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DAILY

Observer

12

ALEXANDER ZVEREV WINS FIRST GRAND SLAM TITLE AT FRENCH OPEN

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ROYAL DECREE PROMULGATES CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS LAW

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 64/2026 on the promulgation of the Civil Society Institutions Law.

Article (1) states that the provisions of the Civil Society Institutions Law, attached to this decree, shall be enforced.

Article (2) stipulates that those subject to the provisions of this law must adjust their status in accordance with its provisions within a period not exceeding one year from the date of its enforcement.

Article (3) says that the Minister of Social Development shall issue the Executive Regulation for the law attached to this decree within one year from the date of its enforcement. The Minister shall also issue the regulations and decisions necessary for the enforcement of its provisions. Until such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to apply, without prejudice to the provisions of the attached law.

Article (4) annuls the Civil Associations Law promulgated by

Royal decree No 14/2000. It also cancels all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publishing. — ONA

Iran and Israel hold fire after first attacks since ceasefire



A man stands amid debris following Israeli air strikes that hit the previous day, near the archaeological site of the Roman hippodrome in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre on Monday. — AFP

Iran and Israel said on Monday that hostilities between them had halted, after the two countries exchanged strikes that threatened to reignite the Middle East war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the “fire on that front is contained” hours after Tehran said it had stopped its military action against Israel.

Tehran launched missiles at Israel on Sunday over its ongoing war against

Hezbollah in Lebanon, which prompted Israel to strike back, despite efforts by US President Donald Trump to dissuade Netanyahu from doing so.

That triggered another round of Iranian missiles, before Tehran announced it would cease fire. Iran has sought for weeks to link the wider Middle East truce, in place since April 8, to Israel’s war against Hezbollah, warning that attacks on Lebanon would force it to act. It said on Monday it

would attack again if Israel persisted with its strikes in Lebanon. Netanyahu warned in turn that should Iran “make the mistake of resuming attacks against us, we will respond with full force”.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz insisted that the campaign in Lebanon would carry on regardless and said Israel would strike the Hezbollah-dominated areas of Beirut in retaliation for each attack on Israel by the group.

SEE ALSO P6&7

Scorching temperatures may continue



The region has witnessed a significant rise in temperatures, reaching 50 degrees Celsius in recent days. This is normal at this time of year due to the presence of a high-pressure system in the upper atmosphere, in addition to dry and hot westerly winds which contribute to the high temperatures

SUHAIL BIN NASSER AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Most governorates of the Sultanate of Oman have been experiencing a significant rise in temperatures in the previous days, nearing 50 degrees Celsius, accompanied by active westerly winds.

Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Barashdi, a meteorologist at the Directorate-General of Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), said that the highest temperature recorded on Monday reached 47 degrees Celsius in the wilayats of Al Amerat, Bausher, Barka, and Wadi Al Maawil. The wilayats of Al Rustaq, Nakhal and Bidbid recorded 46 degrees Celsius.

Al Barashdi noted that the high temperatures are a common meteorological phenomenon, adding that the region has witnessed a significant rise in temperatures, reaching 50 degrees Celsius in recent days. This is normal at this time of year due to the presence of a high-pressure system in the upper atmosphere, in addition to dry and hot westerly winds which contributes to the high temperatures.

Dr Laila bint Saleh al Kalbani, a public health expert, said that high temperatures increase the risk of heat-related health problems, especially among children, the elderly, outdoor workers and patients with chronic illnesses.

DUQM GETS PROJECTS WORTH 2.9 BILLION

AL DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD) has secured RO 2.9 billion (\$7.5 billion) in new investments across energy, industry, battery materials, chemicals, tourism and housing, marking one of the largest investment packages announced for the zone in recent years. The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed 10 investment

agreements and cooperation memoranda on Monday with companies from Oman, India, China, Germany, the Philippines and Egypt.

The package strengthens Duqm’s position as a strategic platform for heavy industry, clean energy supply chains and regional trade, while supporting Oman’s wider economic diversification agenda under Vision 2040.The

largest project is the second and third phases of ACME’s green hydrogen development, with investments of RO 1.6 billion (\$4.2 billion). The project will produce green hydrogen and green ammonia on a large industrial scale, with each phase designed to produce 400,000 tonnes of green ammonia and 71,000 tonnes of green hydrogen annually.

SEE ALSO P13



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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Discussions also focused on cooperation in technical assistance and capacity building. — ONA

Finance Minister, IMF Executive Director discuss ties

MUSCAT: Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, met on Monday with Dr Mohammed bin Ahmed Maait, Executive Director of Arab countries and the Maldives at the International Monetary Fund, to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation between the two sides.

The meeting addressed issues of mutual interest, with an exchange of views on global and regional economic and financial developments and prospects.

Discussions also focused on enhancing joint cooperation in technical assistance, capacity building and the development of financial and economic expertise. — ONA

CDAА takes over Marine Rescue Station duties



The operation of Marine Rescue Station aligns with CDAA’s strategic direction.

MUSCAT: The operational responsibilities of the Marine Rescue Station have been transferred from the Civil Aviation Authority to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), as part of national efforts aimed at strengthening the emergency response system and enhancing the efficiency of rescue services.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority has confirmed its full readiness to operate the station through qualified national personnel specialised in marine search and rescue as well as emergency medical services.

All necessary operational and technical procedures have been completed to ensure the continuous delivery of high-efficiency, round-the-clock services.

The station’s operational framework includes specialised search and rescue teams possessing the requisite expertise and training to handle various maritime incidents and missing-person operations.

It also comprises water rescue teams equipped with modern technologies and equipment enabling them to carry out their missions in diverse marine environments, alongside qualified ambulance teams capable of providing urgent medical care to the injured and transporting them in accordance with approved protocols.

The operation of the station aligns with the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority’s strategic direction to enhance its capabilities in responding to maritime incidents and to raise field readiness levels. — ONA

Nuamani receives ambassadors of India, Switzerland

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Monday Srinivas Godavarthi, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and areas of joint cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India.

For his part, the ambassador commended the level of coordination between the two countries and its continuous development.

The Minister of the Royal



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani with Srinivas Godavarthi.

Office also received Dr Thomas Oertle, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means to enhance them in the service of the mutual interests of the

two countries. Furthermore, they addressed various issues and the latest developments in the regional and international arenas. — ONA



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani with Dr Thomas Oertle.

Oman, Kuwait sign MoU on cybersecurity, standards

THE 11th session of the Oman-Kuwait Joint Committee was held on Monday in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The session was held under the chairmanship of Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

During the session, the two sides reviewed the march of the deep-rooted fraternal relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, and discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in a number of priority fields to serve common interests.

This embodies the aspirations of the wise leaderships of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait.

In his speech, Sayyid Badr emphasised that the convening of this session comes in implementation of the supreme directives of the leaderships of the two brotherly countries, calling for deepening bilateral cooperation, particularly in the economic,



Oman and Kuwait sign MoU in cybersecurity and standardisation.

The 11th session of the Oman-Kuwait Joint Committee convened in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar alongside discussions aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation across key sectors

commercial, cultural, and scientific fields, and exchanging expertise and experiences to achieve greater integration and partnership between Oman and Kuwait.

He pointed out that the regular convening of the Oman-Kuwait Joint Committee reflects the attention and care it receives from the leaderships of both countries, and embodies the joint commitment to strengthening its role as an effective institutional framework to propel cooperative relations towards more advanced and comprehensive levels.

For his part, Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, emphasised that the two

countries’ celebration this year of the 55th anniversary of Oman-Kuwait diplomatic relations reflects the development and growth these relations have reached at various levels, as an extension of the close and deep-rooted historical bonds, and the common aspirations and characteristics they hold, based on unity of destiny, common goals, and identical visions.

The two ministers also affirmed that Omani-Kuwaiti relations represent a model of sincere fraternal relations among the countries of the GCC due to the deep-rooted historical ties, bonds of appreciation, mutual respect, and the constructive cooperation they are based upon, contributing to supporting the march of joint Gulf action and strengthening the GCC system.

At the conclusion of the committee’s proceedings, Sayyid Badr and Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah signed the minutes of the meeting of the 11th session of the Oman-Kuwait Joint Committee.

The two sides also signed a memorandum of understanding in cybersecurity and standardisation. — ONA

First integrated business district inaugurated in Duqm

AL DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm celebrated on Monday the inauguration of the first phase of the “Maysan Square Duqm - Residence” project, which includes 104 residential units alongside 130 diverse commercial units that attracted investors from 22 countries, with an investment value estimated at approximately RO 10 million.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).



The investment value is estimated at approximately RO 10 million. — ONA

Sadiq Jaffer, Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of Maysan Properties Company, stated that this project is the first integrated business district

in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, spanning a total area of 122,000 square metres. He added that it is being implemented across several

phases to include, upon completion, 20 buildings distributed over the residential, commercial, hospitality, and retail sectors, comprising 424 full-service residential units.

He noted in his speech that the project represents a qualitative leap in the real estate development sector, being the first integrated business district that combines housing, commerce, hospitality, and business within a modern urban environment designed according to the highest international standards. — ONA

Two blue whales sighted off Masirah Island

MASIRAH: Specialists from the Environment Centre in the Wilayat of Masirah have recorded the sighting of two blue whales (Balaenoptera musculus) in the waters north of the island — a notably rare occurrence for the species in this area.

Qasi bin Hamad al Farsi, Environmental Control Supervisor at the Environment Centre in Masirah, stated, “This sighting represents a significant ecological



Documenting such sightings contributes to updating national databases on marine mammals. — ONA

and scientific event. It highlights the vital role played by Omani seas as a natural habitat and migratory corridor for numerous large whale species, both resident and migratory, and reinforces the importance of national efforts aimed at monitoring, protecting, and conserving marine mammals and their natural habitats.”

He added that this observation holds additional research significance, as scientific studies

indicate that blue whales in the northwestern Indian Ocean — including marine areas adjacent to the Sultanate of Oman — may constitute a distinct population in terms of acoustic and ecological characteristics. Consequently, documenting their appearance and tracking their movements serves as a crucial source of scientific data regarding the distribution, behaviour, and migration patterns of these species. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Oman's Parachute Regiment of RAO and the Egyptian Army's Special Forces are taking part.

JOINT OMAN-EGYPT MILITARY DRILL BEGINS IN EGYPT

CAIRO: The joint Omani-Egyptian military exercise, Castle of the Mountain/2 (Qalat Al Jabal/2), commenced on Sunday in the Arab Republic of Egypt, with the participation of units from the Sultan of Oman's Parachute Regiment of the Royal Army of Oman and the Egyptian Army's Special Forces.

The exercise will continue until June 16 and forms part of the Royal Army of Oman's ongoing training programmes aimed at enhancing operational readiness and strengthening military capabilities. The joint drill seeks to facilitate the exchange of expertise and equip participating personnel from both sides with advanced skills to execute joint military plans efficiently.

The exercise also underscores the commitment of the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt to bolstering military cooperation and fostering closer defence ties between the two brotherly nations. — ONA

Oman advances Net-Zero drive in agriculture sector

MUSCAT: The agriculture and livestock sectors in Oman are witnessing an expansion in the adoption of natural and innovative solutions supporting Net-Zero, through the implementation of a number of targeted national initiatives and projects.

The agriculture, fisheries and water sectors represent vital sectors capable of contributing to emissions reduction, improving natural resource use efficiency, and enhancing food security.

Oman is adopting the concept of smart agriculture as one of the main pillars for strengthening food security and environmental sustainability, through the application of smart irrigation systems, hydroponics and vertical farming, and the use of drones, artificial intelligence technologies, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to improve production efficiency and reduce water, energy, and chemical fertiliser consumption.

In this context, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources continues its national efforts to enhance Net-Zero and reduce carbon emissions by developing a sustainable agricultural system, enhancing vegetation cover, and adopting modern agricultural and water technologies.

This supports Oman's transition towards a low-carbon green economy to address climate change and promote environmental sustainability.

The ministry is implementing smart fertilisation systems based on artificial intelligence,



The initiative will lead to production of over 10,290 tonnes of fruit with a market value of up to RO 4.3 million.

which enable the analysis of plant needs and the precise provision of nutrients.

This contributes to reducing fertiliser waste, lowering environmental pollution and emissions, and increasing agricultural production efficiency.

Dr Ali bin Obaid al Adawi, Director of the Agriculture Research Department in Al Batinah North, stated that the adoption of modern agricultural technologies and the expansion of green areas represent a fundamental pillar in achieving Net-Zero targets in Oman.

He explained that estimates from the National Centre for Net-Zero indicate that emissions associated with the crop, livestock and aquaculture sectors,

according to the Net-Zero pathway up to 2024, amount to approximately 1.8 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

He added that the agriculture and livestock sectors have witnessed the implementation and monitoring of 11 projects and initiatives up to the first quarter of 2026.

These include afforestation and blue carbon projects, organic fertiliser and sustainable animal feed production, in addition to a research project in collaboration with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to evaluate the cultivation of the Maius (Ghaf) tree as a promising species for carbon sequestration, timber production and enhancing ecosystem sustainability.

— ONA

Experts discuss translation education in the age of AI

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

A FORUM titled 'Translation and the Challenges of Conveying Contemporary Discourse', organised by the Cultural Club under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth at the Cultural Club, explored a range of intellectual and technological challenges facing translation education and practice amid rapid digital transformations, with particular focus on artificial intelligence and the translation of cultural elements across languages.

The forum featured Dr Mohammed al Kahlawi, Supervisor of the Bachelor of Translation Programme at Sultan Qaboos University, and Dr Hassan al Fadhli, Professor at the University of Nizwa.

The session was moderated by Suad al Maskari.

In his paper, 'The Challenges of Translation Studies', Dr Al Kahlawi examined several intellectual and practical issues affecting translation education today.

He noted that rapid advances in technology and artificial intelligence have brought profound changes to the concepts of linguistic and translation competence, while also reshaping labour market requirements and the skills expected of translators.

He explained that translation studies



The Cultural Club held a forum on 'Translation and the Challenges of Conveying Contemporary Discourse'.

continue to face challenges linked to the rigidity of traditional Arabic linguistic instruction and the lack of critical reviews informed by developments in modern linguistic research.

According to him, these challenges are reflected in language and translation curricula and ultimately affect students' performance at the university level.

