

OMAN
Observer

عُمان

DAILY

CREATORS OR CONSUMERS?

RETHINKING OUR KIDS' DIGITAL FUTURE

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2. PARENTS SHOULD MONITOR CHILDREN'S ONLINE ACTIVITY
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INBRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES EMIR OF QATAR

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, on the occasion of the anniversary of his ascension to the throne.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments along with his best wishes of success to Shaikh Tamim to serve the interests of the Qatari people. His Majesty also wished the cooperation and partnership relations between Oman and Qatar further progress and expansion in various levels in a manner that meets the joint aspirations and realises the future visions of the two sides.

FRIDAY FIRST DAY OF MUHARRAM

MUSCAT: The Main Committee for Determining the Lunar Crescents of the Islamic Months announced that Thursday will be the last day of Dhul Hijjah, as the crescent moon was not sighted on Wednesday evening. Therefore, Friday will mark the beginning of Muharram 1447 AH.



ISS HERE WE COME

The Axiom-4 crew, Pilot Shubhanshu Shukla of India, Mission Specialist Tibor Kapu of Hungary, Commander Peggy Whitson of the US, and Mission Specialist Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland, greet their family members before their mission to the International Space Station, in Cape Canaveral, Florida, US, on Wednesday.

REPORT ON P7



Watch this podcast on social media channels of Oman Observer @omanobserver

Trump says Israel-Iran war ‘done’, adamant that uranium destroyed

THE HAGUE: US President Donald Trump has said he believes the war between Israel and Iran is “done” with both sides “satisfied to get home and get out,” stressing he believes US attacks on Iranian nuclear sites have destroyed enriched uranium stocked there.

Speaking at a press conference following a Nato summit in The Hague, Trump said Israel and Iran “fought a hell of a war,” but said he believed the conflict was put to an end when US forces

attacked the Iranian nuclear facilities last weekend.

Trump repeatedly expressed his disdain over recent US media reports citing intelligence officials suggesting the attacks may have not damaged the Iranian nuclear programme to the extent claimed by Washington.

Contradicting reports that Iran might have moved highly enriched uranium needed to build a nuclear weapon before the attacks, Trump said: “We think

OMAN RECEIVES RO 30 BILLION FDI

Manufacturing posts the highest growth rate at 8.6 per cent

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

OMAN received nearly RO 30 billion by the end of 2024 due to simplification of procedures through the Oman Business Platform, which processed over 800,000 transactions in 2024 and added 24 digital services. Speaking during a session of the Majlis Ash'shura on Wednesday, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, reviewed the ministry's ongoing initiatives in industrial growth, investment attraction and digital transformation. Discussions covered the contribution of public and private sectors to Oman's gross domestic product, evaluations of free trade agreements and updates on the Nazdaher programme.

To combat “hidden trade” and ensure fair competition, the ministry has enforced measures including mandatory electronic payment methods for commercial activities, aligning with global trends in the digital economy. A ministerial decision was also issued to enhance corporate governance standards for closed joint-stock companies, said the minister.

Trade sector's contribution to GDP at constant prices reached approximately 8.3 per cent in 2024, amounting to

RO 3.225 BN

Industrial exports reached

RO 6.2 BN

in 2024, reflecting the growing added value of national industries

Invest Oman platform received around 90 investment requests worth

RO 5.38 BN

between its launch in February 2023 and June 2025



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

The minister stated that the trade sector's contribution to GDP at constant prices reached approximately 8.3 per cent in 2024, amounting to RO 3.225 billion, with a cumulative growth rate of 6.6 per cent during the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

He added that the manufacturing sector recorded the highest growth rate among economic diversification activities, at 8.6 per cent, reaching RO 3.6 billion at constant prices by the end of 2024 — constituting 10 per cent of GDP.

He highlighted that industrial exports reached RO 6.2 billion in

2024, reflecting the growing added value of national industries. He noted that over 260 initiatives are currently being implemented in collaboration with partners and stakeholders as part of the Industrial Strategy 2040.

The minister revealed that the number of Omani standard specifications issued by the ministry by the end of 2024 totalled 7,523, with 17 technical services streamlined. Additionally, the Invest Oman platform received around 90 investment requests worth RO 5.38 billion between its launch in February 2023 and June 2025, with 43 projects worth RO 2.25 billion localised in strategic sectors such as industry, healthcare, food security and renewable energy.

He further added that the ministry has bolstered community participation in the local economy through initiatives supporting consumer cooperatives, including regulatory incentives such as streamlined registration and commercial site allocation. In e-commerce, new regulations were introduced, and the Ma'roof Oman platform was launched to certify online stores, boosting consumer trust and increasing licenses by 236.4% within a year. SEE ALSO P13

CAA among top 5 govt earners with RO 105m

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) recorded the highest revenue in its history, contributing RO 105 million and placing it among the top five government entities in terms of contributions. This was revealed by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), during a press conference, which was held on Wednesday to highlight CAA's and aviation sector's progress report of 2024, under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

CAA also launched an



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, launches an updated meteorology website and mobile app in Muscat on Wednesday. — ONA

updated meteorology website and mobile app with a colour-coded alert system during the

annual media meeting. Oman was ranked 5th globally in the Effective Implementation Index of Air Safety Oversight, with a compliance rate of 95.95 per cent, reinforcing global confidence in Oman's aviation system.

Other achievements included the activation of the southern runway at Muscat International Airport, approval of the national civil aviation policy and the signing of nine air transport agreements.

The Authority also issued a regulation to protect passenger rights and introduced licences for UAV (drone) air traffic management and registration.

The approval of emergency and

evacuation plans, commissioning of a new navigation radar in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, operational readiness of Duqm and Marmul airports and operational permits granted to 19 foreign airlines were the also highlights of last year.

Operational statistics showed significant growth as the passenger numbers increased by 2 per cent compared to 2023. Air cargo volumes reached 150,118 tonnes. 540,300 aircraft crossed Omani airspace, marking a 14-per cent increase. The Authority issued 17,182 flight permits and 2,112 obstacle clearance permits and It activated 80 weather monitoring stations, including two new installations. SEE ALSO P5



A woman walks past a residential building that was hit in an Israeli strike covered with a big Iranian flag, in Tehran on Wednesday. — AFP

it's covered with granite, concrete and steel.” He also said the US would talk to Iran next week, floating the idea of an agreement being signed, but without providing further details. Trump compared the impact of American strikes on Iranian nuclear sites to the end of World War Two, arguing that the damage was severe even though available intelligence reports were inconclusive.

“I don't want to use an example of Hiroshima, I don't want to use an example

of Nagasaki, but that was essentially the same thing. That ended that war. This ended the war,” Trump said. Trump argued that Iran's nuclear programme had been set back “basically decades, because I don't think they'll ever do it again” and he turned to top advisers to reinforce that message.

“We're going to talk to them next week, with Iran. We may sign an agreement. I don't know. To me, I don't think it's that necessary,” Trump said. — Agencies

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SHORTTAKES



Sayyid Badr expressed appreciation for the ambassadors' efforts in strengthening bilateral relations. — ONA

FOREIGN MINISTER BIDS FAREWELL TO DUTCH, TUNISIAN AMBASSADORS

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received separately on Wednesday Stella Kloth, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Azzedine el Tayse, Ambassador of the Tunisian Republic, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duty.

Sayyid Badr expressed appreciation for the ambassadors' efforts in strengthening bilateral relations and extended his best wishes for their future endeavours.

Several officials from the Foreign Ministry attended the two meetings. — ONA

OMAN, INDONESIA DISCUSS REGIONAL TENSIONS

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a telephone conversation on Wednesday with Sugiono, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia.

The two ministers reviewed the relations of cooperation

between their countries and explored ways to enhance them across various fields of mutual interest.

The discussion also addressed recent developments in the Middle East, with both ministers emphasising the importance

of supporting international and regional efforts to de-escalate tensions, promote calm, and maintain regional and international peace and security in accordance with the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. — ONA

EA rescues 5 tourists from currents near Daymaniyat

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

THE Environment Authority (EA) has announced that rangers from the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve successfully rescued five tourists who were swept away by strong sea currents while swimming near one of the islands on Wednesday.

According to EA, the group was safely transported to the island's shoreline, where they waited until tourist boats could reach them. The incident prompted officials to renew calls for greater responsibility and vigilance by tourism operators, especially during swimming and snorkelling activities in marine reserves.

"The Environment Authority urges tourism companies to closely monitor visitors while they are swimming or snorkelling, and to avoid leaving them unattended in open waters," a statement read, adding that it is essential to ensure their safety and prevent such dangerous situations.

Located approximately 18 kilometres off the coast of Barka and 70 kilometres west



Over 40 drowning incidents have been recorded across the Sultanate of Oman since the beginning of the year.

of Muscat, the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve is one of Oman's most treasured marine conservation sites.

The reserve is composed of nine small islands known for their vibrant coral reefs, sea turtles, whale sharks and nesting seabirds, making it a popular destination for diving and ecotourism. In recent years, the Environment Authority has strengthened conservation regulations at the site to protect its fragile biodiversity.

However, the area's offshore location and exposure to tidal currents can pose safety risks for swimmers and snorkellers unfamiliar with the conditions. This latest rescue adds to a growing number of water-related emergencies reported in Oman this year.

According to Royal Oman Police (ROP) figures released in May 2025, over 40 drowning incidents have been recorded across the Sultanate of Oman since the beginning of the year. Many of the cases occurred at beaches, wadis and dams, particularly during weekends and holiday periods.

Authorities have repeatedly urged beachgoers and adventure seekers to heed warning signs, avoid restricted areas and follow safety protocols issued by local and environmental agencies.



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7.850

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Zealand Premium Per Kg



0.990

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3.550

Almond Raw Big Per Kg



2.750

Mix Nut Per Kg



1.690

Mazraa Baked Beans 12x220Gm



0.990

Assorted 4x400gm



14.990

Al Zeem Basmati Rice 35kg



0.290

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1.290

Dove Soap Asstd 4x125Gm



0.990

Fam Napco Fam Napkins Maxi Wings 30'Sx10'S

ROP celebrates graduation of officer skills courses, new recruits

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) celebrated the graduation of officer skills courses and a batch of new police recruits at the Police Training Centre in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander, in the presence of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, along with several high-ranking officials, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces and ROP, military and security leaders, members of the Majlis Ash'shura and local officials from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

The graduation ceremony began with a salute to the patron of the event, followed by the parade commander asking permission to inspect the front row. The graduates then marched past the main dais in a ceremonial procession,



The ceremony was held under the auspices of Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander. — ONA

after which Gen Al Numani presented awards to the top-performing graduates.

After that, the graduates chanted the ROP anthem, "Guardians of Justice". They also chanted thrice "Long live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander".

Following the event, Gen Al Numani toured the Police Training Centre in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where he observed combat team demonstrations in self-defence, karate, and taekwondo. These displays were performed by trainees enrolled in various martial arts courses conducted by the centre for ranks of the Special Tasks Police Command and its units.

The demonstrations reflected an advanced level of skill, tactical discipline and readiness through realistic scenarios simulating field operations, showcasing full preparedness to handle diverse security situations and incidents.

— ONA

SHORT TAKES



OMAN PARTICIPATES IN ARAB FORUM FOR EQUALITY

ALGIERS: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the Fourth Arab Forum for Equality “Dialogue and Solutions” 2025, organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, represented Oman at the forum.

This year’s forum focused on discussing regional priorities to address inequality and social protection amid the crises facing the Arab region. It examined how social protection systems can reduce inequalities stemming from economic, environmental, humanitarian and political challenges, while promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

During a panel discussion on “Financing Comprehensive Social Protection”, Dr Al Najjar highlighted Oman’s key national experiences and practices in this field, including the implementation of a social protection system to enhance financial and operational efficiency, diversify funding sources and provide direct cash benefits to the elderly, children, orphans, widows, persons with disabilities and low-income families.

— ONA



The two-day exercise saw the participation of different parties represented in the National Committee for Emergency Management. — ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN RADIOLOGICAL INCIDENT EXERCISE IN ROMANIA

MUSCAT: The National Emergency Management Center (NEMC) took part in a large-scale videoconferencing international exercise codenamed “ConvEx-3” that was based on the hypothesis of a radioactive leak at the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant in Romania.

The exercise was conducted in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as part of measures to enhance national preparedness to deal with nuclear and radiological emergencies.

The two-day exercise saw the participation of different parties represented in the National Committee for Emergency Management.

The exercise envisages multiple scenarios aimed at testing the effectiveness of coordination and the mechanisms of communication among the parties concerned, as well as the efficiency of procedures followed in responding to such incidents. — ONA

OMAN WINS AWARD AT AI ETHICS FORUM

BANGKOK: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the Unesco Global Forum on the Ethics of AI 2025 in Bangkok, a prestigious global platform for discussing ethical governance frameworks for advanced technologies. The forum runs until June 26.

A research paper submitted by Ayoub bin Mohammed al Balushi, a lecturer at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, was selected among the best working papers presented at the research session accompanying the



The research paper received an honorary award in recognition of its scientific originality. — ONA

forum. The research paper received an honorary award from the forum’s organisers in recognition of its scientific originality and research vision, which contributes to advancing ethical AI practices.

This accolade highlights Oman’s active presence in global dialogues on the future of artificial intelligence and underscores the commitment of Omani academic institutions to promoting responsible scientific research in line with international trends.

— ONA

Self-service platform for title deeds launched

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

In a major stride towards enhancing digital governance and streamlining public services, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has officially launched a new self-service platform for issuing digital property title deeds. The service allows beneficiaries to obtain their title deeds instantly and electronically, eliminating the need for in-person visits to service halls.

This initiative marks a significant shift in simplifying procedures. By enabling immediate issuance of ownership documents online, the ministry anticipates reducing the time spent on such services by over 70 per cent and cutting in-person visits by 60 per cent in the first year alone.

In addition to efficiency and speed, the initiative aligns with the ministry’s sustainability goals. It complements a broader digital transition strategy that includes internal communications, external documentation and now the issuance of secure digital title deeds.

Each document is embedded with an electronic verification code, ensuring both accuracy and authenticity. Users can access the traditional version of their property deed through the “Amlak” platform.

Dr Moamen bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Adviser to the Minister for Smart Cities, emphasised the significance of the launch, stating: “This is a critical step towards a fully digital ownership system. Our ambition is for the majority of the public to adopt electronic title deeds by the end of next year. It will save both time and effort for



In addition to efficiency and speed, the initiative aligns with the ministry’s sustainability goals.

users, who previously had to physically visit various service locations.”

Dr Al Busaidy added that the ministry is currently developing smart services designed to anticipate citizens’ needs and deliver information and entitlements proactively – without requiring formal requests. Future enhancements will also enable mobile access to services and real-time interactions with intelligent data systems, further reducing the need to contact support staff directly.

Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Ghilani, CEO of the Oman National Engineering and Investment Company (Oneic), which is partnering with the ministry on the project, commented: “This strategic collaboration

marks a transformative milestone in Oman’s digital journey. We are committed to delivering secure and efficient technological solutions that enhance citizen experience and drive public sector innovation. We are proud of the trust placed in us by the ministry and look forward to further partnerships in line with Oman Vision 2040.

To maximise accessibility and inclusivity, the new service will gradually be rolled out across more than 300 locations. These include all ministry service halls, Oneic branches and self-service kiosks operating around the clock in all governorates. This expansive rollout is expected to improve operational efficiency and raise customer satisfaction levels to 95 per cent.



OMAN, MAURITANIA REVIEW TIES

MUSCAT: Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, on Wednesday received Mokhtar El Housseinou Lam, Minister in charge of the General Secretariat of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Supervisor of the National Documentation Authority.

The meeting explored areas of cooperation and ways to enhance them, while reviewing the working mechanisms of the Council of Ministers and its supporting apparatuses in both countries.

The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority and officials from both sides. — ONA

Array of events await Khareef Dhofar visitors

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, JUNE 25

This year’s khareef (monsoon) season in Dhofar offers a refreshed vision that boosts Dhofar’s touristic and cultural standing. Events are distributed across five main thematic zones that reflect the governorate’s diverse environments.

They include Ateen Square, home to dazzling fireworks, drone shows, carnival parades and fantasy-

themed performances, Al Saada that showcases traditional folk events and cultural heritage, Awqad Park, a favourite destination for children, with exciting carnival shows and exploration zones and Ateen Plain, a modern mixed-use venue for adults and children offering entertainment and sports.

