

O M A N
عُمان
D A I L Y

Observer

Spain's Ferran Torres celebrates winning goal



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Oman calls for efforts to halt escalation of war

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a telephone conversation with Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Kingdom of Jordan, discussing regional developments and their impact on the security and stability of the region.

The two ministers stressed the need to intensify political efforts to halt escalation, prioritise dialogue and peaceful solutions and prevent the region from sliding into further confrontation. They also underlined the importance of upholding international law, safeguarding freedom of navigation, protecting the interests of all peoples and preserving the sovereignty and stability of states.

In a separate call, Sayyid Badr spoke with Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

The telephone conversation covered the latest regional developments, mediation efforts and ongoing communications to prevent escalation and confrontation and to advance opportunities for reaching understanding between the parties that could lead to a practical and sustainable consensus — particularly on securing the freedom and safety of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and restoring global supply chains. Both sides affirmed the importance of continued consultation and coordination on current developments, and of concerted regional and international efforts to address the root causes of tension and consolidate security and stability. Meanwhile, the US said it had completed an eighth straight night of attacks against Iran after earlier announcing that at least two US military personnel were killed in Jordan, while US allies in the region reported more Iranian attacks on Sunday. — ONA

SPAIN DOWN ARGENTINA TO WIN WORLD CUP



ROB Woollard Ferran Torres scored an extra-time winner as Spain defeated holders Argentina 1-0 to win the World Cup on Sunday and shatter Lionel Messi's dreams of a triumphant farewell to football's greatest stage. Barcelona striker Torres lashed home a thumping finish in the 106th minute to

reward a dominant display by Spain against an Argentina team who failed to register a single shot on target in 120 minutes. A star-studded crowd of 80,663 that included US President Donald Trump packed East Rutherford's MetLife Stadium to see if Argentina captain Messi could crown his glittering career with a second World Cup victory. But the 39-year-old maestro - almost

certainly playing in his final World Cup game - was reduced to irrelevance as Spain took control early on against an Argentina team who committed a catalogue of cynical fouls throughout. The South Americans' skulduggery ended with midfielder Enzo Fernandez being sent off after a brutal challenge on Spain defender Pau Cubarsi in injury time. SEE SPORT PAGES

OMAN ADVANCES STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT WITH ASEAN

Sultanate to participate in the 50th anniversary of the treaty of amity and cooperation in Southeast Asia

Oman's participation reflects the Sultanate's longstanding commitment to dialogue, peaceful coexistence, regional stability and respect for international law. It also provides an important platform to advance practical cooperation with ASEAN across trade and investment, logistics, energy, food security, tourism, digital transformation and advanced manufacturing.

Representing more than 680 million people and a combined economy approaching US\$4 trillion, ASEAN is one of the world's most dynamic economic regions. Oman is strengthening its position as a strategic partner connecting ASEAN with the Gulf, Africa, and wider International markets.

ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY AT A GLANCE

	ASEAN Combined Economy	US\$3.8 TR
	ASEAN Foreign Direct Investment	US\$226 BN
	ASEAN Approximate Population	680 MN
	Oman's Trade Surplus with ASEAN	US\$3.41 BN



Partnership & Collaboration Over the Years

- 1990**
ASEAN - GCC relationship initiated by Oman's Foreign Ministry
- 2011**
ASEAN - GCC Economic Officials convene in Salalah, Oman
- 2022**
Oman signs The Treaty of Amity & Cooperation (TAC) with ASEAN
- 2023**
Oman takes part in the 1st ASEAN - GCC Summit, Riyadh, KSA
- 2025**
Oman joins the 2nd ASEAN - GCC Summit & the 1st ASEAN - GCC - China Summit
- 2026**
ASEAN - GCC - China Tripartite Business Council. Oman to take part in 50th anniversary of the treaty of amity and cooperation in Southeast Asia the 59th ASEAN

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SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy held talks with Bakary Yaou Sangaré.

OMAN, NIGER
DISCUSS STRONGER
ECONOMIC TIES

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a session of talks on Sunday with Bakary Yaou Sangaré, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of Niger.

The two sides discussed areas of cooperation and opportunities to develop the commercial and economic partnership between the two countries.

They agreed to follow up on the completion of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding to encourage and stimulate further exchange and communication at the government and private sector levels. Furthermore, they aimed to develop commercial and investment exchange and capacity building to achieve mutual benefits and shared interests. — ONA

HARAT AL RAML
DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETS



The committee reviewed what has been accomplished in the technical and organisational aspects. — ONA

IBRI: The committee for the Harat Al Raml development and investment project in the Wilayat of Ibri discussed the latest updates on the development works and reviewed the execution plan and timeline for the upcoming phases, within the framework of following up on the workflow and enhancing the project’s readiness to transition to the executive phase according to the approved plans and frameworks.

This came during a meeting of the committee chaired by Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Wali of Ibri, in the presence of committee members and Eng Abdulrahman bin Humaid al Yahyaie, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Dhahirah Company. — ONA

SAYYID
BADR BIDS
FAREWELL
TO GERMAN,
NEPAL
AMBASSADORS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received on Sunday, separately, Dirk Lölke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duty. Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the two ambassadors which contributed to strengthening bilateral relations, wishing them continued success in their future endeavours. The two meetings were attended by a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

Study calls for integrated
flood management

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 19

A RECENT study by Dr Ghazi bin Ali al Rawas from the College of Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has highlighted the need for an integrated approach to flood management in Wadi Al Sarmi in Al Batinah North, demonstrating that effective flood mitigation requires coordinated planning across entire wadi catchments rather than treating upstream and downstream areas separately. The study examined flash flooding in Wadi Al Sarmi, viewing it not merely as a hydrological phenomenon but as a challenge shaped by geographical conditions, urban development, and public management.

The researchers emphasised that floodwaters originating in the mountainous headwaters continue downstream into urban areas, where they pose significant risks to communities and infrastructure.

According to the study, the Al Batinah North coastal plain has experienced repeated severe flooding in recent years. Its low-lying coastal landscape, combined with rapid urban expansion, has increased flood vulnerability and highlighted the need for more comprehensive flood management strategies.

To investigate the problem, the research team employed the Storm Water Management Model (SWMM) to simulate hydrological and hydraulic behaviour across both upstream and downstream sections of the catchment.

The study examined flash flooding in Wadi Al Sarmi, viewing it not merely as a hydrological phenomenon but as a challenge shaped by geographical conditions, urban development, and public management. The researchers emphasised that floodwaters originating in the mountainous headwaters continue downstream into urban areas, where they pose significant risks to communities and infrastructure.



A study shows the risk pathway in Wadi Al Sarmi and highlights the need for integrated flood management.

The researchers argued that flood management in catchments comprising rural upper reaches and urban lower reaches should be designed as a single integrated system rather than through separate interventions. The proposed methodology began with optimising the locations and dimensions of detention dams in the upstream non-urban area using a multi-objective optimisation framework.

Candidate scenarios were then evaluated using the Complex Proportional Assessment (COPRAS) method, while Backward Induction Game Theory (BIGT) was applied to resolve competing priorities among stakeholders. Based on the selected scenario, the urban drainage network was subsequently redesigned to complement upstream flood-control measures.

Beyond engineering solutions, the study incorporated game theory to analyse interactions among key stakeholders and identify a balanced solution that reconciles upstream and downstream flood management objectives.

This approach sought to minimise conflicts between institutions while accommodating the priorities of organisations such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Sohar Municipality. Compared with the baseline scenario, the selected flood management strategy reduced peak flow entering urban areas by 60.7 per cent. It also increased the drainage network’s flood absorption capacity to 81.8 per cent, indicating a substantially improved ability to accommodate flood volumes and reduce their impacts.

Residents seek safe pedestrian underpass in Al Khoudh

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 19

Concerned about the challenges of crossing the busy Al Shabab Street in Al Khoudh, residents have called for the construction of a pedestrian underpass to ensure safer and easier movement across the road.

Residents have submitted a collective memorandum to Muscat Municipality and the Tajawob platform, the national platform for suggestions, complaints and reports, highlighting the need for a solution that addresses the daily challenges faced by the community.

“We have submitted a proposal to the authorities to address a daily hardship faced by residents of Al Khoudh, particularly the elderly, mothers, people with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses, for whom walking is an important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle,” a resident said.

Residents said heavy traffic on Al Shabab Street and the absence of a safe pedestrian crossing have limited the use of the newly developed walkway on the opposite side of the road, creating safety concerns and effectively separating neighbouring communities.



Speaking to the Observer, resident Zubair al Balushi said two proposals had been submitted for consideration by the concerned authorities.

The first proposal involves constructing a pedestrian underpass opposite the National Bank of Oman – Al Khoudh Branch. Residents believe the location is technically suitable due to the presence of a wadi, which could facilitate excavation and reduce construction costs.

They added that the underpass would provide a safe and convenient crossing for residents of all ages, encourage walking and promote healthier lifestyles.

Residents also highlighted the role of such a facility in strengthening community

connectivity by linking residential areas with public services and the new walkway.

The second proposal calls for relocating the existing pedestrian bridge in front of the old airport to Al Shabab Street, providing a more convenient crossing point for residents.

Residents said the proposed crossing would represent more than just an infrastructure project, describing it as a measure that would provide reassurance to families, support elderly residents and encourage daily physical activity.

SPOTLIGHT



Just 10 minutes of daily reflection and planning can improve focus, productivity and decision-making

TO TRANSFORM YOUR DAY

Experts say lasting change is built through small, consistent habits rather than dramatic actions

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

IN A WORLD FILLED with constant demands, endless notifications and the pressure to achieve more, many people search for dramatic changes that can transform their lives. Yet, meaningful progress often begins with something much simpler — a small habit repeated consistently until it becomes part of everyday life.

Among the many habits linked to personal growth and productivity, setting aside just 10 minutes each day for self-reflection and planning can have a powerful impact. It requires no special tools or additional resources, but can provide greater clarity, focus and awareness.

Modern life often keeps people trapped in a cycle of constant reaction. Messages, meetings, responsibilities and digital distractions compete for attention, leaving little time for reflection. By the end of the day, many feel exhausted without a clear understanding of what they have achieved.

A simple daily review can

help break this cycle by allowing individuals to pause, assess their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Behavioural psychology specialist Sami al Balushi believes small daily practices play an important role in shaping long-term success.

“People often underestimate what they can achieve through consistent small actions. A few minutes of reflection each day can gradually change the way we think, make decisions and respond to challenges,” he says.

The habit is built around simple questions: What did I accomplish today? What could I have done better? What should I focus on tomorrow? Answering these questions creates direction, encourages self-awareness and supports continuous improvement.

Successful people across different fields often share one quality — consistency. Major achievements rarely happen overnight. They are built through repeated efforts and disciplined routines. A writer completes a book one page at a time,

“A few minutes of reflection each day can gradually change the way we think, make decisions and respond to challenges.”

SAMI AL BALUSHI
Behavioural psychology specialist

an athlete improves through regular training and an entrepreneur builds a business through countless small decisions.

In today’s digital age, maintaining focus has become increasingly difficult. The constant flow of information and online distractions can prevent people from concentrating on meaningful priorities. A daily planning habit helps individuals regain control of their time by distinguishing between what is important and what is merely urgent.

Entrepreneur Laila al Kindi says adopting a daily reflection routine changed the way she approached her professional responsibilities.

“I used to believe that working longer hours was the key to success. However, I discovered that spending a few minutes reviewing my achievements and planning my next steps helped me become more organised and make better decisions,” she says.

Beyond productivity, self-reflection can also improve personal well-being. It helps individuals understand their emotions, recognise patterns in their

behaviour, learn from mistakes and appreciate positive experiences.