Al Kahlawi also cautioned against the

excessive reliance on artificial intelligence tools in translation, stressing that the uncritical use of such technologies may weaken students' linguistic competence and increase dependence on technological systems.

He called for a more balanced approach that uses AI to support learning and strengthen linguistic and translation skills rather than undermine them.

Sarooj Development Company Leads Oman's New Real Estate Landscape

A new urban vision that brings together quality of life, investment potential, and sustainability in the heart of Sultan Haitham City.



AS Oman continues its unprecedented urban transformation under the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, Sarooj Development Company is strengthening its position as one of the Sultanate's emerging national developers, helping shape the future of integrated residential communities across the country.

Building on more than five decades of engineering and construction expertise through the Sarooj Group, the company adopts a development approach founded on long-term planning, integrated infrastructure, and sustainable living environments that respond to the aspirations of individuals, families, and investors alike.

At Sarooj Development Company, modern urban development is viewed as more than the construction of buildings. It is about creating integrated communities that offer a higher quality of life, support contemporary lifestyles, and foster stronger social and human connections within vibrant residential neighborhoods.

In line with this vision, the company continues to strengthen its presence both locally and internationally through participation in leading regional and global real estate events, including MIPIM in France, as well as key local platforms such as Urban October and Oman Real Estate Expo. These engagements reflect the company's ambition to present a modern Omani development model capable of attracting international investors and expertise while connecting local projects with global capital and strategic partnerships, further reinforcing Oman's position as a promising destination for investment and urban development.

Under the leadership of Eng. Suleiman Al Qasbi, Chief Executive Officer of Sarooj Development Company, the company continues to develop communities that place quality of life, sustainability, and long-term investment value at the core of its vision. This approach is driven by a firm belief that the cities of tomorrow are built through communities designed around people's needs, future aspirations, and the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

This vision comes to life through **Sarooj Oasis**, the company's flagship development within Sultan Haitham City, one of Oman's most significant future urban destinations.

Spanning approximately 140,000 square metres, Sarooj Oasis is a fully integrated residential community that combines diverse housing options, landscaped green

spaces, commercial components, and lifestyle amenities within a thoughtfully planned urban environment designed to deliver comfort, privacy, and an exceptional quality of life.

Sarooj Oasis is also one of the few gated communities within Sultan Haitham City, where central parks, pedestrian pathways, and community-focused amenities come together to create a balanced residential experience tailored to the demands of modern living.

The development offers a diverse range of residential options, including **Azha Apartments**, **Ahed Villas**, and the premium park-front **Al Thuraya Villas**, providing a variety of choices to suit different lifestyles and investment objectives.

The continued market response reflects the confidence that homeowners and investors place in the project. All units within Azha Residences 1, 2, and 3 have been fully sold, prompting the launch of **Azha Residences 4**, one of the final opportunities to own an apartment within the Azha collection at Sarooj Oasis. Al Thuraya Villas have also witnessed strong demand, with only a limited number of premium villas remaining available.

The development further incorporates a dedicated business centre alongside commercial and service components designed to support a truly integrated lifestyle, where living, working, and everyday conveniences coexist within a connected community environment.

Today, the vision of Sarooj Oasis is rapidly becoming reality through advanced stages of construction across the development. Visitors and prospective buyers can now experience the project firsthand through the fully completed and furnished show villa within the Ahed neighborhood, showcasing the quality of design, construction, and attention to detail that define the development.

As Oman's urban landscape continues to evolve, Sarooj Development Company remains committed to delivering sustainable communities that support the nation's growth ambitions while enhancing the attractiveness of the Omani real estate market through developments that combine quality living, investment value, and long-term growth potential.

Sarooj Development Company
Developing Today's Communities.
Building Tomorrow's Cities.

SPOTLIGHT

- 1 Children are especially vulnerable to heat-related illnesses due to faster body heating and weaker temperature regulation
- 2 Heat exhaustion can rapidly progress to dangerous heatstroke if early signs are missed
- 3 Prevention through regular hydration, shade, light clothing, and avoiding peak heat hours is essential



Ai generated image

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

WITH the arrival of summer and school vacations, families increasingly head to beaches, swimming pools, and parks to enjoy the outdoors.

Children, in particular, spend long hours playing under the sun. However, this season of recreation can also conceal serious health risks, especially as temperatures rise across much of the world.

International health experts warn that children are among the most vulnerable to heat-related complications. Their bodies heat up three to five times faster than adults', increasing the risk of heat exhaustion and heatstroke — conditions that can become life-threatening if not treated promptly.

Children are especially at risk because their bodies are still developing efficient temperature regulation systems. This is particularly true for those under four years old.

In addition, young children often fail to recognise early signs of thirst or fatigue, continuing to play even as their body temperature rises.

Prolonged physical activity in hot weather further increases metabolic heat production, making them more susceptible to dehydration and heat-related illness.

Medical experts note that children and adolescents are also prone to ignoring early warning signs while engaging in extended outdoor play, which heightens the risk of heat cramps, exhaustion, and heatstroke.

Heat-related illnesses generally fall into two categories: heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

“Heatstroke is among the most dangerous heat-related conditions, as it can quickly affect vital organ function if not treated promptly. Heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke if fluids are not replaced and early symptoms are ignored

DR HUDA AL SHIBLI
Senior Emergency Medicine Specialist
Sohar Hospital

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE THIS SUMMER

Heat exhaustion is the milder condition, usually caused by excessive fluid and salt loss through sweating. Symptoms include extreme tiredness, dizziness, and weakness, while the individual remains conscious. Body temperature typically stays below 40°C.

Heatstroke, however, is far more severe. It occurs when the body loses its ability to regulate temperature, causing a rapid rise above 40°C. Sweating may stop, and confusion, disorientation, or loss of consciousness can occur. This is a medical emergency requiring immediate intervention.

Dr Huda al Shibli, Senior

Emergency Medicine Specialist at Sohar Hospital, emphasises that heatstroke is among the most dangerous heat-related conditions, as it can quickly affect vital organ function if not treated promptly.

She adds that heat exhaustion, while less severe, can progress to heatstroke if fluids are not replaced and early symptoms are ignored.

If symptoms appear, immediate action is critical. Move the person to a cool, shaded area, loosen clothing, and lower body temperature using cool water, cold compresses, and ventilation.

If conscious, they should be

encouraged to drink water. Medical help should be sought urgently if symptoms persist or if confusion or unconsciousness occurs.

Preventive measures remain the most effective safeguard. Experts recommend avoiding outdoor activity during peak heat hours, ensuring regular hydration, wearing light and breathable clothing, using hats and shade, and consuming water-rich foods such as watermelon and cucumber.

Children should also be taught to recognise early signs of heat stress and must never be left inside parked vehicles, where temperatures can become dangerously high within minutes.

Ultimately, summer should be a season of joy, not danger. While children enjoy outdoor play, their bodies may silently struggle under extreme heat.

Careful planning of outdoor activities, consistent hydration, and sun protection are essential to keeping them safe.

As temperatures continue to rise year after year, family awareness remains the strongest line of defence. A few minutes of precaution can make the difference between a pleasant summer memory and a medical emergency — ensuring that the season remains both enjoyable and safe.

SHORT TAKES



The agreement outlines cooperation in applied research.

AL BATINAH NORTH SIGNS COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH SOHAR UNIVERSITY

SUHAS: The Office of the Governor of Al Batinah North has signed a memorandum of cooperation with Sohar University aimed at strengthening institutional partnership and enhancing collaboration in development, academic and research fields to support sustainable development and the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The memorandum was signed on behalf of the governorate by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, while Dr Hamdan bin Sulaiman al Fazari, President of Sohar University, signed on behalf of the university.

The agreement outlines cooperation in applied research addressing the governorate’s development needs, provision of technical and technological consultations, implementation of training and capacity-building programmes, and initiatives to empower students by linking academic projects to local development priorities.

It also includes support for innovation and entrepreneurship, collaboration in urban development, sustainability and climate change, as well as the organisation of scientific events and conferences. — ONA

Al Batinah North gears up for fourth Summer Centres

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAS, JUNE 8

AL BATINAH North Governorate is preparing to launch the fourth edition of its Summer Centres programme from June 14 to July 16 and is one of the governorate’s fastest-growing youth development initiatives.

The programme recorded impressive figures in its previous edition, attracting 41,366 participants through 2,171 programmes and activities delivered in partnership with 46 government, private-sector and civil society institutions.

The statistics were presented by Dr Abdullah al Busaidy, Head of the Executive Committee for the Summer Centres, during a preparatory meeting chaired by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North and Chairman of the Supervisory Committee.

Dr Al Busaidy said the previous edition featured a broad range of cultural, scientific, sports, recreational, educational and innovation-focused activities designed to engage children and youth during the summer break.

Comparative data between 2024 and 2025 highlighted strong growth across several indicators. Participant numbers rose from



The centres attracted 41,366 participants through 2,171 programmes and activities

34,221 in 2024 to 41,366 in 2025, reflecting growing community confidence in the initiative. The number of programmes and events recorded a dramatic jump from 107 in 2024 to 2,171 in 2025.

The number of partner organisations also increased from 26 to 46 institutions, strengthening collaboration between government entities, private-sector companies and civil society organisations.

Addressing attendees, the Governor emphasised that summer holidays provide an important opportunity to invest in young people by offering programmes that promote creativity, innovation, leadership, entrepreneurship, teamwork and

citizenship values.

He noted that the success of the initiative was driven by collaboration among families, educational institutions, government agencies, private companies and civil society organisations, transforming free time into meaningful learning experiences for youth.

Dr Waleed al Jabri, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, unveiled the Summer Centres’ electronic platform, enabling participants to browse programmes by wilayat and organising institution, review participation requirements and complete registrations through a simplified digital process.

AL DHAHIRAH HONEY PRODUCTION UP 138 PC IN 2025

IBRI: The honey sector in Al Dhahirah Governorate underwent a remarkable growth of 138 per cent during 2025. Total production rose to 97.8 tonnes of local honey, compared to 41 tonnes in 2024 and 56.3 tonnes in 2023.

This increase coincided with a rise in the number of beekeepers in the governorate, reaching 1,054 beekeepers managing 24,862 beehives. This indicator reflects the growing interest in this vital sector and highlights the continuous efforts to develop it and enhance its contribution to the local economy.

Eng Maha al Sukaiti, Head of the Bee Department at the Directorate-General of



This surge is due to the ongoing partnership with beekeepers and the application of modern scientific methods.

Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah, explained that this surge is due to the ongoing partnership with

beekeepers and the application of modern scientific methods in beekeeping and honey extraction.

She emphasised that the Directorate focuses on qualifying beekeepers to produce value-added products to diversify their income sources and meet market demands. In this context, breeders are expanding into the manufacturing of transformational products, which include: producing beeswax and pollen, selling bee packages and queens, manufacturing aromatic and cosmetic materials such as soaps and creams, and producing therapeutic honey extracted from wild plants. — ONA

EA launches Oman Environment Atlas to boost environmental data

MUSCAT: As part of events marking World Environment Day, the Environment Authority on Sunday launched ‘Environment Atlas of the Sultanate of Oman’.

Oman Environment Atlas comprises a comprehensive set of maps and data on environmentally sensitive areas, nature reserves and key environmental sites. The manual supports planning and sustainable development and enhances integration among different stakeholders.

Oman Environment Atlas figures among the innovative projects of the 10th Five-Year Plan. It reflects Oman’s commitment to enhancing environmental knowledge and providing accurate data. It constitutes a first step towards developing an integrated digital environmental system that makes information accessible to all and towards utilising the same to serve current and future generations.

Dr Thuraya bint Said al Sariri, Adviser to the Chairman of the Environment Authority for nature conservation, said, “The Environment Authority’s celebration of World Environment Day represents an important milestone for affirming



collective commitment to protect the environment and preserve natural resources. It also seeks to consolidate global efforts to establish a more sustainable future for upcoming generations.”

She added, “This year’s celebration drives home the idea that nature is the resource that sustains our lives and forms an essential part of the solutions capable of addressing climate change in the world today.”

For his part, Jihad bin Khalid al Farsi, Head of a team codenamed ‘Bassmatuna’ (our human print), gave a visual presentation that showcased methods for devising solutions. The presentation explained

how young people can move from being consumers of information to innovators and initiators of environmental solutions that serve the sustainability of nature.

Al Farsi referred to climate action as a major national responsibility that requires constant cooperation among the government sector, the private sector and civil society institutions.

The event included three working papers: A working paper titled ‘The Sultanate of Oman’s efforts in climate action’, a working paper titled ‘The Arab youth movement to address climate change’, and a working paper titled ‘Empowering the next generation’. — ONA

Tender Notice for the purchase of used light vehicles, light equipment, and used/unused project materials.

Al Watanyiah United Engineering and Contracting Co. LLC hereby announce following Tenders for the purchase of used light vehicles, light equipment and used/unused project materials, as described in the table below, on an “as is, where is” basis. Those wishing to submit Bids must obtain the Tender documents from the Company’s Head Office (HO) in Ghala Industrial Area after paying the specified Tender Fee in the Company’s Bank Dhofar account: 01040605344006 (IBAN NO: OM080250001040605344006).

S. No.	Tender No.	Description	Location	Tender Fee Inc. VAT 5% (ﷵ)	Earnest Money Deposit (ﷵ)	Period for purchase of Tender	Last date for submission of offer
1	AW/T/ PH3/ 01/2026	For the purchase of 80 no. used light vehicles (3 Ton Trucks, Saloon cars, Pickups, Buses, Station Wagons).	Ghala/ Barka Yard	75/-	10% of the submitted offer	10/06/2026 To 23/06/2026	30/06/2026 5.00 PM
2	AW/T/ PH3/ 02/2026	For the purchase of 157 no. used light equipment (3 Ton Tandem Rollers, 2 Ton Dumpers, Generators, Skid Steer Loaders etc).	Ghala/ Barka Yard	50/-	10% of the submitted offer	10/06/2026 To 23/06/2026	30/06/2026 5.00 PM
3	AW/T/ PH3/ 03/2026	For the purchase of used / unused M.S., G.I. items, HDPE, PVC, UPVC, D.I. pipes & fittings, D.I. manhole covers, RCC pipes, items for High Tension electrical work, building materials, furniture, water tanks, etc.	Ghala/ Barka Yard	25/-	10% of the submitted offer	10/06/2026 To 23/06/2026	30/06/2026 5.00 PM

- The last date for submission of offers accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 10%) of the total offered value is on 30/06/2026, 5 PM, detailed date on the above table.
- The EMD must be valid for 30 days from the last date of submission of offer and the original EMD along with the offer must be submitted in the tender box at the reception of our HO Ghala, Muscat, Oman on or before the date or time mentioned above.
- Contact details: 2450 2581 / 82 - Extn. 149 / 150, GSM: 9294 7637 / 7722 8166

Request for Proposals (RFP): Camp moving

Project Brief:

BGP Oil & Gas Services LLC plan start camp moving. We are looking for a company can transport skids and heavy vehicles (88 trip) from Thumrit to Adam (779 KM).