Events will also extend to towns like Taqah, Mirbat and Sadah, as well as the historical site of Sumhuram and Al Haffa Beach Market. Sports



Dhofar Municipality aims to deliver an integrated tourism experience aligned with the beauty of nature.

enthusiasts can enjoy major national and international events such as Salalah International Cycling Tour, Dhofar International Drag Race Championship, Salalah Marathon and Khareef Dhofar Traditional Weapons Competition.

Dhofar Municipality aims to deliver an integrated tourism experience aligned with the beauty of nature through distinctive events and advanced services that meet visitor needs. Shopping centres

and local businesses are ready to accommodate increased commercial activity during the season, with a focus on traditional industries and local products such as frankincense, incense, silverware, pottery, Omani sweets and traditional foods.

Public and private institutions continue preparing to receive visitors by providing facilities and services, while several regional airlines have announced direct flights to Salalah International Airport.

SPOTLIGHT

C R E A T O R S O R C O N S U M E R S ?

RETHINKING OUR KIDS' DIGITAL FUTURE

- 1 HANDS-ON LEARNING IN ROBOTICS AND CODING FOSTERS INNOVATION
- 2 PARENTAL SUPPORT AND EARLY EXPOSURE MATTER GREATLY
- 3 ACCESS TO TECH EDUCATION MUST BE INCLUSIVE AND WIDESPREAD



SIHAM AL SAIDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

In a world increasingly driven by technology, one essential question stands out: Are we raising children to be the innovators of tomorrow, or merely the consumers of today? While many young people grow up swiping screens and playing video games, true digital fluency involves more than just usage. It's about creativity, problem-solving and building the technology that shapes our future.

Fatma al Halonia, an educational supervisor, shared how students who participated in tech-based programmes showed genuine excitement and curiosity. "These initiatives fuelled real interest and practical skills in innovation," she said.

This potential, however, needs guidance and structure. Introducing coding, robotics and AI in a creative and hands-on manner - starting at a young age - can transform a child's relationship with technology.

Students showed impressive passion for programming and robotics, which enhanced their creative thinking

SHIFA AL SAIDI
General
Directorate of
Education



According to Shifa al Saidi from the General Directorate of Education, “Students showed impressive passion for programming and robotics, which enhanced their creative thinking.” The impact is even clearer when we hear from the youth. “I learned how to turn an idea into a real

tech project using Arduino,” said Yamama al Maamari. Abdulmalik al Ghailani added, “I gained skills that helped me think like an innovator — not just a consumer.” Mothers too are taking notice. Alta al Qartoobi expressed concern watching her kids spend time on computer games: “I worry —

will this fun time ever lead to something useful?" In contrast, Faiza al Nasri proudly spoke of her children using social media and AI tools productively: "They started using workshops to build content, raise flowers, and even sell goods online. After years of support, we're seeing real outcomes." These examples show the transformative power of exposure — when children are given tools, trust and mentorship, they move from being passive users to active creators.

But access remains a challenge. Many such programmes are limited to select regions or top-performing schools. To truly shape a digital generation, inclusive innovation education must reach all children – regardless of location.

The real question we need to ask is: What kind of digital future do we want our children to create? If we want them to lead, innovate and inspire, we must start nurturing them not just as users of technology, but as the architects of tomorrow's world.

SHORT TAKES



Both sides exchanged views on issues of mutual interest between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

SHURA CHAIRMAN RECEIVES MAURITANIAN DELEGATION

MUSCAT: Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, received a delegation from the Mauritanian government, headed by Mokhtar El Housseinou Lam, Minister in charge of the General Secretariat of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Supervisor of the National Documentation Authority, along with his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on issues of mutual interest between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, particularly those related to the long-standing and close relations between the two countries and their peoples, and ways to further strengthen them in a manner that serves the interests of both nations.

Al Maawali emphasised the important role that archives and documentation institutions play globally in collection, preservation and record-keeping. He also praised the significant efforts of the National Records and Archives Authority in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting was attended by Dr Hamed bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority, along with several members of the Majlis Ash'shura.

Following the meeting, the visiting delegation toured various facilities of the Council, attended part of a regular session, and visited the Oman Council Library, where they were introduced to some of the modern technologies used in the Council's operations and activities.

SHURA COMMITTEE DISCUSSES MILITARY SERVICE FOR OMANI YOUTH

MUSCAT: The Youth and Human Resources Committee of the Majlis Ash'shura held its fifteenth regular meeting of the second annual session on Wednesday, chaired by Younis bin Ali al Mandhari, chairman of the committee, and attended by Tahir bin Mabkhout al Junaibi, Deputy Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura.

Members of the committee explored the practical challenges associated with implementing military service, while also emphasising its potential national benefits.

The committee also discussed incentives and privileges that could make national service an attractive option for young people. In addition, they examined the potential financial and logistical costs of implementing such a programme, including infrastructure requirements, training expenses, administrative and technical preparations and strategies to ensure the programme's sustainability and effectiveness.

The discussions included a review of international experiences in national service. Successful models from various countries were analysed to understand the motivations behind their implementation, the societal and human development benefits achieved and the challenges encountered — providing a valuable opportunity to draw lessons from global best practices while considering the unique context of Omani society.



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Oman’s strength in air safety receives global acclaim

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

OMAN'S strong track record in air safety received global acclaim when it scored 94.4 per cent in the implementation sustainability index and a perfect 100 per cent in the facilitation compliance index. These achievements placed Oman 4th globally among G20 nations and 3rd in the Middle East in aviation security.

This came during the annual review of Civil Aviation Authority's milestones and global achievements on Wednesday in a press conference by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Al Abri said these results reflect Oman's firm commitment to aviation security and readiness to maintain high compliance. The Authority will continue working with partners to implement audit recommendations and uphold international standards.

The ICAO audit team praised Oman's inter-agency coordination, the competence of its national workforce and the effectiveness of its emergency security plans. Solidifying its status as a regional leader in aviation security Oman



A press conference was held on Wednesday to highlight CAA's and aviation sector's progress report of 2024, under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information. — ONA

The CAA launched an upgraded version of the Oman Meteorology website and mobile app during the annual media meeting. The revamped platforms offer real-time, location-based weather updates with an intuitive user interface

recorded outstanding results in the ICAO's Universal Security Audit Programme – Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP-CMA), conducted from February 9 to18, 2025. The audit assessed compliance with international aviation security standards outlined in the Chicago Convention. The audit covered eight core elements, including legislation, training, licensing, quality control and response to deficiencies. It also addressed nine key domains such as airport and aircraft security, passenger and cargo screening and prevention of unlawful acts.

In line with Oman Vision 2040 and digital transformation goals, the CAA

launched an upgraded version of the Oman Meteorology website and mobile app during the annual media meeting. The revamped platforms offer real-time, location-based weather updates with an intuitive user interface and a colour-coded alert system for severe conditions such as heavy rain, strong winds, fog and high waves.

Al Abri said the launch of the upgraded platforms represents a leap forward in the digital services and reflects a dedication to delivering precise, advanced services that empower the public to respond proactively to weather changes.



The meeting reviewed the strategy of the Permanent Committee of Officials of GCC Legislative Departments. — ONA

Oman participates in GCC legislative meeting

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the 28th meeting of heads of GCC states' legislative departments held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), on Wednesday.

Oman was represented at the meeting by Dr Yahya bin Nasser al Khusaibi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs.

The meeting reviewed the strategy of the Permanent Committee of Officials of GCC Legislative Departments, in addition to the recommendations of the working group entrusted with listing legislative principles that were issued by GCC legislative departments.

The meeting discussed the recommendations of the GCC Committee of Experts and Specialists about four main draft laws: The draft GCC unified law on the "Montreal protocol on controlled substances that deplete the ozone layer and their alternatives"; The draft executive regulation on the GCC unified law for the management of plant genetic resources; The draft GCC unified law for organic inputs and products; and The draft GCC unified law on meteorology.

By virtue of the powers assigned to it under Royal Decree No 88/2020, the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs represents the Sultanate of Oman at meetings of the GCC Permanent Committee of Legislative Departments. — ONA



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 (OMR)
NESC/ 2025/018	Supply and Delivery of 7 Multifunction's printers	08/07/2025	17/07/2025	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	Enquiries	Tender Submission	Guarantee	Terms and Conditions	Incentives and exemptions
- 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.	- 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.	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.	- 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.	- The tender will 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 a minimum Omanization level of 60% within the organization is obligatory , 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.	- 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.



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WORLD

AWAITINGRELIEF



Mourners react during the funeral of Palestinians, in Gaza City. — Reuters

TRUMP SEES ‘GREAT PROGRESS’ ON GAZA CEASEFIRE

GAZA: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that “great progress” was being made to end the war in Gaza as a new ceasefire push began more than 20 months since the start of the conflict. “I think great progress is being made on Gaza,” Trump told reporters ahead of a Nato summit in the Netherlands, adding that his special envoy Steve Witkoff had told him “Gaza is very close.” He linked his optimism about imminent “very good news” for the Gaza Strip to a ceasefire agreed on Tuesday between Israel and Iran to end their 12-day war.

Key mediator Qatar announced on Tuesday that it would launch a new push for a ceasefire, with Hamas on Wednesday saying talks had “intensified”. “Our communications with the brother mediators in Egypt and Qatar have not stopped and have intensified in recent hours,” Hamas official Taher al-Nunu said. He cautioned, however, that the group had “not yet received any new proposals” to end the war. The Israeli government declined to comment on any new ceasefire talks beyond saying that efforts to return Israeli hostages in Gaza were ongoing “on the battlefield and via negotiations”. — AFP

Seven soldiers were killed in Gaza after an attack on their armoured vehicle, Israel said on Wednesday, in one of the deadliest incidents for its forces in the more than 20-month war. The troops were operating in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis on Tuesday when their vehicle caught fire after assailants attached an explosive device to it, the Israeli military said. The army’s website listed the names of the seven soldiers, including a platoon commander from the battalion who “fell during combat in the southern Gaza Strip”.

The latest Israeli military losses led to rare criticism of the war effort by the leader of the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party, a partner in Netanyahu’s coalition government. “I still don’t understand why we are fighting there... Soldiers are getting killed all the time,” lawmaker Moshe Gafni told a hearing in the Israeli parliament on Wednesday.

The slain soldiers were from the Israeli combat engineering corps and were conducting a reconnaissance mission in the Khan Yunis area in southern Gaza when their vehicle was targeted with an explosive device, according to a military statement. — AFP

SOUTH KOREAN COURT DISMISSES ARREST WARRANT FOR YOON

SEOUL: A South Korean court on Wednesday dismissed an arrest warrant for former president Yoon Suk Yeol, a day after prosecutors sought to detain him for refusing to comply with an investigation into his failed bid to impose martial law. In a statement released on Wednesday night, the special counsel said that Seoul Central District Court had dismissed the warrant based on Yoon’s willingness to comply with the summons “if requested”. “Accordingly, the

special counsel immediately issued a notice to former president Yoon and his legal counsel, requesting his appearance at 9:00 am on June 28,” the statement continued. Yoon’s legal team, which slammed the warrant as “excessive”, said their client would nonetheless appear as requested. “The rejection of the arrest warrant is a warning to law enforcement authorities who conduct unlawful investigations,” they said in a statement. “We

express deep concern that this excessive and procedurally flawed attempt to secure an arrest warrant amounts to an unjust effort to humiliate and tarnish the reputation of a former president”. “Nevertheless, former president Yoon Suk Yeol will appear before the special counsel this Saturday.” Separately, the court issued a new arrest warrant for Yoon’s former defence minister Kim Yong-hyun, on fresh charges of obstructing official duties. — AFP

Iran votes for suspending cooperation with IAEA

IRANIAN

lawmakers voted on Wednesday in favour of suspending cooperation with the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog, state TV said, after a 12-day war that saw Israeli and US strikes on nuclear facilities. “The International Atomic Energy Agency, which refused to even marginally condemn the attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, put its international credibility up for auction,” Iran’s parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said, according to state TV.

The decision still requires the approval of the Guardian Council, a body empowered to vet legislation. Should it be ratified, Ghalibaf said “the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran will suspend its cooperation with the IAEA until the security of the nuclear facilities is guaranteed.”

In parliament, 221 lawmakers voted in favour and one abstained, with no votes against from those present in in the 290-seat legislature, according to state TV. Lawmaker Alireza Salimi said the suspension of cooperation would mean that IAEA inspectors would be barred from accessing nuclear facilities unless they obtained the approval of Iran’s top security body, the Supreme National Security Council, according to ISNA news agency.

Israel on June 13 launched a major bombardment campaign that targeted Iranian nuclear facilities and killed top military commanders and nuclear scientists. On Sunday, Israel’s ally the United States launched unprecedented strikes of



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MOHAMMAD BAGHER GHALIBAF



Rescuers sift through the rubble inside in the Evin prison complex in Tehran. — AFP

its own on Iranian nuclear facilities at Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz, before a ceasefire was agreed on Tuesday.

President Donald Trump insisted on Wednesday that US strikes led to the “total obliteration” of Iran’s nuclear capabilities and set the country’s atomic programme back “decades”, while Israel said it was still early to fully assess the damage. Over a 12-day conflict, Israel pounded Iranian nuclear and military sites while Iran launched waves of missiles at its foe during their deadliest-ever confrontation.

The United States joined the fray in support of its ally, hitting two nuclear facilities with massive bunker-buster bombs over the weekend, while a guided missile from a submarine struck a third. But leaked US intelligence cast doubt on the damage caused by American

strikes, saying they had set back Tehran’s nuclear programme by just a few months. “They’re not going to be building bombs for a long time,” said Trump, adding that the strikes had set back the programme by “decades” and that the Iran-Israel ceasefire that he declared was going “very well”.

Iranian authorities on Wednesday announced the gradual easing of internet restrictions imposed during the 12-day war with Israel, following the implementation of a ceasefire. Strict internet curbs had been gradually imposed since June 13, when Israel launched a major attack on Iran, which hit back with waves of missile strikes. A ceasefire that came into force on Tuesday appears to be holding. The communication network is gradually returning to its previous state. — AFP

KENYAN PROTESTS TURN VIOLENT

NAIROBI: Marches in Kenya to mark a year since massive anti-government demos turned violent on Wednesday, with two killed and running battles between protesters and police, who flooded Nairobi’s streets with tear gas and sealed off government buildings with barbed wire.

Thousands gathered in central Nairobi and other towns on Wednesday, including the families of last year’s victims, for initially peaceful anniversary marches.

They soon descended into chaos as scattered groups ripped up flagstones to throw projectiles at security forces and chanted for the resignation of President William Ruto. — AFP

DEFENCE CAPABILITY

Japan conducts first domestic missile test



Japan called its first surface-to-ship missile test within its territory necessary training given the current “severe security environment”, as it boosts military capacity. The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) fired a single “Type-88” missile towards Pacific coastal waters in Hokkaido island. “Domestic live-fire exercises like this one provide training opportunities for more troops,” top spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said. — AFP

STRANDED TRAVELERS

Cambodians at Thai border plead for peace



Cambodians living near the checkpoint in Poipet — the main land crossing between the two neighbours — say they are worried about the conflict escalating. Thailand has all but closed the land crossings in seven border provinces as a territorial dispute with Cambodia that erupted into deadly military clashes last month festers. Dozens of tourists and workers were left stranded at Thailand’s main land crossing with Cambodia. — AFP

SEVERE WEATHER

Over 80,000 people flee China’s floods



Flooding in China’s southwest has driven more than 80,000 people from their homes, state media said on Wednesday, as a collapsed bridge forced the dramatic rescue of a truck driver left dangling over the edge. Around 80,900 people had been evacuated by Tuesday afternoon in the southwestern province of Guizhou. Images showed a row of shops on the first floor of a building submerged, with residents leaning out of second-floor windows. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Zohran Mamdani gestures as he speaks during a watch party for his primary election. — Reuters

MAMDANI ON VERGE OF WINNING NY MAYORAL CONTEST

NEW YORK: Zohran Mamdani, a 33-year-old state lawmaker and self-described democratic socialist, was poised on Tuesday to win New York City's Democratic mayoral primary in a surprising upset over former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo. In brief remarks to supporters, Cuomo, 67, who had been seeking a political comeback four years after resigning amid sexual harassment allegations, said he had called Mamdani to congratulate him. "Tonight is his night," Cuomo said while conceding the race to Mamdani.