Experts point out that the biggest challenge many people face is not a lack of time, but how they use it. Everyone has the same 24 hours in a day, but those who use their time intentionally are more likely to move towards their goals with confidence and purpose.

Building a new habit does not require perfection. Sustainable change usually begins with small, realistic steps. Ten minutes may appear insignificant, but consistency gives those moments lasting value.

Ultimately, life is shaped not only by the goals people set, but also by the habits they maintain. A small daily commitment to reflection and planning may not create immediate results, but over time it can transform thinking, improve decisions and lead to a more balanced and purposeful life.

Sometimes, changing your life does not require a complete transformation. It only requires one meaningful habit — practised every day.

SHORT TAKES



Workshop highlights school-to-work initiative

AL MUSANNAH: The National Employment Programme, in partnership with Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, conducted a workshop to introduce the national initiative, codenamed ‘National Model for Transition from School to Work.’

The workshop was held at the Said bin Sultan Naval Base in the Wilayat of Al Musannah, Al Batinah South Governorate, with the participation of officials and representatives from more than 20 entities from the government, military and private sectors.

The workshop aims to enhance institutional integration among partners within the education, training, and employment system.

It seeks to build more efficient transition pathways from school to work, raise the readiness of national competencies, and align education and training outputs with the needs of the labour market, thereby supporting the competitiveness of the national economy and keeping pace with the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

The workshop included a detailed presentation of the initiative, addressing its main pillars aimed at building professional readiness and enhancing professional identity among students from early educational stages.

It also focused on utilising the best international practices and experiences in designing effective transition pathways from education to work. This contributes to aligning education and training outputs with labour market needs, raising the efficiency of the employment system, and supporting sustainable economic development.

Furthermore, the workshop witnessed a review of the ‘Ship’s Cook’ programme, which is implemented in partnership among the Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Labour, the National Employment Programme, and Asyad Shipping Company. This programme serves as a practical model for applying the concept of transitioning from school to work. It combines academic education, practical training, and professional qualification, enabling participants to acquire the skills and knowledge required to work in the maritime sector, ultimately leading to the employment of the programme’s graduates at Asyad Shipping Company.

This was followed by an extensive discussion session in which representatives of the National Employment Programme and participating entities took part. During the session, they discussed ways to develop the initiative, enhance institutional partnerships. — **ONA**

Oman supports Tanzania’s digital archiving drive

DAR ES SALAAM: The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman has provided technical and technological support to Tanzania’s National Archives through the establishment of an integrated data centre aimed at strengthening digital archiving and document preservation capabilities.

The support was delivered as part of cooperation between Oman’s NRAA and the Tanzanian National Archives to develop modern archival infrastructure in line with international standards.

The project includes the



The initiative includes technical assistance and capacity-building support.

installation and equipping of an integrated data centre, dedicated servers for digitising documents and archives, modern facilities for researchers, and advanced security

monitoring systems to protect digital records and ensure the sustainability of archival preservation.

Ridwan Kikwete, Minister in the Office of the President of Tanzania

for Public Affairs and Good Governance, expressed appreciation for Oman’s support, saying the technical assistance would enhance the capacity of the National Archives to preserve national documents according to professional standards.

Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of Oman’s National Records and Archives Authority, said the project reflects the strong historical ties between Oman and Tanzania and highlights Oman’s commitment to sharing expertise with partner countries. — **ONA**

Longer stays signal strong khareef spending in Dhofar

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 19

FAMILIES VISITING southern Oman during the annual khareef season are spending more on accommodation, groceries, restaurants and fuel, offering early signs of increased economic activity, although official visitor data is yet to confirm broader trends.

The khareef season, a climatic phenomenon unique to the Arabian Peninsula, transforms Dhofar’s mountains and landscapes between June and September as moisture-laden winds from the Arabian Sea bring mist, drizzle and cooler temperatures. The season attracts thousands of visitors from across the region seeking relief from the summer heat.

Khalid al Maawali, who travelled to Dhofar with his family, said they rented an apartment for nearly two weeks, allowing them to explore the governorate at a relaxed pace while supporting local businesses through grocery shopping, restaurant visits and travel to tourist attractions.

“The quality of apartments has improved, and there are clear changes in roads and services,” Al Maawali told Observer.

He said access to daily essentials in different areas made longer stays more convenient for families.

Said al Kathiri, a meat and livestock trader in Dhofar, said demand for meat products has



Early indications from visitors and businesses suggest positive momentum for the khareef season.

Families staying longer during khareef are boosting spending on accommodation, food, shopping and local services.

increased during the season, driven by both visitors and restaurants.

“Demand for meat products has increased, both from restaurants and visitors,” he said, adding that available supplies were sufficient to meet market needs.

The accounts provide individual examples of activity on the ground rather than confirmation of a wider economic trend. The National Centre for Statistics and Information had not released visitor figures for the 2026 khareef season at the time of publication.

Last year, Dhofar’s khareef season attracted more than 1.07 million visitors, recording a 2.1 per cent increase compared with 2024.

Dhofar Municipality has

announced 125 cultural, artistic, sporting and entertainment events during this year’s season, which runs from June 21 to September 21. Activities are being held across Salalah and other wilayats, including Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, Samharam and Al Mughsail, with the aim of expanding visitor movement beyond traditional tourist areas.

Air connectivity has also been strengthened for the season. The Civil Aviation Authority said Oman Air is expected to provide around 330,000 seats to Salalah during khareef 2026, compared with 313,000 seats in 2025. SalamAir is expected to add another 190,844 seats.

The season is also attracting first-time visitors.

Abu Layan, a Jordanian visitor from Dubai, said he was impressed by Dhofar’s natural beauty despite arriving before some waterfalls reached their peak seasonal flow.

“This is my first visit, and I was amazed by the beauty of Dhofar,” he said, adding that he would recommend the destination to family and friends.

Early indications from visitors and businesses suggest positive momentum for the khareef season, with longer stays, increased demand and expanded activities contributing to local economic activity.

Official figures, when released, will provide a clearer picture of whether improved air capacity, wider events and tourism initiatives are translating into broader economic gains for Dhofar.

‘Shay Thani’ brings nature and diverse events together

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 19

Amid the khareef drizzle that touches visitors’ faces and mountains draped in green, the activities of Khareef Dhofar 2026 have begun, offering visitors to Dhofar Governorate an exceptional experience that will continue until September 21.

The season combines enchanting nature with cultural, artistic, sporting and entertainment events, reinforcing the governorate’s position as one of the region’s most important tourism destinations during the summer.

This year’s season comes with a fresh look and a rich programme featuring more than 100 events across several locations and wilayats. It caters to different age groups and offers varied experiences for families, young people and children, alongside

international festivals, global performances, and heritage and cultural programmes.

Throughout this period, the governorate is adorned with mist, drizzle, flowing wadis and green plains. Nature itself becomes part of the visitor’s daily programme, creating a scene in which the environment and organised events come together to offer everyone an experience that is difficult to replicate anywhere else.

This year’s season sees the launch of several new destinations that add a contemporary dimension to the tourism experience.

Foremost among them is the modern Up Town destination in Ateen Plain, which hosts the Salalah World Cup Fans Festival.

Football enthusiasts can enjoy the atmosphere of international matches on giant screens amid accompanying activities and a



This year’s season comes with a fresh look and a rich programme featuring more than 100 events across several locations.

festive setting.

The destination also includes a modern amusement park, a recreational walkway and dedicated family areas, creating an integrated space that combines sport,

entertainment and shopping.

At Salalah Public Park, the Health Garden introduces a new concept that combines entertainment with the promotion of quality of life through awareness programmes, health

screenings, sporting activities and educational workshops. These encourage visitors to adopt healthy lifestyles in an interactive environment suitable for all ages.

The season also dedicates considerable space to children through the Kiddy Time event, held at Awqad Public Park.

The event includes the Children’s University, from which several specialised educational cities emerge, including Aviation City, Engineering City, Future City, Talent City and Military Discipline City.

These activities give children the opportunity to take part in practical experiences that stimulate knowledge and creativity, nurture a spirit of discovery and help shape their future ambitions in a safe and enjoyable environment.

The season maintains its heritage presence through the ‘Return of the Past’ activities,

which are among the events most popular with visitors.

They revive aspects of traditional Omani life in general Khareef Dhofar 2026 and old Dhofari life in particular through heritage markets, traditional crafts, folk arts, old-style majlis settings and performances depicting authentic customs and traditions.

During the khareef season, Ateen Square becomes a major centre for events, hosting a diverse daily programme that includes concerts, theatrical performances and public shows, alongside entertainment activities for families and children.

The season features an international artistic programme that includes a wide range of daily performances and carnivals. These include acrobatic performances, water shows, fire shows and roaming performances.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks during a ministerial meeting, at the State Department in Washington, DC. — Reuters

Rubio, Lebanese president hold talks in Washington

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in Washington on Sunday, a State Department official said, after the latest round of Lebanon-Israel talks wrapped up in Italy.

The Lebanese president’s office said Aoun would meet with President Donald Trump on Tuesday. Aoun planned talks “on the situation in Lebanon and ways to strengthen the ceasefire” as well as on “the withdrawal of Israel from the Lebanese regions it occupies,” his office said.

Israel and Lebanon began US-sponsored negotiations in April aimed at reaching a peace deal and permanently ending the Israel-Hezbollah war. On June 26, they reached a framework agreement in Washington under which the Israeli military is to withdraw from southern Lebanon and the Lebanese army is to deploy, starting with two “pilot zones.”

The agreement is contingent on the disarmament of Hezbollah, which has flatly rejected both the deal and the Israel-Lebanon negotiations that underpin it. Israel and Lebanon “agreed on the structure and guidelines” for implementing the pilot zones. — AFP

Israeli settlers torch mosque, factory in West Bank



A Palestinian man checks the torched entrance at the damaged Al Taqwa Mosque. — AFP

RAMALLAH: Israeli settlers set fire overnight to a mosque in a village in the occupied West Bank, a Palestinian official said on Sunday, as a journalist saw the structure’s entrance scorched and Hebrew graffiti sprayed on its walls. The incident came during a period of increased attacks against Palestinian communities by settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank since the start of the Gaza war in 2023.

More than two dozen settlers, some masked, attacked the Al Taqwa Mosque in the village of Al Tuwani during the night and set it on fire, Mohammed Rabie, head of the village council, said. The settlers also set fire to two houses and a dairy factory, he said, adding that the attackers spray-painted Hebrew graffiti on the walls of the mosque. Rabie said the settlers fled after villagers emerged from their homes.