Requirement :

Need 9 Pcs 100T low bed, 21 Pcs high bed, 2 sets 50T crane, Supervisors and helpers for lifting service 8 days.

Timeline:

Announcement Date: 9 June, 2026
Deadline for Submission: 19 June, 2026

Mihui2800@gmail.com



Iranian FM Abbas Aragchi and Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi look on as they meet in Tehran. — Reuters



Part of a missile protrudes from the ground, following strikes from Iran, in the central Israeli-occupied West Bank. — Reuters

IRAN HALTS ISRAEL OPERATION AFTER CLASH

Iran said it was ending its latest military operation against Israel after the first exchanges of fire between the foes since a shaky ceasefire began.

PRESIDENT SAYS IRAN STILL AT NEGOTIATING TABLE

Iranian President Masoud Peshkhan said Tehran remained at the negotiating table after halting attacks on Israel following the first exchange of fire since truce.

HEZBOLLAH HAD NO DIRECT CONTACT WITH TRUMP

A senior Hezbollah official said that the group has had “no direct contact” with President Donald Trump, despite statements from the US leader suggesting otherwise.

ISRAEL MILITARY SAYS IRAN FIRED NEARLY 30 MISSILES

An Israeli military official said Iran fired nearly 30 missiles towards Israel since Sunday night, in the first exchange of fire between the two countries.

ISRAEL, IRAN MUST ‘IMMEDIATELY STOP “SHOOTING”

US President Donald Trump said that Israel and Iran must stop “shooting,” as the two countries attacked each other for the first time since a ceasefire two months ago.



A woman salutes as mourners carry her husband's coffin past in the village of Kfar Jarra, southern Lebanon. — AFP

IRAN, ISRAEL BACK TO DIRECT CONFRONTATION

The wave of attacks threaten Washington efforts



People cross the street past a large billboard showing portraits of Iran's late supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (L) and slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (R) in central Tehran. — AFP

IRAN and Israel said on Monday they had halted attacks on each other following an appeal from US President Donald Trump that they immediately “stop ‘shooting’”, though Tehran said it would resume strikes if Israel continued to hit Hezbollah in Lebanon. The wave of attacks over the past 24 hours marked the most direct confrontation between Iran and Israel since an April ceasefire, threatening to wreck Washington's efforts to reach an agreement with Tehran to end their more than three-month war. Oil prices — which had risen by as much as 5 per cent after the flurry of attacks — later pared gains when Iran's military said its first wave of strikes on Israel was over. The dollar retreated from its highest level in nearly two months.

A source briefed on the matter said that Israel had also decided to halt its attacks on Iran. Israel struck Iranian targets after Tehran fired missiles towards Israeli territory late on Sunday. Tehran said its strikes were retaliation for Israeli attacks on strongholds of Hezbollah on the outskirts of Beirut. Israel hit a petrochemical plant in southwestern Iran that it said was used to produce ballistic missiles. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it retaliated with a strike aimed at a similar Israeli plant in the city of Haifa.

PAINFUL RESPONSE
Iran's military headquarters said it



A woman stands among the rubble of her house, which was damaged in a strike, in Tehran, Iran. — Reuters

The exchange has complicated Trump's push to end the war, launched by the US and Israel on February 28, and underscores how easily the conflict could widen into a broader regional confrontation. A ceasefire announced on April 8 had paused all-out warfare but flare-ups in the Gulf have continued.

had “delivered a painful response” against Israel for its attacks on Lebanon, including Sunday's strikes on the outskirts of Beirut. “Accordingly, the operations of the armed forces are hereby declared halted; however, it is emphasised that if the aggressions and acts of mischief continue — including in southern Lebanon — much more severe and crushing actions than before will follow.”

The exchange has complicated Trump's push to end the war, launched by the US and Israel on February 28, and underscores how easily the conflict could widen into a broader regional confrontation. A ceasefire announced on April 8 had paused all-out warfare but flare-ups in the Gulf have continued.

In one of several posts on social

media, Trump said Israel and Iran both wanted “an immediate CEASEFIRE! Final negotiations on ‘Peace’ are proceeding, subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way.” He added that a US blockade of Iranian ports would remain in place till a final deal was reached.

An Israeli official said Trump had spoken with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday. Earlier, an Israeli military official said Israel was prepared to continue operations for “as long as it takes,” and confirmed strikes on newly rebuilt Iranian air defence systems in addition to the petrochemical target.

Iranian officials struck a similarly defiant tone. A military source quoted by the semi-official Tasnim news agency said Tehran was ready for a prolonged conflict and could renew strikes against US interests in the region.

EXTREME SUSPICION
Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Tehran was exchanging messages with Washington in an atmosphere of “extreme suspicion”. Israel's actions in Lebanon, whether carried out with US knowledge and consent or not, were aimed at sabotaging diplomacy, he added.

Iranian media reported explosions, with air defences shooting down a drone over the capital. There were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage.el's maritime. — Reuters

THEBRIEFS



NAVIGATION RESTRICTED

YEMENIS BAN ON ISRAELI SHIPS IN RED SEA

Yemen's Ansar Allah group announced a missile attack on Israel on Monday and declared a ban on Israeli shipping in the Red Sea, raising the spectre of a return to major disruption on the key route. “We declare a complete and total ban on Israeli maritime navigation in the Red Sea,” said a statement. “We consider all enemy movements to be legitimate military targets for our armed forces from the moment this statement is issued.” — AFP



FLIGHTS RESUME

IRAQ REOPENS AIRSPACE AFTER IRAN ATTACKS

Iraq reopened its airspace on Monday, the country's civil aviation body said, following Iran's announcement that it was halting its military operation against Israel. The Civil Aviation Authority was reopening “Iraqi airspace to flights to and from all airports” and will continue to “monitor and assess the regional situation”, it said in a statement. It had announced a 72-hour closure of its airspace on Sunday evening after Iranian missile strikes on Israel. — AFP



ASSETS FREEZE

EU SANCTIONS IRAN GUARDS OVER HORMUZ

The EU on Monday imposed sanctions on the spokesman for the naval arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards and a regional command over the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The 27-nation bloc said it was blacklisting Mohammad Akbarzadeh, spokesperson for the Guards' naval wing, and the organisation's Hormozgan Provincial Command. It also said it was placing Hamid Hosseini, a representative of Iran's oil exporters union, under an asset freeze and visa ban. — AFP

TALKS BEGIN IN CAIRO ON ADVANCING FRAGILE GAZA CEASEFIRE

CAIRO: Talks on advancing the fragile Gaza ceasefire have begun in Cairo between mediators and Palestinian factions, a Palestinian source familiar with the meeting said. The discussions, which started on Sunday, come as violence continues to plague the territory despite the truce in place since October. The talks bring together mediators Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye, along with representatives of several Palestinian factions, as efforts continue to push forward negotiations on the second phase of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas.

According to the source, mediators were due to meet a Hamas delegation before midday on Monday, followed by a wider



Palestinians appear at the Martyr Muhammad al Durra Stadium, which houses people displaced during the Israeli offensive, in Deir Al-Balah, Gaza. — Reuters

meeting including all participating factions. Egypt's state-linked Al Qahera News channel said Sunday's talks focused on “the proposed road map for completing the implementation of the agreement”. “It was held in a positive atmosphere,” the channel reported, adding that there was agreement on the need to continue implementing US President Donald Trump's plan. The talks come amid rising regional tensions, after Israel and Iran traded fire, in a serious test of another fragile truce and a potential threat to hopes for a deal to end war. Despite the Gaza truce, daily violence has rocked the territory, over half of which is under Israeli military control in defiance of the ceasefire's terms. — AFP

Israel bombed Lebanon 3,500 times during truce



Workers clean debris a day after Israeli air strikes in Tyre, Lebanon. — AFP

BEIRUT: Israel has carried out nearly 3,500 air strikes on Lebanon and hundreds of controlled explosions since the US announced a ceasefire for the country on April 16, Lebanon's defence minister, Michel Menassa, said on Monday. The US-brokered ceasefire came into effect just after midnight on April 17, with Israeli troops still positioned deep inside southern Lebanon. While it has largely halted air strikes on Beirut and its suburbs, the truce has failed to halt fighting in southern Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah. During a cabinet meeting, Menassa said that from April 17 to June 7, Israel had carried out 3,491 air strikes, 407 controlled demolitions and six “razing” operations, or demolitions — which have left some entire villages in the southernmost strip of Lebanon entirely flattened.

During a cabinet meeting, Menassa said that from April 17 to June 7, Israel had carried out 3,491 air strikes, 407 controlled demolitions and six “razing” operations, or demolitions — which have left some entire villages in the southernmost strip of Lebanon entirely flattened.

The statistics were later published on X by the office of Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Salam said the latest escalation between Iran and Israel had caused additional waves of displacement, straining Lebanon's ability to host fleeing families. The latest conflict broke out when Hezbollah fired rockets on Israel in support of its ally Iran, which was being struck by Israel and the United States. Hezbollah has continued firing at Israel and has rejected US-mediated talks between Lebanese and Israeli officials aimed at bolstering the ceasefire with a lasting agreement. Israel struck the outskirts of Beirut on Sunday for the first time since the US announced a truce plan for Lebanon last week, and Iranian officials threatened to retaliate,

casting the talks to end the wider war into new jeopardy. Iran has long said any peace deal with the United States would depend on a ceasefire also holding in Lebanon, which Israel invaded in March in pursuit of Hezbollah fighters who fired across the border in solidarity with Tehran. Iran's chief peace negotiator, parliamentary speaker Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf, said US bases and Israeli assets were legitimate targets because of hostile acts including the “violation of agreements over Lebanon”. “They showed that they only understand the language of power,” he said. Ebrahim Rezaei, an influential hardline lawmaker who serves as spokesperson for the Iranian parliament's national security committee, posted on X that Iran would deliver a “decisive and painful response” to Sunday's Israeli strikes on Lebanon. — Reuters

US DEMANDS IRAN GIVE UN NUCLEAR WATCHDOG ACCESS

VIENNA: The United States is demanding Iran provide “precise” information on its enriched uranium stockpile and give the UN nuclear agency access “without delay”, according to a draft resolution. The draft resolution is expected to be submitted for a vote this week to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that started meeting on Monday. The IAEA in a confidential report reiterated that the lack of access



Director General of the IAEA Raffael Grossi speaks to the media in Vienna, Austria. — Reuters

to nuclear sites in Iran constituted a “proliferation concern”. The draft resolution affirms that it is “essential and urgent” that Iran “without delay” provides the agency with “precise information on nuclear material accountability and safeguarded nuclear facilities in Iran”. Tehran must also “grant the agency all access it requires to verify this information”, it adds. The draft resolution needs to be submitted and approved by the 35 members. — AFP

OPINION

Dialogue crucial to resolve US-Iran deadlock



FOUR decades of confrontation between the United States and Iran have left both sides with deep institutional scepticism, and a lack of trust now shapes every diplomatic effort to avoid wider conflict.

Negotiations between the two countries have repeatedly stalled over sequencing and enforcement, with each side citing past actions as evidence that the other cannot be relied upon to uphold commitments.

From Washington's perspective, officials point to Iran's nuclear programme, its support for regional armed groups, and its ballistic missile development as factors that complicate talks. Iranian officials cite the US withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, in 2018, the imposition of sweeping economic sanctions, and the 2020 killing of General Qassem Soleimani as reasons to question US follow-through.

The result is a diplomatic impasse where both governments call for the other to act first. The US has pressed Iran to scale back nuclear activity before sanctions are eased.

Iran has demanded economic relief before curbing its programme. In the meantime, Iran's uranium enrichment has continued and US naval deployments in the Gulf remain frequent.

The Sultanate of Oman has always been in favour of peace and is calling for an extension of the current ceasefire and the continuation of peace talks between the US and Iran, renewing its decades-long role as a discreet but decisive intermediary in one of

the world's most volatile rivalries.

Dialogue remains the only viable path to prevent further escalation in a region already strained by shipping disruptions, armed proxy clashes and renewed concerns over nuclear enrichment.

Oman's appeal comes at a moment when the cost of miscalculation is rising for all parties, with commercial shipping rerouted, insurance premiums climbing and energy markets reacting to every new incident in the Gulf.

The Sultanate of Oman occupies a unique diplomatic space. It maintains warm and cooperative ties with Washington while sharing the strategic Strait of Hormuz with Tehran. That balancing position is not accidental. It was deliberately built through the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos 'friend to all, enemy to none' doctrine, a foreign policy approach that rejected bloc politics and emphasised quiet engagement. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has preserved and deepened that tradition, keeping Oman's channels open even when regional tensions have peaked.

The US and Iran have not had formal diplomatic relations since 1979. Major incidents since then — including the 2018 US withdrawal from the JCPOA and attacks on shipping and infrastructure in the region — have reinforced domestic political opposition to compromise in both countries. Analysts note that sustained behaviour over multiple months or years is typically required to change threat perceptions.

US officials have said any new arrangement must address Iran's nuclear

Oman has always been in favour of peace and is calling for an extension of the current ceasefire and the continuation of peace talks between the US and Iran, renewing its decades-long role as a discreet but decisive intermediary

programme and regional activities. Iranian officials have said any talks must account for what they describe as security threats from US military bases in neighbouring countries and sanctions on the Iranian economy.

The JCPOA provided phased sanctions relief in exchange for limits on Iran's nuclear programme and IAEA monitoring. After the US exit in 2018, Iran gradually expanded its nuclear activity beyond the deal's limits. Efforts to revive the agreement between 2021 and 2022 did not produce a final outcome.

Without a functioning framework, Iran's nuclear programme operates with reduced international monitoring compared to the JCPOA period, according to IAEA reports.

