

OMAN

دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

SUNRISE 05:21 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 03:53 AM

DHUHR 12:13 PM

ASR 03:31 PM

MAGHRIB 07:01 PM

ISHA 08:23 PM

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11

ALCARAZ WINS TESTING QUEEN'S OPENER; FRITZ, SHELTON OUT

INBRIEF

OMAN STEPS UP EFFORTS TO DIFFUSE TENSIONS

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, continued his discussions with counterparts from Arab and friendly nations to address regional tensions stemming from Israel's preemptive strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliatory response, amid the ongoing escalation of the crisis that erupted last Friday. These talks come as part of Oman's intensified diplomatic efforts to contain the regional escalation.

Sayyid Badr stressed the need to halt this tragic war, which threatens regional security, calling for more diplomatic pressure to revive the political track.

Within the same context, the Foreign Ministry continues its efforts to protect Omani citizens in conflict zones by coordinating evacuation operations and ensuring their safe return. The ministry renewed its call for citizens to avoid areas of tension and to cooperate and communicate with the authorities for necessary support through the announced hotlines at the ministry's operations centre and Oman's embassies in Tehran and neighbouring countries. — ONA

OMAN REAFFIRMS FIRM COMMITMENT TO MINE BAN TREATY

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman has reaffirmed its unwavering stance on the principles underpinning the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its commitment to constructive cooperation with the international community to support efforts aimed at protecting civilians and enhancing human security.

This came during Oman's participation in the meetings of the Twelfth Preparatory Session for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held in Geneva, Switzerland, with broad participation from member states, as well as representatives of relevant international and humanitarian organisations.

Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and International Organizations, delivered Oman's statement during the opening session of the meetings. He emphasised Oman's firm position on the convention's foundational principles and announced that the Sultanate of Oman has fulfilled all obligations outlined in Article 5 of the treaty, reflecting its full commitment to implementing the convention's provisions and cooperating with its enforcement mechanisms.

The Ministry of Defence was represented in the meetings by an official delegation that comprised Captain Khalid bin Abbas al Balushi and Colonel Mohammed al Kaabi. The delegation followed the technical sessions and discussions on action plans and ways to enhance international cooperation in mine clearance efforts. — ONA

His Majesty receives ambassadors' credentials

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK received, separately, at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday credentials of ambassadors of several countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.

His Majesty the Sultan received credentials of Lyu Jian, Ambassador of China; Ibrahima Seck, Ambassador of Senegal; and Shaikh Mohammed bin Maktoum bin Rashid al Maktoum, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

During their meetings with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of their countries' leaders to His Majesty.

They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan, wishing that their mission will be crowned with success in serving the mutual interests of their countries and the Sultanate of Oman. They underlined their sincere commitment and firm determination to promote relations of cooperation, partnership and investment across all fields, in



Lyu Jian, Ambassador of China, presents credentials to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday.

a manner that serves the joint interests.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors. He expressed his gratitude for their leaders' greetings and best wishes, wishing the ambassadors success in carrying out

their duties. His Majesty affirmed that they would receive all support from the government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties in a bid to achieve the desired goals.

The credentials presentation

ceremony was attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of the Royal Protocols and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA

BEFORE HM, AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH TAKES OATH



MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday, Jameel bin Ismail al Balushi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Bangladesh, took the oath of office.

Trump on Iran action: ‘Nobody knows what I’m going to do’

Supreme leader Khamenei rejects US President’s demand for surrender

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is not committing to a clear course of action regarding Iran.

“Nobody knows what I’m going to do,” Trump said on Wednesday in front of the White House when asked if he was considering a US strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. “I may do it. I may not do it,” said Trump. The US President reiterated his demand for Iran's “unconditional surrender”, but on the other hand, he did not completely rule out further negotiations. He said it was not too late.

Trump stated that Tehran has “a lot of trouble”. Trump claimed that the Iranian side had even suggested coming to the White House. “That’s... courageous, but you know, it’s... not easy for them to do, but they suggested [it].”

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has rejected Trump's demand for unconditional surrender. Six days into the conflict, Khamenei warned the US would face “irreparable damage” if it intervenes in support of Israel.

Asked for his response to



Smoke rises following an Israeli attack in Tehran, Iran.

Khamenei rejecting his demand to surrender, Trump said: “I say, good luck.” Meanwhile, Wall Street's main indices advanced in late morning trading as investors also awaited the Federal Reserve rate decision, although they were mixed elsewhere.

The US military is ready to carry out any decision that President Donald Trump may make on Iran, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Wednesday, suggesting that the US direction could become more clear in the coming days.

Testifying before a Senate committee, Hegseth was very cautious in his public testimony, declining to say whether the Pentagon had prepared strike options against Iran.

“They should have made a deal, President Trump's word means something. The world understands that. And at the Defence Department, our job is to stand ready and prepared with options and that's precisely what we're doing,” Hegseth told the Senate Armed Services Committee. — Agencies

OMAN

Envoys convey greetings to HM



Ibrahima Seck, Ambassador of Senegal, presents credentials to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday



Shaikh Mohammed bin Maktoum bin Rashid al Maktoum, Ambassador of the UAE, presents credentials to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday.

SHORT TAKES

OMAN, BELARUS SIGN MOU



MINSK: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of healthcare on Wednesday in the Belarusian capital, Minsk. The MoU was signed by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, and Alexander Khodjaev, Minister of Health of the Republic of Belarus. The MoU includes cooperation in several medical fields, such as healthcare, education and staff training. — ONA

AL BURAIMI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL HOLDS MEETING



AL BURAIMI: Al Buraimi Governorate Municipal Council convened its sixth meeting of 2025 under the chairmanship of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi and Chairman of the Council, to discuss several agenda items. The meeting reviewed the governorate’s key achievements, including the signing of an agreement to develop the integrated public transport station in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi to enhance transport efficiency. — ONA

Establishment of UTAS branch in Musandam contributes to balanced development

KHASAB: The establishment of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Musandam Governorate is a strategic project with economic, scientific, tourism and social dimensions. It forms part of the comprehensive development and urban strategy to advance the governorate, aligning with the Oman Vision 2040. The project is expected to contribute to balanced development across Oman’s governorates, attract investment in projects and services, and enhance the governorate’s economic system, including marine eco-tourism, the fisheries sector, logistics transport services and renewable energy investments.



DR SAID BIN HAMAD AL RUBAIE
Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences

Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, emphasised that the Musandam branch will strengthen human development factors, increase job opportunities for the local community and supply the labour market with graduates who meet the requirements of the comprehensive development plan. This will be achieved through high-quality educational and training programmes that reinforce national identity and social values while equipping graduates with modern knowledge and skills for life and work. In a statement, he said that the establishment of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences branch in Musandam Governorate marks the first higher education institution in the governorate, aimed at developing Omani human resources and serving as a key driver of social and economic progress.



The university plans to introduce scientific specialisations in the second phase, covering marine navigation, marine systems design and marine product processing technology. — ONA

The current admission plan anticipates around 750 students across various specialisations upon the graduation of the first cohort with bachelor’s degrees. The number of enrolled and admitted students is expected to grow annually after the completion of the branch’s permanent building. He noted that in the 2024/2025 academic year, the university’s total student number reached 46,875, including 22,503 male students (48%) and 24,372 female students (52%), in addition to 147 postgraduate students. During the same academic year, the Musandam branch enrolled 328 students. The university offers diverse specialisations across its six colleges: Creative Industries, Education, Applied Sciences and Pharmacy, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Computing and Information Sciences, and Engineering and Technology. These programmes are available at diploma, advanced diploma and

bachelor’s levels. At the Musandam branch during the 2024/2025 academic year, several unique and in-demand programmes were introduced, aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including cloud computing, financial technology, digital business and analytics, and education. The university also plans to introduce scientific specialisations in the second phase, covering marine navigation, marine systems design and marine product processing technology. These programmes are expected to attract students from across Oman and beyond. He explained that, till the completion of the permanent branch building, a temporary facility has been leased to accommodate students and staff. The interim building includes classrooms, academic and administrative offices, computer and science labs, a library, meeting halls and other service facilities. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



The visit began with the Omani team exploring Space Center Houston, one of the premier scientific destinations in the US. — ONA

OMANIS BEGIN SCIENTIFIC JOURNEY TO NASA

TEXAS: The Omani teams shortlisted for the NASA Space Apps Challenge 2024 have commenced their scientific visit to the United States with a tour of NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

The exchange programme is organised by the US Embassy in Oman in collaboration with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

The visit began with the Omani team exploring Space Center Houston, one of the premier scientific destinations in the US. The team toured the Independence Plaza, home to a full-scale replica of the NASA space shuttle mounted atop the historic shuttle carrier aircraft and examined exhibition halls featuring original spacecraft, including the Apollo 17 command module.

Dr Fatima al Harthy, team leader, stated that the visit to Johnson Space Center provided the team with a unique opportunity to engage with NASA's storied history and ambitious future. She emphasised that such experiences not only inspire participants but also foster a culture of scientific innovation among Omani youth.

The team comprises distinguished students from several Omani educational institutions, including the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, the Military Technological College and the German University of Technology in Oman. — ONA

BEGINNING OF SUMMER ON SATURDAY



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will witness the summer solstice on Saturday, June 21, marking the official beginning of the summer season in the Northern Hemisphere, according to astronomical data. The summer solstice occurs when the sun reaches its highest position over the Tropic of Cancer, resulting in the longest daylight period of the year. This astronomical event also signals the start of the Khareef Dhofar Season in Dhofar Governorate.