Photographs showed a child and an elderly man inspecting the charred entrance and windows of the mosque, where part of a prayer carpet had also been burned. Rabie said the dairy factory, run by women from the Masafer Yatta community, suffered extensive damage. — AFP

FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

India’s monsoon rains leave 16 dead



Flash floods and landslides caused by monsoon rains killed at least 19 people in India on Sunday as authorities mounted rescue operations in affected regions. Eight people were killed in the northeastern state of Nagaland, while 11 others died in Jammu and Kashmir. We have recovered four of the eight bodies, and rescue work is ongoing. Army personnel and state emergency responders rescued 11 people, including five children, in Jammu’s Rajouri district. — AFP

EXTREME VIOLENCE

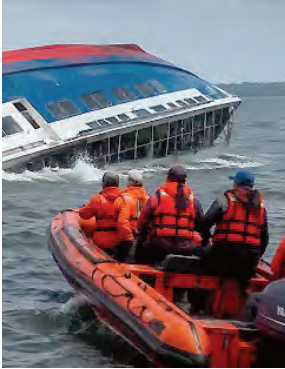
At least 50 Malian soldiers killed: officials



At least 50 Malian soldiers were killed in an attack by Tuareg groups as they left the strategic northern town of Anefis, officials said on Sunday. The attack on the army convoy leaving Anefis occurred on Saturday, following weeks of fighting with both sides attempting to take control. “The provisional toll of the attack is extremely heavy — more than 50 soldiers killed and at least 24 prisoners,” a local elected official, close to the ruling junta, said. — AFP

BOAT ACCIDENT

Ferry carrying 116 capsizes off Guyana



At least 53 people have been rescued after a ferry carrying more than one hundred people capsized overnight off the coast of Guyana, PM Mark Phillips said. “(In) a combination of passengers and crew, the number rescued is 53 and it is daylight now so we expect the number to go up,” Phillips said. The ferry was travelling from Georgetown to Port Kaituma, government minister Juan Edghill said. Medical services were headed to the area to care for those rescued. — AFP

US renews strikes on Iran

ATTACKS THREATEN CONTROL OF STRAIT OF HORMUZ



People walk on the street beside a huge billboard on a building in Tehran, Iran. — Reuters

THE US said it had completed an eighth straight night of attacks against Iran after earlier announcing that two US military personnel were killed in Jordan, while US allies in the region reported more Iranian attacks on Sunday. The US and Iran have intensified attacks as an interim ceasefire deal signed a month ago has unravelled and a struggle for control of the Strait of Hormuz has deepened, raising the risk of a return to all-out hostilities. Israeli officials said Israel was preparing to receive more US refuelling aircraft after the recent escalation, and ahead of a possible expansion of US military operations against Iran.

US Central Command said the latest air strikes, beginning at 6 pm ET on Saturday, were designed “to further degrade Iran’s ability to threaten commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and swiftly punish Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces who launched attacks against American service members in Jordan.” Central Command later said it had completed its wave of attacks, hitting Iranian military coastal surveillance and air defence facilities. The conflict, which began when the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28, hoping to disable its nuclear and missile programmes and degrade its regional proxies, has led to major disruption to energy supplies and fears over global inflation.

Iranian reports said the US carried out an attack near Sirik in southern

US Central Command said the latest air strikes were designed “to further degrade Iran’s ability to threaten commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Central Command later said it had completed its wave of attacks, hitting Iranian military coastal surveillance and air defence facilities.

Iran, and near Shadegan, close to the border with Iraq. Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization condemned a US attack on the site of a nuclear power plant under construction in Darkhovin, Iran’s Mehr news agency reported. The International Atomic Energy Agency said it was investigating reports of an overnight attack, noting that the plant was in the very early stages of construction.

In response to the latest strikes, Iran carried out a drone attack that targeted US military assets and equipment at Kuwait’s Al Adiri camp and Ali Al Salem Air Base, Iranian state TV reported early on Sunday. Both bases have been targeted as part of Iran’s attacks against US assets and allies in the Gulf since last week. Kuwait’s Electricity Ministry said a desalination plant had been attacked for the second day running, causing a fire.

Kuwait’s armed forces said earlier they had again intercepted Iranian missiles, after a sustained Iranian attack on Saturday. Bahrain’s air defences also intercepted an Iranian attack on Sunday, its state TV reported. Sirens sounded in Jordan, where the military said it had shot down three Iranian missiles.

The Israeli military said it had detected the launch of missiles from Iran towards the Jordanian city of Aqaba, on Israel’s border. In recent days, both sides have taken aim at shipping traffic, with the US saying it is enforcing a naval blockade on Iran and Tehran saying it targets vessels violating its rules on navigating the

Strait of Hormuz, which usually handles one-fifth of the global oil supply. Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said on Sunday four vessels had attempted to transit the strait via an “unsafe route” with US backing after ignoring IRGC warnings. It said two had abandoned the attempt while the other two were involved in an “accident”. It did not elaborate.

Central Command said the deaths of two of its service personnel had occurred on Friday and that a third US service member was missing in action. The announcement brought the number of US service members killed since the war began to 16, while more than 420 have been wounded. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth posted on X: “Their sacrifice only stiffens our resolve.”

Iran’s Health Ministry said that 50 people had been killed and more than 500 wounded in US strikes on the country over the past three weeks alone. Overall, thousands have been killed and several million internally displaced in the conflict, mainly in Iran and in Lebanon, where a war between Israel and Hezbollah was reignited.

In a written statement carried by Iranian state media late on Saturday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei said US actions had shown that US President Donald Trump’s signature was “utterly worthless and devoid of credibility”. The statement warned of “even heavier costs and further humiliation” for the United States. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Andy Burnham waves as he leaves Labour's 'Special Conference' in central London. — AFP

UK’S BURNHAM DROPS DIGITAL ID SCHEME OVER COST OF LIVING

LONDON: Britain’s next leader, Andy Burnham, will scrap government plans for a digital ID scheme when he takes office, signalling his intention to focus resources on kitchen table issues such as the cost of living, his allies said. Dubbed the ‘King of the North’ for his work as the mayor of Greater Manchester in northwestern England, Burnham will replace Keir Starmer as prime minister on Monday, when he says he will also unveil his cabinet team of top ministers.

Burnham’s office said one of the first things he would do was ditch a plan for all employees to hold a digital identity document, a scheme designed to tackle illegal migration but deemed to be a “fiasco” by a cross-party committee of lawmakers. Starmer dropped the requirement for the ID to be mandatory in January after criticism.

“All the time and resource that was going to be spent on a national ID scheme will go instead to where it’s most needed, such as helping with the cost of living,” Burnham’s spokesperson said in a statement. Identity cards were abolished in the UK after World War Two, and Britons typically use documents such as passports and driving licences to prove their identity. — Reuters

YEAR ’S FIRST HEATWAVE IN GREECE



Greece is finally bracing for its first heatwave of the year. Maximum temperatures in Thessaly, parts of the Peloponnese and the greater Athens area “may hover around or exceed 40°C”, with a fall likely on Thursday, prominent meteorologist Theodoros Kolydas said. He said data for Monday to Wednesday showed that “we are not dealing with a simple warm spell, but with a heat episode with heatwave characteristics, mainly over the mainland.” National weather service EMY on Sunday forecast temperatures of 40°C to 41°C on Monday and Tuesday in mainland Greece. — AFP

Spanish authorities struggle as wildfire scorches 12,000 hectares

MADRID: A wildfire raging 100 kilometres north of Madrid has spread, burning more than 12,000 hectares and forcing several hundred people to evacuate, local authorities announced on Sunday. The fire that started on Thursday in Guadalajara province, which includes the Sierra Norte Natural Park, has not caused any casualties so far but has been described as “difficult” by regional president Emiliano Garcia-Page and local authorities on X. It broke out in a forest-covered, mountainous region that is home to endangered species including eagles, wolves and butterflies. It comes hot on the heels of a blaze that started on Wednesday near Zaragoza, in the northeast, has burned nearly 16,000 hectares and is “far from under control”, according to the latest update provided on Saturday evening by the regional government of Aragon. No casualties have been reported.

Earlier this month, Spain witnessed one of the deadliest wildfires in its recent history, when a blaze in the southern

The fire that started on Thursday in Guadalajara province has not caused any casualties so far but has been described as “difficult” by regional president Emiliano Garcia-Page. It broke out in a forest-covered, mountainous region that is home to endangered species including eagles, wolves and butterflies



A helicopter flies amid wildfires affecting Farasdues, Spain. — Reuters

province of Almeria killed 13 people and destroyed 7,000 hectares. Spain is on the front line of climate change and has experienced increasingly long and frequent heatwaves in recent years, with temperatures well above 40°C, creating conditions conducive to devastating fires. Scientists say human-driven climate

change is increasing the length, intensity and frequency of heatwaves, which dry out vegetation and contribute to the likelihood of wildfires.

Spain is set to enter its third heatwave of the summer on Tuesday, with temperatures forecast to climb above 40°C across large parts of the country, the national weather office said. The heatwave will be fuelled by a persistent area of high pressure that will trap hot, dry air from North Africa over Spain for several days, pushing temperatures to exceptionally high levels, AEMET said in a statement.

The heat is expected to intensify through Thursday, which forecasters say is likely to be the peak of the event, with some isolated areas potentially exceeding 45°C. “The level of danger will be significant during the central hours of the day, especially for outdoor activities and vulnerable people,” the weather agency said.

Spain has already endured two other heatwaves this summer — one in late

June that broke temperature records across Europe, and another in early July. Mainland Spain recorded its hottest first half of summer since records began in 1961, AEMET said on Tuesday, with average temperatures from June 1 to July 15 reaching 24.5°C — 3.3°C above the 1991-2020 reference period average of 21.2°C. A ferocious blaze in the southeastern province of Almeria earlier this month killed 13 people, making it Spain’s deadliest wildfire in recent years.

Emergency services shared aerial images of the wildfire eating away at expanses of forests and fields. Fire engines were confronted with a tall wall of flames that had engulfed the vegetation. Regional leader Jorge Azcon said on X that King Felipe VI had called him to “enquire about the evolution of the fire” and “send encouragement to the entire firefighting team”. In the central province of Guadalajara, a growing wildfire that began on Thursday forced authorities to evacuate 11 villages and deploy more than 350 firefighters. — AFP

South Africa radioactive contamination controlled

JOHANNESBURG: Recent radioactive contamination incidents at Africa’s only nuclear power plant were minor and posed no public danger, officials said on Sunday, reaffirming South Africa’s intention to scale up nuclear power generation. “Airborne radioactive contamination” was detected during scheduled maintenance work at the Koeberg nuclear plant, about 30 kilometres north of Cape Town, between June 30 and July 16, they told a press briefing.

“The recorded levels were extremely low — less than the radiation exposure from using your cellphone for several minutes,” said Mteto Nyati, chairman of the state-owned energy authority Eskom which runs Africa’s only operational nuclear plant. “All protocols were followed,” he said, with workers undergoing testing that showed minimal exposure. “There was no release into the environment, no risk to the public,” he said.

Energy minister Kgosisentsho Ramokgopa said the incidents were handled efficiently and reinforced

confidence in the management of the plant and South Africa’s capacity to move into a new phase of nuclear generation. “We want to say to the communities around the immediate vicinity of Koeberg that it is safe. We want to say to the rest of the country, we are progressing with the nuclear build programme,” he said. — AFP

Russia pounds Kyiv with dozen of ballistic missiles

RUSSIA FIRED two dozen ballistic missiles at Kyiv overnight on Sunday, killing one person and wounding 16, in an ever-escalating air war that is taking an increasing civilian toll on both sides. The latest bombardment highlights a dual challenge for Ukraine in its fifth year of war. It is facing intensifying Russian missile attacks alongside rare domestic political instability triggered by a sudden wartime shake-up of its defence leadership.

“The missiles just kept coming one after another, the explosions were powerful, it was horrible,” 47-year-old Kyiv resident Ganna Zagorodnia said. “I thought that life was just about to end.” In the morning, journalists in Kyiv saw charred apartment blocks with windows blown out and mangled, overturned cars. “Overnight, Russia carried out one of its largest ballistic missile attacks on Kyiv,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on X. “The enemy launched more than 40 missiles of various types — most of them against the capital,” he said.

Among them were 25 ballistic missiles — weapons that are fast, hard to intercept and typically fired in rapid salvos. Zelensky said that one person was killed and 16 others wounded in the attack, which police said targeted six districts. According to Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko and local authorities, strikes damaged apartment buildings, supermarkets and an entertainment centre. Russia, which denies targeting civilians, said it struck military facilities and logistics hubs in Kyiv and port infrastructure used by the Ukrainian army in the Black Sea city of Odesa.