Sanctions continue to affect Iran's economy, including oil exports and access to the international banking system. Regional tensions have led to periodic maritime incidents, strikes on infrastructure, and exchanges between US forces and Iran-backed groups.

Officials in both countries continue to state that diplomacy is preferable to conflict. Whether further steps are taken depends on domestic political conditions in Washington and Tehran, as well as developments in the region.

The core challenge, according to multiple former negotiators, is establishing procedures that make compliance more beneficial than non-compliance for both sides. Without that, they say, written agreements alone have proven insufficient to sustain de-escalation.

SWISS HEALTH SECTOR REJECTS IMMIGRATION CAP

AGNES PEDRERO

At a Swiss nursing home, Marcelle Mivelaz celebrated her 80th birthday surrounded by friends, as a team of mostly foreign nurses and caregivers ensured the day ran smoothly.

Swiss healthcare facilities like this one, in Cheseaux-sur-Lausanne in the west of the country, are heavily reliant on foreign workers amid chronic staff shortages.

Now the sector fears that a popular vote on June 14 on a proposal to dramatically slash immigration could cripple the industry, with a potentially critical outcome.

"If there aren't enough caregivers, our healthcare system is headed for disaster," Carine Savioz, a Swiss nurse at the Cheseaux-sur-Lausanne home, said.

"This worries me," acknowledged 81-year-old Marie-Therese Barraz, standing next to Mivelaz. "We must have respect for the people who care for nursing home residents."

Put forward by the hard-right Swiss People's Party (SVP), the "No to a Switzerland with 10 million!" proposal wants the wealthy Alpine nation's population — currently 9.1 million — capped below 10 million until 2050.

The initiative faces broad opposition across the government, parliament and business sector, but opinion polls suggest the vote could be tight.

The healthcare sector, which struggles to recruit Swiss nationals put off by the notoriously demanding nature of the work and relatively unattractive salaries, has been front and centre in the debate. For Christian Weiler, director of the Primer Roche Foundation which looks after some 360 people across several establishments, including the Cheseaux-sur-Lausanne nursing home, the situation is clear.

"We have some 240 employees, nearly 80 per cent of whom are foreign nationals," he said. He said his foundation would like to open other nursing homes, but feared it would struggle to find staff. "Currently, 240 people are waiting for a place in the Lausanne area," he pointed out, warning that lacking spots could have dire societal implications.

— AFP

Balance amid overload of artificial intelligence

LATELY, I have been feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information that surrounds us. Every day brings a new technological development, a new artificial intelligence tool, a new digital platform, or a new prediction about the future.

One day, people are discussing Bitcoin. The next day, they are talking about cloud computing, data centres, machine learning, or the latest version of ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude and on and on. Before one has had the chance to understand one innovation, another one appears.

What strikes me is not only the speed of these developments but also the expectation that everyone must keep up. We are constantly told that we need to learn new skills, adapt to new technologies, and prepare for a future that seems to be changing by the minute. There is an underlying message that those who fail to do so risk becoming irrelevant. It is difficult not to feel anxious in such an environment.

Artificial intelligence is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon. Hardly a day passes without a new article, webinar, training course, or social media post explaining how AI is transforming education, business, healthcare, research and creative work.

There are endless discussions about how to use AI more



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

Technological progress is often presented as clean and virtual, yet the infrastructure behind it is very physical and carries real environmental consequences

effectively, how to prompt it, how to integrate it into teaching, how to improve productivity, and how to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world.

Yet beneath the excitement lies a number of concerns that deserve equal attention.

One concern is the impact of AI on creativity. As someone who values creative thinking, I sometimes wonder what happens when answers become too easy to obtain. Creativity often emerges from struggle, reflection, curiosity, and even boredom. It requires time to think, question, and imagine.

When technology constantly provides information, suggestions, and ready-made solutions, there is a risk that our own creative muscles become weaker. The danger may not be that machines become creative but that humans become less so.

Another concern is the growing sense of intellectual fatigue. There is simply too much information to absorb. Every day introduces new concepts, new terminology, and new technologies that demand attention.

Instead of feeling informed, one often feels overwhelmed. The challenge is no longer finding information but deciding what deserves our attention and what can safely be ignored.

The ethical questions surrounding AI also deserve serious consideration. Public discussions often focus on whether students use AI to complete assignments

or whether professionals rely on it too heavily in their work. These concerns are important, but they are not the only ethical issues at stake.

Recently, I learned more about the environmental costs of artificial intelligence. The enormous data centres that power AI systems require vast amounts of electricity and water.

As demand for AI grows, so does the demand for the resources needed to sustain it. This raises difficult questions about sustainability and responsibility. Technological progress is often presented as clean and virtual, yet the infrastructure behind it is very physical and carries real environmental consequences.

Perhaps this is what makes the current moment so complicated. Artificial intelligence offers remarkable possibilities, but it also presents significant challenges. It can increase access to knowledge while simultaneously contributing to information overload. It can support human creativity while also creating conditions that may weaken it. It can solve problems while generating new ethical and environmental concerns.

I do not believe the answer is to reject technological change. Nor do I believe it is wise to embrace every new development uncritically.

Instead, what is needed is a more balanced conversation—one that acknowledges both the opportunities and the costs.

What do we do when a heatwave sets in?



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

WHEN THE heatwave arrives, you do not need an alert; one just feels it. We don't often think about what brews it, but weather experts can explain to us the reasons behind it, from the atmospheric pressure to the northwesterly winds. But everything has good and negative sides. Date fruits love the summer heat, but a heat wave can damage the crop and cause worry to the farmers. The farmers apply the strategy of controlled shading and bagging, and this is how they do it—they cover the fruit bunches with specialised bags or shades, which helps in moderating the microclimate, lowering the direct temperature on the fruit and managing relative humidity. Date palms are known to be drought-tolerant, but during the summer the farmers make sure they provide the palms with a consistent amount of water. This method is also proven to prevent the fruit from shrivelling on the stalk. It is the same with us too, I suppose. The health experts tell us to be indoors and avoid direct sunlight at least until around 4 pm. They even ask us to draw the curtains to keep the indoors cool. We might do all of this instinctively, but did you know there is a lot more when it comes to the impact of a

heatwave on our minds and bodies? Heatwaves have a profound and scientifically proven impact on mental health. We know that extreme heat causes physical dangers like dehydration, but what is interesting is the comprehensive data from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which shows that every 1°C rise in temperature above a region's threshold triggers a 2.2% increase in mental health-related deaths and a 0.9% increase in psychiatric illness. The biological, psychological, and behavioural tolls of a heat wave affect humans in several major ways, and one of them is the fact that neurotransmitter and hormone disruption due to extreme heat directly alters brain chemistry, as a cortisol spike can be detected because it is the body's primary stress hormone. Now you know why you feel constantly on the edge, agitated, or anxious. Researchers also explained that 'When the brain expends excessive energy trying to cool itself down, mood regulation suffers, potentially precipitating depressive or psychotic episodes.' In addition to all that, a hot environment impairs executive functioning apparently. So now you know why you are not feeling quite yourself when going through a heatwave.

The health experts tell us to be indoors and avoid direct sunlight at least until around 4 pm. They even ask us to draw the curtains to keep the indoors cool.

This week, we are going through a dry spell of a heatwave. And what is recommended is to steer clear of high-caffeine drinks (like coffee or tea) and excessively sugary sodas; instead, sip water throughout the day. Water and shade are going to be our best friends. Some people enjoy walking, and a friend said maybe it is a good idea to go walking in the malls. And I thought this might be a good time to indulge in libraries, exploring books and authors. The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Main Library is considered one of the largest academic libraries in the country, featuring over 145,000 volumes, and then we have Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque Library established in 2001, and it has six sections. Another interesting library for school students, especially once exams get over, is the Children's Library. There are more than 130 libraries in Oman and private initiatives like Let's Read. And one cannot wait to know more about the National Library, which will be part of the Oman Cultural Complex. A book can be a guide, an inspiration, and a best friend forever. You can take it wherever you go indoors or outdoors. It can always be the ideal gift. It can ensure that we stay indoors. George R R Martin said, "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, the man who never reads lives only one."

AS CLIMATE SHIFTS, MALARIA GAINS GROUND IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

HILLARY ORINDE

In a remote South African village, Paulina Mhlongo sits in the yard as health workers in green protective gear move briskly through her home, soaking the walls with anti-mosquito insecticide. Her teenage grandson fell critically ill last year from malaria, the disease that kills more than a quarter of a million people annually and is surging in southern Africa as the climate shifts. Before this spraying, the family's "only defence" against malaria-carrying mosquitoes was a rattling fan, said Mhlongo, a 63-year-old retiree. Her village of Calcutta is in Mpumalanga, one of three provinces in South Africa's malaria belt experiencing changing rain patterns and rising temperatures that favour mosquito breeding. Heavy rains leave pools for eggs, while warmer temperatures speed up mosquito development and shorten the malaria parasite's incubation period. Malaria cases in Mpumalanga jumped fourfold in January compared with a year earlier, according to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). The upsurge jeopardises South Africa's goal of eliminating the disease by 2029. Gauteng — the powerhouse province home to Johannesburg and Pretoria, and where malaria is not endemic — logged more than 400 cases and 11 deaths in the first three months of 2026, according to the NICD. While most infections were imported into the province from known hotspots, these figures are "concerning" even if the disease is not being transmitted between people, the public health body said. Human-driven climate change has increased the likelihood and intensity of extreme weather, while the naturally occurring La Nina weather phenomenon brought above-average rains to parts of southern Africa in early 2026, causing flooding that created more mosquito breeding sites, the group said. Namibia reported 8,760 cases in the first four weeks of 2026, a 68-per cent increase from a year earlier. Flood-hit Mozambique recorded more than 1.35 million cases in the first six weeks of the year, up 55 per cent alongside dozens of deaths. The outlook offers little reassurance as climate volatility deepens. The increase in malaria cases does not mean the disease is migrating, said Professor Jantjie Taljaard, head of infectious diseases at Stellenbosch University. Instead, climate change is supercharging existing hotspots and lengthening transmission windows, fuelling far more intense outbreaks. "Rural environments and areas on the margins of established malaria risk areas are at highest risk," Taljaard said. The effects are being felt on the frontline at Cunninghammoore Clinic, where technicians Nicholas Skhumbane and Armstrong Mgiba swiftly process a steady stream of blood samples from surrounding villages. — AFP

Welcome to the era of me-first energy

THE MONTHS-long closure of the Strait of Hormuz is reinforcing an expensive geopolitical lesson about how risky it can be to rely on imported energy. From South America to Southeast Asia, governments and private companies are being forced to look inward and take steps to harness what they can domestically, even when doing so raises upfront costs. Call it the era of me-first energy. Guyana, a fast-growing South American oil producer that ran short of fuel this spring, is discussing building its first refinery. Indonesia is accelerating plans to harness more power from the sun. Many other Asian countries have turned to coal in order to plug their energy gaps, at least for now. And in Europe, Belgium is trying to nationalise nuclear energy. Individuals are also taking matters into their own hands, buying electric vehicles to avoid rising fuel costs or installing rooftop solar panels to lower electricity bills. In the Philippines, which was especially hard hit after US-Israeli strikes on Iran started, imports of electric cars and solar equipment from China recently hit records, according to Ember, a London research group. But countries and businesses can only do so much on their own. The world has developed a tightly interwoven energy system primarily because it is cheaper for countries to specialise in the commodities they have and the technologies where they have expertise — and to import what they lack. Even the United States, the world's biggest oil and natural gas producer, is not truly energy independent. It buys crude oil from Canada, Mexico and Venezuela while selling its own fuel to the rest of the world. Still, each gallon of gasoline or kilowatt-hour of electricity available locally offers that much more of a buffer in the next war or shipping disruption. "Countries will have a much more robust mix of things that they generate domestically and then a much more cautious eye to how they create trade relationships," said Sarah Ladislav, the founding



REBECCA F. ELLIOTT

The writer covers energy for The New York Times

The Iran war is pushing countries to prioritise domestic energy in order to protect themselves from volatile oil and natural gas markets

director of the New Energy Industrial Strategy Center and a former adviser to President Joseph R. Biden Jr. How drastic these reforms are will depend partly on how long the war with Iran lasts. The sooner it ends, the more likely it is that people will forget the pain of higher prices and shortages. The oil shocks of the 1970s lifted fuel prices for more than a decade, remaking energy systems around the world. Countries invested in nuclear power, energy efficiency and more international cooperation, including collective efforts to stockpile oil. Later, oil prices rose for about six months around the Arabian Gulf war of 1991 but did not reshape the global energy map, said Claudio Galimberti, chief economist for the research firm Rystad Energy. A few things suggest that the war with Iran could leave a bigger mark. For one, it has wiped out more supply than any prior crisis. There are also many more alternatives to oil and gas available today than in the past. And because this upheaval comes on the heels of Russia's 2022 attack of Ukraine, the lessons are more likely to stick, said David Goldwyn, a former US diplomat and Energy Department official. "That much crisis in that short a time forces countries to rethink their energy security strategies for economic and national security reasons." In the Philippines, which in 2024 relied on Arabian Gulf countries for about a quarter of its imported oil and natural gas, the closure of Hormuz appeared to be accelerating the transition toward renewable energy. The value of solar equipment that China exported to the Philippines hit a record of almost \$300 million in March — more than double the previous monthly record — before a Chinese tax rebate expired on April 1, Ember data show. The war has also made solar power a bigger national priority in neighbouring Indonesia. "God willing, we will eliminate our dependence on imported fuel and save valuable foreign exchange reserves," the country's president, Prabowo Subianto, said in May.

