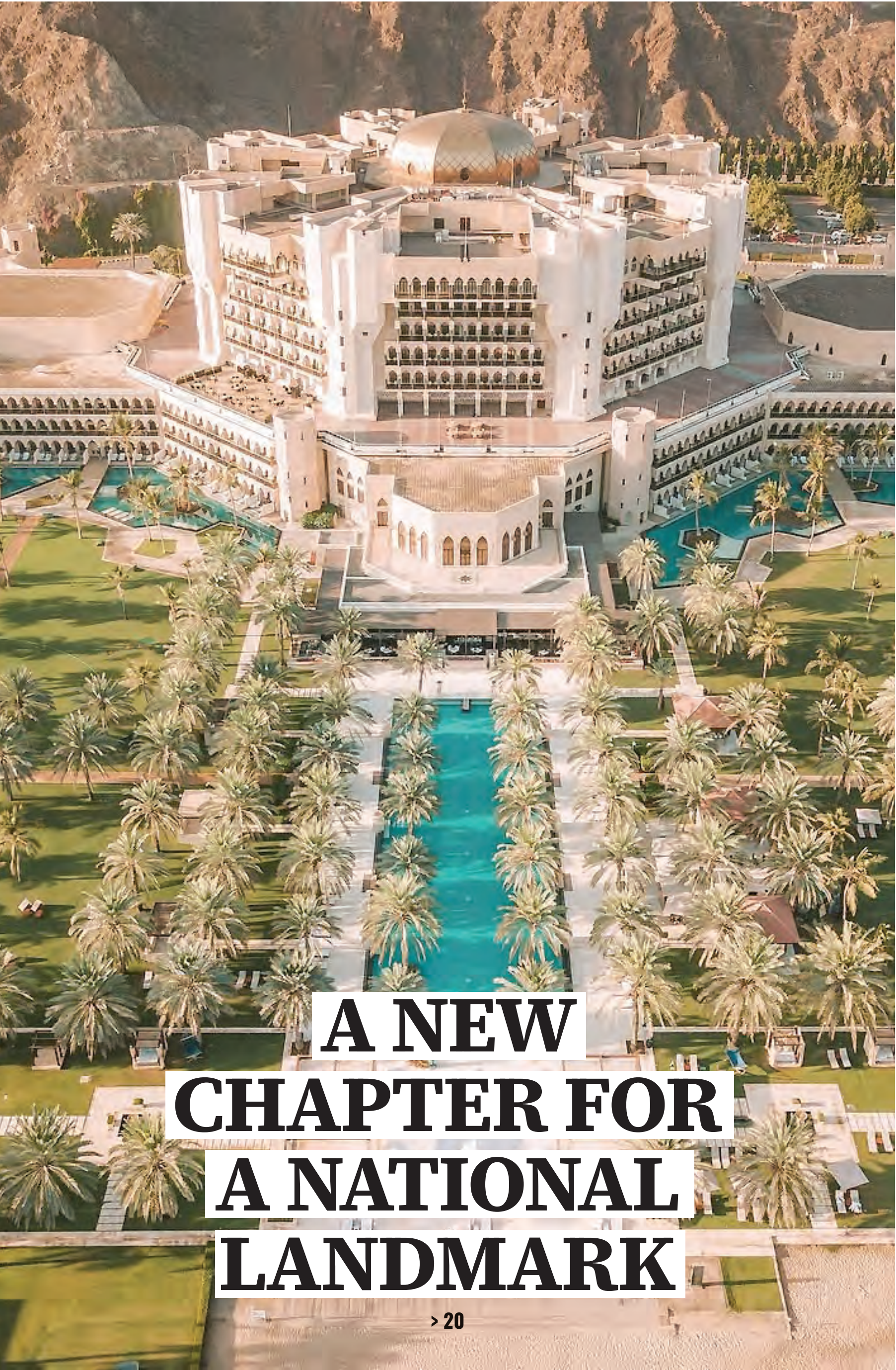
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ART/LIFE



A NEW CHAPTER FOR A NATIONAL LANDMARK

> 20

AWARDSEASON

TEYANA TAYLOR WINS BIG AT 2026 BET AWARDS



Taylor was awarded the noncompetitive honour of Icon of the Year, presented by singer Janet Jackson. — Reuters

Teyana Taylor was a top winner on Sunday at the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Awards, which honours Black actors, singers and sports stars.

The “One Battle After Another” actor took home four awards, including the special, noncompetitive honour of Icon of the Year, presented by singer Janet Jackson. She also won the Fashion Vanguard Award, Best Actress and Video Director of the Year for the short film “Escape Room”.