“Protection against ballistic missiles is our constant and top priority right now. Interceptors are needed everyday,” Zelensky said. Since the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran, Ukraine has suffered from a shortage of air defence projectiles for its US-designed Patriot systems, which are essential for fending off ballistic rounds.

Exploiting the shortage, Russia has intensified its air raids on Kyiv in recent weeks, launching mass ballistic barrages roughly once a week. “Over the past 35 days, Ukraine’s capital city has already endured



People walk past damaged cars parked in a street following missile strikes in Kyiv. — AFP

three massive attacks (today is the fourth) involving virtually the same number of ballistic missiles,” air force communications chief Yuriy Ignat wrote on Facebook.

Even as the war raged, thousands have been gathering in big cities across Ukraine for three consecutive days to protest at the removal of popular defence minister Mykhailo Fedorov. The tech-savvy minister was ousted by Zelensky in a surprise government reshuffle amid signs Ukraine had stabilised the battlefield, triggering a rare public backlash. Zelensky hinted at potential changes in the army, as rare wartime protests over the removal of a popular defence minister rocked the country for a third day.

Mykhailo Fedorov, 35, a tech-savvy minister who championed drones and military reform, was sacked earlier this week in a controversial government reshuffle by Zelensky. “There were many consultations yesterday and today. Of course, I hear what people are saying,” Zelensky said in an evening address, adding that he had spoken with both Syrsky and Fedorov. “Decisions regarding the army will be developed,” he said.

On the Russian side, a Ukrainian strike killed one person in the Kursk region, near the Ukrainian border, regional governor

Alexander Khinshtein said on Telegram. Another drone salvo hit the Caspian Pipeline Consortium’s terminal near the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk — a key export route for Kazakh oil, partly owned by Chevron and Shell.

The consortium said two tankers loaded with Kazakh crude were damaged and pumping operations were halted. On Saturday, Ukrainian drones destroyed two large e-commerce warehouses in the Moscow and Tambov regions of Russia, killing eight workers and causing major fires.

Kyiv has in recent months intensified its strikes on Russian territory, disrupting the lives of ordinary Russians — strikes it calls retribution for more than four years of bombardments against its territory. The campaign, which Kyiv calls “long-range sanctions”, has mostly targeted Russia’s oil infrastructure, triggering a full-blown fuel crisis in one of the world’s biggest oil-producing countries. According to the United Nations, June was the deadliest month for civilians in Ukraine since April 2022, with at least 293 people killed. Talks on ending Europe’s bloodiest conflict since World War II remain frozen, while fighting at the front is effectively at a standstill. — AFP

Why is time off a medical necessity?



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

FOR MANY professionals, taking a vacation often comes with a familiar sense of guilt. Emails continue to arrive, deadlines appear in the background, and the pressure to remain constantly connected has become an obligation! However, research suggests that stepping away from work is not a luxury or a reward; it is a medical necessity. Experts in psychology and occupational health are finding that regular breaks from work can improve health, strengthen mental well-being, boost creativity, and even extend life expectancy. In a world that celebrates busyness, the science of vacation offers an important reminder that the human brain and body were never designed for continuous productivity. There is a hidden cost of never switching off. Stress is not inherently harmful. In short rushes, it can sharpen focus and help individuals respond to challenges. Problems arise when stress becomes chronic. When people remain in a constant state of work-related pressure, the body continues producing stress hormones like adrenaline. Over time, elevated levels of this hormone can contribute to high blood pressure, weakened immunity, sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, and increased risk of heart disease. Researchers have found that extended periods without meaningful breaks can also lead to burnout — a condition characterised by emotional exhaustion and reduced professional effectiveness. Burnout is now recognised by health authorities worldwide as a serious occupational phenomenon affecting millions of workers.

Vacations provide an opportunity to interrupt this cycle. By removing individuals from daily stress and allowing the nervous system to recover, time off helps restore balance and reduce the physiological burden of chronic stress. The benefits of a vacation extend beyond relaxation. Neuroscientists explain that periods of rest activate what is known as the brain’s “default mode network,” a system associated with reflection, memory consolidation, creativity, and problem-solving. When people step away from routine tasks and constant digital stimulation, the brain gains space to process information more effectively. This may explain why solutions to difficult problems often emerge during a walk on the beach, a mountain hike, or a quiet afternoon away from screens. Mental downtime allows the brain to reorganise information and make connections that are difficult to achieve during periods of intense concentration. Studies have linked regular vacations with lower rates of heart disease, improved sleep quality, reduced infection, and enhanced immune function. Time spent outdoors can further amplify these benefits by increasing physical activity, exposure to natural light, and opportunities for social connection. Even short breaks can have measurable effects. Researchers have found that individuals often experience improved mood, reduced fatigue, and higher levels of life satisfaction after time away from work. On the other hand, the idea of completely disconnecting can feel unrealistic, especially in certain businesses. However, experts suggest that adopting an unplugged mindset

Vacations are not pleasures; they are investments in long-term well-being. Employees often return from vacations with greater energy, focus, and efficiency. The temporary pause can ultimately lead to higher-quality work and better decision-making

does not require disappearing entirely. Instead, it involves creating intentional boundaries. Before leaving, employees can prepare colleagues by documenting responsibilities, setting expectations, and establishing clear emergency protocols. Automated email responses can direct urgent matters to designated contacts. Once the vacation begins, limiting screen time becomes crucial. Rather than constantly monitoring notifications, travellers can designate specific times to check personal messages while avoiding routine work communication. Activities that encourage full engagement, such as hiking, swimming, reading, exploring new places, or spending time with family and friends, help shift attention away from professional concerns and into the present moment. Just as athletes schedule recovery periods to improve performance, workers require opportunities for physical and psychological restoration. Ignoring this need may appear productive in the short term, but over time it can undermine health, happiness, and professional effectiveness. Vacations are not pleasures; they are investments in long-term well-being. Employees often return from vacations with greater energy, focus, and efficiency. The temporary pause can ultimately lead to higher-quality work and better decision-making. As workplaces continue to navigate the challenges of an increasingly connected world, perhaps the most productive thing many people can do is occasionally switch off, step away, and allow themselves the time to truly recover.

US FACES TRIPLE EXTREME SUMMER WEATHER THREATS

MARIA TSVETKOVA AND ANDREW HAY

Wildfire smoke blanketed the eastern US from the Great Lakes to Washington, DC on Friday, floodwaters tore through Texas’s Hill Country for a third day, and new fires erupted in the Pacific Northwest overnight, with 68 large blazes now burning in 15 states. Millions of Americans faced hazardous conditions and orders to stay indoors, as the country’s summer weather extremes converged on three fronts at once: a smoke-choked East, rising water in the South, and fast-spreading flames in the West. Firefighters are now battling 68 large fires nationwide, up by nearly two dozen from a day earlier. Some 17 new blazes broke out in the Pacific Northwest after a run of lightning strikes made it the most active fire region in the country, according to a summary from the National Interagency Fire Center. More than 17,400 personnel, 140 helicopters and four military C-130 air tanker crews are now deployed across the US to battle wildfires, with record-low snowpack in the Mountain West and drought pushing fuel conditions to the type of dry and fire-prone levels normally not seen until mid-August, according to the NIFC. Nearly 3.72 million acres have burned nationwide so far this year, outpacing last year’s mid-July tally by over 1 million acres. Jesse Berman, a professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health whose research focuses on how extreme weather affects health, said simultaneous disasters like those playing out now can make them more dangerous. “These are compound events, and that can sometimes make the impacts of them far worse than what we would experience with any one of these events individually,” Berman said. University of Pennsylvania climatologist Michael Mann said the extreme weather events were linked by a wave pattern in the jet stream that may be a phenomenon known as “resonance.” This occurs when large waves in the jet stream become amplified and trapped, causing extreme weather to persist over a region for longer periods, creating more chaos. — Reuters

The conspiratorial mind...

A REAL plot can be exposed. A conspiratorial mind makes itself impossible to refute. Conspiracies exist. Governments deceive, states collude, companies conceal and factions plot. The error begins when conspiracy is turned into a universal principle, a way of explaining every defeat, crisis and surprise. That is not an explanation of the world. It is an escape from explanation. The conspiratorial mind is not simply the belief that a conspiracy has occurred. It is the habit of reducing every large or obscure event to a single hidden intention. A real conspiracy has limits: a scope, actors who can be named, mechanisms that can be described and evidence that can be tested. The conspiratorial mind is different. It is total and sealed. Contrary evidence does not weaken it; it becomes proof of the plot’s perfection. Take George Soros. The western far right has turned him into the hidden architect of a global design, supposedly directing migration, elections and pandemics. The truth is more ordinary and more serious. Soros was a formidable speculator who bet against sterling in 1992 and profited, not through occult power, but by reading distortions in exchange rates, inflation and interest rates within the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. That he was a bold speculator is true. That he is a politically controversial donor is a legitimate subject of debate. That he secretly moves the world is a myth. Such myths are rarely built from pure falsehood. They are built from facts torn from context and welded into a total story. In Soros’s



HAMAD SINAN AL GHAITHI

The writer is an Omani evolutionary biologist, translator and editor

Complexity is not understood by a single story. It requires a map of forces, interests, constraints and unintended consequences. It is not enough to ask who plotted. We must ask who acted, who benefited, who had the capacity to act, and who merely rode the wave after it had formed

case, the old antisemitic pattern is clear: he is Jewish, wealthy and funds organisations. Those facts are made to bear a theory they cannot support. From fragments of truth, an edifice of illusion is raised. Conspiratorial thinking is a human habit, not an Arab defect. A second example comes from our own recent history. The Treaty of Sèvres was signed in 1920 between the Ottoman government and the Allies, and rejected by the Turkish national movement. It envisaged the weakening of Türkiye and the shrinking of its domain among the victors. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, by contrast, was a political statement without, by itself, the force of an operative treaty, though later events folded it into the Mandate and international policy. If the region’s fate had depended only on the neatness of the scheme, Sèvres should have prevailed. It did not. Sèvres collapsed before the Turkish War of Independence and was replaced by Lausanne in 1923. Balfour, legally weaker at the outset, acquired immense historical force because it entered a political, demographic and institutional dynamic carried by Britain, the Zionist movement and the international balance of power. Palestinian and wider Arab resistance, fragmented and institutionally weak, could not overturn that trajectory. What mattered was not the elegance of the plan alone, but the power that carried it and the will that resisted it. This is not to minimise hidden design. It is to refuse to deify it. Between denying conspiracies and reducing all history to them lies

the proper field of judgment. It is naive to ignore interests, secret documents and plans. It is helpless to treat them as sufficient causes for every outcome. A conspiracy succeeds when it finds conditions that sustain it, opponents unable to defeat it and time enough to extend its reach. How does a conspiracy theory arise? It begins when the ambiguity of the world meets the mind’s hunger for intention. The brain dislikes causal emptiness and is uneasy with chance in great events. When a shock occurs, trust weakens, fear deepens and a group’s image of itself is wounded; the mind can turn true fragments into a false total story. Conspiratorial thinking is not mere ignorance. It is an illusory shortcut around the labour of inquiry: meaning, control and comfort bought by abolishing complexity. The tension is between two natures: an entangled reality that does not move in a straight line, and a limited human cognition that seeks compression and intention. In economics, price is shaped by supply and demand, expectations, interest rates, liquidity, confidence and politics. In politics, a decision meets institutions, elites, publics, opponents and accidents. Because the human mind evolved to read intentions more readily than to calculate the probabilities of abstract systems, it seeks a story with a hero, an enemy and a purpose. Conspiracy theory supplies one. Biology offers a useful warning. Highly complex outcomes do not always require a central intention.