Elsewhere, many behavioural and policy changes are extensions of the last energy shock, when Europe realised that its reliance on natural gas from Russia had made it incredibly vulnerable to the whims of the country's president, Vladimir V. Putin. After Russia abruptly cut off gas supplies, forcing Europeans to pay much higher prices, many governments further embraced renewable energy. Europe's gas consumption is about 16 per cent lower than before Russia began its war, according to International Energy Agency estimates. Now, countries are doing more to preserve domestic energy resources. Belgium, which was among the biggest European buyers of natural gas from the Arabian Gulf, is negotiating to buy the country's last two operating nuclear power plants, as well as several others that have shut down. Nuclear power is also seeing a resurgence in Asia, including Taiwan, where the governing party effectively withdrew its opposition to the technology. A big distinction between this energy shock and the last one is that the war with Iran has mostly affected the flow of oil and fuels needed to drive and fly, whereas the 2022 crisis was largely about natural gas and electricity. Soaring electric car sales in much of the world have been among the clearest signs that the war may hasten a shift away from oil. China, the world's leading manufacturer of such models, exported a record \$9.1 billion worth of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in April, up more than 50 per cent year-over-year, according to Ember. Exports to countries hit hard by the loss of Arabian Gulf oil supplies, including Japan, Pakistan and India, were especially strong. Oil producers are also looking to make changes. Kuwait, which has hardly been able to export any oil because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, wants to build more storage capacity abroad, outside the shipping choke point. And many countries across the Middle East are exploring building or expanding pipelines that would avoid the strait.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The participation aims to solidify the position of the Sultanate of Oman as a leading destination for adventure tourism and international sporting events.

MOHT JOINS IRONMAN EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

HAMBURG: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) participated in the Ironman European Championship in the German city of Hamburg through an introductory pavilion aimed at highlighting the tourism potentials and experiences offered by the Sultanate of Oman to athletes and visitors.

It also reviewed the details of this year’s Ironman races with the goal of attracting more international athletes to register and compete in an exceptional race in the Sultanate of Oman.

This participation came within the framework of the official partnership concluded by the MoHT, represented by the promotional identity “Discover Oman”, with the global IRONMAN Group. The partnership aims to solidify the position of the Sultanate of Oman as a leading destination for adventure tourism and international sporting events, in addition to introducing and marketing the Ironman races to be organised during the year and enhancing its presence in global tourism markets.

The importance of this participation lies in supporting the tourism sector through extensive international promotion of the Sultanate of Oman via Ironman’s digital platforms, which attract a large audience of athletes and travel enthusiasts from around the world. It also includes broadcasting promotional films about the Sultanate of Oman during the live broadcast of the European Championship race and enhancing the visibility of the promotional identity across all race routes, contributing to opening new horizons for target tourism markets.

Furthermore, participation in these events helps attract increasing numbers of international competitors, which boosts hotel occupancy rates and supports various activities and experiences associated with the tourism sector, including transport, restaurants and entertainment services.

These events also contribute to supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating in the tourism and service sectors, alongside highlighting the environmental and natural diversity that characterises the Sultanate of Oman and transforming the race routes into live promotional platforms for tourism sites. — ONA

Training programmes elevate Oman’s ice hockey performance

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

The Oman Skating Sports Committee, in cooperation with Snow Oman, continues its summer ice hockey training programmes as part of its efforts to develop the sport, enhance players’ skills, and prepare a new generation capable of representing the Sultanate of Oman in local and international competitions.

The latest sessions brought together several teams and age groups, including the Muscat Team, the Khanjar Team and players from the Learn to Play (LTP) programme for children and young players. The training focused on technical and physical development, basic skating and hockey skills, teamwork and discipline on the ice.

Khalid bin Salim al Shaqsi, Secretary of the Oman Skating



Young ice hockey players sharpen their skills during training at Snow Oman.

Sports Committee, said the current training phase is part of the preparations for upcoming events. He noted that Muscat, Khanjar and Majan teams are preparing for external tournaments in August and September, while LTP players are expected to take part in local

competitions during the coming period.

Al Shaqsi said the committee continues to build the ice hockey system in Oman through specialised training, support for age-group categories and opportunities for talented players

Oman youth handball team beats Yemen in friendly

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

OMAN’S national youth indoor handball team continues its intensive training programme in preparation for the 19th Asian Men’s Youth Handball Championship, scheduled to take place in China from July 15 to 27. Under the guidance of Tunisian coach Kamel Hdidar, the technical staff is focusing on enhancing the players’ physical and technical readiness through daily training sessions and friendly matches aimed at strengthening team cohesion and evaluating player performance ahead of the continental event.

As part of its ongoing efforts to develop the sport, the Oman Handball Association, represented by the Athlete Development Centers Committee, will organise a coaching course for trainers from seven athlete development centers: Seeb, Al Shabab, Nizwa, Yanqul, Ibri, Oman Club and Sohar. The course will be held from June 14 to 16 at Oman Club’s sports hall.

The course will be led by Tunisian coach Kamel Hdidar, technical supervisor of the Athlete Development Centres Project and the national indoor handball teams. It will include a series of theoretical lectures and practical sessions designed to enhance coaching capabilities and improve technical standards. The initiative forms part of the Association’s strategy to unify training methodologies and strengthen technical work within development centers, ultimately contributing to the preparation of future generations of players capable of supporting national teams and clubs.

Meanwhile, Oman’s youth team recorded an encouraging 33-21 victory over Yemen in a friendly match held at Oman Club’s sports hall as part of its preparations for the Asian Championship.

The first half was closely contested, with both teams exchanging control and capitalising on their opportunities effectively. The balanced performance from both sides resulted in a 16-16 draw at half-time.

In the second half, however, Oman displayed a completely different level of performance after coach Hdidar introduced several tactical and technical adjustments. The players executed the game plan efficiently, leading to significant improvements in both defensive and



An intensive training session for the youth team as part of its preparations for the upcoming Asian competition.

offensive play.

Oman gradually extended its lead through strong performances across all positions and eventually secured a convincing 33-21 victory, winning by a margin of 12 goals.

The match marked Oman’s first friendly fixture of the current preparation phase and provided the coaching staff with a valuable opportunity to assess the players’

technical and physical condition while identifying areas that require further development ahead of the upcoming competition.

Both teams are preparing for important continental assignments, with Oman set to compete in the Asian Youth Championship in China, while Yemen will participate in the Asian Handball Federation Cup in Bangladesh from June 9 to 15.

to join overseas camps. He added that the LTP programme is a key pillar in building a strong base for the sport, as it prepares children gradually to move into youth teams and later national teams.

He also explained that registration for the skating academy is opened regularly through the committee’s official social media platforms and direct communication channels. Players are later evaluated based on commitment, skill level and ability to continue training before joining teams or national squads.

Al Firdous bint Ahmed al Kindi, captain and manager of Muscat Team, said the team is preparing for the Al Ain Classic tournament scheduled for October. She said preparations began during the summer with gym sessions, Fan Zone activities and on-ice training at Snow Oman.

Al Kindi said the women’s

team has developed clearly over the past two years thanks to the support of the committee and coaching staff. She added that the ambition is to establish a strong women’s ice hockey team in Oman. Muscat Team currently includes around 27 players from different governorates of Oman, along with expatriate players from Canada, Switzerland, India and Iraq, creating a positive and diverse team environment.

Kholoud bint Faisal Ambusaidi, supervisor of the Ice Hockey School, said the LTP programme targets children aged 6 to 15 and aims to prepare them technically and mentally, improve their understanding of the game and instil sportsmanship from an early age. She said several young players have previously participated in overseas camps in Kazan, as well as tournaments in Al Ain and local competitions in Oman.

SHORT TAKES



Mohammed al Balushi during Malaysia match.

OMAN FINISH
FOURTH IN ASIAN
GAMES QUALIFIER

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Oman's Asian Games Men's T20I Qualifier campaign ended with an eight-wicket defeat to Malaysia in the third-place playoff in Singapore on Monday, leaving the young homegrown side to settle for fourth place after an encouraging run to the semifinals.

The defeat was Oman's third successive loss of the tournament, following a group-stage setback against Hong Kong and a semifinal defeat to Nepal. However, the team achieved its primary objective of securing qualification for the 2026 Asian Games by reaching the last four.

With captain Sufyan Mehmood the only player with previous tournament experience, Oman's youthful squad exceeded expectations by earning a top-four finish and valuable international exposure against some of Asia's emerging cricket nations.

After winning the toss, Malaysia elected to field and quickly justified the decision despite a promising start by Oman's opening pair. Mohammed al Balushi and Shuaib al Balushi shared a 43-run opening stand, with Mohammed top-scoring with 25 off 37 balls, including four boundaries, while Shuaib contributed 19 from 21 deliveries with two sixes and a four.

The innings unravelled after Shuaib's dismissal in the eighth over. Oman slumped from 43 without loss to 69-8 as the Malaysian bowlers applied relentless pressure. Sufyan Mehmood managed only three runs, while wickets fell regularly through the middle order. Nawed al Balushi's unbeaten 10 was the only other double-figure score as Oman were eventually bowled out for 90 in 19.2 overs.

Malaysia's bowling attack shared the honours, with Player of the Match Virandeep Singh taking 3-7, while Vijay Unni (3-17) and Muhammad Amir (3-14) also claimed three wickets each.

Chasing 91, Malaysia lost two early wickets and slipped to 12-2, thanks to strikes from Shuaib al Balushi and Sameer Othman. Any hopes of an Omani comeback were quickly extinguished by captain Syed Aziz and Virandeep Singh.

Aziz blasted an unbeaten 54 from 29 deliveries, including five fours and four sixes, while Virandeep followed his bowling heroics with an unbeaten 29. Their unbroken third-wicket partnership guided Malaysia to 91-2 in just 10 overs, sealing victory with 60 balls to spare.

Despite the disappointing finish, Oman can take encouragement from a campaign that secured Asian Games qualification and provided invaluable experience for a squad making its debut at this level.

The men's cricket competition at the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi Prefecture, Japan, will be held from September 24 to October 3, with Oman joining India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Japan, Nepal, Malaysia and Hong Kong in the race for gold.

AL ZUBAIR
RETURNS
WITH
STRONG
MISANO
RESULTS



Al Faisal al Zubair returns to GT racing at Misano.

OMAN'S Al Faisal al Zubair teamed up with Italy's David Fuminelli to finish sixth (fifth in Pro class) and seventh overall on his return to top flight racing in the two International GT Open races at the Misano World Circuit in Italy.

The Al Manar by Dragon Racing duo qualified fifth and 10th for the two races in the Pro class, finishing race one in a similar position and improving to finish seventh in race two in their Ferrari 296 GT3 EVO run by Dubai-based Dragon Racing.

A last lap victory in race one went to the Elite Motorsport Ferrari duo of Tom Emson and Tom Lebbon and they also topped the standings in race two.

Al Zubair said it was encouraging to return strongly after five months away from the car. "It was good to be back after five months out of the car. I haven't been away for this long since I started racing. Having only two practice sessions before going into the weekend was definitely not the easiest," he said.

"We finished P7 on Saturday with a 10-second handicap but, unfortunately, qualified P17 on Sunday. We made it to

seventh overall in the end and that was pretty positive for our return to racing," he added.

The Omani driver said there were positives to take from finishing inside the top 10 in both races, but admitted the team still had work to do before the next round.

"We struggled with the car quite a bit, if we are honest, and need to work hard to find the issues before the next race. My teammate was great and we had a very positive partnership. It's a difficult and technical circuit, but we have had podiums here before. We need to figure out what we were lacking from the set-up this weekend," he said.

Twenty-nine teams competed across the Pro, ProAm and Amateur categories, with Al Manar by Dragon Racing facing nine rivals in the Pro class, including GetSpeed, Team Motopark, AF Corse and ZRS Motorsport.

Al Zubair and Fuminelli began the weekend strongly during Friday's free practice sessions. They completed 29 laps in the opening session and posted a best time of 1min 34.478sec, placing fifth overall and third among the Pro class runners.

In the second free practice session, the Al Manar by Dragon Racing Ferrari recorded a

best lap of 1min 33.839sec, again keeping the pair among the leading Pro entries before Saturday's qualifying.

Fuminelli handled the first qualifying session and secured fifth in the Pro category with a best lap of 1min 32.229sec. He maintained that position through the early stages of the opening 70-minute race before handing over to Al Zubair after the half-hour mark.

The Omani driver began his stint fourth in the Pro class with less than 29 minutes remaining and eventually brought the Ferrari home sixth overall and fifth in Pro after a yellow flag stoppage.

Al Zubair qualified the car for race two, posting a best lap of 1min 32.898sec to start 10th in the Pro class and 17th on the full grid. Despite high track temperatures, he gained places in the opening laps and moved up to 12th overall before handing over to Fuminelli.

The Italian completed the final stint strongly, holding seventh overall to the finish and giving Al Zubair a confidence-boosting return to GT racing.

The Al Manar by Dragon Racing duo will return to action at the Paul Ricard circuit in France from July 17 to 19.

Al Subhi set for Thai challenge with Port FC

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Oman international striker Essam al Subhi is poised to begin a new professional chapter in Thailand after reaching an agreement to join Port FC ahead of the 2026/2027 season.

The 29 year old forward is expected to complete the move after undergoing the routine medical examination and signing the final contract, in a deal that will place him among the foreign recruits of the Bangkok based club as they prepare for a demanding domestic and continental campaign.

Port FC, officially known as Port Football Club, will compete in the AFC Champions League Elite next season after finishing second in the Thai

League 1 standings with 60 points, behind champions Buriram United. The move offers Al Subhi a fresh opportunity to test himself at a high level in East Asia and to continue his rise as one of Oman's most effective attacking players in recent years.

Al Subhi arrives after an impressive spell with Iraqi giants Al Quwa Al Jawiya, where he played a key role in their league title success. The Omani striker featured in 35 matches, scoring 11 goals and providing five assists, finishing the campaign as one of the team's leading attacking contributors.

His arrival is part of Port FC's efforts to strengthen their foreign player options ahead of the new season. The club has also been linked with Brazilian winger Bruno Moreira



Essam al Subhi celebrates Al Quwa Al Jawiya's league triumph before starting a new chapter in Thailand.

as it looks to add more depth and quality to its attacking line.

For Al Subhi, the move marks another important step in a career that has seen him become a regular figure with the Oman national team. He has represented the Red Warriors in major regional and continental competitions, including the AFC Asian Cup, the FIFA Arab Cup, the Gulf Cup and the CAFA Nations Cup.

He was also part of the Oman squad that reached the final of the Gulf Cup in 2023 and finished third in the CAFA Nations Cup in 2025. More recently, he contributed to Oman's qualification for the fourth round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The striker expressed his happiness at the move through his personal

account, saying he was excited to start a new chapter with Port FC and grateful for the opportunity. He added that he was ready to give his best for the club, his teammates and the supporters.

Al Subhi also left Al Quwa Al Jawiya with a heartfelt message to the Iraqi club's fans, describing his time there as a memorable experience and stressing that the affection and respect he has for the club will remain with him.