Experts explain that the Earth's axial tilt of approximately 23.5 degrees causes the Sun's rays to fall directly over the Tropic of Cancer during the solstice.

This phenomenon not only ushers in peak summer temperatures across Oman but also initiates the unique monsoonal transformation in Dhofar, bringing cooler weather and lush greenery to the southern coast.

ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES BRITISH OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, on Wednesday received Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, UK Defence Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa.

At the outset of the meeting, Gen Al Numani welcomed the guest and reviewed the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. The two



sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation in a manner that strengthens the security of both friendly nations, in addition to reviewing recent developments on regional and international fronts.

On his turn, the guest expressed his deep appreciation for Oman's diplomatic efforts in bridging viewpoints on various issues.

The meeting was attended by the UK Ambassador to Oman. — ONA

‘Ayadi’ volunteer platform to promote culture of giving

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

IN a significant move to institutionalise volunteer work in the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), in partnership with Al Hosni International Group, officially launched the ‘Ayadi’ digital platform for volunteerism on Wednesday.

The event was held under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat and attended by ministers, dignitaries and representatives from government entities, private sector organisations and civil society.

‘Ayadi’ is the first official digital platform in Oman dedicated to organising and enhancing volunteer efforts across the country. The initiative reflects the goals of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in the area of social welfare and protection, by creating a supportive environment for social responsibility and volunteer contributions.

Hamood al Shibibi, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Social Development, stated: “The Ministry is proud to launch ‘Ayadi’, Oman's first official digital platform for volunteerism. It aims to unify and streamline voluntary efforts and initiatives across the Sultanate of Oman. The platform will attract volunteers from government, private and non-profit sectors, as well as individuals, making it easier to register and match skilled participants with relevant opportunities.”

He added: “Each volunteer will have a personalised profile, a volunteering certificate and a digital record, which can be utilised as a formal reference for future opportunities across various sectors.”



The event was held under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat and attended by ministers and dignitaries. — ONA

The platform is designed to elevate the culture of volunteerism in Oman, ensuring professional management of volunteering activities through a centralised, data-driven approach. It enables the creation of a unified database and provides detailed statistics about volunteers and their contributions, helping shape future national initiatives.

Three key volunteer initiatives were announced during the launch: ‘Baharna Mas’ooliyatna’ (Our Sea, Our Responsibility), ‘Oman Design Week’ and ‘Sawaa’id Al Khair’ (Hands of Goodness).

‘Ayadi’ integrates volunteer teams, NGOs, public and private entities; and individual volunteers under a single digital umbrella. It provides access to opportunities across fields such as healthcare, education,

environment, emergency relief and other developmental sectors.

Built with community input gathered through online consultations, the platform was shaped according to the aspirations of the Omani people for a modern, accessible and efficient volunteer ecosystem.

The mobile app is now available on the Apple App Store and Google Play, offering users an easy and flexible experience. Volunteers can register, choose initiatives that align with their interests and expertise, receive training and gain formal recognition for their contributions.

Institutions, in turn, can launch initiatives, manage volunteer relationships, track progress and generate customised reports — ensuring transparency, accountability and maximum impact.

Oman participates in Beijing book fair

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Ministry of Information, is participating in the Beijing International Book Fair 2025, which runs until 22 June in the Chinese capital, Beijing.

Oman's participation aims to activate its pavilion as a literary and intellectual hub, offering visitors insights into the nation's past, present and future. The pavilion features a diverse and extensive



The participation also seeks to strengthen cultural and media cooperation between Oman and China. — ONA

collection of publications across literary, artistic, intellectual and scientific fields, with a particular focus on titles in English and Chinese. Additionally, visual presentations highlight Oman's cultural, historical and civilisational landmarks, alongside digital and visual publications through the “Ayn” platform.

The participation also seeks to strengthen cultural and media cooperation between Oman and China,

fostering intellectual and literary exchange. It aims to promote cultural collaboration in authorship, publishing and book production, while introducing Omani writers to audiences in Arab, Islamic and international markets.

The pavilion also promotes Muscat International Book Fair and attracts new publishing houses to participate, reflecting Oman's commitment to active engagement and positive influence in the global cultural landscape. — ONA

Forum highlights integration between academic, industrial sectors

KABEERYOUSUF
@kabiyousef

More Omani students will benefit from the Siraj Foundation, an endowment foundation supporting education, during the 2025-2026 period, turning their dreams into reality, as announced by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. This announcement was made at the First Annual Forum to Enhance Integration between the Academic and Industrial Sectors, held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister

of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, at the Ministry's General Diwan office on Wednesday. During the forum, 18 agreements were signed to promote community engagement in enhancing education, with the primary goal of strengthening partnerships between higher education institutions and society.

These agreements aim to cultivate a culture of endowment in support of education, focusing on raising awareness among students, teaching staff and administrative departments, as well as encouraging participation in educational institution events and



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

activities.

Engineer Mahmoud bin Khalfan al Hadidi, CEO of the Siraj Foundation, expressed pride in expanding the network of partnerships with educational institutions to enhance social solidarity and support students in need. The Foundation is actively implementing initiatives and programmes to support education in Oman, including the “University Student Sponsorship” initiative and the “Siraj Advantages” electronic platform, which facilitate donations and support for students pursuing higher education.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The campaign focuses on Khareef Dhofar Season, one of the most prominent tourism attraction periods in Oman. — ONA

CAMPAIGN HELD IN GCC TO SHOWCASE KHAREEF SEASON

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is pressing ahead with efforts to boost tourism in Dhofar Governorate, notably by implementing promotional activities in key shopping malls across GCC cities. The campaign takes the theme “Your Summer is Green”.

The campaign focuses on Khareef Dhofar Season, one of the most prominent tourism attraction periods in the Sultanate of Oman. During the monsoon, which begins on 21 June every year, Dhofar Governorate is endowed with moderate weather and adorned with picturesque vegetation.

To make optimum use of the Khareef Dhofar Season, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism provides visitors with full information that enables them to engage in different tourism experiences and activities, including recreational events, nature exploration trips and visits to heritage and archaeological sites.

The information also includes an account of direct flight options to Salalah. This facilitates access to hotspots in Dhofar Governorate and enhances its appeal as a preferred summer destination. Besides attracting visitors from GCC states, the information boosts Dhofar’s presence on the regional tourism map. — ONA



AIR TRAFFIC SEES GROWTH IN MAY 2025: CAA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman recorded a notable increase in air traffic during May 2025, according to the latest bulletin released by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

According to the report, Oman saw a significant surge in both overflights and passenger movement through Muscat International Airport.

Passenger numbers at Muscat International Airport reached 599,507 in May 2025, marking an 8 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2024, the report highlighted.

In parallel, the number of aircraft crossing Omani airspace surged by 16 per cent, rising from 44,399 flights in May 2024 to 51,329 flights in May 2025.

COOPERATION BETWEEN ROP, LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS LAUDED

NIZWA: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, met on Wednesday with a number of commanders of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) at the Officers’ Institute of the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in the Wilayat of Nizwa.

The meeting was attended by Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs.

During the meeting, Dr Abdullah reviewed the foundations, current state and future prospects of Omani media, emphasising its role in strengthening national security. He highlighted the importance of security media in conveying



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information

police messaging and the media’s approach to various events and emergency situations.

He also touched upon governorates media, foreign media,

the Government Communication Centre and the roles of the Directorate General of Publications and Artistic Works.

He affirmed that Omani media is rooted in national values and principles, reflecting the nation’s commitment to achieving comprehensive development goals, building national identity and fostering social cohesion.

The minister noted that Oman Vision 2040 opens new horizons for media institutions to adopt modern technologies and enhance digital media content. He lauded the high level of coordination and cooperation between the ROP and various local media outlets. — ONA

Early rains signal start of Dhofar’s khareef season

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JUNE 18

AS much of the Arabian Peninsula sizzles amidst soaring summer temperatures, the southern Omani governorate of Dhofar is witnessing an entirely different phenomenon: light rains, mist-covered mountains and temperatures in the low 20s — all ahead of the official launch of the Khareef Dhofar Season on Saturday.

Since Tuesday evening, several highland areas including the outskirts of Salalah, Qairoon Hiriti and Dhalkout have experienced light drizzle and cooler weather, with thick clouds rolling in across the mountains. Temperatures dropped to 23 °C in Qairoon Hiriti, while coastal areas such as Salalah, Taqah, and Sadah ranged between 28-32 °C, according to the Civil Aviation Authority’s latest weather bulletin.

The forecast indicates continued chances of scattered rainfall and low clouds across the Dhofar coast and mountains, driven by moderate to active winds and high humidity levels reaching up to 100 per cent in coastal zones. Sea conditions are expected to be rough, especially along southern shores.

The forecast indicates continued chances of scattered rainfall and low clouds across the Dhofar coast and mountains, driven by moderate to active winds and high humidity levels reaching up to 100 per cent in coastal zones.



Mountain zones experience early drizzle as Oman’s southern region prepares for an exceptional summer unlike anywhere else in the Gulf. — ONA File Photo

Unlike the rest of Oman and the GCC region, Dhofar experiences a unique microclimate each summer known as Khareef, caused by monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean. Between late June and early September, the governorate transforms into a lush green landscape with mist, cool temperatures and flowing springs — attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors from Oman and abroad.