Spain's Ferran Torres celebrates winning goal.
— Reuters

SPAIN BEAT ARGENTINA TO WIN WORLD CUP



Spain's Rodri lifts the World Cup trophy alongside teammates. — Reuters

Spain down Argentina to win World Cup, shatter Messi dream

EAST Rutherford: Rob Woollard Ferran Torres scored an extra-time winner as Spain defeated holders Argentina 1-0 to win the World Cup on Sunday and shatter Lionel Messi's dreams of a triumphant farewell to football's greatest stage.

Barcelona striker Torres lashed home a thumping finish in the 106th minute to reward a dominant display by Spain against an Argentina team who failed to register a single shot on target in 120 minutes.

A star-studded crowd of 80,663 that included US President Donald Trump packed East Rutherford's MetLife Stadium to see if Argentina captain Messi could crown his glittering career with a second World Cup victory.

But the 39-year-old maestro -- almost certainly playing in his final World Cup game -- was reduced to irrelevance as Spain took control early on against an Argentina team who committed a catalogue of cynical fouls throughout.

The South Americans' skulduggery ended with midfielder Enzo Fernandez being sent off after a brutal challenge on Spain defender Pau Cubarsi in injury time.

For long periods though it looked as if Argentina may somehow hold on for a penalty shoot-out as Spain struggled to make the breakthrough.

But after Nico Williams had a goal controversially disallowed in extra-time, Spain struck.

A lofted cross to the back post by

Pedro Porro found Williams who nodded into the path of Torres to crash home the goal that would clinch Spain's second World Cup title after their maiden 2010 triumph.

"Ultimately, the goal belongs to 47 million people -- not just me or the 26 players," goal hero Torres said, referring to Spain's approximate population.

"At the end of the day, all finals are tough; when you're up against Messi, there's a certain nervousness, but we always believed in our football and in ourselves."

A clear sign of Argentina's frustration came in the 15th minute when Alexis Mac Allister went flying in with a studs-up challenge that struck Dani Olmo's ankle.

Mac Allister escaped an early yellow card although after Slovenian referee Slavko Vincic only awarded a foul.

Spain made their presence felt moments later though, with Alex Baena poleaxing Messi with an elbow to the back that again escaped sanction.

Argentina continued to test referee Vincic's patience with a series of niggly challenges, and Nicolas Tagliafico was lucky not to be cautioned after raking Lamine Yamal's calf in a clumsy challenge.

- Lopsided half -

Spain meanwhile continued to probe for openings but Mikel Oyarzabal failed to seriously test Emi Martinez with a low shot that the Argentina goalkeeper gathered easily in the 39th minute.



Spain's Aymeric Laporte kisses the World Cup trophy. — Reuters

Eventually though Vincic did reach for a yellow card, with Lisandro Martinez booked for a cynical challenge on Oyarzabal.

Martinez was substituted shortly afterwards with an apparent injury, veteran Nicolas Otamendi coming on

in his place. The final's controversial extended half-time show featuring the likes of Madonna, Shakira and Justin Bieber stretched to 27 minutes but did little to upset Spain's rhythm.

The Spanish piled on the pressure in a lopsided second half as

Argentina hung on grimly.

Spain coach de la Fuente sent on Pedri and Ferran Torres for Fabian Ruiz and Oyarzabal and the chances continued with Argentina in full siege mode.

Yamal twisted away and chipped a cross for Torres, whose downward header was saved by Martinez.

Pedri and Cubarsi both lashed long-range shots that Martinez failed to grasp at the first attempt but somehow Argentina continued to hold on. But the arrival of substitutes Williams and Mikel Merino gave fresh life to Spain's attacking momentum, and the onslaught continued.

Fernandez was booked for dissent in the 82nd minute before Torres and Rodri both fired long-range shots from Martinez.

Fernandez's dismissal left Spain down to 10 men heading into extra-time. Martinez had one last save deep in stoppage time when Yamal's superb whipped free-kick was clawed wide. The Spanish dominance continued in extra-time, with Williams almost opening the scoring with a glancing header that Martinez got down well to save one-handed.

Moments later it looked as if Spain had made the breakthrough when Williams slid a low finish into the net but referee Vincic blew for a marginal foul on Nicolas Otamendi.

But the breakthrough came with Torres's winner.

Argentina made a desperate last raid on Spain's goal but La Roja held firm to seal victory. — Reuters



SPAIN DOMINATE INDIVIDUAL HONOURS



Spain's Unai Simon celebrates Golden glove award. — Reuters



Spain's Pau Cubarsi celebrates Young Player award. — Reuters



Spain's Rodri celebrates celebrates Golden Ball award. — Reuters



Spain's King Felipe VI, Queen Letizia and their daughters Leonor, Princess of Asturias, and Infanta Sofia celebrate with the World Cup trophy alongside Spain players as they celebrate winning the World Cup. — REUTERS



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BUSINESS

Bidding for two limestone sites opens

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 19

THE Ministry of Energy and Minerals has launched a public investment opportunity for two limestone mining sites in Salalah, inviting qualified Omani companies to bid for the projects as part of efforts to support the development of the Sultanate of Oman's mining sector and strengthen local production of construction materials.

According to an announcement issued by the ministry, applications will be accepted from July 19 until October 18, 2026 through the Taqa digital platform. The opportunity covers two limestone mining sites located within the Public Mining Area in Salalah.

The ministry said the tender is open exclusively to Omani companies and institutions with proven experience in mining projects and related activities, underscoring the government's focus on increasing local participation in the sector while ensuring technical capability among successful bidders.

Under the terms of the investment opportunity, limestone

The tender is open exclusively to Omani companies and institutions with proven experience in mining projects and related activities, underscoring the government's focus on increasing local participation in the sector while ensuring technical capability among successful bidders.



The opportunity covers two limestone mining sites located within the Public Mining Area in Salalah.

production from the sites will be restricted to domestic use, with exports not permitted. The condition is aimed at supporting the local construction and building materials industry by ensuring a stable supply of raw materials for the domestic market.

Companies may submit bids for both mining sites. However, the ministry said no company will be awarded more than one site.

The restriction also applies to

companies owned by the same shareholders if ownership exceeds 30 per cent in relation to the same site, a measure intended to promote wider participation and competition within the industry.

The latest offering forms part of Oman's broader strategy to develop its mining sector, one of the priority industries identified under Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the economy beyond hydrocarbons.

Oman has been expanding investment opportunities in mineral resources, supported by geological surveys, regulatory reforms and digital licensing services aimed at attracting private-sector investment.

Limestone is among Oman's most abundant mineral resources and serves as a key raw material for cement, construction aggregates and other building products.

Demand for construction materials is expected to remain supported by ongoing infrastructure projects, industrial developments and urban expansion across the Sultanate of Oman.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals has increasingly used competitive public tenders and digital platforms to allocate mining concessions, seeking greater transparency and efficiency in awarding mineral rights while encouraging responsible resource development.

Interested companies are required to submit their applications electronically through the ministry's Taqa e-mining platform within the three-month application period.

Successful bidders will be expected to develop the sites in accordance with the ministry's technical, operational and regulatory requirements while supplying limestone exclusively to the domestic market.

Oman opens renewable power market to direct sales

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 19

Oman's electricity market is set for a major transformation following the introduction of a new regulatory framework allowing renewable energy producers to sell electricity directly to eligible consumers, ending the sector's long-standing reliance on a single-buyer model for renewable power transactions.

According to legal experts, the Authority for Public Services Regulation's (APSR) Decision No 54/2026 represents a significant milestone in the liberalisation of Oman's electricity sector and is expected to create new opportunities for renewable energy developers, industrial users and investors.

Issued on April 20, 2026, the Regulatory Framework for Direct Sale permits "Qualified Sellers" of renewable energy to supply electricity directly to "Qualified Subscribers" under approved conditions, creating a new bilateral market outside the traditional procurement structure managed by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP).

Legal specialists at prominent Omani legal services firm Al Busaidy, Mansoor Jamal & Co (AMJ) explain that ever since the enactment of the Sector Law under Royal Decree 78/2004, PWP has held the exclusive right to purchase electricity generation capacity and output in



The Regulatory Framework for Direct Sale creates a new bilateral market outside the traditional procurement structure managed by Nama PWP.

Oman.

The single-buyer model was designed to ensure supply security, coordinate procurement and support the orderly development of the electricity sector.

However, as Oman's renewable energy industry has matured and the government has accelerated its sustainability and private sector participation objectives under Oman Vision 2040, regulators have introduced greater flexibility to encourage direct investment in clean energy projects.

Under the new framework, renewable energy projects will be classified according to capacity and developer eligibility.

Projects exceeding 50 MW per subscriber will initially be reserved for the National Champion Company under government-approved guidelines, while smaller projects ranging from above 25 MW to 50 MW and projects between 0.25 MW and 25 MW, can be developed by qualified sellers subject to location and licensing requirements.

Projects below 0.25 MW will be reserved for implementation by small and medium enterprises holding a Riyadh certificate, opening opportunities for local businesses to participate in distributed renewable energy development.

Qualified sellers must obtain the necessary electricity generation licences, be locally registered and ensure that electricity production comes from renewable sources. Projects above 25 MW will also require approval from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The framework introduces an annual quota system for direct sale capacity, with APSR coordinating with government entities, utilities and industry stakeholders to determine the permitted share based on national energy policies, grid capacity and technical considerations.

One of the most significant changes is the commercial flexibility provided to market participants.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (O.R.)
NESC/2026/027	Social Media Monitoring System	29/07/2026	09/08/2026	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming Omanization achievementmt_bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization. - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



A key attraction during the holiday season is the card's travel-focused benefits package.

BANKDHOFAR CREDIT CARDS ENABLE CUSTOMERS TO ENJOY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

MUSCAT: As summer travel gathers pace across the Gulf and beyond, customers of BankDhofar are increasingly turning to the bank's latest suite of credit cards to enhance their travel experiences through premium rewards, airport privileges, digital payment convenience and exclusive lifestyle benefits.

Among the bank's flagship offerings is the recently launched Mastercard World Elite Credit Card, designed for globally connected customers who value convenience, rewards and premium travel privileges. Cardholder can earn up to 1.5 per cent value back as reward points on International spending and 1 per cent on domestic purchases, enabling them to accumulate rewards while

travelling or shopping overseas. A key attraction during the holiday season is the card's travel-focused benefits package. Customers enjoy unlimited complimentary access for cardholder and one guest to over 1,200 airport lounges through Mastercard Travel Pass app, fast-track airport services and comprehensive travel insurance coverage, helping make journeys smoother and more comfortable.

track airport services and comprehensive travel insurance coverage, helping to make journeys smoother and more comfortable. Additional merchant offers and lifestyle privileges further enhance travel experience.

Beyond travel rewards, digital convenience has become a defining feature of the bank's card offerings. Through its strategic partnership with Mastercard, BankDhofar has strengthened access to secure digital payment solutions, allowing customers to transact seamlessly at millions of merchants worldwide, whether in-store, online or while travelling abroad.

Advanced security features and authentication technologies further enhance confidence in cross-border spending.

The combination of value-back rewards, airport privileges, travel protection and global acceptance is proving particularly attractive during peak holiday periods, when consumers seek both convenience and value. The growing adoption of premium cards also reflects broader trends towards digital payments and cashless travel across the region.

As Omanis and expatriate residents embark on summer holidays, BankDhofar's card portfolio is helping customers enjoy a more rewarding travel season, combining financial flexibility with a suite of benefits that extend well beyond simple payment functionality.