Mamdani was ahead of Cuomo 43.5% to 36.4% with nearly 95% of ballot scanners reporting. Nine other Democratic candidates trailed far behind. Mamdani declared victory addressing his supporters. "Today... with the vision of the city that every New Yorker can afford, we have won," he said in a published speech. He promised to reject President Donald Trump's policies and "to govern our city as a model for the Democratic Party." The outcome will not be final until next week, due to New York's ranked-choice system that allows citizens to pick up to five candidates in order of preference. — Reuters

CABLE THEFT DISRUPTS EUROSTAR



The theft of cables along train tracks in northern France on Wednesday disrupted Eurostar trips between London and Paris for a second day in a row, the company and French railway operator said. Overnight, "more than 600 metres (650 yards) of cable were stolen or severed south of the Lille Europe station" on the way between the two capitals, French railway operator SNCF said. "The impact is essentially on high-speed train traffic," it added. Around 15 workers, including cable layers, were dispatched to solve the issue, but repairs were expected to take a good part of the day. — AFP

ARMENIA ARRESTS ARCHBISHOP OVER ALLEGED COUP PLOT

LONDON: Armenian authorities on Wednesday arrested a prominent Christian cleric, Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, along with 13 other people and charged them with orchestrating a plot to overthrow the government. In a statement, Armenia's Investigative Committee said it had filed criminal charges against Galstanyan and 15 others whom they said had "acquired the means and tools necessary to commit a terrorist attack and seize power".

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan wrote on his Telegram channel that the authorities had thwarted a "large and sinister plan by the 'criminal-oligarchic clergy'" to take power in Armenia, a former Soviet republic in the South Caucasus. Galstanyan's arrest is part of a growing confrontation between Pashinyan and the powerful Armenian Apostolic Church, who have traded increasingly bitter allegations in recent weeks ahead of elections scheduled for next year.

Lawyers for Karapetyan say the businessman denies wrongdoing. A lawyer for Galstanyan, Sergei Arutyunyan, told journalists on Wednesday that his client was being unfairly criminalised by the government.

Detailing the charges that he faces now, authorities alleged that Galstanyan and associates had recruited over 1,000 people, mainly former soldiers and police officers, to block roads, paralyse traffic, incite violence. — Reuters

Trump reassures allies as Nato agrees defence hike

US President Donald Trump took a victory lap at Nato's Hague summit on Wednesday, joining leaders in reaffirming the "ironclad" commitment to protect each other after allies agreed to his demand to ramp up defence spending. The unpredictable US leader appeared keen to take the plaudits as he secured a key foreign policy win by getting Nato's 32 countries to agree to meet his headline target of five per cent of GDP on defence spending.

In a move that will provide reassurance to allies in Europe worried over the threat from Russia, Trump signed off on a final leaders' declaration confirming "our ironclad commitment" to Nato's collective defence pledge that an attack on one is an attack on all. "It's a great victory for everybody, I think, and we will be equalised," Trump said of the new spending commitment, ahead of the summit's main session. Diplomats said that behind closed doors Trump insisted there was no greater ally than Washington and urged others to spend some of the new money on US weaponry.

The deal hatched by Nato is a compromise that allows Trump to claim triumph, while in reality providing wiggle room for cash-strapped governments in Europe. It sees countries promise to dedicate 3.5 per cent of GDP to core military spending by 2035, and a further 1.5 to broader security-related areas such as infrastructure. Entering the meeting, leaders lined up to declare the summit's spending hike as "historic".

Nato allies say the increase is needed to counter a growing threat from Russia but also to keep Trump engaged, with the US leader long complaining that Europe spends too little on its own defence. Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever said: "As Europeans, we should realise that our long break from history is over." The continent needed to take responsibility for its own security "in a very difficult time", added De Wever.

Everything was carefully choreographed at the gathering in The Hague to keep the volatile US president on board: from chopping back the official part of the meeting to putting him up overnight in the royal palace. Trump rattled his allies



US President Donald Trump and Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte attend the start of a leaders summit in The Hague. — AFP

by appearing to cast some doubt on the validity of Nato's mutual defence clause — known as Article Five of the alliance treaty — telling reporters on the way to The Hague that it "depends on your definition. There's numerous definitions of Article Five."

But Rutte insisted Trump remained "totally committed" to the pledge — which was reaffirmed unequivocally in the summit's final statement. Underpinning the leaders' discussions on defence was Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and in another sop to the demands of allies the United States allowed Nato to refer to the "long-term threat posed by Russia to Euro-Atlantic security" in the communique. Though its language was watered down from previous years, the declaration also said allies would continue to support Ukraine "whose security contributes to ours" and

could use money from the new spending pledge to fund military aid for Kyiv.

That came as a meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US leader Donald Trump has begun on the sidelines of the Nato summit in The Hague on Wednesday, the Ukrainian presidency said.

The two leaders were set to discuss additional sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and arms procurement for Kyiv.

Zelensky is playing a less central role here than at previous summits, to avoid a bust-up with Trump after their infamous Oval Office shouting match. But Trump described him as a "nice guy" and added that he was talking to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the war, saying: "I think progress is being made." — AFP

India, Poland, Hungary make spaceflight comeback with ISS mission

CAPE CANAVERAL: A US commercial mission carrying crew from India, Poland and Hungary blasted off to the International Space Station on Wednesday, taking astronauts from these countries to space for the first time in decades. Axiom Mission 4, or Ax-4, launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 2:31 am, with a brand-new SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule riding atop a Falcon 9 rocket.

The vehicle is scheduled to dock with the orbital lab on Thursday at approximately 11:00 GMT and remain there for up to 14 days.

Aboard the spacecraft were pilot Shubhanshu Shukla of India; mission specialists Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland and Tibor Kapu of Hungary; and commander Peggy Whitson of the United States, a former NASA astronaut who now works for the company Axiom Space, which organizes private spaceflights,

among other things.

The last time India, Poland or Hungary sent people to space, their current crop of astronauts had not yet been born — and back then they were called cosmonauts, as they all flew on Soviet missions before the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Shukla became the first Indian in space since Rakesh Sharma, an air force pilot who traveled to the Salyut 7 space station in 1984 as part of a Soviet-led initiative to help allied countries access space.

India's space agency, ISRO, sees this flight as a key stepping stone toward its own maiden crewed mission, planned for 2027 under the Gaganyaan programme, meaning "sky craft" in Hindi.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the successful launch of the Ax-4 space mission.

"He (Shukla) carries with him the wishes, hopes and aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians. Wish him and other



The Axiom-4 mission lifts off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida. — AFP

astronauts all the success!" he wrote on X.

All three countries are footing the

bill for their astronauts.

Hungary announced in 2022 it was paying \$100 million for its seat,

according to spacenews.com.

India and Poland have not disclosed how much they are spending. "We've got this! Poland has reached for the stars," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on X, alongside a video himself watching the launch on a screen at the Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw. "Who knows how many future Polish astronauts watched Slawosz's launch with me? Everyone was very excited and very proud," Tusk said in another post, which included a photo of him seated next to several children at the science centre.

The Ax-4 launch comes after multiple issues delayed the mission, originally slated for early June. It also follows an explosive online spat between US President Donald Trump and SpaceX chief Elon Musk, the world's richest person and, until recently, Trump's ally and advisor. — AFP

OPINION

A cotton tote won’t stop a crisis, but it’s a start



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

THE cotton tote in my handbag has become muscle memory. Unroll, fill it with tomatoes and coriander, and feel the weave tighten across my knuckles. On Monday evening while shopping in Muttrah, that rhythm was interrupted by a headline on my phone: Qatar had shut down its airspace. More than 160 flights were grounded or turned around after missiles were reportedly fired in the region, raising concerns around the Al Udeid Air Base near Doha. A Qantas jet flew fifteen hours to nowhere, returning to Australia without ever landing in Doha.

The announcement came quickly, and the disruption was immediate. Though the closure lasted only a few hours, the sense of fragility lingered. For a brief moment, it felt like a glimpse into how swiftly normal life can be unsettled by forces far beyond our control. In that moment, I found myself thinking not only about warplanes and airspace, but about the everyday systems we rely on; food, water, shelter and routine.

It is against this backdrop that Oman prepares to launch the third phase of its single-use plastic bag ban on July 1. Fruit

stalls, bakeries, sweet shops and grocery corners will no longer be allowed to distribute flimsy plastic carriers. In their place will come cloth, paper, or reusable alternatives.

The shift began in 2021, not with a sweeping ban, but with a nudge. One that signalled where we were headed without forcing immediate change. It was never about overnight transformation. The aim was to make space for new habits to form, to let communities and corner shops find their footing. Oman’s target is to eliminate single-use plastic bags nationwide by 2027. What happens between now and then will depend less on rules and more on whether this change begins to feel like second nature.

And that change matters more than it may seem. Plastic waste rarely dominates headlines the way airspace closures or armed conflicts do, but its impact is constant. A single bag dumped into a wadi. A coral reef quietly bleached. A turtle caught in drifting debris. On their own, these moments might seem small, but multiplied by millions, they become a crisis. The Middle East and North Africa region already leaks over six kg of

And that change matters more than it may seem. Plastic waste rarely dominates headlines the way airspace closures or armed conflicts do, but its impact is constant. A single bag dumped into a wadi. A coral reef quietly bleached.

plastic into the sea per person each year, the highest rate in the world.

It’s easy to feel removed from such numbers until you see the alternative with your own eyes. That evening, as I left the souq, I passed an older gentleman selling fresh dates arranged not in plastic tubs, but in handwoven buckets made from date palm fronds. He told me the leaves came from the same trees that bore the fruit. “Nothing is wasted from the nakhla,” he said, holding one up with pride. A material once used out of necessity now offered a model for sustainability. What had once been overlooked now stood as an alternative to imported plastic, rooted in wisdom, not nostalgia.

By the next morning, the skies had reopened. Flights resumed, and the urgency faded. But plastic waste, like conflict, does not disappear just because the immediate disruption ends. I packed the same cotton tote before heading out again, its fold now part of my routine.

Change doesn’t always need noise. Sometimes it lives in the weight of what we carry, and choose to carry again.

Flying anxiety peaks in India after fatal Air India’s crash

HRITAM MUKHERJEE AND DHWANI PANDYA

Retired Air Force officer Dinesh K has seen a surge in demand for his \$500 therapy course to help people overcome their fear of flying since Air India flight 171 crashed moments after take-off from Ahmedabad two weeks ago.

Dinesh uses a combination of flight simulation and counselling at his Cockpit Vista centre for “fear of flying solutions” in Bengaluru, the only one in India. The centre has received more than 100 enquiries since the disaster, compared to a previous average of about ten a month.

“Fear of flying is typically to do with things happening on an aeroplane - the sounds, motion, vibrations... exposure therapy is the only solution,” Dinesh said. The centre has a simulator for a Boeing and Cessna plane to help people experience how landings and take-offs appear from the cockpit and understand that not every vibration or sound during a flight signals danger.

WhatsApp messages Dinesh received showed individuals complaining about “losing confidence” after the crash while others said it was “too hard on the brain”.

A chilling 59-second CCTV clip showing the crash of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, which killed 260 people, has been widely shared on social media and TV channels since the June 12 accident, which aviation and mental health experts said had led to an unusually high number of counselling requests.

Some travellers are becoming more choosy in selecting their airline and aircraft — Boeing or Airbus — while others are so anxious they are taking more drastic steps by rescheduling or cancelling their air travel plans altogether.

“I am filtering on the basis of not having to fly a Boeing... I’m bloody terrified currently, and I don’t want to get back on a flight,” said London-based Indian marketing consultant Nidhi Bhatia, 25, who flew to Mumbai in an Air India Boeing 777 plane a day before the Ahmedabad crash.

Unlike India, Western countries have many more formal setups to help people tackle their fear of flying, in its most intense form known as aerophobia, as fatal crashes often spike worries among travellers across the world.

Days after an American Airlines plane collided with a helicopter in Washington, killing more than 60 people, a survey of 1,000 US consumers by research firm Prodege found 55 per cent of travellers had higher anxiety, while 38 per cent had reconsidered or cancelled travel plans.

Google Trends data shows searches for the term “flying fear” in India hit “peak popularity” a day after the Air India crash, and the phrase was still being widely searched. — AFP

The heroes of nanotech are Oman’s role models

KHALID ALSAFI AL HURAIBI

FIVE years ago, a quiet first-semester student, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Lawati, walked into my entrepreneurship class at Sultan Qaboos University.

Today, he stands as an award-winning pioneer in nanomedicine, authoring over 20 peer-reviewed papers and leading international research teams. His remarkable journey, shared on the 10th episode of “Business Class” podcast reveals the passion driving Oman’s unsung scientific heroes and the immense potential of nanotechnology.

THE POWER OF A VILLAGE

Dr Abdullah’s foundation was built at home. Raised by doctor parents who pursued knowledge globally (in Japan and Canada), he witnessed innovation firsthand while appreciating Oman’s own advancements. This environment was not just supportive; it was collaborative. He co-authored research papers with his family, nurturing a profound love for discovery. Returning to Oman from Japan and Canada, he pursued medicine at SQU with a clear mission: to position his nation on the global map of life-saving innovation. “It takes a village,” he emphasises, highlighting the crucial role families and communities play in igniting scientific curiosity for future generations.

A PURPOSE FORGED IN PASSION

Dr Abdullah’s drive is palpable: Contributing to saving lives. His prolific research, garnering national and international acclaim, focuses on one of healthcare’s most revolutionary frontiers: nanomedicine. But what does this mean? Understanding nanotechnology can be simplified by imagining and engineering



materials and devices at the scale of individual atoms and molecules – that’s the nanoscale (1-100 nanometers). A human hair is about 80,000 nanometers wide. At this tiny scale, materials behave differently, unlocking unique properties. Nanomedicine holds a high potential. This field uses nanotechnology to revolutionise treatments. Think of nanoparticles as incredibly precise delivery vehicles. They can be designed to target directly and carry drugs straight to diseased cells (like a smart missile), sparing healthy tissue. It also enhances effectiveness and delivers higher drug concentrations exactly where needed. In audio, it reduces side effects by minimising damage to healthy areas, treatments become safer and more tolerable. It also enables new diagnostics by detecting diseases earlier and more accurately using nanosensors. The global nanomedicine market, valued at over RO 57 billion and

projected to double by 2030, underscores its transformative potential. Dr Abdullah is at the forefront of harnessing this power for Oman and the world. Lessons from Rough Seas The path of a doctor-scientist is rarely smooth. Dr Abdullah shared poignant moments that shaped him. The unsuccessful resuscitation of an elderly patient and facing the grieving family laid bare the profound value of life and the harsh reality of medicine’s current limits. Conversely, witnessing a patient defy a terminal prognosis – living far beyond expectations – became a powerful testament to science’s unexplored potential and the hope driving his research. These experiences fuel his determination to push boundaries through nanomedicine, seeking solutions where conventional methods fall short.

OMAN’S NOBEL-WORTHY FUTURE

Dr Abdullah embodies the exceptional talent emerging in Oman. His journey, from an SQU classroom to the cutting-edge labs of nanomedicine, proves that passion, nurtured by family and community, can yield world-class innovation. His work is not just about awards; it’s about pioneering treatments that could save countless lives. Oman possesses such promising minds, capable of Nobel-worthy breakthroughs.

It is our collective duty – media, institutions, businesses and the public – to cultivate an environment of “meaningful curiosity”, actively support research and champion these young heroes. By investing in them, we invest in a healthier, more innovative future for Oman and humanity.

Dr Abdullah is not just a researcher; he is a role model, proving that tiny technology can lead to giant leaps for mankind.

Inappropriate approaches: Determining permission



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

WHEN a woman says ‘no’, it means ‘no’. When she says ‘stop’, it means ‘stop’. Silence does not mean ‘yes’. Unfortunately, on many occasions, when a woman declines advances, smiles often turn into frowns, and the perpetrator responds to her refusal as if she is at fault for not wanting to engage.

Why is it difficult to understand the meaning of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ when it comes to consent? In everyday relationships, physical or verbally inappropriate advances, including touching, stroking, or hugging to express interest, have been institutionalised. These actions mean harassment.

Women and girls, and occasionally even males, don’t talk openly about unwanted advances because society doesn’t accept the topic to be discussed. Cases may remain unreported due to the prevailing culture — victims often hesitate to press charges or testify, fearing repercussions and questioning whether they would receive the justice they deserve.

In societies where misogyny is ingrained, addressing the issues related to abusive interactions between partners or acquaintances is challenging. Think about culture, society and tradition. Culture encompasses art, music, philosophy and literature, but it is also mentality. Interestingly, talks on cultural sensitivity do not address offensive physical actions and

unwanted social approaches. It primarily focuses on a frame centred around ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, with the ingroup viewed positively and the outgroup viewed negatively.