This year’s edition includes

upgraded tourism zones, expanded cultural programming and stronger support for Omani small businesses and artisans — aligning with Oman Vision 2040’s goals for sustainable tourism and local economic development.

With early rains already gracing the mountains, tourism operators, local authorities and service providers are working in full coordination to ensure a safe and seamless experience for all visitors.



OCA MARKS CANCER SURVIVORS MONTH

MUSCAT: The Oman Cancer Association (OCA) held a heartfelt event on Tuesday in honour of cancer survivors, coinciding with the global month dedicated to survivorship and aligned with the Association’s celebrations of its 25th anniversary.

The event began with a welcoming speech by Dr Wahid al Kharousi, Chairperson of OCA, who emphasised the significance of the occasion. “This month is all about recognising and celebrating the strength of cancer survivors,” Dr Al Kharousi stated.

“While we host this event annually, this year holds special meaning as we commemorate 25 years of OCA’s unwavering commitment to cancer awareness, support and advocacy across the Sultanate of Oman,” he added.

Founded in 2000 by Yuthar al Rawahi, OCA has been a beacon of hope for thousands of patients and their families. The organisation has continuously strived to support those affected by cancer through awareness campaigns, early detection programmes and psychosocial services.

Omani-Bahraini Friendship Society elects new BoD

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Rudaina bint Amer al Hajriyah has been re-elected to be the president of the Oman Bahrain Friendship Association for the second time while Sheikha Jawaher bint Khalifa al Khalifa was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Association for the period from 2025 to 2028 at its regular meeting attended by board members and representatives from the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain held at the Diplomatic Club.

The meeting, which affirmed renewed confidence, reviewed 2025 plan to enhance bilateral cooperation and discussed key topics related to strengthening bilateral relations and developing cooperation programmes between the two countries.

Dr Ahmed bin Saeed al Jahouri was elected as Secretary-General and Ahmed bin Mohammed al Ardi as Treasurer. The Board of Directors also included, from the Omani side: Shaikh Omar bin Ali al Junaibi, Mohammed bin Abdullah al Kharousi and Abdullah bin



Rudaina bint Amer al Hajriyah

Mohammed al Ajmi. From the Bahraini side: Yousef Salahuddin Ibrahim, Janat Hassan Musa Shafiei, Ali Kazim Ahmed al Mousawi, Zahraa Baqer and Mohammed Hassan Abdul Hussein al Wazir.

The formation of the association’s standing committees was also approved and their chairpersons appointed: the Economic Committee, chaired by Abdullah bin Saleh al Shanfari; the Membership and Affiliation Committee, chaired by Manar Malallah al Balushi; the Communication and Media

Committee, chaired by Maryam bint Ghaleb al Alawi; the Programmes and Events Committee, chaired by Shihab bin Ahmed al Mujaini; and the Sports Committee, chaired by Captain Ismail al Ajmi.

The society was established in 2022 pursuant to Ministerial Resolution No 19/2022 issued by the Omani Foreign Ministry, with the aim of building bridges of cooperation and strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between the Omani and Bahraini people in various fields, at the official, popular, or social levels.

SHORT TAKES



Two people ride a motorcycle through a flooded street in Zhongshan, China. — AFP

THOUSANDS EVACUATED AS FLOOD HITS CHINA

BEIJING: Nearly 70,000 people in southern China have been evacuated after heavy flooding caused by Typhoon Wutip, Chinese state media reported on Wednesday. Vast areas of Zhaoqing city in Guangdong province were submerged, with floodwaters inundating shopfronts and covering roads. Rescuers pushed stranded cars out of the water and used dinghies to transport residents to safety.

The flooding had affected 183,000 residents in Zhaoqing’s Huaiji county, with the city mobilising more than 10,000 rescue personnel, state media outlet Xinhua reported. The flooding affected much of Guangdong province and the neighbouring Guangxi region. Footage showed rescuers in Guangxi dragging a rubber boat crammed with people through knee-deep water as heavy rain continued to fall. — AFP

CAMBODIANS RALLY OVER THAI BORDER SPAT

PHNOM PENH: Tens of thousands of Cambodians took part on Wednesday in a government rally over a border spat with Thailand, as a leaked phone call between leaders triggered a fresh row. A massive crowd led by Deputy Prime Minister Hun Many — Prime Minister Hun Manet’s youngest brother — joined a “Solidarity March” to support Cambodia’s government and troops stationed on the border with Thailand.

Singing patriotic songs and flourishing Cambodian flags and portraits of Hun Manet and his father, former leader Hun Sen, supporters marched to the Independence Monument in the heart of the capital. Despite weekend talks between the two sides, the stand-off shows little sign of abating and on Wednesday a new spat blew up after a recording of a call on Sunday between Hun Sen and Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was leaked online. — AFP

N KOREA TO SEND ARMY BUILDERS, DEMINERS TO RUSSIA’S KURSK

SEOUL: North Korea will send military builders and sappers to help restore Russia’s Kursk region after Ukraine’s incursion, Moscow’s security chief said, in a fresh sign of deepening ties between the two countries. Sergei Shoigu, head of Russia’s Security Council, was in Pyongyang for the second time this month for talks with leader Kim Jong Un on the one-year anniversary of the signing of a sweeping military deal between the two countries, state media from

both countries reported.

Now, Pyongyang is going to dispatch more specialist military forces to help with reconstruction efforts, with both sides reaching a deal “on continuing constructive cooperation”, the TASS news agency quoted Shoigu as saying. North Korea will send “a division of builders, two military brigades — 5,000 people” as well as 1,000 deminers to the Kursk region, Shoigu said. “This is a kind of fraternal assistance from the Korean

people and leader Kim Jong Un to our country,” he was quoted as saying.

North Korean Kim had confirmed plans for further cooperation but did not provide details. Kim and Shoigu discussed “items of immediate cooperation” as well as “long-term plans” to carry out “important matters agreed by the heads of states of the two countries through the exchanges of personal letters for several weeks,” the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. — AFP

Mass causality as Israeli brutal strikes hit Gaza

GAZA’S civil defence agency said 33 people were killed by Israeli fire in the Palestinian territory on Wednesday, including 11 who were seeking aid. Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that 11 people were killed and more than 100 wounded “after the occupation forces opened fire and launched several shells... at thousands of citizens” who had gathered to queue for food in central Gaza.

The civil defence agency said another 19 people were killed in three Israeli strikes on Wednesday, which it said targeted houses and a tent for displaced people. The Israeli military said that regarding one of those attacks that its troops were “operating to dismantle Hamas military capabilities”. Three more people were killed in an Israeli air strike on a neighbourhood northeast of Gaza City on Wednesday, Bassal said.

Israeli restrictions on media in the Gaza Strip and other difficulties in accessing some areas mean media is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by the civil defence agency. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza denounced “a terrible massacre” as a result of shelling on a crowd of “thousands of civilians”.

“There are dozens of martyrs



Palestinians try to get food at a charity kitchen in Rimal neighbourhood in Gaza. — AFP

The civil defence agency said another 19 people were killed in three Israeli strikes on Wednesday, which it said targeted houses and a tent for displaced people

who are still on the ground and others who were turned into pieces because of the shells falling directly among the civilians,” a ministry official told a press conference.

In early March, Israel imposed a total aid blockade on Gaza amidst an impasse in truce negotiations, only partially easing restrictions in late May.

That was when the US- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) began distributing aid, but its operations

have been marred by chaotic scenes and dozens of deaths.

The UN’s humanitarian agency OCHA said on Monday that during recent aid distributions several children have been “temporarily separated from their families due to mass movements around militarised distribution points”. GHF said in a statement that its teams had distributed two million meals on Tuesday “without incident” and nearly 28 million since it started operating. — AFP

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NGOs rescuers saved 175,000 since 2015

BERLIN: Maritime rescue organisations said on Wednesday they had pulled more than 175,000 people from the Mediterranean over the past 10 years, as waves of migrants sought to use the dangerous sea route to reach Europe. The group of 21 NGOs active in the region estimated that at least 28,932 people had died while trying to cross the sea since 2015.

The majority had died in the central Mediterranean — waters between Libya, Tunisia, Italy and Malta — said Mirka Schaefer of German NGO SOS Humanity.

In that area, the equivalent of five adults and one child lost their lives every day over the past decade, she said.

— AFP

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
5/2025/MAFWR/HQ-2 RECALL	SUPPLY OF MAGNESIUM PHOSPHIDE INSECTICIDE (FUMIGATION PLATES)	Monday 16/6/2025	Wednesday 25/6/2025	Sunday 6/7/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
384/2025/MAFWR/HQ-42	REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE FIFTH FLOOR OF THE MINISTRY'S GENERAL OFFICE	Tuesday 17/6/2025	Monday 7/7/2025	Sunday 27/7/2025	Specialized companies registered with Second, Third grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
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TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Khamenei warns US



Israeli air defence systems are activated to intercept Iranian missiles, in Tel Aviv. — AFP

IRAN'S supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday the nation would never surrender as demanded by President Donald Trump and warned the United States it would face “irreparable damage” if it intervenes in support of its ally. The speech came six days into the conflict, with Trump demanding Iran’s “unconditional surrender” while boasting the United States could kill Khamenei and fuelling speculation about a possible intervention.