OIA-backed Terminal 11 joins CIC Global Network

OMANI innovation hub Terminal 11 has signed a strategic partnership agreement with the Cambridge Innovation Centre (CIC), one of the world's leading organisations in designing and operating innovation ecosystems.

Through this agreement, Terminal 11 — an investment of Future Fund Oman (FFO) of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — officially becomes part of the CIC Global Network, marking a significant milestone in connecting Oman's innovation ecosystem with one of the world's most influential innovation communities.

The partnership enables Terminal 11 to benefit from more than 26 years of CIC's experience in building and operating innovation ecosystems while gaining access to a global community of entrepreneurs, startups, corporations, investors, universities and government organisations.

The collaboration is expected to strengthen international partnerships, facilitate knowledge exchange and attract investment opportunities to Oman.

Terminal 11 and CIC entered into a Master Services



The collaboration is expected to strengthen international partnerships, facilitate knowledge exchange, and attract investment opportunities to Oman.

Agreement in December 2025, beginning with a four-month advisory phase covering physical space design and operational model development.

That initial phase included a Test Fit floor plan and design advisory alongside Terminal 11's local architects, discovery and stakeholder alignment and development of the Terminal 11 Playbook, a comprehensive operating guide covering CIC's service model, community-building approach, programming strategy and financial modelling.

Dougan Sherwood, Partner at Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC), said: "Our work with Terminal 11 has focused on transferring the knowledge needed to launch and operate a world-class innovation hub, while connecting founders in Muscat to a broader global ecosystem."

CIC operates a global network of innovation campuses across Cambridge, Boston, Miami, Philadelphia, Rotterdam, Warsaw, Berlin, Tokyo and Seoul. Its headquarters are located in Kendall Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts—widely recognised as one of the world's most concentrated innovation districts and adjacent to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Terminal 11 connects

startups, corporates, investors and public and private sector organisations to develop, test and scale technology solutions into regional and global markets through an integrated ecosystem of flexible workspaces, specialised programmes and international partnerships.

Under this partnership, the next phase of collaboration between Terminal 11 and CIC will be to develop innovation programmes and initiatives, strengthen international cooperation, exchange global best practices in innovation ecosystem development and connect Oman's innovation community with leading international networks.

Abdullah al Badi, Managing Director and Founder of Terminal 11, said: "This partnership marks a strategic milestone in Terminal 11's journey to build a globally connected innovation ecosystem from Oman.

Joining the CIC Global Network provides our startups, entrepreneurs and partners with direct access to one of the world's most advanced innovation communities while enabling us to adopt global best practices and develop high-impact programmes that connect local innovation with international opportunities."

Al Duqm campaign targets Khareef travellers

Al DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has launched a two-month tourism campaign aimed at encouraging travellers heading to Dhofar during the Khareef season to stop in Al Duqm and explore its coastal and natural attractions.

The campaign, titled "Pass By Duqm" and carrying the slogan "Pass By... Make It a Stop," will run throughout July and August. It seeks to position Al Duqm as a destination in its own right rather than merely a transit point for motorists travelling south.

The initiative will promote Al Duqm's beaches, geological formations, marine activities, camping sites and family attractions, while also highlighting its relatively mild summer climate and growing range of hotels and visitor services.

SEZAD said the campaign would use digital content, social media platforms, content creators and travel influencers to showcase visitor experiences and help travellers plan routes, activities and stopovers.

It will also promote local hospitality businesses, restaurants, cafes and tourism operators, with the aim of increasing visitor



The campaign, titled "Pass By Duqm" and carrying the slogan "Pass By... Make It a Stop," will run throughout July and August.

spending and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the area.

"The campaign aims to transform a visit to Al Duqm into a comprehensive tourism experience, encouraging visitors to stop over, stay and discover the region's natural, tourism and service attractions," Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, said.

He said the campaign was designed to change the perception of Al Duqm as

only a transit point by presenting it as a coastal destination suited to families, young travellers and adventure and nature enthusiasts.

Akaak said stronger participation by hotels, tourism establishments and the local community would be important to the campaign's success.

"The initiative represents an opportunity to support economic and tourism activity in Al Duqm, increase demand for accommodation facilities, restaurants, cafes and tourism activities and enhance the participation of local institutions," he said.

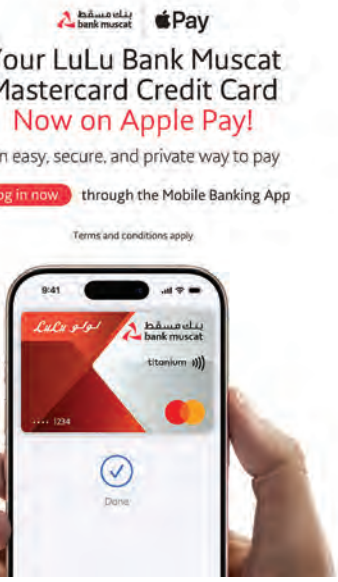
Al Duqm, located on the Arabian Sea coast, has expanded rapidly in recent years as an industrial, logistics and investment centre. SEZAD is now seeking to strengthen the tourism component of the area's development by building partnerships with tourism businesses, media outlets and travel platforms. The campaign is expected to support efforts to extend visitor stays, diversify local economic activity and reinforce Al Duqm's position as both an investment hub and an emerging coastal tourism destination. — ONA

Apple Pay now available for LuLu Bank Muscat Mastercard credit card

MUSCAT: In line with its ongoing efforts to provide customers with secure and innovative banking solutions, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced an update to Apple Pay tokenised payment.

Customers can now tokenise their LuLu Bank Muscat Mastercard Credit Card, offering a faster, safer and more convenient way to make digital payments.

This latest addition builds on the bank's continuous initiatives to enhance electronic payment technologies and digital services. The Apple Pay service is now available to all Bank Muscat Cards across all schemes (VISA and



Mastercard), allowing them to easily add their cards to the Apple Wallet app. Once activated, customers can complete transactions by double-tapping the side button on their Apple devices and holding it near a payment terminal.

Each transaction is secured through facial recognition, fingerprint authentication, or device passcode, combined with a unique dynamic security code for every payment, ensuring a high level of protection and confidentiality.

The Apple Pay service provides a secure and efficient method for making purchases both online and in-store across the globe. It integrates a unique technology, which safeguards sensitive

information through advanced encryption and biometric authentication, replacing personal data with unique tokens to prevent potential cyber threats.

Bank Muscat invited all Mastercard Bank Muscat & Lulu Credit Card holders to leverage this service by adding their cards to the wallet and enjoying a secure and fast payment experience.

For more details on the service, customers can reach out to call centre via 24795555, or visit the nearest branch.

Reaffirming its leadership in digital banking, Bank Muscat continues to introduce innovative solutions designed to simplify everyday banking experiences.

In recent years, the bank has launched a range of modern payment options, including contactless payments at point-of-sale (POS) terminals and seamless online payment facilities.

These services comply with the latest international security standards and support various local and international debit, credit and prepaid cards. The bank also offers instant payment settlements and 24/7 customer support services.

Through these ongoing efforts, Bank Muscat continues to play a pioneering role in advancing digital transformation in Oman's banking sector, offering customers smarter, faster and more secure ways to manage their financial transactions.

SHORTTAKES



The decision is anchored in Oman’s Veterinary Quarantine Law (Image for illustration only).

OMAN PROHIBITS IMPORTS OF SOME FISH PRODUCTS

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 19

Oman’s Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has banned the import of certain fish

species from designated regions in Austria and South Korea.

The ban applies to fish and their products, by-products and waste, imported from Lower Austria state in Austria and from the North Jeolla, South Jeolla and Jeju provinces of South Korea.

Exempted from the restriction are processed products, by-products and waste that have undergone heat treatment, along with aquaculture equipment that meets the inactivation standards set out in WOA’s Aquatic Animal Health Code.

treatment, along with aquaculture equipment that meets the inactivation standards set out in WOA’s Aquatic Animal Health Code.

The decision is anchored in Oman’s Veterinary Quarantine Law, issued by Royal Decree No 45/2004 and its executive regulations under Ministerial Decision No 107/2008. According to the text, it was adopted on the recommendation of the competent veterinary authority and in the public interest.

Article 2 of the decree obliges all relevant government entities to enforce the ban within their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The decree was signed on July 15, 2026 by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Oman private firms’ value added eases to ~~8.1~~ 8.1 billion

MUSCAT: The value added generated by active private sector enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman slipped 1.7 per cent year-on-year to RO 8.1 billion in the first quarter of 2026, reflecting weaker performance by large companies despite continued growth among small and medium-sized businesses, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The NCSI said the number of active private enterprises declined 0.8 per cent to 265,918 during the January-March period, compared with 268,033 a year earlier, as the number of micro-enterprises fell while medium, small and large businesses expanded.

Medium-sized enterprises recorded the fastest growth, rising 6.7 per cent to 1,987 businesses. Small enterprises increased 4.8



Medium-sized enterprises recorded the fastest growth, rising 6.7% to 1,987 businesses.

CORPORATE RESTRUCTURING

Samsung cuts US workforce



Samsung Electronics has cut hundreds of jobs in its US consumer electronics business as it relocates its American headquarters from New Jersey to Texas.

The company said 739 positions in New Jersey were affected, with many employees offered relocation. The restructuring comes as Samsung’s chip division prospers while its consumer electronics operations face mounting cost pressures. — Reuters

ENERGY INVESTMENT

Iraq signs major energy deals



Iraq signed more than \$60 billion worth of non-binding agreements and memorandums of understanding with Western companies covering oil, gas, pipelines, healthcare and technology.

Officials said the deals support efforts to strengthen ties with the United States and develop alternative export routes that reduce reliance on the Strait of Hormuz amid heightened regional tensions. — Reuters

AVIATION OUTLOOK

Boeing keeps demand forecast



US planemaker Boeing maintained its 20-year forecast for global aircraft demand, projecting deliveries of 43,625 commercial aircraft between 2026 and 2045 despite geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

The planemaker expects passenger traffic growth to slow this year before recovering from 2027, saying the current weakness is temporary rather than a long-term downturn. — Reuters

SOHAR starts work on \$50m zinc recycling park

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 19

CONSTRUCTION

has begun on a \$50 million (RO 19.2 million) zinc recycling and processing industrial park at SOHAR Port and Freezone, marking the latest investment in Oman’s downstream metals sector as the Sultanate of Oman seeks to expand value-added manufacturing under Oman Vision 2040.

The project, being developed by Oman Zinc (FZC) LLC, a subsidiary of Oman Zinc Group, will occupy a 100,000-square-metre site within the freezone.

Once fully operational, the facility is expected to produce 100,000 tonnes of refined zinc ingots and 50,000 tonnes of zinc oxide annually for export to GCC countries, India, Pakistan and other international markets.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Saif bin Khaled al Risi, Member of the Majlis Ash’shura representing Liwa.

The project will be developed in two phases. The first will focus on processing zinc-bearing materials and residues and pilot-scale production of special high-grade (SHG) zinc ingots.

The second phase will add a full-scale zinc refinery and zinc oxide production plant, expanding operations into higher-value manufacturing.

“This project represents another important step in strengthening SOHAR’s integrated metals ecosystem



The project, being developed by Oman Zinc (FZC) LLC, will occupy a 100,000-square-metre site within the freezone.

The project represents another important step in strengthening SOHAR’s integrated metals ecosystem through advanced manufacturing, downstream value creation and greater resource efficiency.

through advanced manufacturing, downstream value creation and greater resource efficiency”, said Dr Raid al Rubaiey, Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Freezone and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Port.

“By connecting zinc recovery with refining, manufacturing and export through one integrated ecosystem, we are creating stronger industrial linkages,

supporting the more productive use of resources and expanding Oman’s participation in global metals value chains”, he added.