Unwanted or inappropriate advances happen not only in workplaces or schools but also on streets, in restaurants, coffee shops, and, other public places. Low-key stalking, following women to their cars, staring non-stop, chanting things at them, or grabbing women’s hands are not acceptable.

Studies suggest that women invest significant time and effort in rejecting advances safely because they have a greater worry about adverse outcomes. While some women do speak up about their experiences, the majority stay silent — in part because of fear of retaliation. Women who challenge this type of behaviours might be labelled as “playing hard to get”.

Society permits the occurrence of shaming, which involves criticising women and girls to embarrass them, alongside the tendency to blame and objectify bodies. Many of the same people who criticise also engage in inappropriate advances. There are situations in which offenders assume that girls wearing cosmetics, filters and Botox are to allure attention and consequently, approval for advances. Good looks are not a synonym for availability.

There is no shortage of stories. Acknowledging the actions and expressing discomfort, or using clear and direct

We need to talk about consent. The conversation should foster the understanding that consent is an agreement between participants engaged in some sort of activity. Consent means permission, approval, or agreement.

language to let the offenders know that you are not interested in their advances, may not always work. Many women simply laugh off this behaviour, even if their safety is in jeopardy. It’s a defence mechanism.

A rejection may be perceived as a rewarding experience by the offenders. This can be ‘coffee shop talk’ with friends – peers’ praise is a powerful motivation factor – or escalate into retaliation or forms of stalking.

Some circumstances trap women and girls within societal structures. However, a dialogue must be initiated to highlight that it is unacceptable to grab or give little slaps in the backside of any woman because they aren’t complying with the offender’s desires. It is not OK to suggest that the problem solely lies with the women.

Choosing to disregard the issue or to behave as if it does not exist contributes to the problem. We need to talk about consent. The conversation should foster the understanding that consent is an agreement between participants engaged in some sort of activity. Consent means permission, approval, or agreement. ‘No’ is a one-syllable word with four letters that do not leave room for interpretation.

Readings suggest that individuals who initiate unwanted advances fail to understand the difficult position their targets find themselves in, so it is time to educate them. Education can advance a culture of respect and the importance of consent.

Turkiye breathes easier as Iran-Israel truce eases fallout risk

HAZEL WARD

As the fragile Iran-Israel truce took hold, there was no letup in Turkiye’s diplomatic efforts on Wednesday to prevent any return to a conflict fraught with risk for Ankara’s domestic and regional policies.

Erdogan’s “intensive diplomatic efforts” to curb the conflict also involved calls with Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Iran’s Masoud Pezeshkian and top Middle Eastern leaders.

“Turkiye has been trying very hard to de-escalate the situation, but it’s not seen as a credible mediator, neither by Iran nor by Israel,” Gonul Tol of the Washington-based Middle East Institute said. Turkiye’s ties with Israel have been shattered by the Gaza war and Iranians see Ankara as complicit “because it hosts this strategic radar”, she said of a Nato early-warning system at Kurecik base in eastern Turkiye that can detect Iranian missile launches.

Turkiye has categorically denied radar data was used to help Israel but its presence has rattled Iran — with several Iranian military officials warning it could be “the first target” in case of a wider war, she said.

Even so, Erdogan reportedly sought to set up US-Iran talks in Istanbul last week, which only failed because Iran’s Ayatollah Ali Khamenei couldn’t be reached to approve it, the Axios news site said.

For Turkiye, the big fear would be seeing neighbouring Iran plunged into chaos as happened in Iraq and Syria, said Soner Cagaptay of the Washington Institute of Near East Policy.

“Ankara absolutely does not want to see Iran descending into chaos, decentralisation or civil war which could create cross-border threats or fresh refugee flows.”

In Iraq and Syria, destabilisation had created a power vacuum that was used by the IS group and Kurdish PKK militants “to launch attacks into Turkiye”, fuelling Ankara’s efforts to support both nations’ recentralisation, he said.

Turmoil in Iran could also harm Ankara’s efforts to draw a line under its decades-long conflict with the PKK, which last month said it would disarm, Tol said.

Although most PKK-linked groups embraced the call to disarm, its Iranian affiliate, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), did not, with Ankara concerned any unrest could embolden recalcitrant Kurdish separatists.

“The worry is that this chaos may strengthen the PJAK. There are PKK fractions who are not happy with (founder Abdullah) Ocalan’s call who could think: why disarm now when there’s so much chaos we can capitalise on,” she said.

A more immediate concern for Turkiye was the economic implications of the conflict, she said, with its crisis-hit economy already “struggling” with rising energy prices while fighting hard to bring down inflation. — AFP

Machine intel & wisdom



Subjective consciousness — our felt sense of being — cannot be reduced to mathematical functions.

A profound question emerges at the intersection of philosophy and science: Can algorithmic intelligence alone ensure an ethical and secure future, or must humanity strive towards a “digitisation of wisdom”, imparting moral depth to machines, directing their immense computational power towards noble human ends?

At first glance, we may not grasp the true gap between “machine intelligence” and “machine wisdom”, perceiving it merely as a play on words. Yet this gap reaches into the nature of consciousness, the architecture of will, and the consequences of purposeful action. I have previously explored the nature of consciousness - artificial and spiritual - and its ethical implications. Now, we confront a new realm where the paths of intelligence and wisdom intersect and diverge within digital machines.

Modern algorithms have exceeded our expectations. They operate as deep neural networks with trillions of parameters, capable of generating entire libraries of text within minutes. They outperform humans in pattern recognition, data retrieval and solving complex mathematical problems. In 2016, Google DeepMind’s AlphaGo defeated world champion Lee Sedol in the ancient game of Go, once believed too complex to be fully codified. While this victory was mathematically dazzling, the algorithm itself felt no triumph, no emotional reward. It solved the problem within rigid logical constraints, but it could not reflect on the meaning of playing, of winning, or of emotional resonance.

This exemplifies the essential distinction: Intelligence is the ability to represent and manipulate knowledge to achieve goals efficiently, while wisdom — as defined by thinkers from Aristotle to Kant — is the faculty of foresight. Wisdom surveys causes and consequences, weighs short-term gains against long-term values, and contextualises facts within cultural and moral traditions.

The first challenge lies in the very nature of wisdom, it resists codification into fixed rules or equations. Wisdom arises from the



DR MUAMAR AL TOBI

The writer is an academic and researcher

interplay of personal experience, collective tradition and intuitive awareness of the long-term effects of our actions. Neuroscientific studies show that the brain’s prefrontal cortex, responsible for long-term moral judgement, interacts with immediate reward systems, balancing present pleasure against the benefit of future generations. How, then, can a machine — confined within an unfeeling digital framework — understand choices whose effects extend far beyond its operational lifespan?

Proponents of value-aligned AI argue that algorithms can be trained through reinforcement learning to consider ethical variables within their reward functions. Weights could be assigned, for instance, to increase penalties for violating human dignity or to account for environmental sustainability across generations. Yet three major issues arise:

1. The Epistemic Dilemma: Who decides which values are encoded? Humanity has never reached universal consensus on ethical hierarchies. Should individual liberty outweigh social justice? Do spiritual beauty and dignity have computational value?
2. The Technical Barrier: Wisdom requires understanding indirect and unforeseen consequences, something that even the most powerful computers, including quantum models, cannot yet simulate with sufficient accuracy,

especially when social and psychological factors are involved.

3. The Trust Problem: Suppose we create a “wise” algorithm, how can we convince ordinary users to trust its decisions, especially if they clash with intuition or immediate interests? Ethical AI demands explainability, not just for scientists, but for the public who must live with its impact.

Amid these debates, a deeper question emerges: Is wisdom something that can be digitally transferred, or is it a living experience requiring conscious awareness? Philosophers like Thomas Nagel and John Searle suggest that subjective consciousness — our felt sense of being — cannot be reduced to mathematical functions. If true, then wisdom may not be measured by efficiency alone, but by a kind of ethical taste akin to artistic or poetic sensibility.

Scientific efforts towards “mind uploading” raise intriguing possibilities. Theories like Integrated Information Theory (IIT) posit that consciousness results from complex physical integration of information, a view supported by a 2016 study published in Nature. However, our current technologies remain far from matching the human brain, with its 86 billion neurons and countless connections, not to mention the yet-unexplained depths of mental life possibly linked to quantum mechanics.

The wisest path may begin not with technological ambition, but with intellectual humility. Machines must not replace humans in moral judgement but rather complement them. Human-in-the-loop systems — where humans retain final authority — could ensure accountability in decisions affecting future generations. For example, AI may propose renewable energy strategies based on historical data and climate simulations, but elected bodies or national councils should determine the acceptable level of risk.

In the end, wisdom may remain an inherently human virtue. Our challenge is not to manufacture it inside machines, but to embed our best human values into the decisions they help shape.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



DHOFAR SPORTLAB BOOSTS SPORTS TOURISM AND COMMUNITY FITNESS

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Sports enthusiasts in Dhofar celebrated a significant milestone with the grand opening of the Dhofar SportLab, marked by an energetic 20 km cycling race that drew cyclists from across Salalah. The event fostered a festive atmosphere and concluded with a recognition ceremony honouring all participants.

Founded by Mohammed al Obaidani, CEO of Middle East Global Events (MGE), the Dhofar SportLab is envisioned as a hub for sports innovation and community engagement in Dhofar Governorate.

A passionate athlete himself, Al Obaidani described the initiative as a key component of MGE’s mission to position Dhofar as a premier destination for sports tourism and grassroots talent development.

“This isn’t just a facility — it’s a movement, we aim to nurture the next generation of athletes and active citizens, from toddlers to seniors, while showcasing Dhofar’s potential to global sports tourists.” Al Obaidani said.

Located in Sahalnout, Salalah, the SportLab is a first-of-its-kind multi-functional sports space in the Dhofar Governorate. It serves as a training and activation center for cycling and endurance sports, a retail outlet for bicycles and gear and a vibrant community hub offering kids’ programmes, weekend runs, and fitness workshops.

The launch event attracted amateur cyclists, local cycling groups, and sports enthusiasts, reflecting the growing interest in endurance sports in the region. MGE, active in Dhofar’s sports ecosystem since 2013, continues to empower local youth through organised sporting events. With its natural landscapes, youthful population, and rising enthusiasm for outdoor activities, Salalah offers the ideal backdrop for a long-term initiative like the Dhofar SportLab. The facility now stands as a symbol of community health, sports innovation, and Dhofar’s growing role on Oman’s fitness and tourism map.

OAA HONOURS OPEN WATER SWIMMING TEAM

MUSCAT: The Oman Aquatics Association (OAA) hosted a special ceremony to honour the national open water swimming team for their exceptional performance at the 3rd GCC Beach Games “Muscat 2025”, which took place in Muscat from April 5–11. The team earned top spots in the competition, securing a remarkable achievement for the Sultanate of Oman.

The event, held under the auspices of Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services and Treasurer of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), recognised key partners and supporters who played a vital role in the team’s success. The ceremony was attended by board members of the OAA and representatives of other national sports federations.

Dr Awadh bin Salim al Ojaili, Chairman of Oman Aquatics Association, delivered the opening remarks, emphasising the importance of celebrating such milestones to motivate young athletes and align with the federation’s strategy launched in March. “This recognition reflects our commitment to developing swimming in the Sultanate of Oman and inspiring future generations. We are particularly focused on increasing female participation through the dedicated efforts of the Women’s Sports Committee,” he said.

Sayyid Sulaiman elected as chairman of OFA

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

SAYYID SULAIMAN BIN HAMOOD AL BUSAIDY was elected as the new Chairman of the Oman Football Association (OFA) for the 2025–2029 term. Sayyid Sulaiman secured 30 out of 43 votes while his opponent, Dr Jassim bin Mohammed al Shukaili, received 13 votes, during the general assembly meeting on Wednesday.

The election, conducted through an advanced digital voting system under supervision of OFA election committee and Fifa representative, witnessed attendance of 43 member clubs present.

The process commenced with a roll call and proceeded smoothly under the supervision of the OFA Election Committee and Fifa representative Hasan Hassan, and Shaheen Rahimi from Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Salim al Wahaibi, the former OFA chairman, delivered a speech ahead of the election process, highlighting the achievements of the previous board and emphasising the importance of the next phase of the association to ensure the continuous development of Oman’s football.

In the race for the Vice-Chairman position, Qutaiba bin Said al Ghailani was elected after receiving 22 votes, surpassing Nasr bin Hamood al Wahaibi and Sayyid Musallam bin Salim al Busaidy who received 12 and 9 votes respectively.

Hajar bint Khamis al Muzainiyah was elected to the women’s representative after gaining 25 votes while her fellow candidate Fatma bint Ibrahim al Fazariyah secured 18 votes.

The former Oman Olympic coach and former national team player, Mohammed bin Khamis al Orami, was elected as



Sayyid Sulaiman al Busaidy

I already presented my vision for the development of Omani football to the club presidents during pre-election visits across the Sultanate of Oman.

SAYYID SULAIMAN BIN HAMOOD AL BUSAIDY



Hajar al Muzaini (L) enters OFA as women representative

representative of the players in the OFA board.

As for the Board Member positions, Abdullah bin Salim al Shanfari, Abdullah bin Ali al Rashdi, and Ali bin Ahmed al Kathiri received 21, 19 and 16 votes respectively.

DOORS OPEN FOR ALL
Following his election, Sayyid Sulaiman expressed his gratitude to the General Assembly members for their confidence and support. He also extended appreciation to the outgoing Board, chaired by Al Wahaibi, acknowledging their significant efforts and contributions to Omani football. In his remarks, Al Busaidy highlighted the smooth organisation of the electoral process and praised the work of the Election Committee, in addition to thanking the media for their comprehensive coverage.

“The doors of OFA are open to all technical experts and specialists. We will soon form specialised committees and we welcome everyone with the passion and expertise to contribute to the development of Oman’s football. Our priorities will focus on elevating the top-tier league, enhancing all domestic competitions, and introducing a new Olympic league. We will work in partnership with the General Assembly to ensure continued progress.” Sayyid Sulaiman said Also, he emphasised that the national team will remain the top strategic priority.

“Oman team are currently in the playoff qualification stage and it is in our top priorities to work for the historic qualification for the Fifa World Cup. There will be a discussions with the technical and coaching staff in the coming days to chart the path forward,” he added “I already presented my vision for the development of Omani football to the club presidents during pre-election visits across the Sultanate of Oman. However, I refrained from sharing it with the public prior to the elections to ensure full focus on the national team and to maintain neutrality. There is a clear vision and I will share it with the public through a dedicated media and press conference soon,” he said.

Rasheed calls 30 players for Salalah training camp

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

The Oman head coach team, Rasheed Jaber, announced recently the squad of 30 man for the upcoming Salalah training camp which is scheduled to take place from July 1 to 29.

The squad featured a mixture of experienced players as well as standout talents from the Olympic and youth national teams and in line with the technical staff’s strategy to build depth and broaden readiness for the decisive qualification phase. The official draw of the upcoming phase of the playoff qualifiers will take place on July 17.

The preparatory camp in Salalah will act as a key part of the Red Warriors’ preparations for the next round of the AFC Asian Qualifiers — Road to the Fifa World Cup 2026, where Oman will compete in the intercontinental playoff



Players will undergo a comprehensive programme under the direct supervision of head coach Rasheed Jaber

stage in October 2025, with two direct spots for the global finals in Canada, Mexico and the United States up for grabs.

The coastal city of Salalah was selected for its mild summer climate, providing an ideal environment for high-intensity technical and physical training. Over the course of the 29-days camp, players will undergo a comprehensive programme under the direct supervision of head coach Rasheed Jaber and his assistant Yaqoob al Sabahi, focusing on tactical formations, fitness development and team chemistry.

The summer gathering will be an important opportunity to shape the squad and fine-tune the tactical and physical aspects of the team.

The presence of young players allow the coaching staff to assess future talents and increase competition within the squad.

The training camp reflected

the national team’s ambition to secure one of the two direct qualification berths and realise the long-standing dream of reaching the Fifa World Cup for the first time in Oman’s history.