The long-range blitz began on Friday, when Israel launched a massive bombing campaign that prompted Iran to respond with missiles and drones. “This nation will never surrender,” Khamenei said in a speech read on state television, in which he called Trump’s ultimatum “unacceptable”. “America should know that any military intervention will undoubtedly result in irreparable damage,” he said.

Khamenei, in power since 1989 and the final arbiter of all matters of state in Iran, had earlier vowed the country would show “no mercy” towards Israel’s leaders. The speech followed a night of strikes, with Israeli attacks destroying two buildings making centrifuge components for Iran’s nuclear programme near Tehran, according to the UN nuclear watchdog.

“More than 50 Israeli Air Force fighter jets... carried out a series of air strikes in the Tehran area over the past few hours,” the Israeli military said, adding that several weapons manufacturing facilities were hit. Centrifuges are vital for uranium enrichment, the sensitive process that can produce fuel for reactors or, in highly extended form, the core of a nuclear warhead.

The strikes destroyed two buildings making centrifuge components for Iran’s nuclear programme in Karaj, a satellite city of Tehran, the International Atomic Energy Agency said. In another strike on a site in Tehran, “one building was hit where advanced centrifuge rotors were manufactured and tested”, the agency added in a post on X.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said they had launched hypersonic Fattah-1 missiles at Tel Aviv. Hypersonic missiles travel at more than five times the speed of sound and can manoeuvre mid-flight, making them harder to track and intercept. No missile struck Tel Aviv overnight, though photos showed Israel’s air defence systems activated to intercept missiles over the commercial hub. Iran also sent a “swarm of drones” towards Israel, while the Israeli military said it had intercepted a total of 10 drones launched from Iran. It said one of its own drones had been shot down over Iran.

Trump fuelled speculation about US intervention when he made a hasty exit from the G7 summit in Canada, where the leaders of the club of wealthy democracies called for de-escalation but backed Israel’s “right to defend itself”. “We know exactly where the so-called ‘Supreme Leader’ is hiding. He is an easy target, but is safe there -- We are not going to take him out (kill), at least not for now,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Trump met with his National Security Council to discuss the conflict. There was no immediate public statement after the hour and 20 minute meeting. US officials stressed Trump has not yet made a decision about any intervention.

The United States is “complicit” in Israel’s strikes in Iran, Tehran’s ambassador to the United Nations claimed on Wednesday, vowing that his country would respond if Washington crosses a “red line”. After decades of enmity and a prolonged shadow war, Israel says its surprise air campaign that began on June 13 is aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons -- an ambition Tehran denies.

“We firmly believe that the United States is complicit in what Israel is doing,” Iranian ambassador Ali Bahreini told a press conference. “And at any time, at any point, if we come to the conclusion that the United States is directly involved in attacks against Iran, we will start responding to the United States.” He said Tehran was “vigilant” about Trump’s “completely unwarranted” and “hostile” remarks.

“There is a line which, if crossed, there should be a response on our side... once the red line is crossed, the response will come,” Bahreini said. “We will respond strongly and we will stop aggression from any side, be it Israel or the United States,” he told the UN correspondents’ association. — AFP

‘irreparable damage’



Rocket trails are seen in the sky above the Israeli coastal city of Netanya. — AFP



A destroyed drone, which the Iranian Army says belongs to Israel, is seen in Isfahan. — Reuters



Smoke rises following an attack in Tehran. — Reuters

Two Iran nuclear sites destroyed in Israel strikes

TEHRAN: The UN nuclear watchdog said Israeli strikes on Wednesday destroyed two buildings making centrifuge components for Iran’s nuclear programme near Tehran, while Iran said it fired hypersonic missiles as the arch-foes traded fire for a sixth day.

After the Israeli military issued a warning for civilians to leave one district of Tehran for their safety, Israeli warplanes hit the capital early on Wednesday. “More than 50 Israeli Air Force fighter jets... carried out a series of air strikes in the Tehran area over the past few hours,” the Israeli military said, adding that several weapons manufacturing facilities were hit. “As part of the broad effort to disrupt Iran’s nuclear weapons development programme, a centrifuge production facility in Tehran was targeted.” Centrifuges are vital for

uranium enrichment, the sensitive process that can produce fuel for reactors or, in highly extended form, the core of a nuclear warhead.

The strikes destroyed two buildings making centrifuge components for Iran’s nuclear programme in Karaj, a satellite city of Tehran, the International Atomic Energy Agency said on Wednesday. In another strike on a site in Tehran, “one building was hit where advanced centrifuge rotors were manufactured and tested”, the agency added in a post on X. Iran also sent a “swarm of drones” towards Israel, while the Israeli military said it had intercepted a total of 10 drones launched from Iran. It said one of its own drones had been shot down over Iran.

Israel’s attacks have hit nuclear and military facilities around Iran, as well as residential areas. Residential

areas in Israel have also been hit, and foreign governments have scrambled to evacuate their citizens from both countries.

On Tuesday in Tehran, long queues stretched outside bakeries and petrol stations as people rushed to stock up on fuel and basic supplies. Iran’s ISNA and Tasnim news agencies on Wednesday reported that five suspected agents of Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency had been detained, on charges of tarnishing the country’s image online. With air raid sirens regularly blaring in Tel Aviv, some people relocated to an underground parking lot below a shopping mall. “We’ve decided to permanently set camp here until it’s all clear, I guess,” Mali Papirany, 30, said.

After a prolonged shadow war, Israel said its surprise air campaign

was aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons -- an ambition Tehran denies. The UN nuclear watchdog said there appeared to have been “direct impacts on the underground enrichment halls” at Iran’s Natanz facility. Israel has maintained ambiguity regarding its own atomic activities, but the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) says it has 90 nuclear warheads.

The conflict derailed a running series of nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington, with Iran saying after the start of Israel’s campaign that it would not negotiate with the United States while under attack. French President Emmanuel Macron said Trump had a critical role to play in restarting diplomacy with Iran, where any attempts at “regime change” would bring “chaos”. — AFP

Iran has ‘legitimate’ right to self-defence, says Erdogan

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday Iran had the “legitimate” right to defend itself in the face of Israel’s ongoing bombing campaign, now in its sixth day. “It is a very natural, legitimate and legal right for Iran to defend itself against Israel’s thuggery and state terrorism,” the Turkish leader said, a day after referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as “the biggest threat to the security of the region”.

The long-range blitz began early on Friday, when Israel launched a massive bombing campaign that prompted Iran to hit back with missiles and drones, including hypersonic missiles. “These attacks were organised while the Iranian nuclear negotiations were taking place,” Erdogan said. “Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons and does not recognise any international rules... did not wait for the negotiations to end, but carried out a terrorist act without waiting for the result,” he added.

Iran says at least 224 people have been killed in the Israeli attacks, which have targeted nuclear and military facilities, while Iranian fire on Israel has claimed at least 24 lives and wounded hundreds more, Netanyahu’s office said. “We are closely following Israel’s terrorist attacks on Iran. All our institutions are on high alert regarding the possible effects of these attacks on Türkiye,” Erdogan said. — AFP



Pakistani citizens who were residing in Iran arrive with their belongings in Quetta. — AFP

OPINION

Grief and grit in the climate fight



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

I didn't come to TED Countdown, a global gathering focused on accelerating climate solutions, in search of answers. I came carrying questions. Heavy ones. About exhaustion. About how long one can stay in the climate movement without losing the very thing that drew them in: belief. It has been four years since I gave my TED talk, filmed in the stillness of Oman's lockdown, standing in the mangroves of Yankit, who have always been more than trees to me. They are teachers. They hold storms, heal waters and never ask for applause. In that moment, even through a screen, I wanted to share that symbol of climate resilience. I did not know then how much I would need that same resilience now. I saw that tension again in Al Gore's talk. His words did not sound rehearsed. They sounded bruised. He spoke against the rise of climate realism, a quiet surrender dressed up as pragmatism. That realism does not make us honest. It makes us tired. It tells us to shrink our vision to match political

convenience. But I have never believed realism and ambition are opposites. You can face the facts and still believe in miracles. You can be heartbroken and still show up. There was also a session that asked whether the 1.5 degree target is already dead. Some said yes. Others refused to surrender. But what struck me most was not the debate. It was what it revealed. We are still struggling to mourn while we act. Still learning to speak both loss and urgency in the same breath. In the session I co-led, titled Spiritual Resilience for Climate Action, we asked a different question: what roots us? We read sacred verses, sat in silence and shared the quotes and memories that carry us through. We often reach for graphs and policy briefs. But sometimes, the most powerful thing is a remembered verse or a deep breath before a storm. That space grounded me more than any debate or headline. It was a return to why we do this in the first place. Not for data points, but for the land and lives we love. And then there was the fire. Not in

Climate fatigue is real. But so is climate faith. And faith, for me, is not just belief in a better outcome. It is belief that showing up again and again matters.

speeches, but in what is already being done. Over a million people have signed on to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, led by Pacific Island nations who have no luxury of delay. Outside the United Nations process, they are building the future anyway. That is not protest. It is leadership. The Global South is not waiting to be rescued. It is offering rescue. There is no shortcut through climate grief. But naming it matters. Sitting with it matters. And still choosing to act, especially when the story seems too heavy to lift, is what transforms that grief into something enduring. I am leaving Nairobi without easy optimism. But with something stronger: clarity. Climate fatigue is real. But so is climate faith. And faith, for me, is not just belief in a better outcome. It is belief that showing up again and again matters. That grief can coexist with grit. That stillness can sharpen resolve.