His confidence will be high after a standout performance for Oman in their recent friendly win over Mozambique in Jakarta. Al Subhi scored a hat trick as the Red Warriors recorded a 4-1 victory, with Abdulsalam al Shukaili adding the fourth goal late in the match.

SPORTS



Zverev says cramps helped him overcome nerves and win first Grand Slam title

Zverev credits his long-standing team for support through injuries and setbacks

Cobolli praises Zverev after close loss, thanks supporters for best week of his life

Germany's Alexander Zverev lifts "La Coupe des Mousquetaires" trophy after winning the men's final. — AFP

ALEXANDER ZVEREV WINS FIRST GRAND SLAM TITLE AT FRENCH OPEN

ALEXANDER ZVEREV said he hopes winning his first Grand Slam crown at the French Open will unblock the path to more major titles after years of near-misses and heartbreak on the biggest stage.

Zverev broke his major drought at the fourth time of asking by beating Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1 in the Roland Garros final on Sunday.

After painful past defeats in the title-matches at the 2020 US Open, Roland Garros in 2024 and last year's Australian Open, Zverev was considered by many to be the best player never to have won a Grand Slam.

The 29-year-old joked it was "fine" if people now consider him "the worst player to win a Grand Slam" but that he "could not care less".

"Now no matter what happens, I will always be a Grand Slam champion, and nobody can take that away from me," Zverev added.

"To be honest, I'm a little bit drunk already, so I just repeat myself a little bit more than I'm used to. I'm just happy to be sitting next to this trophy."

The Tokyo Olympics gold medallist said having the Coupe des Mousquetaires in his possession would make his future attempts at winning more of tennis' biggest titles less burdensome, mentally.

"For sure this trophy helps the belief a lot," he said.

"That does give me some freedom. It does give me some — maybe my mind will just be a little bit calmer when I play a final, meaning that even if I lose it, I will still be a Grand Slam champion.

"I think this trophy for me is very important, because if I would have lost this one, the self-belief would have gone down a lot. But now that I've won it, I feel like I can do it again."

However, Zverev admitted that the favourite tag he had seemed to carry serenely through most of the tournament did weigh on him during the final against world number 14 Cobolli.

"I was just very tight today. I honestly feel like I've managed the last two weeks extremely well, because with all the losses that happened early on with Jannik (Sinner) going out, with Novak (Djokovic) going out, I managed to stay composed, I managed to stay calm in my mind," he said.

"But then today I feel like I didn't manage so well."

Zverev revealed he experienced "mental cramps" during the match, but in the end they helped him get over the line after four hours and 16 minutes of battle on Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I was a lot more nervous, which at some stage is also human, I think. That's why I say the cramps helped me in a way, because my mind let go," he explained.

"I started swinging more freely. I started hitting the ball a bit more aggressive. All of that, you know, that's because of the cramps. I couldn't focus on being tight anymore. I had to kind of let go. That's why I played the fifth set the way I did." — AFP

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,590.619

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$93.38
BRENT \$97.11
LIGHT \$94.44



SHORT TAKES



The hike came amidst a rally in global oil markets.

OMAN OIL PRICE CLIMBS TO \$93.38 PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman crude oil for August delivery rose by \$2.49 on Monday to reach \$93.38 per barrel, compared with \$90.89 recorded at the close of trading last Friday.

The increase came amidst a broader rally in global oil markets, with crude prices rising more than 4 per cent following renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Brent crude futures gained \$4.02, or 4.3 per cent, to \$97.11 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude advanced \$3.90, or 4.3 per cent, to \$94.44 during trading on Monday.

Market sentiment was supported by concerns over potential disruptions to energy supplies after renewed Israeli strikes on targets in Iran and escalating regional tensions. Analysts said uncertainty surrounding shipping routes and energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz continued to underpin oil prices.

According to market observers, restrictions affecting traffic through the strategic waterway have heightened concerns over global supply security. The Strait of Hormuz normally handles around one-fifth of the world's daily oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

The latest gains reversed losses recorded on Friday when hopes of a diplomatic breakthrough had briefly weighed on prices. Since the start of the regional conflict more than 100 days ago, Brent crude has risen by 34 per cent while WTI has gained 41 per cent.

Meanwhile, the average monthly price of Oman crude for June delivery stood at \$104.73 per barrel, down \$19.32 from the average price recorded for May delivery. — Agencies

Duqm attracts investments worth AED 2.9 billion

BUSINESS REPORTER
AL DUQM, JUNE 8

THE Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD) has secured RO 2.9 billion (\$7.5 billion) in new investments across energy, industry, battery materials, chemicals, tourism and housing, marking one of the largest investment packages announced for the zone in recent years.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed 10 investment agreements and cooperation memoranda on Monday with companies from Oman, India, China, Germany, the Philippines and Egypt.

The package strengthens Duqm's position as a strategic platform for heavy industry, clean energy supply chains and regional trade, while supporting Oman's wider economic diversification agenda under Vision 2040.

The largest project is the second and third phases of ACME's green hydrogen development, with investments of RO 1.6 billion (\$4.2 billion). The project will produce green hydrogen and green ammonia on a large industrial scale, with each phase designed to produce 400,000 tonnes of green ammonia and 71,000 tonnes of green hydrogen annually.

Once completed, the two phases will have a combined capacity of 800,000 tonnes of green ammonia and 142,000 tonnes of green hydrogen a year. Commercial operations are expected to begin in 2030 for the second phase and in 2033 for the third.

A second major project is an 890 MW independent power plant to be developed by Al Sahil Power at an investment cost of RO 350 million (\$910 million). The plant will support rising electricity



Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef, Chairman of OPAZ, (**right in the picture**) said the agreements reflect the confidence of local and international investors in Oman's investment environment and in Duqm's infrastructure, strategic location and role in regional and global supply chains.

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demand from Duqm's industrial expansion and is expected to start early operations in April 2028, with commercial operations planned for April 2029.

The agreements also include a RO 192.2 million (\$500 million) project to manufacture silicon-based anode materials used in lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles.

The project is expected to begin trial production in the second quarter of 2027, with capacity rising from 2,000 tonnes to 5,000 tonnes annually after the second phase.

Other signed projects include a RO 30 million residential city for Jindal Oman employees, a RO 12.3 million chemical manufacturing plant, a RO 10 million steel fabrication facility and a RO 5.7 million precast concrete housing factory.

Three cooperation memoranda were also signed. They include an RO 288 million (\$750 million) natural gas liquids separation and processing plant by OQ Group, a RO 192.2 million integrated light industries complex by Trot Holding and a RO 184.5 million tourism and technology

project by Ruby Investment and Development.

Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef, Chairman of OPAZ, said the agreements reflect the confidence of local and international investors in Oman's investment environment and in Duqm's infrastructure, strategic location and role in regional and global supply chains.

He said the projects are aligned with global investment trends in the green economy, renewable energy and electric vehicle components, while also improving quality of life in Duqm through housing and tourism developments.

Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Chief Executive Officer of the SZED, said the agreements show that Duqm has moved beyond the stage of being a promising project and has become an integrated economic platform capable of attracting high-value investments.

He said OPAZ and SEZAD would continue supporting investors, accelerating procedures and helping turn the announced projects into operating assets that add real value to the national economy.

Investment court boosts investor confidence in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

The establishment of a specialised Investment and Trade Court is among the most significant measures undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman to strengthen its investment environment and enhance investor confidence, according to Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farouji, Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

Speaking in an interview with Radio Sultanate of Oman, Al Farouji highlighted the importance of a clear and transparent judicial framework in supporting investment decisions and reinforcing Oman's attractiveness as a business destination.

"One of the most important factors enhancing the investment environment in Oman is the existence of a specialised investment court," she said. "This gives investors confidence that there is a clear legislative and judicial system in place, that their rights are protected, and that there is a specialised judiciary capable of handling investment-related cases efficiently."

According to Al Farouji, investors today evaluate not only the fairness of a legal system but also the speed at



This gives investors confidence that there is a clear legislative and judicial system in place, that their rights are protected, and that there is a specialised judiciary capable of handling investment-related cases efficiently.

IBTISAM BINT AHMED AL FAROJJI
Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion, MoCIIP

which disputes are resolved. They also consider the availability of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, reconciliation procedures and the overall litigation process.

She noted that the specialised court has significantly enhanced investor confidence while also highlighting the transparency of Oman's judicial system.

Al Farouji further stressed the importance of government integration in facilitating investments, describing the current approach as one in which investors interact with a unified government system rather than multiple entities.

"The government operates as one team. Investors deal with a single interface and receive one approval covering all services required for a project within a specified timeframe," she explained.

She said investors benefit from greater clarity regarding procedures, timelines and decision-making processes, enabling them to better plan and execute projects.

"The investor must be able to anticipate the next step, know who the decision-maker is, and clearly understand what services will be provided and what will not be provided," she said.

Al Farouji added that building trust



The specialised court forms part of Oman's broader efforts to improve its business climate and attract domestic and foreign investment.

requires transparency and realistic commitments. "When there are no promises beyond the capabilities of the system and when expectations are managed clearly, investor confidence increases. This confidence is crucial in encouraging investors to establish and expand their projects in Oman."

The Investment and Trade Court

was established under Royal Decree No 35/2025 issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The court, which is affiliated with the Supreme Judiciary Council, officially commenced operations on October 1, 2025.

The specialised court forms part of Oman's broader efforts to improve its business climate and attract domestic and foreign investment. It is designed to provide a dedicated judicial framework for investment and commercial disputes while accelerating legal procedures and improving the quality of judgments through specialised expertise.

According to the Supreme Judiciary Council, the court will be required to adjudicate cases within 90 days from the date of referral, with a possible extension of up to 45 days in complex cases. The accelerated timelines are intended to reduce project delays, prevent capital from being tied up in lengthy litigation and lower legal and operational costs for businesses.

The council has also announced plans to establish primary and appellate chambers of the Investment and Trade Court across various governorates, further strengthening access to specialised commercial justice throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

OCCI AND THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

QASIM AL MAASHANI

FOR many small businesses, chamber membership can feel less like a source of value and more like an annual obligation. That perception should concern the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, not because it weakens the chamber, but because it points to a question that every representative business body must answer: what does the member receive in return?

The issue is not that OCCI takes part in overseas delegations, conferences or business forums. No serious chamber of commerce can operate from behind a desk alone. Opening markets, building commercial links and representing the private sector require presence, dialogue and external engagement.

The real question is what follows that engagement. How many companies secured contracts? How many small firms entered new markets? How many Omani businesses were linked to buyers, investors or supply chains?

How many concerns raised by businesses in the governorates were taken up and resolved?

A chamber is not measured by the number of trips it makes, but by the number of doors it opens.

OCCI has already moved in the right direction. In 2025, it announced 14 strategic initiatives linked to improving the business environment, supporting economic diversification, strengthening governorate development and empowering small and medium enterprises. That direction matters.

But initiatives need measurement. Members should not only hear that a programme was launched; they should know what it delivered.

A simple annual “membership value report” would help. It could

show how many members used chamber services, how many were small enterprises, how many delegations were organised, which sectors were targeted, what follow-up took place and what results were achieved. It should also show what each branch delivered in its governorate

Transparency is especially important in business delegations. Without clear criteria, even useful missions risk being seen as selective rather than representative. Clear selection rules would help ensure that opportunities are open to firms with the strongest sector relevance, export readiness and growth potential, not only to those already well connected.

This matters because fees are not only an administrative matter. They shape how businesses view the institution that represents them. A micro enterprise should not be treated in the same way as a large company.

The smaller business needs lower entry costs, practical advice, regulatory support, market access and help in surviving its early years.

For small firms, value does not come from invitations to broad events alone. It comes from help with pricing, export readiness, financing, procurement access and introductions to real buyers.

A larger company can reasonably be asked to pay more, provided it receives higher-value services such as market intelligence, investment facilitation, dispute resolution, export support and specialised business missions.

Other chambers offer useful lessons.

Singapore links compulsory business federation membership to company size. Dubai ties chamber membership to clear services such as certificates of origin, customs documents, attestations, mediation and business support.

Qatar has moved to reduce some chamber fees to ease pressure on the private sector. Oman does not need to copy any model, but the principle is relevant: fees should be linked to size, capacity and value, not only to the existence of a commercial registration.

The same logic applies to OCCI's branches. A branch in Dhofar should not operate in the same way as one in Al

Batinah North or Al Wusta. Dhofar's priorities include tourism, seasonal commerce, food security, logistics and regional trade.

Al Batinah North needs deeper engagement with industry, ports, mining and supply chains. Al Wusta requires stronger commercial support around Al Duqm, energy and the blue economy. Al Dakhiliyah has opportunities in agriculture, heritage tourism, family businesses and crafts.

Branches should therefore become economic platforms for their governorates, not merely administrative offices. Each should have a clear programme, performance indicators and enough authority to turn local challenges into practical business solutions.

Greater disclosure would not weaken OCCI. It would protect it from unfair criticism and give members a clearer sense of what their fees are helping to build.

Oman's private sector is entering a more competitive phase. Businesses face higher operating costs, tougher regional competition and a growing need to export, innovate and attract investment.

In this environment, traditional membership is no longer enough. Membership must have measurable value.

A strong chamber is not the one that travels most.

It is the one that makes small businesses feel represented, convinces large companies that their fees are an investment and gives every governorate a commercial platform that reflects its real strengths.

OCCI's future value will not be judged by certificates renewed each year, but by the opportunities it creates, the members it serves and the economic impact it can prove.

Transparency is especially important in business delegations. Without clear criteria, even useful missions risk being seen as selective rather than representative. Clear selection rules would help ensure that opportunities are open to firms with the strongest sector relevance, export readiness and growth potential, not only to those already well connected.

SHORTTAKES



The event forms part of national efforts to accelerate digital transformation in Oman.

Digital payments symposium highlights efficiency and security

MUSCAT: A symposium on digital payments held in Oman highlighted the importance of enhancing the efficiency and speed of electronic transactions, expanding the availability of digital payment services across businesses and strengthening public awareness of safe payment practices.

The event, organised by Bank Muscat in cooperation with the Central Bank of Oman, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) and the Oman Banks Association, forms part of national efforts to accelerate digital transformation, promote financial innovation and build an integrated payments ecosystem in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Participants discussed ways to encourage wider adoption of electronic payments while ensuring consumers can benefit from secure, convenient and efficient payment channels. The symposium also stressed the importance of awareness campaigns to educate users on the advantages of digital transactions and the measures required to safeguard financial information.