SQUAD:
Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fayeze al Rushaidi, Abdulmalik al Badri, Thani al Rushaidi, Ghanim al Habshi, Majid al Saadi, Ziyad al Rasbi, Turki Abdullah, Mulhem al Sunaidy, Essa al Naabi, Ahmed al Kaabi, Yousef al Malki, Harib al Saadi, Sultan al Marzooq, Ahed al Mashakheyi, Al Faraj al Kiyoumi, Fahad Adil, Mohammed al Ghafri, Abdulsalam al Shukaili, Hussain al Shabri, Jameel al Yahmadi, Nasser al Rawahi, Hamed al Habsi, Mohammed Abdulhakim, Osama Majdi, Hatim al Rousdhi, Ahmed al Riyami, Bassam al Saadi, Said al Salami and Mohammed Bait Mustahil.

SHORT TAKES



Czech Republic's Barbora Krejčíková in action. — Reuters



Britain's Jodie Burrage in action. — Reuters

KREJCIKOVA SAVES MATCH POINTS AGAIN TO SURVIVE IN EASTBOURNE

EASTBOURNE: Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejčíková saved match points for the second successive day against a British opponent to reach the quarter-finals of the Eastbourne WTA 250 event on Wednesday. The 29-year-old Czech was troubled by a thigh strain and looked on the verge of being knocked out by Jodie Burrage when she served at 5-6 in the deciding set and fell 0-40 behind but she somehow turned it around to win 6-4 4-6 7-6(3). Second seed Krejčíková, who beat Italy's Jasmine Paolini to win last year's Wimbledon title, was leading by a set and a break of serve but needed treatment on her leg.

Burrage, ranked 164th in the world, played impressively to hit back and broke Krejčíková's serve to level the match — one point being awarded to her after a forehand from her opponent found its way through a hole in the net. The 26-year-old British player kept just ahead in the decider but she could not take any of the three match points that came her way and then a costly double-fault in the tiebreak offered up match points to Krejčíková, who made no mistake. Krejčíková, who also saved match points on Tuesday against home player Harriet Dart, has won two singles matches in a row for the first time in an injury-hit 2025.

"Another tough match," Krejčíková, who also has a French Open singles crown to her name, said on court.

"Brits know how to play on grass and it's hard to play against them but happy I'm through.

"I was going through a difficult moment at the beginning of this year but I'm happy I'm here and can keep finding the level that I know I can reach."

— AFP



The main goal of the championship is to discover and develop Omani boxing talent

Omani fighters gear up for FFC 3 on Friday

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

THE FFC 3 Boxing Championship will kick off on the evening of Friday, at the Sheraton Hotel — Muscat. The event is organised by FITBOX Club under the direct supervision of international coach Ali Bilal Kurdi, and in cooperation and supported by the Oman Committee for Martial Arts and Self-Defense, chaired by Dr Adil al Shanfari. Now in its third edition, the championship stands out as one of the most prominent sporting events of the year, noted for its high level of professionalism in organisation and the outstanding participation of young Omani fighters alongside elite local and international champions, who bring a global dimension to the competition. The main goal of the championship is to discover and develop Omani boxing talent, offering a genuine platform for young athletes to showcase their abilities as a pathway to representing Oman in regional and international arenas. It also gives participants the opportunity to engage with high-level competitors, which helps refine their skills and broaden their experience.

Through this event, the organisers aim to raise community awareness of the importance of martial arts and self-defense sports — not only as competitive activities but also as tools for building character, discipline and self-confidence. This makes



The event is organised by FITBOX Club under international coach Ali Bilal Kurdi

them an ideal choice for youth development. FFC 3 is distinguished by hosting matches in accordance with approved international standards, which elevates the level of local competition and encourages participants to give their best. The event is overseen by Coach Ali Bilal Kurdi, whose presence is a major asset due to his extensive experience in the field. He also plays a key role in empowering Omani trainers and supervisors by offering practical training and professional development opportunities. The event is expected to feature professional organisation and attract a diverse audience of sports enthusiasts and martial arts fans, reflecting the growing popularity of these sports among Omani youth. This further underscores the need for more such events across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Speaking about FFC 3, international coach and event organiser Ali Bilal Kurdi emphasised that this edition marks a qualitative leap in terms of organisation and technical level. He highlighted the wide participation of local and international champions, noting that the championship mirrors global events in terms of quality and standards. Kurdi stressed that the primary objective is to empower Omani youth and provide a genuine platform for showcasing their boxing talents, while also promoting the culture of martial arts in society for its role in character building, discipline, and self-confidence. He praised the promising Omani talents, affirming that the Sultanate of Oman possesses great potential that only needs consistent training and care. He also encouraged young people to engage in self-defense sports as a lifestyle, while calling on the relevant authorities to continue supporting such initiatives that create the champions of tomorrow. FFC 3 is more than just a sporting event — it is a national platform for building champions and strengthening Oman's position on the regional martial arts map by supporting talent, empowering professionals, and nurturing a passion for sports within Omani society. It is worth noting that previous editions of the championship achieved remarkable success and broad participation, raising expectations that this edition will deliver new sporting achievements in both organisation and technical outcomes.

Extreme heat, storms take toll at Club World Cup

LOS ANGELES: Furnace-like heat and the threat of thunder and lightning are wreaking havoc at the Club World Cup — and more of the same is likely at the 2026 World Cup.

With the latest in a series of brutal, climate change-driven record heatwaves blanketing the eastern United States, adapting to the weather has become a key focus for coaches and players.

Borussia Dortmund took the unusual step of leaving their substitutes in the dressing room for the first half of their game against Mamelodi Sundowns in Cincinnati, rather than have them sitting on the bench in blazing sunshine.

Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca meanwhile cut short his team's training session in Philadelphia on Monday as the City of Brotherly Love

baked in temperatures of 99 degrees Fahrenheit (37.2 degrees Celsius).

Dortmund coach Niko Kovac, meanwhile, said the weather could ultimately shape the destiny of the tournament.

"I think that this tournament will be decided not by the best team, but the team that can adapt to these weather conditions the best. They will probably win this tournament," Kovac said. While cooling breaks midway through each half have become standard during the tournament, Dortmund, like other teams, are taking extra steps to mitigate the heat and humidity.

"Our boys are very well taken care of by our doctors and the medical staff," Kovac said.

"We have very cold towels. We put them in ice baths. The boys also



Boca Juniors' Carlos Palacios as sprinklers are used to cool down the players during a break in play. — Reuters

need to cool down their legs and their feet in cold water and ice baths." The experience of the Club World Cup is likely a preview of what can be expected at next year's men's World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

A recent study published by the International Journal of Biometeorology warned of the risk posed by extreme heat at the tournament for players and spectators, citing climate change as a cause of "extreme heat" events that were "more frequent and intense".

On Tuesday, Boca Juniors' game against Auckland City became the fifth match of the tournament to experience a lengthy delay due to public safety regulations used in the United States that mandate play is halted whenever lightning is

within 10 miles (16.1 kilometres) of a stadium. A weather delay in Benfica's game against Auckland led to an interruption in play of nearly two hours.

National Weather Service official Ben Schott, who advises FIFA and the US World Cup taskforce for 2026, says the kind of weather affecting the ongoing competition is not out of the ordinary, and said teams and fans next year should plan accordingly.

"Nothing that we're seeing right now is unusual even though we are breaking records," Schott told AFP.

"Most of the eastern United States is breaking records, and then that happens almost every summer. To expect something similar next year as a possibility is something that people should prepare for if you're going to come and enjoy the games." — AFP



Chelsea's Tosin Adarabioyo scores their first goal. — Reuters

CHELSEA THROUGH TO CWC KNOCKOUTS, BENFICA BEAT BAYERN

CHELSEA beat Esperance of Tunisia 3-0 on Tuesday to set up a Club World Cup last-16 tie against Benfica, who defeated Bayern Munich 1-0 earlier in searing heat.

Elsewhere minnows Auckland City claimed a memorable draw against Boca Juniors while Los Angeles FC bowed out of the tournament with a stalemate against Flamengo.

In Charlotte, Andreas Schjelderup scored the only goal for Benfica in their Group C clash with Bayern in front of 33,287 fans, finishing first-time from a cutback by his fellow Norwegian Fredrik Aursnes in the 13th minute. The German champions, who left the likes of Harry Kane and Michael Olise on the bench at kick-off, were unable to come back in sweltering afternoon conditions in heatwave-hit North Carolina.

Kane and Olise came on at half-time and Bayern did then look more dangerous, but Leroy Sane was denied when clean through by Benfica's Ukrainian goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin.

A draw would have allowed Bayern to top the section but a Kimmich effort that found the net was ruled out for offside and Trubin denied Sane again while Kane mistimed a header late on.

It was Benfica's first ever win in 14 competitive meetings with Bayern and it meant they finished first and will next play Group D



Benfica's Nicolas Otamendi and Benfica's Leandro Barreiro in action. — Reuters

runners-up Chelsea in Charlotte in the last 16 on Saturday.

"I think this was a very fair and important win, historic really," said Benfica coach Bruno Lage.

"We were as straightforward and assertive as we should be and I think we were very effective in delivering our strategy today."

Bayern finished second and so will go to Miami on Sunday to take on Brazilian giants Flamengo, with a potential quarterfinal against European champions Paris Saint-Germain awaiting.

"You could see that it was really tough conditions so respect to both teams for that," said Bayern coach Vincent Kompany.

"Our first half was not good enough for sure, the second half was definitely more the level that we expected and good enough to score one or two or three goals."

ANOTHER WEATHER DELAY

That result meant whatever Boca did against Auckland City in Nashville would not be enough to qualify, but the Argentine giants were still expected to do better than draw 1-1 against the tournament minnows from New Zealand. Auckland had lost 10-0 to Bayern and 6-0 to Benfica but this time they recovered from falling behind in the first half when goalkeeper Nathan Garrow palmed a Lautaro Di Lollo

header into his own net.

Christian Gray equalised with a header in the second half to earn the sole representatives from Oceania a remarkable point.

"You can't say we haven't learned from the experience of being at the tournament, I'm thrilled for the players and the club, it's wonderful. It's something to go home with," said City coach Paul Posa.

"We're a tiny club with a huge heart and that's evident for all to see."

DELAP OFF MARK

The game was the fifth so far at the tournament to be suspended due to a weather warning, with play

stopping for almost an hour — when the action restarted not a drop of rain had fallen at Geodis Park.

Chelsea eased through to their meeting with Benfica with a clinical 3-0 win over Esperance at Lincoln Financial Field in Group D in Philadelphia.

New signing Liam Delap opened his account for the club with a deftly-taken finish in stoppage time at the end of the first half, just moments after Tosin Adarabioyo had headed the Blues in front.

Teenage talent Tyrique George added Chelsea's third deep into injury time at the end of the game with a low shot that crept under Esperance goalkeeper Bechir Ben Said.

Flamengo, who had already assured themselves of top spot in the section after wins over Chelsea and Esperance, wrapped up their first-round campaign with a 1-1 draw against already-eliminated LAFC in Orlando.

Los Angeles forward Denis Bouanga threatened to give the MLS side an upset win in their final game of the tournament after a cool finish in the 84th minute, only for Wallace Yan to equalise for Flamengo two minutes later. Elsewhere on Tuesday, Fi opened a disciplinary investigation into Pachuca's Gustavo Cabral after allegations he made a racist comment to Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger.

The incident came towards the end of Sunday's game between the two teams which Real won 3-1.

— AFP



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Visitors to the pavilion have praised its unique design, which reflects the authenticity of Omani culture and heritage.

OMAN PAVILION ATTRACTS STRONG INTEREST AT ALGIERS INTERNATIONAL FAIR

ALGIERS: The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion at the 56th Algiers International Fair is drawing large crowds of Algerian visitors and businesspeople, reflecting strong interest in Omani products and industries.

As the guest of honour at this year’s event, Oman has taken the opportunity to showcase the depth and diversity of its industrial, commercial, and service sectors. Visitors to the pavilion have praised its unique design, which reflects the authenticity of Omani culture and heritage.

Tareq Mousuni, an Algerian entrepreneur in the plastics industry, highlighted the quality and competitive pricing of Omani plastic products, noting their popularity among Algerian consumers. “The pavilion is an excellent platform for us to explore potential business collaborations,” he said.

Another visitor, Iman Boutelja, expressed her admiration for the variety of products on display. “It’s a beautiful and well-organised pavilion. I believe Omani companies will successfully secure distribution deals and agency contracts in Algeria,” she noted.

Algerian businessman Abdulrahman bin Omar echoed this sentiment, describing the pavilion as an opportunity for deeper commercial ties. “Omani industries are known for their quality. I’ve decided to pursue partnerships with several Omani firms in the electricity and agriculture sectors,” he revealed. — ONA

OIA expands private equity footprint with 13 new investments in 2024

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

OMAN Investment Authority (OIA) added 13 new investment funds to its private equity and venture capital portfolio in 2024, significantly expanding its exposure to high-growth global sectors aligned with the Sultanate of Oman’s long-term development priorities.

The investments — spanning digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, fintech, clean energy and other strategically vital industries — were executed through the Future Generations Fund (FGF), OIA’s international investment arm tasked with safeguarding and growing wealth for future generations.

During the year, FGF strategically invested in 13 funds headquartered in key international financial centres across the Gulf, the wider MENA region, and beyond. Each fund was selected for its alignment with Oman’s economic diversification goals and its potential to deliver sustainable, long-term returns.

Among the most notable additions is Hahn & Company, a fund that acquires and develops companies across advanced industries, logistics, energy, chemicals,

THE manufacturing sector has emerged as a key engine of economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman, recording the highest growth rate among the economic diversification sectors in 2024, according to Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Al Yousef was speaking during the 13th regular session of the Majlis Ash’shura’s second term meeting on Wednesday, where he presented a detailed overview of the ministry’s achievements, ongoing projects, and strategic vision.

His briefing focused on six major themes: GDP contributions from both public and private sectors, the future outlook of the industrial sector, progress on ministry projects from 2020 to 2023, evaluation of free trade agreements and the Nazdaher programme, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, and future aspirations.

Al Yousef reported that the manufacturing sector achieved an 8.6% growth rate by the end of 2024, with its contribution to GDP at constant prices reaching RO 3.6 billion — equivalent to 10% of the national economy.

The sector has also proven its ability to attract investment, drawing RO 2.489 billion in FDI by 2024. This underscores the growing appeal of Oman’s industrial landscape for international investors.



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion speaks during the 13th regular session of the Majlis Ash’shura’s second term meeting on Wednesday.

Oman’s industrial exports reached RO 6.2 billion in 2024, reflecting the added value and global competitiveness of national industries.

Al Yousef emphasised that over 260 initiatives are being implemented in partnership with various stakeholders as part of the 2040 Industrial Strategy.

Further strengthening the regulatory and commercial framework, the ministry issued 7,523 Omani standard specifications by the end of 2024 and simplified 17 technical services.

The “Invest in Oman” platform, launched in February 2023, has so far received around 90 investment applications worth RO 5.38 billion. Of these, 43 projects have already been localised, with a combined

value of RO 2.25 billion. These include ventures in key sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, food security, and renewable energy.

FDI across all sectors has continued its upward trend, reaching a cumulative total of RO 30 billion by the end of 2024. Al Yousef also highlighted the role of digitalisation in simplifying business operations. The “Oman Business” platform handled over 800,000 transactions in 2024 and added 24 new digital services.

To enhance transparency and promote fair competition, the ministry has introduced measures to combat hidden trade and mandated the use of electronic payment systems across commercial activities.

A ministerial decision has

also been issued establishing governance principles for closed joint-stock companies. In support of local economic participation, the ministry has introduced new regulations to support consumer cooperatives, including incentives such as access to commercial spaces and streamlined registration procedures.

Al Yousef noted that e-commerce regulations have been implemented and the “Ma’roof Oman” platform was launched to verify and promote online stores. This initiative has led to a remarkable 236.4% increase in e-commerce licences within a year.

The minister also outlined several flagship programmes initiated by the ministry. These include:

- The Industrial Observatory Programme, to monitor sector performance and support supply chains.
- The Automation and Artificial Intelligence Programme, aimed at modernising factories and cutting operational costs.
- The Manufacturing Programme (Tasneea), which focuses on localising procurement and boosting national product content.
- The Ta’meer Programme, designed to link large-scale urban developments — such as Sultan Haitham City — with domestic manufacturers, enhancing economic integration. — ONA



Each fund was selected for its alignment with Oman’s economic diversification goals and its potential to deliver sustainable, long-term returns.

and commercial services. Another major investment, eWTP, focuses on growth opportunities in digital infrastructure, advanced industrial applications, energy transition technologies, and food security — sectors considered crucial to future resilience.

Technology-related investments featured prominently in the 2024 portfolio. Vista specialises in acquiring tech-enabled companies across healthcare, marketing,

media, financial services, and retail.