Longer exposure, more pollen: climate change worsens allergies

JULIEN MIVIELLE

Runny nose, itching eyes, worsening asthma symptoms — the effects of hay fever are nothing to sneeze at, experts say, warning of an “explosion” of allergies as climate change lengthens and intensifies pollen seasons. The UN’s World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has found that a shifting climate has already begun altering the production and distribution of pollen and spores. As winter frost thaws earlier and spring weather gets warmer, plants and trees flower earlier, extending the pollen season, numerous studies have shown. Air pollution can also increase people’s sensitivity to allergens, while invasive species are spreading into new regions and causing fresh waves of allergies. More and more people, particularly in industrialised nations, have reported developing allergy symptoms in recent decades. Around a quarter of adults in Europe suffer from airborne allergies, including severe asthma, while the proportion among children is 30 to 40 per cent. That figure is expected to rise to half of Europeans by 2050, according to the World Health Organization. “We’re in crisis because allergies are exploding,” said Severine Fernandez, president of the French Allergists’ Union. Whereas previously an allergic person would endure only what is commonly known as hay fever, albeit sometimes for years, “now that person can become asthmatic after one or two years”, Fernandez said. Climate change affects allergy patients in multiple ways, according to a 2023 report by the WMO. Rising levels of carbon dioxide, one of the main heat-trapping gases produced by burning fossil fuels, boost plant growth, in turn increasing pollen production. Air pollution not only irritates the airways of people exposed, but it also causes stress to plants, which then produce more “allergenic and irritant pollen”. In a study published in 2017, researchers projected that ragweed allergies would more than double in Europe by 2041-2060 as a result of climate change, raising the number of people affected from 33 million to 77 million. The authors suggested that higher pollen concentrations as well as longer pollen seasons could make symptoms more severe. In parts of France, authorities have planted “pollinariums”, gardens packed with the main local allergen species. These provide information on the very first pollen released into the air so that people can start taking antihistamines and other protective measures in a timely manner. — AFP

AI and the crafting of parallel history

WITH the rise of intelligent algorithms capable of generating language and imagery in ways that mirror the human mind, a new realm of historical imagination has emerged, what can be called the “galaxy of historical possibilities”. This domain of counterfactual history asks: what if events had unfolded differently? What if Julius Caesar had not been assassinated, or the Arabs had triumphed at pivotal battles? Such questions, once confined to speculative philosophy, have gained new legitimacy through artificial intelligence (AI) and its simulation capabilities. AI, powered by deep learning and neural networks, can now be trained on massive datasets of historical, economic and demographic information. It can simulate countless alternate realities, tracking how a single altered event might cascade through time like a domino effect. These simulations do not recreate history as it was, but they revive possible histories grounded in plausible models and precise probabilities. While traditional historians rely on artefacts, documents and testimonies, AI adds a fourth dimension: the “simulated probability”, a causality-based narrative framework that allows a tweak in one event to reveal systemic historical shifts. Sceptics may argue this overstates AI’s power. Indeed, AI does not possess conscious knowledge of the past; it merely generates outcomes from patterns. However, its value lies in offering a hypothetical mirror, an imaginative yet logical contrast to actual history, revealing how contingent the course of human events truly is. This approach reshapes how societies perceive history in three ways. First, it breaks the illusion of historical determinism, revealing that major outcomes are not inevitable but the result of human choices. This awakens political agency, showing individuals that



Used wisely, AI rekindles the Promethean spark, not to burn, but to illuminate the dark corridors of our shared past and guide us towards paths once unseen.



DR MUAMAR
AL TOBI

The writer is an academic and researcher

AI may be the technological key to rethinking history not as a record of what was, but as a spectrum of what could have been and what may yet still be.

the present is not a dead end but an open frontier. Second, it empowers historically marginalised peoples. For nations colonised or erased from dominant narratives, counterfactual simulations provide moral consolation and restore symbolic justice. It's not about rewriting history but imagining the dignity that was denied. Third, in political science, these simulated models become testing grounds for policy, revealing dangers or opportunities before real-world decisions are made. Such developments provoke a profound question: what is history? Is it a sequence of necessary outcomes dictated by natural and economic systems? Or is it a dance of probabilities around human decisions? AI cannot fully answer this, but it radically expands our perception. It allows us to envision history as a topological field of overlapping timelines, not a straight line. This view aligns with both philosophical critiques of linear progress and quantum physics' interpretation of reality as a wave function collapsing into one observable event. In this frame, parallel histories become a scientifically plausible concept. However, access to “alternative

histories” is not always neutral. Governments or corporations may misuse such simulations to construct persuasive, pseudo-scientific propaganda. By manipulating data inputs or assumptions, they can present a desired narrative as the “most likely” future, shaping public opinion through visually and linguistically compelling stories. This creates a risk that AI becomes not a tool for knowledge, but a factory of illusions. Ethical protocols must be established, requiring transparency in data, clarity about assumptions and openness to peer review, to prevent such misuse. Ultimately, humanity has given AI the unprecedented ability to dissect and recompose time. Not to escape the past, but to reinterpret it. Counterfactual simulations are more than narrative play, they are intellectual tools that reposition humans at the centre of historical agency. If, as philosopher Edmund Husserl said, philosophy is “the science of absolute beginnings”, then AI may be the technological key to rethinking history not as a record of what was, but as a spectrum of what could have been and what may yet still be.

I have a right to defend myself and my family



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a former Cambridge School Principal and author

AS a British man married to an Omani woman, currently living in Oman on a citizen's visa, I find myself in a paradoxical and deeply troubling situation. My own government, the United Kingdom, has taken actions that now threaten not only my life, but the lives of my wife, my daughters and my extended Omani family.

The British government's and US support of Israel's attack on Iran's nuclear facilities by continuing to supply arms and giving it political justification has placed all of us and millions more, in grave danger. Let me be clear: this is not an abstract or distant threat. My daughters' Omani cousins, aunts and uncles are now at risk because of the British and US government's support for Israel unprovoked aggression against Iran. The world, and especially Oman and the Middle East, should have no illusions about the magnitude of this danger. Consider the precedent set by Chernobyl. When the nuclear facility in what is now Ukraine (then part of the Soviet Union) suffered a catastrophic meltdown in 1986, the region became uninhabitable. The disaster was not contained to the immediate area; radioactive fallout drifted across Europe, contaminating land, water and food supplies. Even today, nearly forty years later, the area around Chernobyl remains a radioactive wasteland, a

stark reminder of the enduring consequences of nuclear disaster.

Now imagine the consequences if a nuclear facility in Iran was struck by an Israeli missile powerful enough to penetrate its underground defences. The Sea of Oman, so vital to the livelihoods and well-being of everyone in this region, would be contaminated by radioactive fallout. Oman's fishing industry would be destroyed overnight. Home-grown vegetables would become inedible. The water supply — essential for drinking, cooking and even showering — would be poisoned. For all of us living in Oman, life as we know it would end in an instant.

Radiation fallout does not respect borders. Being so close to Iran, Oman would be among the first and worst affected. The lives of Omanis and all residents — including myself, my family and my wife's Omani family, would be irreversibly changed. Decades of progress and development since 1970 would be put at risk in a single moment.

In the aftermath of such a disaster, our only recourse would be to hide in our homes, sealing windows and doors to keep out the radioactive dust. We might survive for a time on bottled water and whatever food we had stockpiled. Some might try to shelter in their cars, parked in sealed garages, in a desperate attempt to avoid contamination. But the sea

The right to self-defence is fundamental, and it is time for the world to recognise the catastrophic risks we all face if nuclear facilities become targets in this conflict. The time for illusions is over.

would remain poisoned for months, if not longer.

The land, where farmers grow the fruit and vegetables that feed us, would be contaminated for years. Many would die slow, agonising deaths from radiation sickness. This is not scaremongering. This is the reality of nuclear fallout. Look to Chernobyl. Look further back to Japan in 1945, when the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The descendants of those exposed to the radiation still suffer from increased rates of cancer and other illnesses, nearly eighty years later.

My own government, and the US, are fully aware of these possibilities. Yet they continue to support Israel's unprovoked attack on Iran and its people. The consequences of such actions will not be confined to Iran alone, they will ripple outward, endangering everyone in the region, including innocent families like mine.

So I ask: do I not have the right to defend myself, my family and my wife's family? When my own government's policies put us in harm's way, what recourse do I have? The right to self-defence is fundamental, and it is time for the world to recognise the catastrophic risks we all face if nuclear facilities become targets in this conflict. The time for illusions is over. The world must act to prevent disaster — before it is too late.

Putin eyes peacemaking role in Israel-Iran air war

ANTOINE BOYER

Vladimir Putin is eyeing the conflict between Israel and Iran as an opportunity to thrust himself to the forefront of the international stage, more than three years into his war of Ukraine.

The Russian president has pitched himself as a possible mediator — though Moscow's closeness to Iran and Russia's war of Ukraine raise doubts about what kind of role he can play, experts say.

The assault on Ukraine and the war in Gaza have strained Moscow's traditionally good relations with Israel, home to a large Russian-born community.

At the same time, Russia has deepened military ties with Iran.

But while Moscow was quick to condemn Israel's strikes on Iran last Friday, Putin also wasted little time phoning both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to offer his role as a peacemaker.