“There would be no me without you”, Taylor said to Jackson during a tearful acceptance speech for the Icon of the Year award, which BET describes as honouring those who have paid homage to music, entertainment, advocacy and community impact.

“I worked for 20 years for this. So, I’m not accepting what I’ve earned with arrogance; I’m accepting what I’ve earned with gratitude”, she said.

The BET Awards were held at the Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles and broadcast live on BET, as well as multiple Paramount-owned channels.

Comedian Druski, the youngest person ever to host the ceremony, opened with his comedic pastor persona, leading the audience in a humorous group prayer that blended jokes with tributes to spirituality.

The ceremony featured performances from Cardi B, Raye, TI, Kehlani, DoeChii and Don Toliver.

Boundary-breaking music industry executive Sylvia Rhone was also honoured with the BET Ultimate Icon Award, which recognises individuals who have made a lasting impact throughout their careers in the entertainment industry and the Black community.

“Tonight’s honour bears my name but really belongs to all of us who create culture. I’ve been fortunate to spend my life around extraordinary artists”, Rhone, 74, said as she accepted the award onstage.

“Black creativity is one of the most powerful forces in the world. It has shaped culture”, she said.

She emphasised that while technology is valuable, it is essential for Black creatives to preserve the soul and artistry of music for the next generation.

The 50-year veteran of the music industry is the first Black woman to have held various top-level positions at a number of well-known record labels.

She has held executive roles at Epic Records, Universal Motown, Elektra, Atlantic and East West; and is known for her mentorship, including her work with Missy Elliott, Brandy and Busta Rhymes. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model presents an Issey Miyake Menswear Spring-Summer 2027 creation during Men’s Fashion Week in Paris. — Reuters



TRADITION

People dance and sing during Ivana Kupala celebrations, a traditional midsummer festival, at Kyiv’s Mamayeva Sloboda museum, Ukraine. — Reuters



HANDS ON

Workers make cement poles at a workshop in New Delhi. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Little Owl, Salalah



“Rose-ringed Parakeet”

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SONY DISCONTINUES JAPAN SALES OF ROBOT PUPPY ‘AIBO’

Sony is halting sales of its robotic puppy “aibo” in Japan, the company said, eight years after the latest model of its interactive android pet became an instant hit. The announcement marks the end of an era for loyal fans of the high-tech toy, which develops its own personality and can perform tricks like waving and mimicking its owner.

The ERS-1000 model of aibo — a 30-centimetre (one-foot) long hound with flapping ears, eyes that show various emotions and a nose camera — charmed customers on its launch in 2018, clocking up 20,000 sales in the first six months.

It was also a big comeback for Sony’s robot dog.

The first iteration of aibo came out in 1999, followed by numerous models over the years — from angular metallic-silver bots to more cuddly round-faced versions — with more than 150,000 units sold.

But by 2006, Sony, facing a tough business environment, pulled the plug on aibo, seen as something of a frivolous luxury.

Sony said in a short statement that Japan sales of



the current ERS-1000 model will be discontinued once stock runs out.

Services such as access to tech support, replacement parts and subscriptions to online cloud plans to store the robodog’s memories will be maintained, it said.

In Japan, fans had a vocal reaction to the news.

“I’ve been in a daze ever since I saw the announcement. Until more information comes out, I need to be careful not to mess up my daily life from overthinking”, wrote X user Yachi.

“So it’s over already? It didn’t last until the golden age of physical AI”, Yusuke Ando wrote. — AFP

ARCHAEOLOGISTS FIGHT TO SAVE LIBYA’S ANCIENT GREEK RUINS



A man walks through the ruins of the Temple of Zeus at the archaeological site of Cyrene. — AFP

In eastern Libya, a small group of archaeologists is working to safeguard the ancient ruins of Cyrene and Apollonia, Greek-era sites that have faced looting, neglect and the devastation of Storm Daniel.

The Unesco-listed remains once formed part of a network of Greek colonies along the North African coast. At Cyrene, guide Hamdi al Kailani looks across the imposing Temple of Zeus, which he says is slightly larger than Athens’ Parthenon.

Today, the site is calm. But after the 2011 fall of longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi, Cyrene and other eastern Libyan heritage sites became vulnerable as state institutions weakened.

“We were so afraid”, said Smail Dakhil, who oversees the dilapidated Museum of Cyrene. It holds statues of Apollo and Zeus, as well as a store of more than 40,000 artefacts salvaged from the ancient city.

Dakhil said colleagues hid small statues, gold coins and archives in their homes. Larger pieces, including a rare female sphinx, could not be moved, so volunteer archaeologists and residents guarded the sites around the clock. Cyrene was founded in 631 BC by settlers from Thera, now Santorini, alongside four other colonies: Apollonia, Ptolemais, Arsinoe and Berenice. At its height, it had as many as 100,000 inhabitants and developed a rich intellectual life around arts, music and science, with theatres and a school of philosophy.