Industry Ventures complements this focus by backing venture capital firms active in AI, fintech, e-commerce, and health tech, while Flagship Pioneering targets innovation in health technology, agri-tech, and renewable energy solutions. FGF also invested in IDG Industrial, which supports growth-stage firms in cleantech, semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare.

ICG Strategic Equity Fund focuses on secondary investments, partnering with experienced fund managers to scale companies across diverse sectors. In the infrastructure and digital services space, Digital Alpha stands out with its focus on companies advancing smart city technologies, wireless communications, IoT networks, and multi-cloud services.

Frazier Healthcare Partners brings specialised expertise in healthcare IT, life sciences, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare management. In the financial technology space, FTVC Capital targets high-growth firms, with a complementary investment in FTV Ascend, which focuses on smaller-cap players in the same sectors.

Additional portfolio entries include Atlas Holdings, known for acquiring and restructuring underperforming industrial

businesses, and the Valor Atreides AI Fund, which invests in cutting-edge AI technologies and related infrastructure. The portfolio is rounded out by Creador, a growth-focused fund targeting consumer products, financial services, and healthcare in fast-developing markets.

As part of its broader Direct Investments strategy in 2024, OIA also invested in xAI, the artificial intelligence company founded by American entrepreneur Elon Musk.

xAI is behind Grok, an AI-driven conversational platform. The Series B financing round will fund the development of a 100 MW US-based data centre to train Grok’s third-generation large language model.

“As a financial investor, FGF partners with other financial and strategic investors to pursue viable direct, listed, and fund-based opportunities globally, while also seeking global strategic partnerships to localise technologies and advance Oman’s economy,” the Fund explained on its website.

To date, FGF has invested in more than 185 funds across private equity, venture capital, infrastructure, and real estate. In addition, it holds over 60 direct investments in a wide range of sectors, along with allocations in global equities, bonds, treasury bills, and deposits.

ADVERTORIALS

OMAN’S RICHNESS



An official agreement signing ceremony was held at Sohar International's headquarters.

Sohar Islamic supports the 3rd Rummana Agritourism Season

MUSCAT: In alignment with its enduring commitment to sustainable development, cultural preservation, and community empowerment, Sohar Islamic – Sohar International's Islamic banking window, has announced its role as the Gold Sponsor of the 3rd Rummana Agritourism Season, set to take place in the scenic highlands of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar from July to September 2025.

The festival highlights the richness of Oman's agricultural heritage and the increasing significance of community-based tourism in driving inclusive economic growth.

Coinciding with the peak of the pomegranate harvest season, the Rummana Festival offers visitors an immersive cultural and eco-tourism experience, celebrating the beauty of Oman's natural environment, traditional practices, and the entrepreneurial spirit of its people.

The initiative is a dynamic platform for small and medium-sized Omani enterprises to engage with wider audiences and create long-term value. To formalise the partnership, an official agreement signing ceremony was held at Sohar International's headquarters in the presence of Mazin bin Mahmood al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International, and Al Amjad bin Hilal al Maawali, Chief Executive Officer of TEEPEE.

The ceremony further underscored the bank's strategic collaboration with key national stakeholders in support of Oman's tourism and economic diversification agenda.

Commenting on the occasion, Mazin bin Mahmood al Raisi stated: "At Sohar International, we take pride in supporting national initiatives that elevate Oman's cultural richness while enabling sustainable, community-driven tourism.

Our sponsorship of the Rummana Agritourism Season reflects our broader strategic commitment to fostering inclusive growth — by empowering local entrepreneurs, safeguarding natural and cultural heritage, and contributing to Oman's long-term development priorities.

As a financial institution aligned with Oman Vision 2040, we remain dedicated to initiatives that generate meaningful social impact and economic opportunity."

Al Amjad bin Hilal al Maawali, Chief Executive Officer of TEEPEE, commented: "The Rummana Festival offers a distinctive and enriching experience for visitors through a wide array of engaging activities and events.

These initiatives allow guests to fully immerse themselves in the unique ambiance of the pomegranate season amidst the breathtaking landscape of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar — making it a much-anticipated annual destination for visitors from across Oman. The festival features a diverse selection of restaurants and cafés, in addition to a series of cultural and interactive workshops designed for families and children. These activities aim to promote the concept of agritourism and transfer agricultural knowledge through engaging and educational experiences."

LULU RETAIL WINS BEST IPO IN THE MIDDLE EAST AWARD

MUSCAT: LuLu Retail Holdings PLC, the region's leading full-line retailer, has been honoured with the prestigious "Best IPO in the Middle East" award by EMEA Finance magazine. The recognition was presented at the annual EMEA Finance Achievement Awards 2024, held in London.

The accolade celebrates LuLu Retail's landmark Initial Public Offering, which successfully raised US\$1.7 billion in Q4 2024, and marked the company's official listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX).

The IPO drew widespread investor interest and was one of the most anticipated public listings in the region, reinforcing strong market confidence in the Group's growth trajectory, financial resilience, and retail leadership.

The EMEA Finance Achievement Awards are



The award was received by Saifee Rupawala, CEO; Prasad KK, CFO; and Nidhin Jose, Group Company Secretary, at the EMEA Finance Achievement Awards ceremony in London.

regarded as a benchmark of excellence in capital markets across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Winners are selected by the editorial board from a pool of nominations submitted by investment banks, corporates, and market participants.

The awards spotlight the most impactful and innovative financial transactions spanning IPOs, debt issuance, Islamic finance, structured deals, and mergers and acquisitions.

Saifee Rupawala, CEO of LuLu Retail Holdings, said: "We are truly honoured to receive this award, which reflects the strength of our business, the commitment of our team, and the trust placed in us by our investors. The IPO marked a transformative chapter for LuLu Retail, and we remain committed to delivering long-term value and sustainable growth."

Kia K8 luxurious sedan with welcome bonus

THIS summer, welcome the luxurious Kia K8 – the dynamic, high-powered sedan with an attractive bouquet of welcome benefits to your homes.

Now available with a welcome bonus of RO 500, service of 50,000 kms, insurance, registration and much more. To add to your ownership, an attractive raffle of 5 units of Apple iPhone 15 (256 GB) is also available.

Welcome bonus can be utilised in any convenient way that the customers' demand such as price adjustment, as an addition to down payment or upgrading trade-in price of the old vehicle.

The Kia K8 delivers a complete package that sets new quality benchmarks in automotive excellence. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the K8 offers a progressive, modern design and superior handling performance.

Set off on family journeys



The Kia K8 delivers a complete package that sets new quality benchmarks in automotive excellence.

in the refined comfort of the executive lounge setting of the K8. Powered by a 3.5-litre GDI Smartstream powertrain and paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission with 296 hp / 6400 rpm, the K8 makes every trip enjoyable and memorable.

Each feature inside the K8 is thoughtfully designed to deliver seamless connectivity, safety and control for all passengers.

Step inside and be welcomed by cutting-edge technology, Crisp leather seats, a 12.3-inch TFT digital cluster for key driving information, a 12.3-inch infotainment system with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, Bluetooth with voice recognition, and a sophisticated 14-speaker Meridian surround sound system, ensuring you're connected to the outside world.

Furthermore, experience enhanced convenience with features like remote engine start and a keyless entry system. While you set the pace for your day and load belongings into the spacious 510L rear boot, enjoy the ease of wirelessly charging your smartphone using the integrated charging trays.

To maximise driver comfort, the K8 includes a memory seating system with lumbar support, ventilated power leather front seats, and a panoramic sunroof that enhances the cabin's spacious feel.

Driver-focused technologies such as the head-up display provide a clear and accurate view of the road ahead, improving safety and confidence behind the wheel.

Safety remains a top priority with Kia's Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS), offering intelligent features to reduce risks and protect all occupants.

EVENING WITH VINFAST : AN EXCLUSIVE VF 8 EXPERIENCE

MUSCAT: To celebrate the official arrival of the all-electric VinFast VF 8 in Oman, Bahwan Automobiles and Trading LLC hosted the "Evening with VinFast", an exclusive event curated for media representatives, influencers and select customers.

Held in an elegant setting, the evening offered guests a firsthand look at the VF 8's striking design, advanced technologies, and eco-conscious engineering. The event provided an immersive platform to showcase VinFast's bold vision for the future of smart mobility and its unwavering commitment to delivering innovative, sustainable driving solutions.

Speaking at the event, G K Ganesh COO, Bahwan Automobiles and Trading LLC remarked: "We are delighted to introduce the VinFast VF 8 to the Sultanate of Oman. This launch marks a significant milestone in our efforts to offer



Officials during the launch event.

forward-thinking, sustainable, and high-quality mobility solutions to our customers. VinFast's trailblazing EV innovation and contemporary design align perfectly with our aspirations for the

future of automotive excellence in the region."

Attending this key event, Do Hoai Linh, Market CEO of VinFast Middle East added: "The VF 8's debut in Oman represents a pivotal moment in VinFast's regional growth journey. We believe the Middle East is poised for a transformative shift toward intelligent, zero-emission mobility, and the VF 8 stands as a compelling symbol of that future. Our partnership with Bahwan Automobiles reflects our shared commitment to delivering performance, progress, and sustainability to drivers across the Sultanate of Oman."

In alignment with the Oman Vision 2040 initiative, VinFast enters Oman at a time when interest in electric vehicles is surging, fuelled by consumer demand for cost-effective, eco-friendly alternatives and governmental efforts to lower carbon emissions.

Travel Insurance from BankDhofar is an all-inclusive safety net

MUSCAT: Travel insurance is no longer just a travel extra — it serves as a crucial safeguard for individuals embarking on family holidays, corporate travel, or overseas assignments.

In an era marked by uncertainties such as flight delays, sudden health issues, and unpredictable weather, having robust insurance coverage offers essential reassurance and security.

Understanding the importance of this protection, BankDhofar—one of Oman's largest banks — has joined forces with Dhofar Insurance



The insurance policy offers comprehensive protection for travelers facing unexpected events abroad.

Company, a leading name in the Sultanate of Oman's insurance sector, to introduce a comprehensive travel insurance solution. With wide-ranging coverage, generous benefits, and adaptable features tailored to travellers' needs, this policy delivers dependable protection and reflects a strong focus on customer well-being.

Fully underwritten by Dhofar Insurance, the Travel Insurance policy offers comprehensive protection for travellers facing unexpected events abroad. It covers emergency medical expenses and

hospitalisation up to \$150,000, including emergency dental treatment up to \$1,000 per year.

In case of serious illness or accident, the insurance covers transportation or repatriation costs up to \$100,000, and sea or mountain search and rescue expenses up to \$20,000. Additional support is provided for family members during medical emergencies.

If a traveller is hospitalised for more than seven days, the policy includes one economy class air ticket or a first-class rail ticket for a visiting relative, along with

accommodation expenses of \$100 per day for up to 15 days. In the unfortunate event of death, repatriation of mortal remains is covered up to \$35,000, and emergency return home for the traveller following the death of a close family member is also included.

Financial protection for trip disruptions includes \$1,000 for cancellations or curtailment (with a \$50 deductible), up to \$2,500 for delayed departures, and compensation of \$30 for every 5-hour delay, up to \$180.

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The agreement was signed by Dr Ammar bin Mohammed al Ojaili, Vice-President of Innovation at OQ, and Maha bint Mohammed al Balushiyyah, Group Director at ITHCA.

OQX, ITHCA SIGN PACT TO COMMERCIALISE INNOVATION

MUSCAT: OQX, the research, development and innovation arm of OQ Group, has celebrated a major milestone with the graduation of the first cohort from its business accelerator programme.

Thirteen startups took the stage to present their innovative solutions to a panel of energy and entrepreneurship experts from Oman and abroad, marking a significant step in OQ’s mission to drive technology-led economic growth.

Spanning sustainable energy, clean tech, artificial intelligence and energy asset optimisation, the showcased ventures reflected a bold vision for a smarter, greener future. The event drew interest from investors across Oman, Europe, Asia and South America, offering a platform for cross-border collaboration and shared investment potential.

In a key highlight of the event, OQX signed a strategic agreement with ITHCA Group to support commercialisation of outcomes from the accelerator. The partnership aims to connect participating startups with funding opportunities and ecosystem initiatives, strengthening their path to market. The agreement was signed by Dr Ammar bin Mohammed al Ojaili, Vice-President of Innovation at OQ, and Maha bint Mohammed al Balushiyyah, Group Director at ITHCA.

Dr Al Ojaili noted: “This graduation marks a pivotal moment for the accelerator. It is proof of the programme’s impact on launching startups that offer real, scalable solutions for the energy sector.”

Echoing this, Maha al Balushi added: “Our partnership with OQ reflects ITHCA’s commitment to nurturing Oman’s entrepreneurship ecosystem. By aligning innovation with market demand, we believe we can unlock new opportunities in ICT and related sectors while reinforcing Oman’s position as a regional hub for technology and investment.”

OMAN OIL PRICE REACHES \$67.66 PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil for August delivery reached \$67.66 per barrel on Wednesday, June 25. The price of Oman oil decreased by \$1.17 compared to Tuesday’s price of \$68.83.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for June delivery reached \$67.87 per barrel, a decrease of \$4.64 compared to the price for May delivery.

Meanwhile, international oil prices recovered a little on Wednesday. Brent crude futures were up 46 cents, or 0.7%, at \$66.29 a barrel at 1200 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was up 43 cents, or 0.7%, to \$64.67. Brent settled on Tuesday at its lowest since June 10 and WTI at its lowest since June 5. — Agencies

FREQUENT TALK

Vietnam expects US trade deal before July



Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh said on Wednesday he expected a trade deal with the United States before the expiration of a pause on 46% reciprocal tariffs on Vietnamese exports in early July.

Speaking during the World Economic Forum in Tianjin, in China, Chinh said Vietnam’s government was in frequent communication with the Trump administration on tariffs. — Reuters

CLEAN DEAL

EU eases aid rules to boost green projects



Businesses will find it easier to get state aid for projects aimed at cutting their carbon emissions and to switch to green projects while heavy industries will benefit from temporary power price relief under looser rules announced by the European Commission.

The new state aid rules are part of the Commission’s goal to revitalise Europe’s industries with its Clean Industrial deal. — Reuters

NEW SOURCE

Trump says China can buy Iranian oil



US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that China can continue to purchase Iranian oil after Israel and Iran agreed to a ceasefire, a move that the White House clarified did not indicate a relaxation of US sanctions.

“China can now continue to purchase Oil from Iran. Hopefully, they will be purchasing plenty from the US, also,” the US President said in a post on Truth Social. — Reuters

Sovereign investing with home-grown impact

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

THE Oman Investment Authority (OIA) is emerging as one of the most strategically repositioned sovereign wealth funds in the Gulf, as it shifts from traditional asset accumulation toward a new mandate — creating tangible, long-term value both at home and abroad.

While 2024 marked a record year in financial terms, OIA’s most notable transformation lies not in profits, but in purpose. Global SWF analysis shows that Oman’s sovereign wealth fund is now prioritising economic diversification, innovation, and private sector development over purely financial metrics.

More than 61 per cent of OIA’s assets are now invested inside the Sultanate of Oman — a rare statistic among global sovereign investors.

This local-first strategy has turned OIA into a central engine of Oman’s Vision 2040, a blueprint that aims to transition the economy away from hydrocarbons toward a more knowledge-based and inclusive model.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INVESTMENT

The National Development Fund (NDF), OIA’s domestic investment arm, deployed RO 2.1 billion (\$5.5 billion) in 2024, exceeding its target. These funds are being channelled into infrastructure, industrial diversification, and energy transition — key priorities under Oman Vision 2040.

Among the most visible projects are the Duqm Refinery, which anchors the fast-growing



More than 61 per cent of OIA’s assets are now invested inside Oman.

SEZAD zone; solar energy plants in Manah, supporting renewable capacity; and new mining ventures in Lasil and Al Baydha, expected to tap into Oman’s underdeveloped mineral wealth.

OIA’s domestic deployment strategy is not merely about state-building — it is also about crowding in private capital and raising governance standards.

The authority has already divested from 19 assets since 2022, with three IPOs — Abraj Energy Services, OQ Gas Networks, and Pearl REIF — raising over \$2.5 billion. A further 30 divestments are planned by 2029, in sectors such as logistics, aquaculture, and utilities.

The October 2024 listing of 25 per cent of OQ Exploration & Production — Oman’s largest IPO to date — signalled growing liquidity and maturity in the Muscat Stock Exchange.