Lin Feng, Chairman of Oman Zinc Group, said the investment underscores the company’s long-term commitment to Oman.

“SOHAR offers a distinctive combination of industrial infrastructure, global maritime connectivity and access to important growth markets. Through this investment, we aim to build a competitive regional platform for zinc recovery and processing while contributing to the development of Oman’s advanced manufacturing capabilities”, he said.

The plant will recover zinc-bearing industrial residues

and convert them into commercially usable products, supporting more efficient resource utilisation and circular industrial practices.

Its output will supply downstream industries including galvanising, alloy manufacturing, battery production and specialty chemicals, while complementing SOHAR’s growing metals cluster.

The project is also expected to create business opportunities for logistics providers, maintenance companies, engineering firms and specialist contractors, supporting local suppliers and strengthening SOHAR Port and Freezone’s position as a regional industrial and logistics hub for high-value manufacturing investments.

Beyond strategy: Building Oman’s integrated green energy future



MARYAM AHMED YOUSEF AL NOFLI

The writer is a researcher, academic faculty and Head of the Continuous Education and Community Service Department at UTAS Musandam

decades, energy leadership was defined by the ability to produce and export hydrocarbons. Today, that equation is changing. The countries shaping the future energy landscape are not only those with abundant resources, but those capable of transforming clean energy into industrial competitiveness, technological innovation and sustainable economic growth.

The Sultanate of Oman stands at a defining moment in this global transformation. Over recent years, Oman has moved beyond ambition and established a clear pathway towards becoming a significant player in the emerging global hydrogen economy. Through the creation of Hydrom, the allocation of green hydrogen concession areas and a national framework designed to attract international investment, the country has demonstrated strategic foresight in preparing for the next era of energy.

The scale of this ambition is considerable. Oman aims to produce approximately 1-1.25 million tonnes of renewable hydrogen annually by 2030, increasing to 7.5-8.5 million tonnes by 2050, supported by estimated investments of around \$140 billion across the hydrogen value chain. However, the true measure of success will not be the volume of hydrogen produced alone. It will be the ability to transform renewable energy into a complete industrial ecosystem.

The next phase is therefore not about creating another strategy. It is about building the system that connects energy, industry, infrastructure and national capability.

FROM SOLAR POTENTIAL TO INDUSTRIAL POWER

Oman’s greatest renewable advantage is its exceptional solar resource. Many regions of the country receive solar irradiation

exceeding 2,000 kWh/m² annually, providing favourable conditions for large-scale photovoltaic (PV) development.

However, sunlight itself is not the final product. Its real value lies in what it enables. When utility-scale solar PV is integrated with water electrolysis, renewable electricity can be transformed into green hydrogen and used to support industries that are difficult to decarbonise. These include green ammonia production, low-carbon steel manufacturing, sustainable fuels and other energy-intensive sectors.

This is where Oman’s geography becomes a strategic advantage. Industrial centres such as SOHAR Port and Freezone, Duqm Special Economic Zone and Salalah Free Zone have the potential to evolve from traditional logistics and industrial locations into future low-carbon hubs.

By connecting renewable generation, hydrogen production, manufacturing and export infrastructure, the Sultanate of Oman can move beyond exporting energy resources and begin exporting higher-value industrial products. This shift represents one of the most important opportunities for economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040.

THE GLOBAL COMPETITION HAS ALREADY BEGUN

The opportunity is significant, but it exists within an increasingly competitive global environment. Countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Australia are investing heavily in integrated hydrogen and renewable industrial ecosystems, competing to secure future markets for clean fuels and low-carbon products.

Through Hydrom, Oman has established a structured platform to coordinate land allocation, investment opportunities and the

development of integrated hydrogen projects.

This approach provides an important foundation for building connected value chains rather than isolated facilities. The global competition will not be won simply by producing hydrogen. The leading countries will be those capable of creating complete systems — from renewable electricity generation and hydrogen production to manufacturing, logistics and international trade. For the Sultanate of Oman, the challenge is not whether it possesses the resources. The challenge is how effectively it can integrate them.

INTEGRATION: THE REAL ENGINEERING CHALLENGE

Producing green hydrogen at a competitive cost requires much more than installing solar panels and electrolyser. Renewable energy systems must be carefully designed to balance electricity generation, storage, grid interaction and industrial demand.

Solar power naturally changes throughout the day and across seasons, while electrolyser require efficient operation to maintain economic competitiveness. Producing one kilogramme of green hydrogen typically requires around 50-55 kilowatt-hours of electricity, making optimisation a critical factor in project success.

This is where advanced modelling, artificial intelligence, energy forecasting and digital optimisation tools become essential. Before investing billions of dollars, developers and policymakers must evaluate different scenarios and identify the most efficient combination of renewable generation, storage and hydrogen production capacity. The future of the energy transition will depend not only on building projects, but on designing intelligent systems.

By connecting renewable generation, hydrogen production, manufacturing and export infrastructure, the Sultanate of Oman can move beyond exporting energy resources and begin exporting higher-value industrial products. This shift represents one of the most important opportunities for economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040.

Global ‘FOMO’ keeps fueling Wall Street’s AI exceptionalism

JAMIE MCGEEVER

Doubts around Wall Street’s AI-fueled boom may be swirling, but foreign investors’ insatiable appetite for US stocks suggests there’s life in the “US exceptionalism” narrative yet.

Official US Treasury International Capital (TIC) figures – the gold standard for measuring US securities flows – this week showed historic demand for US equities in May from the foreign private sector.

Foreign private sector investors’ net purchases of US stocks in May totaled \$120.8 billion, up from \$85.6 billion the month before, according to the latest TIC report. That was the second-highest inflow on record after November 2024.

“It’s still really, really hard to see evidence that the rest of the world is shunning US assets,” said Kit Juckes, head of FX strategy at Societe Generale.

To be sure, a heavy rotation within the US tech and AI universe is underway. Investors are punishing the hyperscalers that are spending vast sums on AI infrastructure and capex, while rewarding the semiconductor companies receiving much of that flow. The S&P 500 software and services index is down 17% year to date, while the Philadelphia Semiconductor Index is up a whopping 75%.

Zoom out though, and it’s a familiar picture: global investors’ appetite for US equities, especially tech, remains undiminished.

May was a strong month for Wall Street, with the S&P 500 up 5% and the S&P 500 tech sector rising an impressive 16%, so perhaps solid participation from abroad isn’t all that surprising.

But the strength of that buying is, especially when compared with the foreign selling in other countries at the vanguard of the global AI revolution, notably South Korea and Taiwan. Non-residents are dumping these countries’ stocks while continuing to pour huge amounts into the US.

Investors’ “fear of missing out,” or FOMO, appears to be alive and well, as far as US equities are concerned.

Comparing the TIC data with foreign flows for South Korea and Taiwan – two other AI heavyweights – is revealing.

Of course, like-for-like comparisons between countries are difficult because of methodology, collection and calculation differences. But one can get a good sense of foreign demand for emerging market assets using the Institute of International Finance’s (IIF) best-in-class emerging market portfolio flows data. — Reuters

Structural reconfiguration of the global supply chain



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an Assistant Professor at the Marketing and Management Department, CBFS

decades, legacy supply chains were built on a simple logic of linear efficiency and abundance. A linear supply chain is the straight sequential movement of goods from the producer to the consumer.

The approach was to concentrate manufacturing in the lowest-cost regions and rely heavily on a small number of dominant ports and chokepoints. The global supply chain was defined by scale, cost optimisation and globalisation.

Earlier pillars of the global supply chain, such as institutional stability, network predictability and open trade, have now become fragile and unpredictable. The global supply chains have entered a new era of structural volatility. Disruptions in the Red Sea and the Panama Canal forced hundreds of billions of dollars in trade flows to be diverted and contributed to a sharp increase in container shipping rates.

Globalisation is undergoing a structural recalibration due to AI, automation, technological acceleration and protracted regional and international military conflicts.

It is no longer viable to produce anywhere and transport everywhere under the dominant paradigm. Regional systems now manage structural instability by striking a balance between dependability and efficiency.

In such an environment, success belongs to those with agility, trustworthiness and digital foresight; and to those leaders who can perceive uncertainty as a source of advantage.

Reports from leading global bodies such as the WEF, IMF, OECD and UN warn that technological asymmetry, geopolitics and economic divergence and disruption are now persistent features of

the world economy. Against this backdrop, several structural changes are redefining the global supply chain:

According to recent multilateral forecasts, economic growth is projected to remain low, around 2.5-3%, with developing economies at around 4% and growth stagnating among the major trading partners.

There is a paradigm shift from supply chasing demand to demand being shaped by constrained supply around local markets. Trade is splitting along geopolitical rather than geographic lines, a pattern the IMF calls geoeconomic fragmentation. Long and linear supply chains are evolving into digitally enabled ecosystems.

One of the visible structural changes is the fragmentation of supply networks. Practices such as reshoring — bringing production back in-house; nearshoring — moving production to a country that is geographically close to the home market; and dual sourcing — deliberately using two or more separate suppliers are becoming standard tools in supply chain strategies.

These moves are supported by AI-driven forecasting and advanced analytics. The global supply chain is shifting from a single efficient network to a more resilient, focused network of trusted partners.

While trust has always influenced supply chain relationships, it now emerges as a performance metric, with geopolitical rivalry and the erosion of public trust in institutions putting leaders under intense scrutiny. Accountability, transparency and secure data sharing are becoming the core currency in partner relationships across the supply chain ecosystem.

Technology is accelerating at a speed and scale never imagined

before, with AI and automation already reshaping planning, logistics and production; and emerging technologies such as quantum computing poised to transform optimisation and security further.

A new digital divide is emerging between the few powerhouses and others with data and emerging dependencies. Some research shows that early adopters are achieving logistics cost reduction and lower inventory levels, making this a key differentiator and widening the divergence.

Geopolitical escalations have ushered in a period of deep instability and volatility, with prolonged armed conflicts in Ukraine and multiple flashpoints in the Middle East and escalating military tensions in East Asia.

Globalisation is now being increasingly shaped by two main blocs: the US-led bloc and the China-led bloc, with the EU as a potential third bloc. Though the EU largely aligns with the US, it seeks to act as an autonomous geopolitical pole.

Many other countries that are not aligned with either bloc occupy the space between these countries and are called swing countries. These swing states have now become a bridge between the two blocs.

Notable examples include India, Vietnam and the Gulf States. These forces are individually disruptive and collectively rewriting the structure of global supply chains.

These overlapping conditions are shaping the leaders’ decisions across industries and geographies. As the global value chain becomes more transactional, volatile and fragmented, leaders need to evaluate risks, assess opportunities and assess operating conditions with greater precision and speed.

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IRISH ACTRESS, DIES
AGED 81



Brenda Fricker holds up her Oscar after winning the Best Supporting Actress category at Academy Awards. — Reuters

Brenda Fricker, the first Irish actress to win an Oscar for playing the determined mother of disabled artist Christy Brown in the 1989 film “My Left Foot”, has died at the age of 81 after a period of ill health, her agent said on Friday.

Fricker, described as among the most respected Irish actors of her generation by the Irish Times, won the best supporting actress prize for the Irish-made drama that also landed Daniel Day-Lewis the first of his record three best actor Oscars.

Fricker also starred in another renowned Irish film of that era, “The Field” and went on to play supporting roles in 1990s US films including “So I Married an Axe Murderer”, “A Time to Kill” and “Home Alone 2”, where she played the kindly “Pigeon Lady” opposite Macaulay Culkin.