The Central Bank of Oman presented two papers focusing on the development of the Sultanate of Oman's payment systems and the national "Maal" card initiative, a strategic project aimed at strengthening the national payments infrastructure and improving economic efficiency.

The MoCII highlighted the legal framework governing electronic payments and underscored the need for a comprehensive regulatory environment that supports innovation while protecting the rights of all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the Consumer Protection Authority outlined its role in monitoring compliance among businesses, ensuring digital payment services are provided without additional charges, handling consumer complaints related to payment failures and coordinating with regulatory bodies to create a fair and secure payment environment.

Bank Muscat presented papers on the importance of digital payment solutions, including POS services and related technologies, as well as the security measures designed to protect electronic transactions and enhance operational efficiency across the banking sector. — ONA

Opec+ decision adjusts Oman's oil output ceiling

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

OMAN will see its crude oil production increased by 5,000 barrels per day (bpd) in July 2026 under the latest output adjustment agreed by Opec+, lifting the Sultanate of Oman's production ceiling to 831,000 bpd.

The increase forms part of a collective decision by seven Opec+ producers — Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman — to gradually unwind a portion of the additional voluntary production cuts introduced in 2023 to support global oil market stability.

Meeting virtually on June 7, the seven countries agreed to implement a combined production adjustment of 188,000 bpd in July 2026.

The move represents another step in a previously announced roadmap aimed at restoring voluntarily curtailed supplies to the market, while retaining flexibility to pause, accelerate or reverse the process depending on evolving market conditions.

The participating countries reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining market stability and ensuring full compliance with the Opec+ Declaration of Cooperation.

They also pledged



Oman's crude exports and oil revenues are expected to remain resilient despite ongoing geopolitical tensions.

to compensate for any overproduction recorded since January 2024, with the compensation period now extended through December 2026.

Commenting on the decision, Omani energy expert Ali al Riyami described the production increase as largely "symbolic" under current circumstances, given continuing disruptions to regional energy flows and shipping movements through the Strait of Hormuz.

Al Riyami said the decision should be viewed in the context of Opec+'s broader strategy to gradually restore production

volumes withheld under voluntary cuts.

He noted that the alliance remains committed to returning these barrels to the market by the end of the year as conditions normalise.

According to Al Riyami, Oman's crude exports and oil revenues are expected to remain resilient despite ongoing geopolitical tensions. He said the latest Opec+ action reflects confidence that oil trade through the Arabian Gulf will gradually return to normal levels.

The expert also observed that global oil prices have

been tempered by softer Chinese demand and increased production from the United States, Canada, Guyana and Brazil.

Nevertheless, he cautioned that physical crude buyers are often paying premiums of \$20–30 per barrel above benchmark prices such as Brent to secure prompt deliveries, highlighting continued tightness in parts of the market.

The seven Opec+ countries are scheduled to meet again on July 5 to review market conditions, conformity levels and compensation commitments.

Oman marks World Accreditation Day

MUSCAT: Oman will join countries around the world on June 9 in marking World Accreditation Day under the theme "Accreditation: Innovation, Trust and Sustainability — The Power of Accreditation", highlighting the growing role of accreditation in supporting quality, innovation and sustainable development.

Accreditation is a key component of quality infrastructure, ensuring the competence of

conformity assessment bodies, including testing and calibration laboratories, inspection entities and certification bodies, in accordance with internationally recognised standards.

This helps strengthen confidence in products, services and test results among consumers, investors and business partners.

Dr Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Director of the Oman Accreditation Centre, said accreditation

has evolved beyond a technical function to become a strategic tool for building trust, enhancing competitiveness and supporting economic development.

He noted that the Centre continues to develop the national accreditation framework in line with Oman Vision 2040. To date, six testing laboratories in Oman have been accredited under the ISO/IEC 17025 international standard. — ONA

Investors invited to prequalify for RO membrane manufacturing project

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 8

Nama Water Services has invited interested investors to pre-qualify to participate in a competitive process leading to the award of a mandate for the establishment of a high-value industrial project specialising in the manufacture of Reverse Osmosis (RO) membranes in the Sultanate of Oman.

This initiative stems from the recommendations of the National Local Content Lab organised with the support of the Oman Investment Authority to drive the localisation



RO membranes are the core component of modern desalination plants.

of business opportunities. It reflects the government's broader push to strengthen domestic manufacturing capabilities in the Sultanate of Oman and thereby reduce reliance on imports.

The establishment of RO membrane manufacturing capacity will represent a strategically important milestone for Oman's water sector, strengthening the resilience and sustainability of a desalination industry that underpins the nation's potable water supply.

Located in one of the world's most water-stressed regions, Oman relies heavily on seawater

desalination to meet the needs of its growing population, industries and economic development projects. RO membranes are the core component of modern desalination plants, directly influencing operational efficiency, energy consumption and water production costs.

Local production would reduce dependence on imported membranes and global supply chains, enhance security of supply, lower procurement lead times and create opportunities for cost savings over the long term.

It would also support the development of a domestic water

technology ecosystem, fostering research, innovation, skilled employment and industrial diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Overseeing the management of the water sector is Nama Water Services, the integrated water and wastewater utility responsible for the production, transmission, distribution and supply of potable water, as well as the collection, treatment and reuse of wastewater across much of the country.

The deadline for submission of qualifications for the award is July 2, 2026.

CURRENCY MARKETS

Dollar climbs on rate bets



The US dollar hovered near a two-month high after a stronger-than-expected jobs report increased expectations of a Federal Reserve interest rate hike later this year.

The euro, pound, Australian dollar and New Zealand dollar all weakened against the greenback. Markets now see more than a 70 per cent chance of a December rate increase, while the yen fell to 160.33 per dollar. — Reuters

TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

China software revenue expands



China's software industry generated 4.67 trillion yuan (\$689.2 billion) in revenue during the first four months of 2026, up 10.9 per cent year-on-year.

IT services revenue rose 12 per cent to 3.13 trillion yuan, while cloud computing and big data services grew 12.6 per cent. Integrated circuit design services recorded particularly strong growth, with revenue increasing 18.3 per cent. — ONA

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold extends recent decline



Gold prices fell further as investors weighed the prospect of higher US interest rates following a strong jobs report and renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Spot gold declined 0.4 per cent to \$4,313.11 an ounce, while US gold futures dropped 0.7 per cent. Rising oil prices have heightened inflation concerns, reducing demand for non-yielding assets such as gold. — Reuters

OPINION

Be careful; it’s not from ROP. It’s a phish!



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

YESTERDAY, while browsing websites online, a pop-up window suddenly appeared on my screen. At first glance, it looked official. It displayed the logo of the Royal Oman Police (ROP), used formal language, included a case reference number, named an officer and claimed that my device had been blocked due to repeated access to certain websites.

Nevertheless, being a technologist myself, I paused, examined the pop-up page carefully and realised it was a scam (phishing attempt). I therefore decided to write my article today on this exact issue because I trust many people could easily be fooled by such a convincing page/message.

The message/header in bold on the page read as follows: “Device Blocked — Official notification from the Royal Oman Police — Sultanate of Oman”. It had a local Omani designated officer name along with very convincing style, formatting and language that many would probably believe. The fake notification claimed that my device had been blocked because it had allegedly accessed websites containing prohibited material under Omani law.

It referenced cybercrime legislation, mentioned serious offenses and warned of severe penalties including fines, imprisonment and registration in offender records. The message then moved to its real

objective, ie, scamming me for money.

According to the pop-up, I was required to pay a fine of RO 326.82 within two hours to avoid legal consequences. A countdown timer was displayed to create urgency, showing less than two hours remaining. The page also displayed my IP address and internet provider, making the message appear more personalised and believable.

To further strengthen the illusion of legitimacy, the page included payment logos such as Visa, Mastercard, Apple Pay and Google Pay. It even mentioned security standards and banking authentication processes. Everything was carefully designed to make me believe that I was dealing with a genuine government authority. As you may note, this type of scam relies on psychology more than technology.

Cybercriminals and hackers alike understand that fear is a powerful motivator. Most people do not want to risk legal trouble, especially when a message appears to come from a trusted institution. By combining official branding, legal language, countdown timers and payment requests, scammers create pressure that encourages victims to act quickly without verifying the information.

In reality, government authorities do not typically issue fines through random browser pop-ups. They do not demand immediate payment through suspicious web pages, nor do they use countdown timers to force citizens into making rushed decisions.

Cybercriminals and hackers alike understand that fear is a powerful motivator. Most people do not want to risk legal trouble, especially when a message appears to come from a trusted institution.

Legitimate legal matters follow official procedures and communication channels.

To someone like me who is experienced, I noted several warning signs that exposed this page as fraudulent. First, the website address was suspicious and did not belong to an official government domain (the ROP).

Second, the message attempted to create urgency through a strict payment deadline.

Third, it demanded immediate online payment before any formal investigation or communication. Finally, the page appeared unexpectedly while browsing rather than through an official notification channel. These all looked too good to be true other than spooky.

Unfortunately, scams like this are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Cybercriminals no longer rely on poorly written emails filled with spelling mistakes.

Modern scams often use professional designs, convincing branding and detailed language that can easily deceive even experienced internet users, as I did at first, before pausing accepting being taken for a ride. So what should you do if you encounter a similar pop-up?

Do not panic. Do not click any buttons, links, or payment options on the page. Do not enter your banking details, passwords, or personal information and, finally, close the browser tab or window if possible. If the page appears locked, use your operating system’s task manager to force-close the browser.

RELIANCE HIRING
SLUMP IS CALM
BEFORE AI STORM

SHRITAMA BOSE

Finding a good job in India is going to get a lot harder. Headcount growth at its biggest private company, \$190 billion Reliance Industries, is slowing sharply as an investment binge fades. But a chronic skills shortage also gives businesses a strong incentive to rapidly adopt artificial intelligence. That will turn today’s hiring squeeze into a deeper, structural slump.

The energy-to-retail giant’s over 419,000 headcount as of March 2026 represents 4% year-on-year growth, just one quarter of its expansion rate the previous year.

Its disclosures have turned hazier too: last year Reliance discontinued a table in its annual report offering a detailed breakdown of employees across business divisions.

The hiring slowdown is partly explained by the end of a phase of higher recruitment for its fledgling renewable energy business. But the growth remains well below India’s 7%-plus GDP growth — and the squeeze could soon become entrenched: Reliance says it is “building talent fluent in leveraging AI to enhance decision-making, productivity and purpose-driven work”, implying that the impact of AI on hiring will become clearer next year.

The problem is pronounced at IT outsourcers like \$85 billion Tata Consultancy Services, the country’s second-largest company by market capitalisation and Infosys, where the number of employees is now up to 5% below their respective March 2023 peaks, thanks to a slowdown in revenue growth and rise of new coding tools.

Indeed, future job growth is a bigger worry than headline-grabbing layoffs, as the government’s Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran warned in February.

His call on the private sector to hire more and balance capital-intensive growth with labour-intensive growth has gone unanswered by industry titans.

Urban youth unemployment is as high as 13.6% and it’s common for college graduates to queue up for janitorial roles in the public sector.

The danger is employers — who have long complained that India’s 600 million-strong workforce does not have the modern skills required for the service-oriented economy — will turn to AI as a quick fix and adopt new technologies faster.

Some 65% of respondents to a World Economic Forum survey saw a skills gap in India as a challenge to business transformation and more than one-third of them expected talent availability to worsen over the five years to 2030.

Indian employers plan to outpace global adoption in computing technologies, quantum and encryption to transform their businesses, according to the WEF’s Future of Jobs report for 2025.

It all threatens to tip India Inc’s hiring slump into a depression. — Reuters

Oman-Kazakhstan: A new era built on partnership

EVERY so often two countries look across a map and recognise in each other not a rival but a missing half.

When Oman and Kazakhstan signed a framework agreement in Astana this spring to establish a strategic partnership and a jointly financed investment fund, that is what happened. It would be easy to file the announcement under routine economic diplomacy.

It deserves a closer reading, for beneath the protocol lies the architecture of a new era one in which two diversifying economies decide to grow into each other’s strengths. Consider the platform from which Oman approaches this partnership.

The Sultanate of Oman is in the middle of one of the Gulf’s quieter success stories. By the close of 2025 its non-oil economy had reached RO 28.7 billion, expanding 3.1 per cent and outpacing the hydrocarbon sector; non-oil activity now accounts for roughly seven of every ten rials of real output.

Foreign direct investment stock climbed past RO 31 billion, up 8.1 per cent on the year, while non-oil exports grew by more than 15 per cent. Manufacturing, logistics and tourism are no longer supporting characters; they are carrying the story.

This is perhaps the clearest evidence yet that Oman Vision 2040 is not an aspiration on paper but a structural shift under way and a nation negotiates with confidence when its own house is in order.

Kazakhstan arrives with the mirror image of that profile and that is precisely the point. It is the giant of Central Asia, rich in the metals and minerals on which the world’s energy transition increasingly depends and it has set itself the goal of doubling the size of its economy by 2030 while steadily widening its non-oil base.

What Kazakhstan seeks is reach capital partners, downstream industry and a route to open water. What Oman offers ports, energy, capital and an Indian Ocean address



Kazakhstan is the giant of Central Asia, rich in the metals and minerals.



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HAMED AL
BALUSHI
yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

The writer is founder and CEO, Smart Investment Gateway, economist, board adviser & business transformation mentor

The vehicle chosen to express this is a sound one. A government-to-government fund, financed equally by the Oman Investment Authority and Kazakhstan’s Samruk-Kazyna and overseen by a balanced board with a rotating chair, signals parity and seriousness.

answers each of those needs almost line for line. Complementarity, not competition, is the foundation of any partnership that lasts.

The vehicle chosen to express this is a sound one. A government-to-government fund, financed equally by the Oman Investment Authority and Kazakhstan’s Samruk-Kazyna and overseen by a balanced board with a rotating chair, signals parity and seriousness.

For the Oman Investment Authority a sovereign fund of roughly 50 billion dollars that observes the Santiago Principles this is its eleventh international partnership, extending a deliberate strategy of economic diplomacy that already spans India, Uzbekistan, Türkiye and others. Cross-border investment of this kind achieves something a trade agreement alone cannot: it places shared capital and therefore shared risk and shared reward, at the centre of the relationship.