For OIA, this marked a turning point: moving from direct ownership toward enabling private sector participation and

competition.

FUTURE FUND OMAN: A DOMESTIC CATALYST

Perhaps the most transformative initiative launched by OIA is Future Fund Oman, a RO 2 billion (\$5.2 billion) platform launched in late 2023 to finance domestic transformation.

The fund is focused on large-scale projects, SMEs, and startups—especially those with innovative or tech-forward business models.

In its first year alone, the Future Fund approved over \$2 billion in investments.

Strikingly, around 75 per cent of the capital came from international partners, highlighting growing global interest in Oman’s evolving economic model.

The fund is expected to play a pivotal role in bridging the financing gap for non-oil sectors and accelerating the growth of locally embedded supply chains, industrial zones, and export-ready enterprises.

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL RETURNS

While the fund’s domestic focus is clear, its global engagements are increasingly shaped by the principle of strategic reciprocity. Every international deal must return value to Oman — whether through knowledge transfer, supply chain access, or sectoral expertise.

Recent global ventures illustrate this approach. In the US, OIA took a stake in Tidal Vision, a startup developing biodegradable materials from seafood waste. In Singapore, it joined Golden Gate Ventures in a \$100 million venture capital initiative, establishing a presence in Muscat to support deep-tech incubation.

A high-profile move was OIA’s participation in Elon Musk’s xAI — alongside sovereign peers from Saudi Arabia and Qatar — connecting Oman’s capital to frontier sectors such as generative AI and autonomous systems.

BUILDING TALENT FOR A DIVERSIFIED FUTURE

Human capital development is a cornerstone of OIA’s updated strategy. The authority helped create nearly 1,400 new jobs in 2024, while Omanisation across its portfolio companies reached 77.7 per cent.

Through programmes such as Jadarah, Nomou, and Eidaad, OIA is also integrating training and professional development directly into its investment framework. These initiatives are structured to align educational pathways with labour market demands, especially in emerging sectors like clean energy, logistics, and digital infrastructure.

SMEDA HOSTS 16TH SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES DIALOGUE

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 25

THE Small and Medium Enterties. Development Authority (SMEDA) held its 16th dialogue session in Muscat, centring on social protection services for SMEs, in alignment with the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040. The event brought together Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of the Authority for (ASMED), officials from the Social Protection Fund, SME owners, and stakeholders from relevant entities.

Deliberations focused on increasing partnership and integration between small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and interested stakeholders, enriching supportive policies to encourage SME development.

They were also aimed at imparting entrepreneurs with the passion to introduce new ideas that drive the development of priority economic sectors.

To this end, steps are being taken to improve the overall business environment and make it more favourable for SMEs and



A dialogue session hosted by the SME Authority focused on social protection, SME inclusion, innovation, and public-private collaboration.

to scout for viable opportunities for such businesses in various economic sectors.

The meeting was intended to foster cooperation, innovation, and operational efficiency across the SME sector — objectives that align with Oman Vision

2040’s diversification of the economy, empowerment of the private sector, and sustainable development agenda.

Discussions on issues of current concern such as insurance coverage, subscription to the Social Protection Fund, and mechanisms for SME support were designed to help the Authority establish a better business environment and enhance resilience of small business.

With Oman’s move towards a knowledge economy, the inclusion of SMEs in social protection systems ensures a more inclusive growth and efficient social safety net — two pillars of utmost importance to the vision.

The Authority renewed its commitment to an enabling, competitive, and economic space with SMEs as the centre of national prosperity. It concluded with an open discussion that encouraged frank conversation between policymakers and SME owners, further solidifying participatory and inclusive nature underpinning Oman Vision 2040’s government and institutional development strategy.

OPINION

Gratitude to Oman’s authorities for the safe return of citizens



HAIDER AL LAWATI

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

THERE are moments in life when gratitude transcends words, especially during times of uncertainty and crisis. It is only natural for people to express deep appreciation for the kindness and support they receive – whether from individuals or institutions – particularly when they find themselves in distressing or unfamiliar situations. One such moment was experienced recently by a group of Omani citizens who had travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran for various purposes, including religious pilgrimages, medical treatment, tourism, and leisure. Their journeys, however, were disrupted by the sudden escalation in military tensions between the Zionist entity and Iran, resulting in the outbreak of hostilities and the closure of Iranian airspace. In the face of this volatile situation, the swift and effective response of Oman’s authorities provided a lifeline to those affected. This message is a heartfelt expression of gratitude to all government entities and individuals who played a role in ensuring the safe return of these citizens. Particular thanks are due to the Foreign Ministry and the Omani Embassy in Tehran for their prompt coordination and

unwavering commitment. Their efforts were crucial in securing basic necessities such as accommodation, food, and medical care for stranded citizens until they were safely repatriated. The professionalism and humanity displayed by officials working in a challenging environment, surrounded by uncertainty and danger, speak volumes about their dedication and sense of national duty. Many returning citizens took to social media to express their gratitude publicly, sharing messages of thanks that reflected not only their relief but also their pride in the efficiency and compassion of the Omani government. At the heart of this national effort was the personal attention of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, whose directives ensured that the issue of stranded citizens was handled with the urgency and seriousness it deserved. His Majesty’s guidance mobilised the necessary resources and diplomatic channels to bring Omanis home safely. Given the closure of Iranian airspace and the complex regional dynamics, the operation required meticulous planning. Citizens were first transported overland to Turkmenistan, near the Iranian city of Mashhad, and from there flown by Oman

In the face of this volatile situation, the swift and effective response of Oman’s authorities provided a lifeline to those affected. This message is a heartfelt expression of gratitude to all government entities and individuals who played a role in ensuring the safe return of these citizens.

Air to Cairo for refuelling before arriving at Muscat International Airport. These extraordinary arrangements were made to ensure safety and avoid escalation risks in an active conflict zone. Throughout the crisis, Omani families endured anxiety and fear. Yet, thanks to timely communication and the dedicated support of the authorities, they were able to remain informed about the well-being of their loved ones. The nation’s response did not stop with its own citizens – Oman also extended assistance to travellers from other GCC states and foreign nationals, enabling them to return home on Oman Air flights. Many of these individuals have since expressed their deep appreciation through written and video messages shared widely on social media platforms. Once again, heartfelt thanks go out to all those who contributed to resolving this humanitarian challenge with such efficiency and grace. The compassion, competence, and speed with which Oman’s authorities responded have not only reassured its citizens but also demonstrated the country’s unwavering commitment to protecting its people – even amidst the spectre of regional war and global uncertainty.

MADE-IN-CHINA PLANES FACE BUMPY FLIGHT ABROAD

KA SING CHAN

CHINESE factories may be making most of the world’s ships and electric cars, but one thing remains out of reach for them: passenger planes. State-owned Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China, or Comac, wants to sell its C919 single-aisle jet to international airlines but it is better placed to chip away at the dominance of Western rivals Boeing and Airbus in the People’s Republic.

Challenging the duopoly is slow work. Comac’s long-delayed C919 - meant to compete with the Airbus 320 and Boeing 737 - only completed its first commercial flight in 2023.

To date, the manufacturer has built less than two dozen C919s, and it is hoping to ramp up annual production to 200 by 2029. Still, that would be less than a third of Airbus’ output last year.

The Chinese company previously said it was aiming for the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to certify the plane this year - a crucial endorsement if Comac wants to sell in other markets.

To date, the manufacturer has built less than two dozen C919s, and it is hoping to ramp

up annual production to 200 by 2029. Still, that would be less than a third of Airbus’ output last year. Moreover, the process of winning European certifications can take up to six years.

Any attempt by Beijing to use next month’s summit celebrating 50 years of diplomatic relations between the EU and the People’s Republic to speed things up looks like it will be a hard sell even if President Xi Jinping’s administration purchases Airbus planes as a sweetener.

The bloc is already reeling from a surge of overall Chinese exports and the two sides have a long list of thorny trade issues to tackle spanning electric vehicles, French cognac and rare earths.

There are other hurdles to Comac’s journey West. The company depends on imported components, including the C919’s engine, for instance.

That makes it vulnerable to US President Donald Trump’s export controls. Switching to domestic suppliers may also push back the EU certification process.

At least Comac has its home market, where the country’s top airlines are all state-backed. In its Made in China 2025 policy document unveiled roughly a decade ago, the government laid out goals including having local manufacturers account for 10% of the domestic aircraft market by 2025 and even higher percentages for related equipment and components.

By 2044, China’s domestic travel market will be the world’s largest by traffic flow, Boeing estimated this month, and the country’s commercial fleet will more than double to 9,755, equivalent to 19% of the total. That should help make up for what will be a fraught journey overseas. — Reuters

Investors must do more to attract tech firms to LSE

THE flood of British tech firms dropping London in favour of a New York IPO (Initial Public Offering) is only set to increase, a boss in Allianz’s investment arm, Jeremy Gleeson, has warned. Gleeson, technology CIO at Allianz Global Investors, has no UK companies in his global tech fund citing their high price and scarcity. “One of the problems that we have when we identify a great European company is that we find the equivalent in the US is trading at a discount,” said Gleeson. “There are fewer high-quality technology companies here in Europe, so when one does make a breakthrough, one is acknowledged as being world class, if you’re a European fund manager, that’s the one you have to own.”

The London Stock Exchange (LSE) is upping its campaign to attract more floats, warning IPO candidates that a US listing could prove expensive.

In a document shared with bankers and IPO hopefuls, the LSE said underwriting fees for LSE listings can be more than double those levied by advisers in the UK. US fees typically range between 6 per cent and 7 per cent, while cost in the UK are normally between 3 per cent and 5 per cent, the LSE’s analysis found.

It added that companies face a “lower litigation risk” if they are listed in London.

The LSE said 3.3 per cent of all US-listed firms were sued in 2023, with 215 new securities class action lawsuits over the year. In comparison, the LSE found there have been just five UK class actions against London-listed firms since 2008.

The pressure for UK and European fund managers to own home-grown tech companies when there are so few means that American competitors often end up being cheaper.

Gleeson gave FTSE 100 tech firm Sage as an example, noting that while it trades at a similar pace to US equivalent Intuit, the American competitor “has a lot more strings in its bow in terms of markets it



A man walks through the lobby of the London Stock Exchange in London. — Reuters

The pressure for UK and European fund managers to own home-grown tech companies when there are so few means that American competitors often end up being cheaper.



ANDY JALIL

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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

covers.” “They’re not just products for small and medium businesses, they do tax products for consumers, and they’ve got other irons in the fire as well”, he explained, meaning that Intuit ends up always being the favoured pick by global investors. It didn’t used to be this way. Gleeson participated in Darktrace’s IPO in 2021, noting that from when the tech company floated to when it was taken over by an American private equity firm, “it only had one small dip below its IPO price, which the company never really got credit for”. “There was almost like this ‘we don’t want to have a technology company be successful in the UK,” he said. “Unfortunately, maybe that has to

change a little bit in the UK amongst the investment community, actually be more warm towards technology companies, rather than seeing them with a mistrust to begin with.” The fund manager also pointed to Arm (a British semiconductor and software design company) a former FTSE 100 constituent saying it was “really sad” that when the company re-listed, it chose to go to the US, as it would “have helped if UK investors could have had a good experience with Arm, then it might have encouraged them to think a little bit more about other UK tech companies. Gleeson said: “Increasingly, it’s going to make it easier for UK companies to think about listing overseas, and in the US in particular.” He added, he was trying to be “benchmark aware” rather than simply buy the biggest tech firms. “You can go back to the mid-to-late 2000s, where the predominant players in the technology benchmark were IBM, Nokia, Intel, HP,” he explained, arguing that the benchmark shows what the more successful tech companies have been, rather than what they will be.

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Hilal bin Hamad bin Salim Al-Touqi (Civil No. 14936509) hereby gives formal notice that he has sold and transferred all shares, assets and liabilities of
GOLDEN JEED TRAD SPC – Commercial Registration No. 1001971 – to the new sole proprietor: Mr. Sakhr Mohammed Mohammed Ahsan (Civil No. 139354591).
With effect from the date of this publication, Mr. Ahsan assumes exclusive responsibility for the management of the company and for all existing and future obligations of the business. The former owner is fully discharged from any liability whatsoever.
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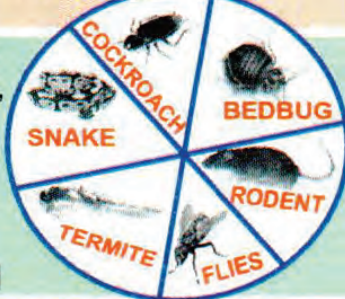
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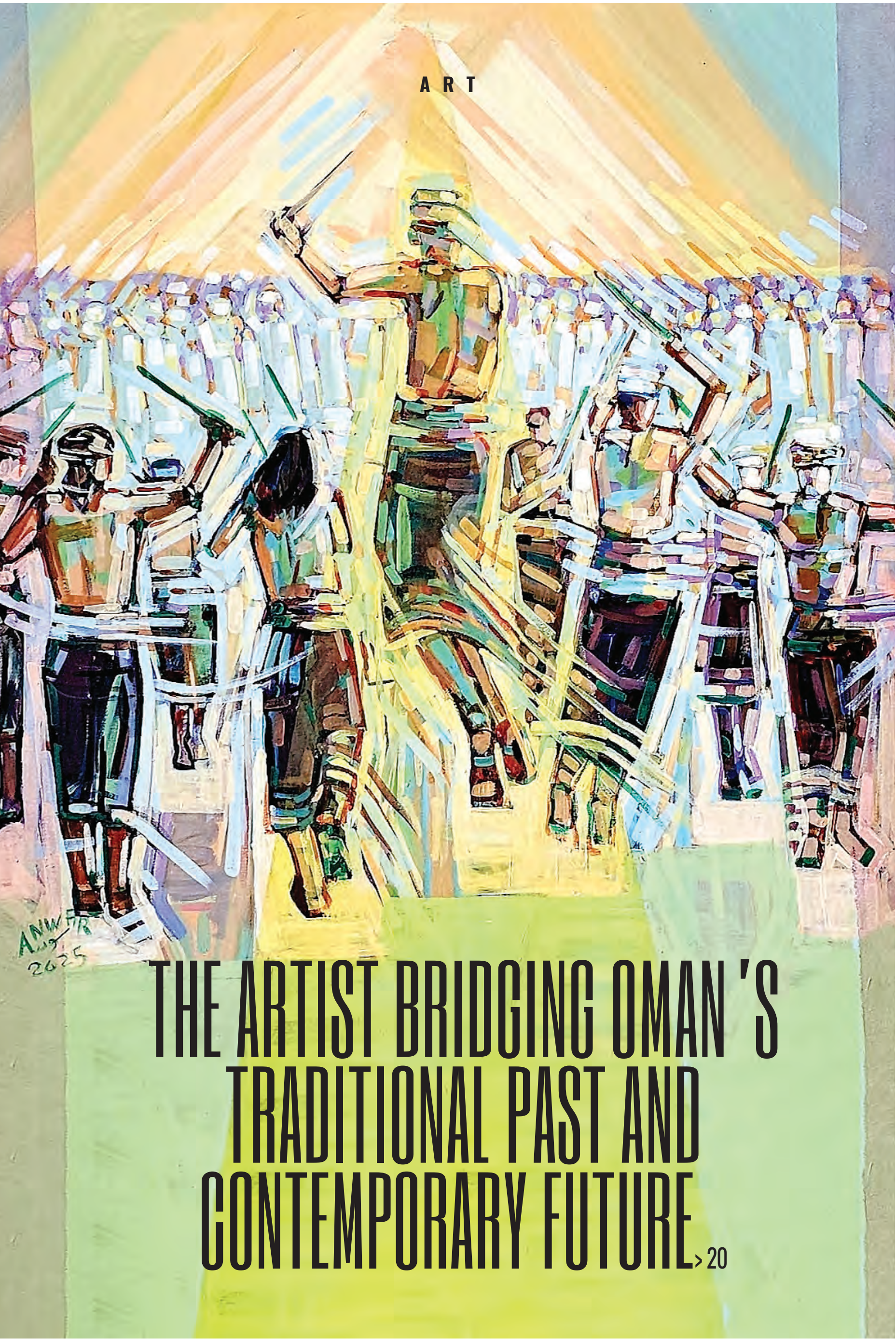
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ART/LIFE



ENTERTAINMENT

Disney launches stage musical ‘Hercules’ in London



DISNEY TAKES London audiences back to Ancient Greece with its new musical “Hercules”, bringing alive its 1997 animation on the West End stage.