“She was an amazing actress, amazing character, a forceful personality”, “My Left Foot” director Jim Sheridan told a popular lunchtime phone-in show on national broadcaster RTE that was dedicated to Fricker’s career.

“She was vibrant and full of life and had her own opinions. She took no prisoners, let’s put it that way”.

Born in Dublin, Fricker began acting in the 1960s at the age of 19 in film, on stage and later in popular television shows in Ireland and Britain before her searing performance as Bridget Fagan Brown won her wide acclaim.

The success of “My Left Foot” was also a turning point for the now booming Irish film industry.

“Many’s the time we’re talking about ‘oh we’ve got another 10 nominations’ but back then it was literally this outlier, the little film that did”, said Dublin International Film Festival director Grainne Humphreys, a close friend of Fricker’s.

“The country’s film industry is built on the back of the success of ‘My Left Foot’”.

Fricker, writing in the Irish Independent in 2015, said she was probably prouder that her name became Dublin rhyming slang for knickers than for the Academy Award, which she stored in a plastic shopping bag under her sink before it made its way to the shelf. — Reuters

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



MUSIC CONCERT

Australian singer Nick Cave performs during the second day of the 34th edition of music festival “Les Vieilles Charrues” in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France.

— AFP



FESTIVAL

A man wearing a Dacian warrior outfit demonstrates Dacian-era warfare tactics at Getodava historical reenactment festival.

— Reuters

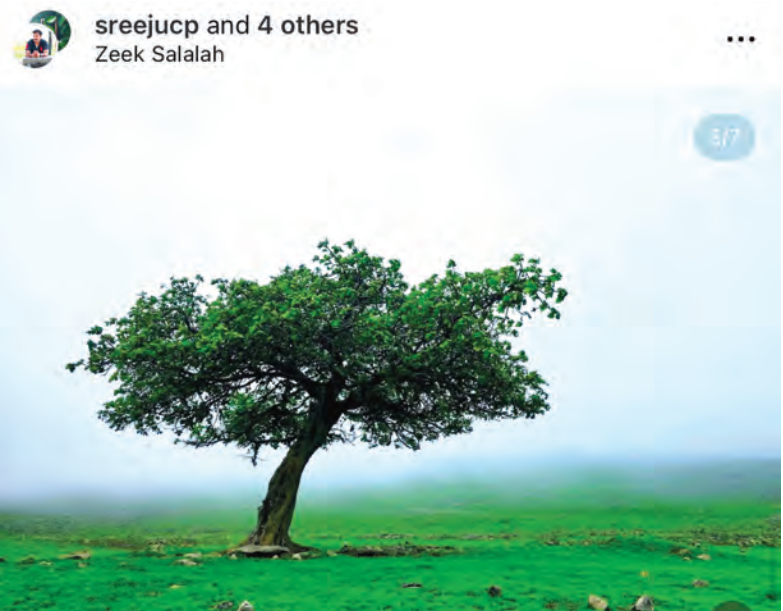


TOURISM

This photograph shows a general view of the Champ de Mars with pedestrians standing next to the Eiffel tower in central Paris.

— AFP

INSTA PICKS



Surrounded by endless greenery and mist.



A flamingo's happily ever after

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MARVEL COMICS TO MOVE PUBLISHING OPERATIONS TO CALIFORNIA, REPORT SAYS



Marvel Comics will relocate its publishing division from New York City to Burbank, California, ending a nearly 90-year presence in the city where the comic book publisher was founded, The Hollywood Reporter said.

Employees were informed at a town hall meeting at Marvel's Midtown Manhattan office that the publishing unit would move to Burbank, home to Marvel Studios and parent Walt Disney's entertainment operations, the media outlet reported on Thursday.

The move comes alongside a leadership shake-up at the comics division. Stephen Wacker, a longtime Marvel editor and producer, has been named editor-in-chief, replacing C B Cebulski, who has led the division since 2017, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Disney did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

New York was home to many

of Marvel's most influential creators, including Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko and served as the setting for several of its best-known characters and teams, including Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and the Avengers.

Marvel is now seeking to have all of the New York-based employees of the comics and franchise group, just over 100 people, relocate to California by next July, according to the report. The relocation reflects Marvel's push to more closely align its comics division, the source of many of its characters and storylines, with its film, television and animation businesses.

The changes come as Marvel is betting on a year-end release of "Avengers: Doomsday" to revive momentum in its film franchise after several recent releases failed to match the box-office success of the studio's earlier blockbuster run.

— Reuters



From YouTube creator to Hollywood filmmaker, Curry Barker's debut has rewritten the record books.

'OBSESSION' SHATTERS HORROR PROFIT RECORDS



Made for under \$1 million, Obsession has grossed more than \$400 million worldwide.



Low-budget horror hit Obsession has become a global box office phenomenon.



A viral word-of-mouth sensation, Obsession has emerged as one of the year's biggest cinematic surprises.

LOW budget horror film Obsession, directed by first-time filmmaker Curry Barker, has become one of the most profitable films in cinema history, earning more than \$400 million worldwide after its release in May.

Premiering at the Toronto Film Festival last year, the film quickly gained momentum through word of mouth, particularly among Gen Z horror fans. Made for an estimated \$750,000 to \$1 million, its financial success has propelled 26-year-old Barker from YouTube creator to one of Hollywood's most sought-after new directors.

"In terms of the ratio between the worldwide box office and the production budget, Obsession is going to be the biggest success of all time", said Bruce Nash, founder of industry-tracking website The Numbers.

With global ticket sales approaching \$430 million, the film

has already surpassed the 1999 horror classic The Blair Witch Project, which grossed around \$250 million on a reported \$600,000 budget. While blockbusters such as Avatar, Frozen and Titanic earned far higher totals, they were produced with budgets hundreds of times larger.

Barker's achievement also eclipses another surprise horror success of 2026, Backrooms, directed by 20-year-old Kane Parsons, which has earned around \$360 million on a budget of about \$10 million. Their success highlights the growing influence of young online creators making the leap to feature filmmaking.

"They're very encouraging for the future of cinema", Oscar-winning director Christopher Nolan said.

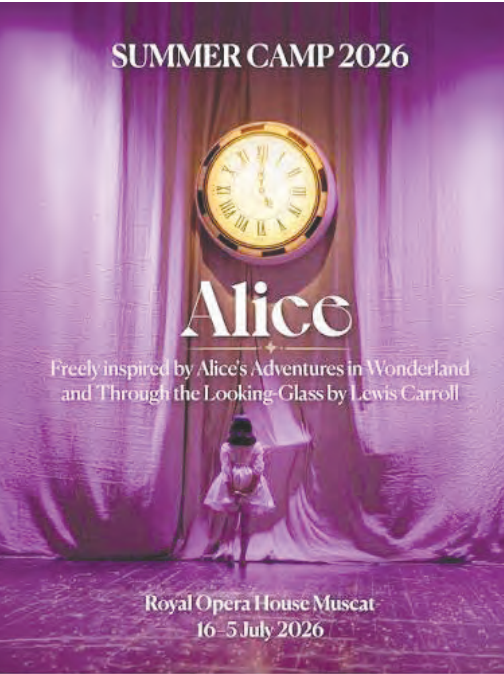
Originally from Alabama, Barker moved to Los Angeles after high school to pursue filmmaking and acting. Before his breakthrough, he worked a series of jobs, including flipping burgers, working at

Starbucks and taking production roles in television, including overseeing Covid safety protocols. Alongside creative partner Cooper Tomlinson, he built an online audience through comedy videos and horror shorts on social media and their YouTube channel, "That's a Bad Idea".

The film follows a young man who uses a magical charm called the "One Wish Willow" to make his longtime friend fall in love with him, triggering disturbing and violent consequences while exploring themes of toxic relationships, dating culture and consent. Universal's Focus Features acquired the film's distribution rights for \$15 million after its Toronto premiere. Barker is now preparing his second feature, Anything But Ghosts, starring himself and Tomlinson; and has also been chosen to direct a new adaptation of the 1974 horror classic The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.

— AFP

FEATURES



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

FOR two weeks, curiosity became a rehearsal, imagination found its voice and the stage at the Royal Opera House Muscat transformed into a doorway to Wonderland.

As the curtain rose on the final performance of ALICE, nearly 100 children, performers, educators, university students and volunteers brought Wonderland to life on stage. Through playful characters, enchanting music and imaginative storytelling, the production revealed the transformative power of the performing arts, nurturing confidence, creativity and connection among its young participants.

Inspired by Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, the production, created by the acclaimed Italian theatre company Venti Lucenti, was far more than a theatrical adaptation. It was a celebration of learning through creativity, where every rehearsal became a lesson in teamwork and every costume stitched together stories from different cultures.

Directed by Manu Lalli, the production blended theatre, music and movement with compositions by Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Rossini, Offenbach, Stravinsky, Rota and Silvestrov. This year's Summer Camp also marked a significant milestone with the Royal Opera House Muscat Children's Choir joining the programme for the first time under vocal coach Marcella Polidori and pianist Andrea Boi, enriching the performance with youthful harmonies.

The magic of ALICE was not only found in its storytelling, but also in the visual and musical language that shaped the world on stage. The colourful costumes transformed the young performers into a collection of unforgettable characters, from the curious Alice to the eccentric Mad Hatter and the playful rabbits, adding layers of charm and imagination to every scene. The choreography brought energy and movement to the production, allowing the young cast to express themselves beyond words, while the carefully selected musical pieces created an atmosphere that shifted between wonder, mystery and joy. Together, the performances, costumes and melodies formed a vibrant tapestry that transported audiences into a dreamlike world while highlighting the creativity and dedication of the young performers.

The spirit of collaboration extended beyond the stage. Five Omani university students worked alongside Italian filmmakers Francesca Nesler and Zoe Bellei to document the experience, gaining valuable hands-on training while preserving the memories created behind the curtains.

For audience member Nashwa al Sharji, Marketing and Communication Officer, the performance's greatest achievement lay in watching every element unite seamlessly.

"The show was amazing. I loved how the kids worked on everything, from the dance and the play to the acting. Everything was so organised", she said. "My favourite part was the ending because you could finally see the full picture, with all the children participating together". Her words echoed what unfolded



ALICE FINDS WONDERLAND IN MUSCAT



The Royal Opera House Muscat's Summer Camp 2026 concluded with a captivating performance of ALICE, bringing together young performers, musicians and creatives in a celebration of imagination, collaboration and artistic discovery. Inspired by Lewis Carroll's timeless tale, the production transformed the stage into a world of wonder while nurturing confidence, creativity and a lifelong connection with the arts.

on stage. Like the final pieces of a colourful mosaic, each child, regardless of previous experience, became an essential part of a larger masterpiece.

Audience member Azza al Harthy found herself revisiting a story that generations have cherished.

"It was amazing", she said. "We all grew up knowing Alice in Wonderland and to see it performed live here in Oman by our own children was so entertaining". Although she admitted she was slightly biased towards "the little kids and the rabbits", it was clear that the entire production had rekindled a sense of childhood wonder.

The Summer Camp reflects the Royal Opera House Muscat's enduring commitment to education through the arts, creating opportunities where international collaboration meets local talent. Two Omani actors performed alongside the young cast, demonstrating that the stage can become both a classroom and a meeting place for cultures.

"As we conclude a magnificent 2025-2026 season, our annual Summer Camp remains the ultimate celebration of youth and creativity", said Director General Umberto Fanni. "Featuring Venti Lucenti's adaptation of ALICE has opened new horizons of inspiration for these young minds".

In Lewis Carroll's tale, Alice follows a rabbit into the unknown. At the Royal Opera House Muscat, a new generation followed that same path, not simply into Wonderland, but into a future where imagination, confidence and creativity take centre stage.