Earthquakes and wars reduced the cities to ruins, which were rediscovered in the 18th century. Under Gaddafi, Libya’s pre-Islamic heritage received limited attention amidst an official focus on pan-Arabism.



A man holds a preserved artefact from the Cyrene archaeological site near the ancient historical town of Shahat in the northeastern Mediterranean coast of Libya. — AFP

Cyrene was founded in 631 BC by settlers from Thera, now Santorini, alongside four other colonies: Apollonia, Ptolemais, Arsinoe and Berenice.

Then, in 2023, Storm Daniel brought catastrophic floods to Derna, around 100 kilometres east of Cyrene, killing thousands and damaging surrounding archaeological areas.

“The day after, everyone who loves this site came by”, said Anis Hamid Younes, who is leading restoration along the sacred pathway linking upper Cyrene to the Temple of Apollo. “We were in shock”.

His team has spent months clearing rubble, recovering objects and rebuilding a sanctuary and nearly 60 metres of an ancient wall. Despite outdated equipment and scarce resources, he hopes the area can reopen to visitors in September.

The storm also revealed new finds, including engravings and funerary offerings among thousands of Greek and

Roman tombs.

At Apollonia, Cyrene’s former port about 20 kilometres away, the threat is increasingly urgent. A third of the site has already been submerged over centuries.

“Before Daniel, we estimated the risk of losing the site at 50 per cent. Now it’s 80 per cent”, said Talal al Hasey of the Department of Antiquities, warning that marine erosion has left some structures fully exposed.

Officials have called for international support and greater national investment in heritage. Ahmad Essa Abdulkariem, a senior antiquities official, said Libya should look beyond oil and build tourism around its cultural legacy.

“Oil will run out one day, while these sites will exist forever”, he said. — AFP

FEATURES

A NEW CHAPTER FOR A NATIONAL LANDMARK

YERU EBUEN

FEW hotels in Oman have witnessed the country's modern history as closely as Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Set between the Al Hajar Mountains and the Sea of Oman, the landmark property has long been more than a luxury hotel, serving as a stage for diplomacy, state occasions and defining moments in the Sultanate of Oman's development.

Its most significant recent role came on January 11, 2020, when, following the passing of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Defence Council convened at Al Bustan Palace to open the sealed letter naming his successor. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik then took the constitutional oath before an emergency session of the Council of Oman, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the nation's history.

This was no coincidence. Since opening in 1985 to coincide with the Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in Muscat, Al Bustan Palace was designed as a venue capable of hosting heads of state, dignitaries and major international events. Over the decades, it has hosted GCC meetings, Arab League gatherings, ministerial conferences and state visits, as well as more recent events such as the 19th Arab Ministerial Tourism Council in 2016 and the GCC-European Union Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting in 2023.

Today, the landmark is undergoing a comprehensive renovation and redevelopment project led by Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group), following the announcement on June 22. The hotel temporarily closed for renovation works beginning July 1, 2026, as part of a planned upgrade aimed at enhancing Oman's tourism infrastructure and strengthening the property's long-term competitiveness.

The redevelopment includes extensive

enhancements to guest rooms and suites, restaurants, spa and wellness facilities, public areas and core infrastructure, alongside upgraded technology and operational systems aligned with international hospitality standards. OMRAN described the project as part of a broader strategy to preserve key tourism assets while ensuring long-term sustainability and competitiveness, with the property set to reopen with a renewed identity that honours its legacy while embracing the future.

The timing reflects a shifting luxury hospitality landscape in Muscat, where new international brands and contemporary resort concepts have raised expectations for design, wellness and guest experience. While Al Bustan Palace continues to be praised for its setting, architecture and service, guests in recent years have also noted the need for renewal as newer properties enter the market. Properties such as Mandarin Oriental Muscat and St Regis Al Mouj Muscat have introduced a new generation of luxury hospitality to the capital, while several other international brands continue to eye Oman for expansion.

With 250 rooms and suites, including presidential suites for heads of state, the hotel remains one of Oman's most recognisable hospitality landmarks. Its grand 38-metre lobby, private beach, landscaped gardens and iconic pool have long defined its identity, alongside restaurants, wellness facilities and a beachfront spa that have hosted generations of guests.

The ongoing renovation marks more than a routine upgrade. It is the renewal of a landmark deeply woven into Oman's modern story. As it moves through this next phase, Al Bustan Palace continues its legacy as a symbol of Omani hospitality, history and national identity for years to come.