Showing at composer Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Theatre Royal Drury Lane, the show is inspired by the much-loved Disney film, itself based on the ancient myth.

It follows the titular character and son of Zeus who, upon losing his immortality as a baby due to the plotting Hades, god of the underworld, goes from zero to hero to stop his uncle from taking over.

“It’s a myth that reflects contemporary culture and still honours the DNA of (the) animated movie,” Robert Horn, who wrote the show’s book with Kwame Kwei-Armah, said late on Tuesday at the musical’s press night.

“It’s its own new thing and yet fans of the movie will absolutely come and recognise it and love it.”

Central to the show are the five Muses, who sing their way through the story with energetic gospel-like tunes and plenty of costume changes.

“I think I speak for all of us ... we have idolised these women. We have looked at these women and seen ourselves in times when we weren’t really represented,” actor Malinda Parris, who plays Calliope, said. “So being able to be that representation for other young girls ... who ... want to be The Muses ... it’s living the dream.”

The show differs from the movie in several ways, including Hercules’ mentor, Phil, no longer being a satyr but a taverna owner.

“The main thing is that he still is there ... to love and support Hercules on his journey,” actor Trevor Dion Nicholas said.

“It really is about building this bond between the two of them that kind of builds this paternal relationship that I think we were able to deepen more so than the animated film was.”

“Hercules” is the latest Disney stage adaptation in London, showing in the same theatre where the hit show “Frozen” ran up until last year.

It features songs written by Oscar-winning composer Alan Menken and lyricist David Zippel from the animation, including “Go the Distance” and “Zero to Hero”, as well as new tunes. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



MUSIC

US singer Chaka Khan performs during the Noches del Botanico festival in Madrid. — AFP



FILM

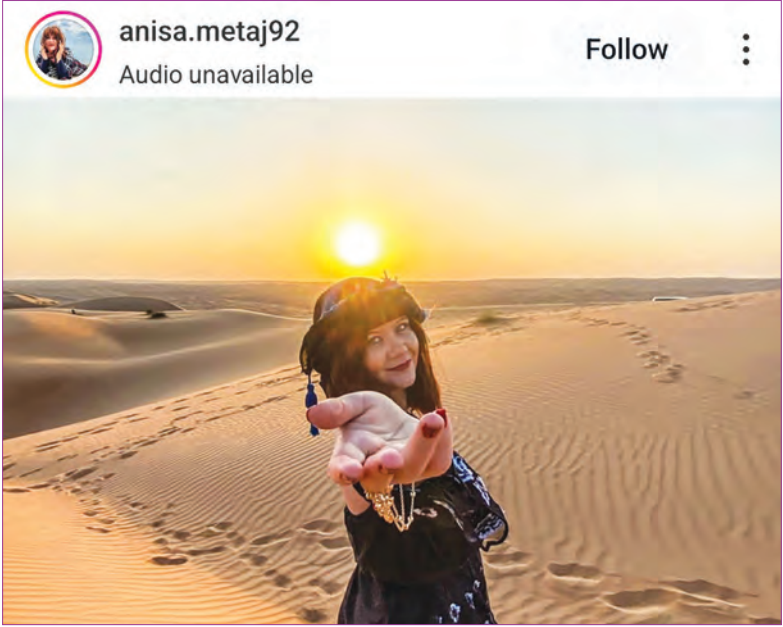
British F1 driver and film producer Lewis Hamilton poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the European Premier of F1 The Movie, at Cineworld Leicester Square, central London. —AFP



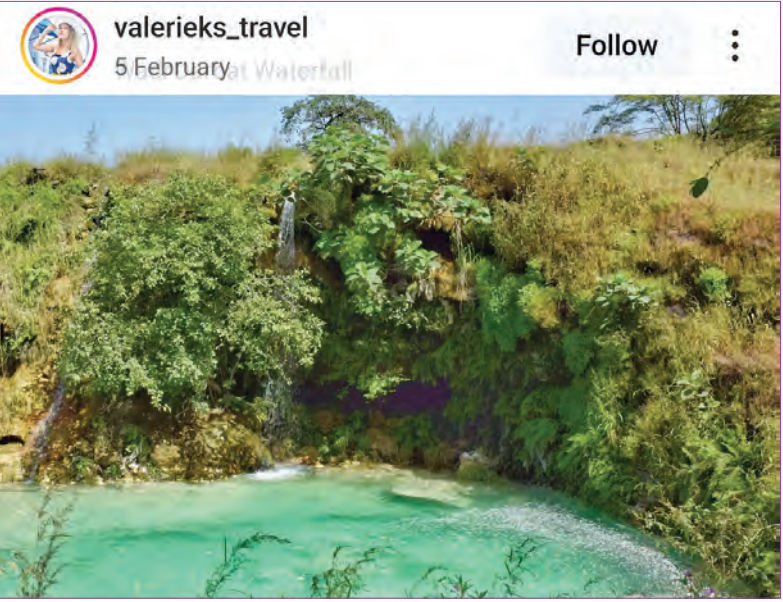
LIFESTYLE

Children play with soap bubbles during the first day of the Glastonbury festival at Worthy Farm in the village of Pilton in Somerset, southwest England. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Journey to the Desert



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Tourist taking a selfie damages painting in Italy’s Uffizi Gallery



A visitor to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence damaged a priceless oil painting while attempting to take a selfie, the museum revealed on Saturday.

The unidentified tourist leaned against the Baroque portrait Portrait of Ferdinando de’ Medici, Grand Prince of Tuscany by Anton Domenico Gabbiani to capture a photograph — until the canvas gave way.

Italian broadcaster TG1 posted a video on X showing the painting’s canvas tearing under the man’s weight.

The painting is regarded as one of the highlights of the current exhibition. The man was identified by museum staff and reported to the police.

A photograph in the local newspaper Corriere Fiorentino shows a tear in the canvas.

The museum management said that the damage is minor and can be repaired. The painting was immediately

removed for restoration.

Museum director Simone Verde expressed his outrage to the Italian news agency ANSA.

He said the issue of visitors coming to museums to take selfies or memes for social networks was getting out of hand.

“We will establish clear rules to prevent behaviour that is incompatible with the purpose of our institutions and respect for cultural heritage,” Verde asserted.

This is not the first time that art has fallen victim to selfies.

Recently, two visitors to the Palazzo Maffei in Verona destroyed a Van Gogh chair by artist Nicola Bolla, which was encrusted with Swarovski crystals.

The couple had apparently found the perfect photo opportunity — they sat on the glittering sculpture, which then broke, as seen in a surveillance video from the museum. — dpa



Saint Laurent, Vuitton kick off Paris men’s fashion week



SAINT LAURENT and Vuitton opened Paris Men’s Fashion Week on Tuesday with collections tinged with retro influences, as the industry reels from the revolving door of creative directors and a diminished appetite for luxury goods.

Saint Laurent kicked things off with a playful, spring-summer 2026 collection mixing shorts with strong shoulder pads, and rolled-up darted trousers with loose trench coats nonchalantly tied at the waist.

Shorts, evoking those worn by the label’s founder, Yves Saint Laurent, in his youth, were paired with bright and loose long-sleeved shirts and finished off with oversized sunglasses.

The show marked Saint Laurent’s official return to the fashion week fold after a two-and-a-half-year absence from the Paris men’s fashion official calendar.

Heads have been rolling across much of the luxury industry as bumper profits have evaporated, with brands grappling with a reduced appetite for luxury products.

Saint Laurent’s parent group Kering is no exception, with falling sales last year wiping 28 per cent off its share price since the turn of the year. But shares shot back up 12 per cent last week after former Renault boss Luca de Meo was named as Kering’s new chief executive.

Fashion buyer Alice Feillard of Galeries Lafayette, Europe’s biggest department store chain, said the return of Saint Laurent creative director Anthony Vaccarello to men’s

fashion week was “rather a good thing”, and would help reinforce the label’s men’s line.

VIP-STUDDED SHOW

Festivities continued on Tuesday night in front of the Pompidou Centre modern art museum with Louis Vuitton artistic director Pharrell Williams hosting a VIP-studded event before the architectural icon closes for a major overhaul.

The US singer and producer who got the world dancing to his infectious hit “Happy”, unveiled a quieter palette of earth tones, dusky pinks and rich browns, under the watchful eyes of US superstar Beyonce, music producer Jay-Z and film director Spike Lee.

In a nod to the past, models wore shorts, and flared or cargo pants, paired with short-sleeved, unbuttoned shirts layered over retro white t-shirts.

Models pushed large leather trunks adorned with a cartoonish safari print down the catwalk, echoing the fashion house’s roots in luxury travel.

Also at the show were US basketball legend LeBron James and San Antonio Spurs star Victor “Wemby” Wembanyama from France, both ambassadors for the brand.

BEACHWEAR TWIST

Founded in 2015 by Ryota Iwai, the Tokyo-based clothing brand — known for its meticulously crafted fabrics — revisited its traditional urban roots with a summery, beachwear twist.

In the courtyard of Paris’s Archives

National, swimsuits, bucket hats and flip flops sat alongside light cashmere poplin suits, soft leather and light calf hair garments.

“There’s a term in Japanese which means the winds of spring,” Iwai said after the show, describing the mixture of blue skies and strong winds that inspired this collection.

“In the same scene you’ll have someone ready to go to the beach but then you’ll have someone in a down jacket. That kind of odd balance is interesting,” he said.

ANDERSON’S DIOR DEBUT

The packed six days of Paris shows are in stark contrast to London — which cancelled its men’s shows completely — and the rather thinned-out line-up in Milan last week.

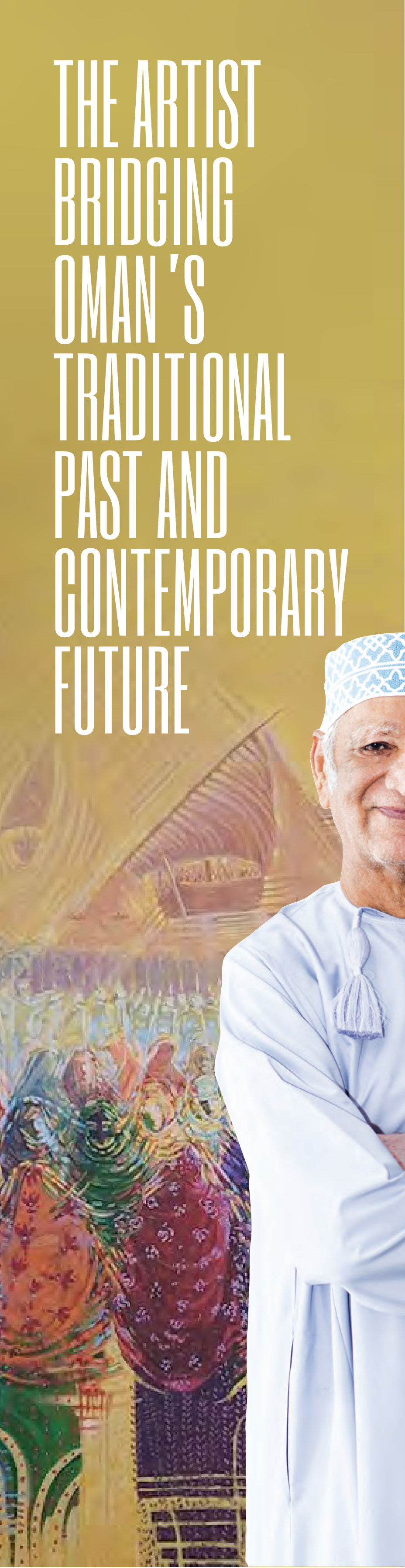
The French capital will see a “rather dense programme with big headliners including Jonathan Anderson”, who will be making his highly anticipated debut at Dior on Friday, said Adrien Communier of French GQ magazine.

The Northern Irish designer is the first to oversee the men’s, women’s and haute couture lines at the fabled French house since its founder, Christian Dior.

In all, some 70 brands will unveil their latest looks across 40 runway shows and 30 presentations that end late on Sunday with the French label Jacquemus.

Anderson, the son of former Irish rugby captain Willie Anderson, had previously turned around the rather fusty Spanish house Loewe. He was named as the head of Dior’s women’s collection earlier this month, replacing the Italian Maria Grazia Chiuri. — AFP

FEATURES



THE ARTIST
BRIDGING
OMAN'S
TRADITIONAL
PAST AND
CONTEMPORARY
FUTURE

BY NAJAH AL RIYAMI

BORN IN 1948, Anwar Sonya is one of Oman's pioneering and most revered artists. He is a storyteller at heart, transforming the country's vibrant landscapes, bustling markets, and rich cultural rituals into timeless works of art. Like ink spreading through water, his vision is infused with stillness and depth, shaping how Oman perceives its own heritage today.

Sonya's canvases seamlessly blend realism, impressionism, and figurative styles, driven by a profound devotion not only to aesthetics but also to national identity. From the fishermen of Sur to the frankincense harvesters of Dhofar, his brushwork elevates everyday Omani life into a lasting cultural legacy.

"Sonya's recent works (2024-2025) offer an immersive glimpse into daily Omani life," writes gallerist and curator Volodymyra Sobolevska, who has curated several exhibitions at Stal Gallery and Studio. "Set against the backdrop of places like the souq, traditional Friday markets, and the corniche, his characters are transformed into cultural icons through posture, gesture, and dress."

His distinctive style captures the hustle of busy souqs, the rhythmic bustle of animal markets, and the swirling energy of traditional Omani dances. Recently, he has begun integrating Arabic calligraphy into his art — layering the spoken words of his subjects directly onto his canvases. The result? Visual poetry that not only depicts Oman but speaks its soul.

His latest series celebrates the dynamic joy of folk dances such as Razha and Haboot, and ceremonial moments from Omani weddings steeped in tradition. Whether it's the clash of swords or the beating of drums, Sonya's vibrant compositions pulse with movement. These dances go beyond mere spectacle; they are powerful reflections of memory, pride, and community — feelings he vividly captures with each stroke.

His work vividly brings to life places like Salalah, Dhofar, Al Musannah, and Muttrah, creating emotional landscapes filled with memory, motion, and identity — portals into Oman's layered past. Muttrah, Muscat's historic port and commercial hub, is portrayed not as a static skyline but

as a living entity shaped by generations of merchants, sailors, and artisans.

"These aren't just backgrounds," Sobolevska notes. "They are characters in their own right — settings that speak to Oman's soul." In Sonya's art, place is never passive; it holds memories, embodies tradition, and whispers the rhythms of daily life and celebration. Whether it's the coastal glow of Muttrah or the festive grandeur of Dhofar, each location adds depth and authenticity to his storytelling.

Beyond gallery walls, Anwar Sonya is a dedicated mentor, teacher, and cultural philanthropist. His influence extends through workshops at the Omani Society for Fine Arts, artist talks, and mentorship at Stal Gallery. His presence is magnetic, inspiring future generations.

"His practice reaches far beyond the canvas," says Sobolevska. "He commits himself to charitable causes, organises community events, and actively supports emerging artists. Sonya bridges tradition and innovation, nurturing both seasoned masters and young aspirants alike."

Over the decades, Sonya has carried Oman's artistic identity onto the international stage. From his earliest exhibitions in the 1970s to recent appearances at the Gulf Arts Symposium (Bahrain, 2025), "Redrawing the Boundaries" at Hayy Jameel (Saudi Arabia, 2025), and the Venice Biennale (Oman Pavilion, 2022), his global journey is testament to his enduring influence.

A pivotal moment came in 2000 during The Circle Show, curated by Hassan Meer — Oman's first exhibition dedicated to contemporary and conceptual art. It marked a daring shift, with Sonya and other avant-garde artists daring to push aesthetic frontiers beyond tradition.

Despite international recognition, Sonya remains rooted in one core belief: art must come from the heart. "If you create art solely for profit, you will fail," he asserts. "You must love your country, and be honest — in your heart and in your work — with your people."

To him, true success isn't measured by awards or gallery openings but by silent recognition — a viewer pausing, connecting, and saying, "I see myself in this."

Today, Anwar Sonya is more than an artist; he is a cultural pillar, a guardian of collective memory, and a mirror reflecting Oman's beauty and identity. With every canvas, he invites us to witness a nation — not just through its history or architecture, but through its people: their faces, their dances, their stories.

He is currently represented by Stal Gallery and Studio in Muscat, where his work continues to inspire, provoke, and preserve. In an age of fleeting images and transient trends, Sonya's art endures — slow, textured, and deeply human, just like the land he lovingly captures.