"By positioning itself as an indispensable intermediary, Moscow aims to reassert diplomatic relevance despite its pariah status in Europe," said Nicole Grajewski, an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

It also wants to protect its ally Tehran, facing a potentially existential military clash.

"Russia does not want to see regime change in Iran, especially if it results in a pro-Western government," she said.

Moscow and Tehran in January inked a far-ranging strategic partnership agreement to broaden military ties, and Kyiv and its allies have long accused Iran of supplying Russia with drones and short-range missiles.

"Since Russia is seen as Iran's ally, and they have a strategic partnership agreement, such mediation would not inspire confidence in Europe. Nor in Israel," Russian political analyst Konstantin Kalachev said. "A mediator should not sympathise with one side," he added.

French President Emmanuel Macron is among those to have pushed back at the idea of Putin as a moderator.

"I do not believe that Russia, which is now engaged in a high-intensity conflict and has decided not to respect the UN Charter for several years now, can be a mediator," he said over the weekend.

And asked if it had received a response to its overtures, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday that Moscow saw "a reluctance, on the part of Israel, to resort to any mediation services or to embark on a peaceful path towards a settlement."

One person who does not seem concerned at a possible role for Russia is Donald Trump, who said he was "open" to Putin playing middleman.

The US president is pushing his own rapprochement with Putin in a complete overhaul of the West's attempts to isolate and punish him for the Ukraine offensive.

4 thoughts on Trump's hawkish turn on Iran

THE only way to know for certain where Donald Trump's Iran policy is going is to wait — for the president to throw in fully with the Israelis, for a new attempt at diplomacy with a battered Iranian regime, for a continuation of the United States' current position as spectator, cheerleader and secondary participant.

But while we wait, here are four quick comments on the debate about the war: 1) There is nothing inherently surprising about Trump's permitting and indirectly supporting Israel's war against Iran. Trump generally took a hawkish line on Iran throughout his first term; he has never been a principled non-interventionist; his deal-making style has always involved the threat of force as a crucial bargaining chip; and the idea that you can accomplish a lot with a few sharp blows while avoiding regime change and nation building fits comfortably into his worldview.

What is more surprising is that Trump would let war come after he had seemingly separated himself from his first term's hawkish personnel — sometimes with prejudice, as with the petty withdrawal in January of security protection from his former secretary of state Mike Pompeo. This separation helps explain the wounded shock with which some non-interventionists on the right have reacted to the war. They imagined that personnel was policy, that the realists and would-be restrainers in Trump's orbit would have a decisive influence. That was clearly a mistake, and the lesson here is that Trump decides and no one else. And it could well be the hawks' turn to be disappointed tomorrow, if he decides to accept concessions from Iran that they regard as fake or insufficient.

2) I have a lot of doubts about the decision to let the Israelis go for it. But non-interventionists should recognise that the strongest Tucker Carlson-style argument for restraining Israel from war, the warning that Iran could plunge the Middle East into turmoil and strike at Americans across the region and



US President Donald Trump, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. — Reuters



ROSS DOUTHAT

The writer is NYT Opinion columnist since 2019. He is also the host of the Opinion podcast "Interesting Times."

And a reckless war in the Middle East, an echo of the Iraq disaster that implicates the right's long-standing loyalty to Israel, would be one of the most blackpillng ways for Trumpism to fail.

the world, inevitably looked much weaker once the Israelis were able to absolutely wreck Iranian proxies.

Those successes were also of immediate strategic benefit to America that's facing serious challenges from multiple rivals at once, reducing Iran's ability to add its own pressure to Russian aggression and Chinese ambition. So if you imagine the basic Benjamin Netanyahu pitch to the White House — in effect, let us have a go at the Iranians, and you can decide whether to explicitly support us once you see the outcome — it's easy to see how Trump might decide that an "America First," national interest-based foreign policy is compatible with letting the Israelis try to settle all accounts.

3) With that said, I'm unconvinced by the arguments from some writers on the nationalist right, such as Oren Cass and Daniel McCarthy, who have tried to square Trump's acceptance of the Israeli war with their own desire for American disentanglement from global obligations.

Of course one can square the two in theory — acceptance is not participation, and Israel's war need not be ours — but in practice wars are almost always engines of entanglement for great powers, whatever their initial intentions may be.

So you can tell yourself a story in which America just watches Israel's war play out and stays aloof even if Iran collapses in the manner of circa-2005 Iraq or post-Moammar Gadhafi Libya, because "America First" means that we don't worry

about regional stability anymore. But stories have to interface with reality, and I don't see anything in the current nature of America's relationship with the Gulf states or the Israelis to suggest that we wouldn't be caught up in a postwar mess. "America First" isn't a magic wand that does away with path dependency or makes the retreat from empire smooth. If Iran implodes, there will be crises we have to help manage, and a price we have to pay.

4) Last, it is by no means the most urgent question as the bombs and rockets fall, but one of my fears is that the price of a war against Iran that goes sideways will be paid inside American conservatism.

I've suggested before that anyone who fears the toxic elements at work on the contemporary right — the pull of paranoia, the openness to antisemitism, the impulse to take the "blackpill" of despair — should especially fear what might take root among disaffected right-wingers if Trumpism is seen to end in failure. And a reckless war in the Middle East, an echo of the Iraq disaster that implicates the right's long-standing loyalty to Israel, would be one of the most blackpillng ways for Trumpism to fail.

All active presidencies assume some risk of this sort. You can't let the fear of disillusionment stop you from making what seems like the correct strategic choice, and I am more hopeful about the potential success of a war against Iran than I would have been a year or two ago.

But that is not the same as being optimistic. — The New York Times

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Oman and Spain players during the match

SPAIN DEFEAT OMAN IN OPENER OF BEACH HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

The Oman U-17 national beach handball team began their campaign at the 2025 IHF Men’s Junior Beach Handball World Championship with a challenging match against Spain. The national team players suffered to a 2-0 loss against the European giants in straight sets (12-24, 12-24) in their opening Group A fixture.

Despite the defeat, Oman’s junior stars showed strong display and promising performance beside their determination against one of the tournament favorites and a strong contender for the championship title. Spain, the 2018 Youth Olympic gold medalists, showcased their experience and clinical execution throughout both halves. Oman’s standout performers were Yazan al Buraiki and Imað al Ghailani, who managed to contribute the majority of the team’s points and created several offensive threats with their agility and sharp movement during the opening match. The tough encounter, however, also highlighted Spain’s defensive strength, particularly their goalkeeper, who was a dominant presence throughout and thwarted several Omani scoring opportunities. With the triumph, Spain gained their first winning points while Oman met Puerto Rico late on Wednesday. The chances still high for the qualification to the second round due to Iran’s withdrawal from the group.

The first half saw Oman earned an initial possession after a strong defensive effort by Salim al Oraimi, but the team was unable to capitalise on early chances. Spain quickly bounced back and gained a two-point lead but Oman equalised through Yazan al Buraiki’s aggressive play, bringing the score to 4-4. A series of missed chances and continued brilliance from Spain’s goalkeeper allowed the Spanish team to pull away. Oman’s head coach, Jaber Yaqub al Balushi, called a timeout to regroup but Spain extended their lead as they ended the first half at 24-12.

In the following half, a similar scenario were delivered by national team players. Oman fought hard to gain momentum as Al Buraiki and Al Ghailani were stepping up. The match was tied as they reached to 6-6 draw in the early minutes but Spain gradually widened the gap to 14-6. After another timeout, Oman attempted a comeback as Al Ghailani made several successful runs down the right flank, scoring vital points. However, Spain maintained their dominance and sealed the match by taking the second half 24-12.

Coach Ammar al Kathiri joins ICAB programme



Al Kathiri expressed his pride and gratitude for the opportunity

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

THE Oman Basketball Association has announced the nomination of national coach Ammar al Kathiri to participate in the International Coaching Apprenticeship in Basketball (ICAB) programme. The initiative is organised by the University of Delaware in collaboration with the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), and the World Association of Basketball Coaches (WABC), with full support from the Olympic Solidarity programme. The programme will run from June to November 2025.

The ICAB programme is recognised globally as a leading initiative in developing basketball coaches, combining academic instruction with practical field experience. It comprises four interconnected phases designed to enhance coaching capabilities through a blend of theoretical and practical learning.

The first phase is an online module delivered twice monthly, featuring specialised lectures and applied assignments aimed at reinforcing modern coaching concepts. The second phase involves a two-day in-person module held on the University of Delaware campus, including interactive workshops and direct engagement with top training



The ICAB programme is recognised globally as a leading initiative in developing basketball coaches

experts from the US. The third phase is a hands-on field experience in which participants are integrated into NCAA Division I basketball team programmes. This phase offers close-up exposure to professional coaching methods and team management systems. The programme concludes with a final in-person unit where participants return to the University of Delaware to present their acquired knowledge and propose a professional development plan tailored to the needs of their home environments. Coach Ammar al Kathiri will travel to the United States to participate in the in-person components of the programme,

with all expenses covered by the Olympic Solidarity programme. In an exclusive statement, Al Kathiri expressed his pride and gratitude for the opportunity, saying Who wouldn’t dream of learning basketball from its very source in America? Living daily with NCAA teams and observing their operations closely is every coach’s dream. This is truly a priceless opportunity. He also appreciated the support of the OBA and the trust placed in him by the Technical Development Committee, adding This experience will be a turning point in my coaching career. We will be exposed to the latest theories and practices in the basketball world, and we’ll return with practical knowledge that can help develop the game locally. For his part, Abu Bakr al Jahwari, Vic-President of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) and Chairman of the Technical Development Committee, stated Coach Ammar’s nomination aligns with the Association’s strategy to empower national talents and expose them to world-class training experiences. We believe this investment will positively impact the future of basketball in Oman. He added Our partnership with Olympic Solidarity and the Oman Olympic Committee in such programs offers Omani coaches a unique opportunity to gain exposure to advanced methodologies and contribute to building a strong technical foundation for Omani basketball.