Yet here I must offer the conviction that has guided my work for two decades. Public capital is the spark, never the engine. The measure of this fund will not be how much the two states invest, but how much private investment they manage to draw in behind it.

Deployed wisely as anchor equity, as a catalyst that lowers perceived risk for commercial investors public money can mobilise several times its value in private commitment.

The opportunity now opening for the private sectors of both nations is the real prize: Omani logistics operators and manufacturers,

Kazakh mining and agribusiness firms; and the small and medium-sized enterprises that turn a memorandum into payrolls and exports. Family-owned businesses, the backbone of productive economies everywhere, should read this partnership as an invitation, not a spectator sport.

The opportunities are tangible. In manufacturing and minerals, Kazakhstan has been clear that it wishes to move up the value chain into processing and metallurgy rather than the export of raw material. This is exactly where Oman adds value rather than merely capital: competitive energy, including its growing green hydrogen and ammonia capacity, married to industrial land at Al Duqm, Suhar and Salalah.

A venture that combines Kazakh feedstock with Omani energy and ships finished products to world markets is worth more than any number of passive holdings. In healthcare, renewable energy and the consumer economy, the same logic of joint enterprise applies.

Above all, there is the corridor. Kazakhstan sits at the heart of Eurasia yet is landlocked; the trans-Caspian Middle Corridor that carries much of its trade has seen volumes rise by more than 60 per cent in a single recent year and is forecast by the World Bank to reach 11 million tonnes by 2030.

Oman offers a natural southern gateway linking Central Asia, through the Indian Ocean, to the fast-growing markets of South Asia, the Gulf and East Africa. Kazakh grain moving through Omani terminals, Omani logistics threading Central Asian goods into new markets and the shared ambition for Oman to rank among the world’s ten leading logistics nations by 2040: these are the economic activities that will give the partnership its weight and transform a financial agreement into a functioning trade corridor.

Oman’s story has always been one of connection of seafaring routes and busy harbours that linked distant economies long before anyone spoke of “corridors”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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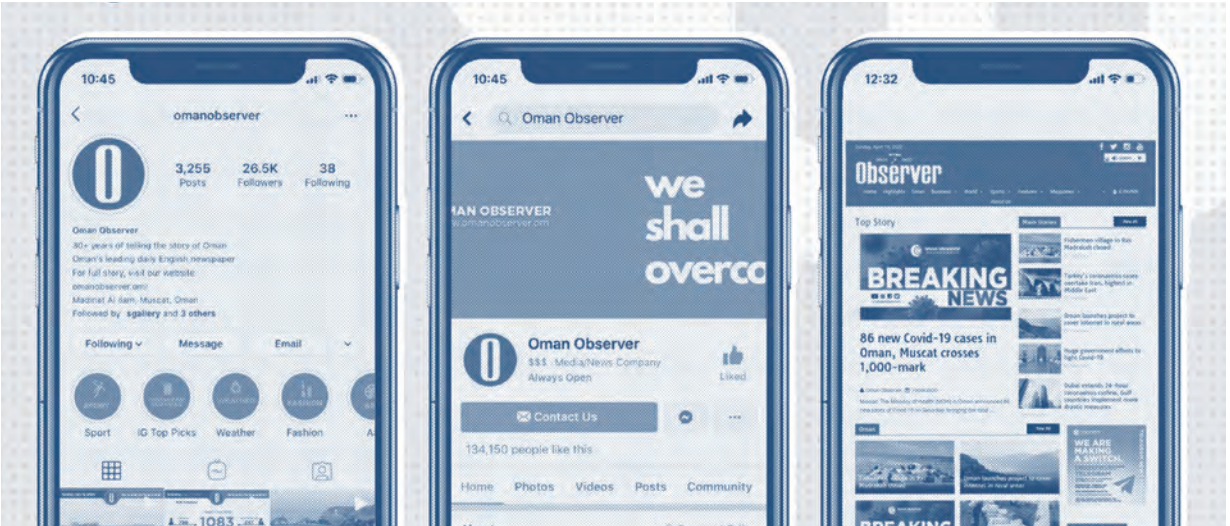
LOOKING for part time or full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

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

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

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



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ART/LIFE



WELLNESS SHIFT

From diabetes to sourdough: the story behind Burrah

> 20

MUSIC HISTORY

LENNON DRAWINGS GO ON DISPLAY IN LIVERPOOL



The original set included 240 drawings, each linked to words and phrases from the song. — **dpa**

Drawings created by John Lennon for what some believe to be the world's first rock music video have gone on public display at a Liverpool museum.

The pop art-style images, which Lennon worked on with American artist and filmmaker Stephen Verona, were used in a promotional film for the Beatles' 1960s hit "I Feel Fine". Ten of the drawings are now being exhibited at the Liverpool Beatles Museum on Mathew Street, giving fans a rare chance to see part of the collection together.

The original set included 240 drawings, each linked to words and phrases from the song. The full collection was sold by Christie's at auction in 2000 for more than \$58,000 before later being separated.

The ten artworks now on display were recently acquired by collector Joseph O'Donnell, 29, from Tynemouth, after he spotted them at an auction in London. O'Donnell said the drawings had not been heavily promoted at the sale, giving him the opportunity to bid.

"I'm a big Beatles fan and I spotted these at an auction in London, where they weren't really made a big deal of", he said. "I thought I would have a go at bidding on them, although I thought it might go a bit crazy and I managed to get them at a reasonable price".

He added that each piece features a different word from the song, allowing him to piece the drawings together to form a complete sentence.

Lennon collaborated with Verona after a chance meeting in a London nightclub. Verona, who died in 2019, later recalled that the pair worked on the drawings at the kitchen table of his Manhattan apartment, colouring the images with felt-tip markers.

O'Donnell, who eventually plans to sell the artworks, said he wanted to loan them to the museum first so that Beatles fans could see them together in Liverpool, the band's home city.

"I think interest in the Beatles will never go away", he said. "Someone has to be the best, it's as simple as that. There has to be a greatest band in the world and it's the Beatles".

The drawings on display include pieces featuring the words "and" and "I", as well as phrases from the song. They were unveiled at the museum on Thursday and are expected to remain on display for several months. — **dpa**



SHOT TAKES



FASHION

Racegoers pose on Ladies Day at Epsom Derby Festival opening. — **AFP**



ART

Ishara Puppet Theatre puppeteers rehearse giant parade before London festival. — **AFP**



HOLLYWOOD

Keith David receives Walk of Fame honour at Hollywood ceremony. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



“Black-necked Stilt Chick”



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A statue depicting former President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama during their 2009 inauguration parade is seen outside the entrance of the Museum Tower. — AFP

A museum dedicated to the career of former US president Barack Obama is set to open in Chicago on June 19, the US holiday Juneteenth, which commemorates the liberation of the African-American population from slavery in 1865. The exhibition, housed in a large concrete tower, presents stages in the Democrat’s life before and after his rise to become the first black president of the United States. Obama’s diplomatic efforts are honoured in part through his speech at Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate with former German chancellor Angela Merkel. Visitors can also walk through a full-scale replica of the Oval Office. Obama set the direction for the museum concept and wants to review exhibits, Michael Strautmanis, the head of corporate communications and policy at the Obama Foundation, said. “But generally

OBAMA MUSEUM SET TO OPEN IN CHICAGO

speaking, he sort of let people do their jobs”, he said. In addition to the museum, the campus, covering around 7.8 hectares — about 11 football pitches — also includes a forum, a multipurpose hall and part of the public city library. Obama’s choice of Jackson Park as the location for the museum was not haphazard. His wife, Michelle, grew up on Chicago’s South Side, the couple married there and their daughters, Malia and Sasha, were born there. Obama taught at the University of Chicago for 12 years and began his political career on the South Side, eventually becoming the 44th president of the United States. According to the foundation, construction costs of around \$850 million were financed through donations. In recent years, supporters have included Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and the foundation of billionaires Bill and Melinda Gates. The Chicago Tribune newspaper said completion was originally planned for 2020 or 2021. However, reviews by federal authorities and a lawsuit by park activists delayed the start of construction by around five years. — dpa



Records suggest that Soma Nomaoi has been held uninterrupted for at least the last 400 years. — AFP

Japan’s samurai spirit still burns in cooler conditions

JAPAN’S thousand-year-old samurai horse festival has survived wars, earthquakes and a nuclear disaster. Now, it is adapting to a new challenge: climate change. The Soma Nomaoi, held around Minamisoma in Fukushima prefecture, began as a way to train mounted warriors. A millennium later, it still carries the spirit of another era, with riders in samurai armour racing on horseback and competing in traditional events. Until 2024, the festival was held at the height of Japan’s punishing summer. In recent years, the heat had become increasingly dangerous, with riders and spectators collapsing and horses suffering heatstroke. Organisers eventually moved the event to late May, when conditions are cooler. For 69-year-old Mitsukiyo Monma, who has taken part for 54 years, the change has given the festival a new lease of life. “You have to wear a kimono under the armour, which is not like going out in just a T-shirt in

the summer”, he said, recalling one day when temperatures neared 40°C and he needed medical attention. “Your clothes would be so soaked that you could wring out the sweat”, he added. “When the festival moved to May, it was the first time I could drink hot coffee before going out”. Japan recorded its hottest summer on record last year, while temperatures of 40°C and above have become common enough for the weather agency to create an official term for them: “cruelly hot” days. Such heat is especially challenging for Soma Nomaoi, where riders wear armour weighing around 25 kg. The main event begins with races around an oval track, with riders carrying giant flags on their backs. Hundreds then gather in a field to compete for coloured flags fired into the air and drifting to the ground. For Monma, the experience remains deeply emotional. “I feel like I’ve truly become a samurai”, he said. “I feel more courageous and on the day itself, my whole body and mind tighten”. The festival is more than spectacle. Records suggest it has

been held uninterrupted for at least 400 years, continuing even after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that left more than 18,000 people dead or missing and triggered the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Fumihiko Futakami, director of the Minamisoma City Museum, said the festival became a source of comfort when he was evacuated to Tokyo after the disaster. “Even for people who have left here and now live elsewhere, when they think of their hometown, they think of mounted warriors”, he said. “It’s the identity of our town”. This year’s event unfolded under cloudy skies, with temperatures around 18°C — far from the dangerous conditions of 2023, when more than 100 horses and dozens of people needed treatment for heatstroke and two animals died. Still, the festival faces an uncertain future. Owning or hiring a horse is expensive and Japan’s ageing population has contributed to a steady decline in participants. Monma worries the tradition may not survive another century unless organisers find new solutions. — AFP



The thousand-year-old Japanese festival of Soma Nomaoi began as a way to train mounted warriors. — AFP



Monma worries the tradition may not survive another century unless organisers find new solutions. — AFP

FEATURES

ARWA AL HASHIMI

FOR many people, a diabetes diagnosis can feel like an unexpected setback. For Mashael bint Naser al Shabibi, it became the beginning of a journey that would reshape her relationship with food, health and purpose.

Today, Al Shabibi is the founder of Burrah, described as the first brand in Oman dedicated to sourdough bread. But behind the growing demand for its naturally fermented baked goods is a story that began not with business ambition, but with a personal health challenge.

At the age of 27, Al Shabibi was diagnosed with diabetes. The news pushed her to reconsider her lifestyle and begin searching for ways to better manage her health. Guided by the belief that every illness has a remedy, she began researching the connection between nutrition and wellbeing.

That search led her to sourdough. She became drawn to the world of natural fermentation, particularly the beneficial bacteria produced during the slow fermentation process and its links to digestive health. As she learned more, she realised that sourdough could offer an alternative for people looking for more mindful food choices.

What began as a personal journey soon grew into something bigger. Al Shabibi noticed that many people around her were asking similar questions about healthier eating, yet authentic sourdough products were still not widely available in the local market.

That gap became the seed for Burrah. Specialising in sourdough bread and naturally fermented baked goods, Burrah was created with a mission that goes beyond baking. The brand aims to raise awareness about better food choices while offering products made through traditional fermentation methods. Among its offerings are naturally fermented American-style bagels, making Burrah one of the early brands to introduce such products to the Omani market.

Even the name Burrah reflects the community spirit behind the brand. Rather than choosing it alone, Al Shabibi invited her followers to take part in the decision through a public vote. The final name became a shared choice, reinforcing the bond between the founder and the community that had encouraged her from the beginning.

One of the defining moments in her journey came in August 2025. By then, the idea of Burrah had become difficult to ignore. Messages of support were arriving daily from people eager to see the project come to life. Their encouragement gave her confidence that the community was ready for what she wanted to build.

Al Shabibi says she never allowed challenges to overshadow her purpose. She credits her progress to faith, determination and the support she received from those around her. Today, her focus is on expanding production capacity to meet growing demand and make sourdough products more accessible across Oman.

Perhaps most strikingly, she does not describe diabetes as an obstacle. Instead, she sees it as one of life's most valuable lessons. The experience taught her responsibility, patience and the importance of sharing knowledge. While many may describe her as an entrepreneur, she sees herself as someone carrying a responsibility towards people searching for healthier alternatives.

For Al Shabibi, Burrah is more than a business venture. It is a mission built on care, awareness and community.

One message in particular has stayed with her. A woman battling advanced-stage cancer reached out after trying Burrah's bread. Restricted by a highly limited diet, she shared how grateful she



Mashael bint Naser al Shabibi, founder of Burrah, turned her diabetes diagnosis into the starting point for a sourdough brand focused on healthier food choices.



FROM DIABETES TO SOURDOUGH: THE STORY BEHIND BURRAH



Through traditional fermentation methods, Burrah aims to raise awareness about food quality, gut health and the value of honest ingredients.



was to enjoy something she genuinely loved. The message deeply moved Al Shabibi and strengthened her belief that food can carry meaning far beyond nutrition.

As a business owner in the food sector, she believes integrity is essential. Food, she says, should never be treated as just another product. It carries a responsibility towards people's health and wellbeing, making quality, transparency and honesty non-negotiable.

What began as a personal health challenge has grown into a movement promoting awareness, connection and healthier choices. Through Burrah, Mashael bint Naser al Shabibi has transformed her experience into a mission, proving that some of life's most meaningful opportunities can emerge from its most unexpected challenges.