Alexander Zverev cruises past Giron in Halle opener

HALLE, Germany: Alexander Zverev’s hunt for an elusive grasscourt title began with a clinical 6-2 6-1 victory over Marcos Giron in the first round of the Halle Open on Wednesday in a match interrupted by an advertising hoarding falling on spectators. During the opening set, a section of an advertising hoarding came crashing down from the upper tier onto spectators below, forcing the chair umpire to stop play. Zverev immediately procured an ice pack for an elderly woman who pressed it against her neck and the players waited patiently while tournament organisers scrambled to provide medical assistance. Organisers said the 62-year-old

did not suffer any major injuries and was able to leave the stadium after the initial shock, but she was taken to hospital as a precaution. They added that drumming against the boards may have caused the screws to come loose. “There has never been anything like this in our 32-year tournament history. We deeply regret the incident,” tournament director Ralf Weber said in a statement. On court, Zverev finished the match with 23 winners in the 79-minute contest where Giron struggled to match the power of the German’s first serve and had no answer when his opponent’s returns found all corners of the court. World number three Zverev, still nursing the disappointment



of Sunday’s Stuttgart Open final defeat by Taylor Fritz, showed no mercy with the home fans firmly behind the towering second seed who has finished runner-up twice in Halle. “It was a great match for me,

I thought it was quite high level. Maybe he wanted to play a bit better than he did, but all in all I felt like I didn’t let him play that well, which was important for me,” Zverev said. THUNDEROUS SERVE Giron held his own early in the opening set with some deft touches and drop shots, but his resistance crumbled against Zverev’s thunderous serve, with the German finishing with 10 aces. The opening set’s final game became an unexpected epic as Giron saved four set points before Zverev finally secured it after 54 minutes of play. Any hopes of a comeback quickly evaporated as Zverev

reeled off seven consecutive games to take a 3-0 lead in the second set as Giron’s shoulders slumped. Giron’s double-fault count also increased at the wrong time and the German pounced to break before serving out the set. “I feel like when he’s on top of the ball, when he’s allowed to play, it’s very difficult with him because he moves quite well. He can control the rally quite well, so I had to take that away,” Zverev added. Earlier, eighth seed Karen Khachanov dispatched Belgium’s Zizou Bergs 7-5 6-3 despite a nasty fall on the grass. Third seed Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas are in action in the last 16 later. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



Joan Garcia. — AFP

GOALKEEPER GARCÍA JOINS BARCELONA FROM ESPANYOL

BERLIN: Barcelona are signing goalkeeper Joan Garcia on a six-year contract until 2031 from crosstown rivals Espanyol, the Spanish champions said on Wednesday.

Barca said that 24-year-old Garcia would put pen to paper on Friday after they activated his 25 million (\$28.8 million) release clause.

The club said that Garcia offers “immediate reliability and an even brighter future.”

The arrival of 24-year-old Garcia could spell bad news for their current first-choice keeper, German international Marc-André terStegen.

Barca’s statement came shortly after Garcia had announced his Espanyol exit in a video on Instagram.

“The time has come for us to part ways. Today I have to say goodbye to the club that has been my home since I was 15 years old,” he said.

Garcia joined Espanyol in 2016 and made his first team debut in 2021. He became first choice in 2023, and according to Barca was the goalkeeper with the most saves in the league at 146 in the past season.

He won Olympic gold last year with Spain and the Paris Games, and has one call-up for the senior national team.

Garcia’s arrival raises questions about the future of Ter Stegen at the club he joined in 2014.

The 33-year-old has been linked with other clubs such as Türkiye’s Galatasaray, but is said to be willing to fight for his first-choice status at Barca, where he has a contract until 2028.



Spain’s Carlos Alcaraz in action during his round of 32 match. — Reuters

Alcaraz wins testing Queen’s opener; Fritz, Shelton out

TOP seed Carlos Alcaraz got his grasscourt campaign up and running with a 6-4 7-6(4) victory over Australian Adam Walton to move into the last 16 at the Queen’s Club Championships on Tuesday.

Playing in his first match since his epic 5-½ hour French Open final victory over world number one Jannik Sinner nine days ago, Alcaraz was tested by Walton who had set points in the second set before the Spaniard recovered and won the tiebreak.

Alcaraz was meant to play compatriot Alejandro Davidovich Fokina but the Spaniard withdrew due to illness, giving lucky loser Walton the chance to play the French Open champion as he warmed up for his Wimbledon title defence.

“I realised that I was going to play against Adam after my warm-up... He has played a few matches already before this one. I think he played really great tennis,” said Alcaraz, the champion at Queen’s Club in 2023.

“It surprised me a little bit. So I knew that I was going to struggle a little bit today, but just really happy to get the win.

“I feel super happy to be back on grass. It is a special surface, a special place to me.”

Walton is ranked number 86 in the world and the Australian did not seem overawed by the occasion as he showcased some attacking tennis to hold serve until Alcaraz finally got to grips with the surface and



Taylor Fritz of the US in action during his round of 32 match. — Reuters

broke to take a 4-3 lead.

Alcaraz used serve and volley to good effect, showing finesse with some exquisite drop shots while he was also virtually unstoppable on serve, sealing the opening set with an ace.

But Walton held serve well in the second set and nearly broke Alcaraz with his first break points — which were also set points — when he was 5-4 up but the Spaniard held on.

Once he forced a tiebreak, there was no looking back as Alcaraz wrapped up the contest.

DRAPER ADVANCES, FRITZ OUT
French qualifier Corentin Moutet pulled off

the biggest win of his career, saving a match point to stun American third seed Taylor Fritz 6-7(5) 7-6(7) 7-5 in a marathon battle.

The 26-year-old, who earned just his second career victory over a Top-10 opponent, will face Britain’s Jacob Fearnley in the last 16.

Second seed Jack Draper warmed up the home crowd when he claimed an impressive 6-3 6-1 victory over American Jenson Brooksby for his first win on grass this season.

Draper had beaten defending champion Alcaraz in the second round last year and the Briton is hoping to improve on his quarterfinal run.

“It’s tricky coming onto the grass after clay, to adapt, I’m hitting the ball a bit late, not on time,” Draper said.

“The more matches and time I have on practice courts, I’ll get better and better. It’s definitely a surface I really enjoy playing on.”

Australia’s fifth seed Alex de Minaur bowed out of the tournament after a 6-4 6-2 loss to Jiri Lehecka while Alexei Popyrin beat Aleksandar Vukic 6-2 7-6(9) 7-6(3) in an all-Australian battle.

American sixth seed Ben Shelton, who had reached the semifinals in Stuttgart last week, was also knocked out in a 7-6(5) 7-6(4) loss to French qualifier Arthur Rinderknech.

— Reuters

Bangladesh tighten grip on first Sri Lanka Test

GALLE, Sri Lanka: Bangladesh continued their dominance over Sri Lanka on the second day of the first test on Wednesday, finishing at a commanding 484 for nine — despite a few late breakthroughs by the hosts.

The Tigers resumed on 292 for three overnight and turned the screws on a batting-friendly wicket, with Mushfiquir Rahim and Najmul Hossain Shanto extending their record-breaking partnership.

The 264-run partnership finally ended when Shanto fell for 148, deceived in the air as he attempted to drive one.

Shanto’s fluent innings was peppered with 15 boundaries and a six. Mushfiquir kept going with wicketkeeper Litton Das before finally falling for 163, a marathon knock that spanned nearly nine hours and 350 balls.



Bangladesh’s Mushfiquir Rahim plays a shot during the first day of the first Test cricket match. — AFP

Das piled on further misery for Sri Lanka with a brisk 90 off 123 deliveries, cashing in on tired

bowlers and some loose fielding. He was particularly severe on the spinners, using his feet to good

effect to lift the ball cleanly over the in-field.

But he also survived some anxious moments. Pathum Nissanka grassed a sitter at short mid-wicket when he had just 14 to his name.

Moments earlier, he had survived a run-out stemming from a mix-up. He eventually perished attempting a reverse sweep off debutant Tharindu Rathnayake, gloving it to Kusal Mendis behind the stumps.

Bangladesh batting coach Mohammad Salahuddin said it was a “very good effort by the batsmen”.

“We were very impressed with the way Mushfiquir Rahim went about things. He had not scored a big one in a while but we knew it was just a matter of time before he scored a big one,” Salahuddin said.

“They (batsmen) showed character and we have almost scored 500 runs now. I hope our bowlers

will be able to create opportunities bowling to attacking fields as we have got the runs on the board now. It will be an interesting day three.”

Sri Lanka’s Milan Rathnayake said it was one of the “flattest wickets we have seen in Galle”.

“It was a tough wicket to bowl on but I thought we did a decent job,” Rathnayake said.

“When they were building the pressure and taking the attack on to us, it was important to stay calm and show character. I thought after tea we came back stronger to claim five wickets.”

With rain interrupting play shortly after lunch, only 61 overs could be bowled on day two. A persistent drizzle forced an early tea and fading light ended proceedings prematurely. Play will resume fifteen minutes early on Thursday to compensate for the lost time. — AFP

SPORTS



Monterrey's Sergio Ramos scores their first goal. — Reuters

SERGIO RAMOS GIVES INTER A SCARE IN CLUB WORLD CUP STALEMATE

THE 39-year-old Spanish great Sergio Ramos scored as Monterrey held Inter Milan 1-1 in a hard-fought Fifa Club World Cup (CWC) Group E opener in Pasadena on Tuesday.

Argentine striker Lautaro Martinez scored a well-worked equaliser to cancel out Ramos's opener for the Mexican side in front of 40,311 fans at the Rose Bowl.

Inter, playing their first game since being thrashed 5-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final, were left ruing their failure to turn their dominance of possession and territory into goals.

But the draw was a boost for Ramos and Monterrey, who face Argentina's River Plate in their next game on Saturday. "When you don't get all three points you're never entirely happy," Ramos, the former Spain and Real Madrid defender, said.

Martinez also went close after 36 minutes, and Inter had a strong penalty appeal when Pavard's header struck Ramos on the arm inside the area. VAR found in favor of Ramos and Monterrey escaped.

"But one point is better than no point.

"They were a tough opponent and have just played in the final of the Champions League. We were a little bit nervous but in the second half we stayed organised and kept the ball better.

"Now we need to think about the next game."

Inter coach Cristian Chivu said his team had struggled to break down a Monterrey team who sat deep for long periods.

"We played well in the first half even though we went behind," Chivu said. "We could have attacked better in the second half. It's not easy to play against a very low block."

Chivu, in his first match in charge after the departure of Simone Inzaghi, denied the Champions League finalists had underestimated the Mexicans.

"We respect every team we play and we knew what kind of team they were, we tried to do our best," he said.

"Sometimes you get the best out of it, sometimes you don't. We created a lot of chances. Football's not won on paper."

ALL INTER

The Italians were in complete control almost from the kick-off, Benjamin Pavard the first to threaten with an eighth-minute shot that flew over the bar.

Matteo Darmian should have done better in the 22nd minute but shot over after clever work down the left from Nicolo Barella.

Yet despite the early onslaught, Inter were rocked in the 25th minute when Monterrey scored from one of their few forays into the Italians' half.

Midfielder Oliver Torres swung a corner in from the right and Ramos — who had lost Francesco Acerbi on the edge of the six-yard box — steered his header into the bottom corner.

Inter were soon back on the offensive and only a point-blank save by Monterrey goalkeeper Esteban Andrada from Sebastiano Esposito prevented an equaliser.

Martinez also went close after 36 minutes, and Inter had a strong penalty appeal when Pavard's header struck Ramos on the arm inside the area. VAR found in favor of Ramos and Monterrey escaped.

Three minutes later Inter drew level with a wonderfully worked free-kick routine. Albanian international Kristjan Asllani shaped to shoot from 25 yards out but instead flighted a delicate chip behind the Monterrey defence.

Brazilian international Carlos Augusto timed his run to perfection and squared into the path of Martinez, who tapped in for 1-1.

Monterrey almost regained the lead against the run of play on 64 minutes, Sergio Canales unleashing a low shot that cannoned off the post.

Inter had a Martinez goal ruled out for offside moments later as the Italians continued to threaten. But it was Monterrey who came closest to grabbing a winner in stoppage time when Colombian midfielder Nelson Deossa got behind the Inter defence but could only shoot into the side netting.

— AFP

CLUB WORLD CUP RESULTS:

Group E

In Seattle

River Plate (ARG) 3 (Colidio 12, Driussi 48, Meza 73) Urawa Red Diamonds (JPN) 1 (Matsuo 58-pen)

Group F

In East Rutherford

Fluminense (BRA) 0 Borussia Dortmund (GER) 0

In Orlando

Ulsan HD (KOR) 0 Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA) 1 (Rayners 36)

Group E

In Pasadena

Monterrey (MEX) 1 (Ramos 25) Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Martinez 42)

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التي لا تغطي منتجات الشركة المنتجة التي تم توزيعها في الأسواق المحلية

بموجب قانون التجارة

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ENHANCEDCOOPERATION



The agreements reflect Oman's proactive approach to securing strategic infrastructure funding and reinforcing its long-term development goals.

OMAN SIGNS KEY FINANCING DEALS AT OFID FORUM IN VIENNA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has taken part in the 2025 Annual Forum of the Opec Fund for International Development (OFID), held in Vienna under the theme “Transformation Empowering Our Future”.

Oman's delegation, led by Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, participated in discussions centred on sustainable development financing, economic transformation in developing countries, climate change resilience and the role of digital innovation in fostering robust economies.

On the sidelines of the forum, Al Harthy met with officials from OFID and other regional and international financial institutions to enhance cooperation.

A significant outcome of Oman's participation was the signing of two key agreements with OFID. The first agreement will finance the implementation of the Khasab–Dibba–Lima Road Project (Sultan Faisal bin Turki Road), while the second is a five-year framework agreement aimed at deepening collaborative efforts between Oman and OFID.

In addition, a separate financing agreement was signed with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. The agreement supports the first phase of the Surface Water Drainage Project in Al Rawdha Economic Zone, Al Buraimi Governorate. — ONA

Freehold ownership to drive SEZ investment

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

THE opportunity for foreigners to own residential property on a freehold basis in Oman's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Free Zones is expected to significantly enhance the investment appeal of Oman's expanding portfolio of industrial and economic hubs.

This provision is a key feature of the Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, promulgated under Royal Decree No 38/2025 on April 7, 2025, and effective from April 14, 2025.

Article 42 of the law, titled Land Allocation and Freehold Sale of Units, states: “A real estate developer may sell the units of these projects to non-Omanis — whether they are natural or legal persons — as freehold, in the manner specified by the regulation.”

An explanatory note published by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) clarifies that land for real estate development projects within SEZs is allocated through usufruct rights.

However, under the new law, developers may sell residential units within these projects to non-Omanis on a freehold basis.

“It permits real estate developers to sell project units to non-Omanis under the freehold system, a legal framework that allows buyers to fully and permanently own property without restrictions on the ownership period. In other words, individuals possess absolute ownership of the property and may dispose of it in accordance with the regulations set forth by the Authority,” OPAZ stated.

“This type of ownership presents an attractive option for investors and buyers seeking long-term stability and permanent property ownership,” the Authority



Under the new law, developers may sell residential units within these projects to non-Omanis on a freehold basis. (Picture for illustration)

“It permits real estate developers to sell project units to non-Omanis under the freehold system, a legal framework that allows buyers to fully and permanently own property without restrictions on the ownership period.

emphasised.

Until now, freehold property ownership for foreigners was limited to Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) — zones designated by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

As of mid-2023, around 19 ITCs were operational or under development across Oman, offering thousands of residential units for foreign investment.

In March 2025, the ministry announced that 13 additional ITCs are under development, with a further 12 in the pipeline, as part of efforts to strengthen investment in Oman's growing tourism sector.

With the extension of freehold

ownership rights to SEZs and Free Zones, Oman is poised for a surge in foreign investment in residential real estate, particularly in high-growth industrial and logistics hubs.

OPAZ currently manages an extensive portfolio of 23 investment zones, comprising SEZs, free zones, industrial cities, economic cities, an airport free zone and a dedicated IT park.

Several more developments are in early planning or construction stages, aligning with Oman's national drive for economic diversification, industrial resilience, job creation and foreign direct investment (FDI) attraction.

As of end-2024, the total volume of investments in OPAZ-managed assets rose by 10% to approximately RO 21 billion. The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) accounted for RO 6.3 billion, while free zones collectively attracted RO 6.6 billion. Meanwhile, industrial cities saw cumulative investments reaching RO 7.6 billion.

Oman and EU target energy synergies through innovation and storage

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

THE Sultanate Oman and the European Union (EU) are exploring deeper collaboration to accelerate the energy transition through innovative technologies, smarter infrastructure and long-duration storage systems. This was the key message that emerged from a session of the EU-Oman Energy and Water Collaboration Forum, held recently in Muscat under the theme “How Can Oman and the EU Work Together to Optimise the Energy Mix?”

The high-level panel brought together energy experts from Oman and Europe to explore how partnerships can help optimise energy resources, enhance grid resilience and support Oman's ambitious sustainability targets.

Moderator Said al Kamyani, Sustainability Specialist, set the tone by highlighting the urgency of building diversified and secure energy systems. He guided the



Technologies like CO₂, batteries and pumped hydro are essential to support the stability and scalability of Oman's renewable and hydrogen ambitions. Image for illustration only.

discussion across a range of topics, including regulatory frameworks, advanced technologies and the growing role of energy storage in stabilising renewables.

Thuraiya al Wahaibi, Senior Product Engineer at Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP), shared Oman's clean energy targets of 30% renewables by 2030 and 60% by 2040, alongside net-zero emissions by 2050. She

outlined Nama PWP's road map, which includes more than eight upcoming solar and wind projects, as well as ongoing studies into pumped hydro and geothermal energy.

“Oman's regulatory environment and public-private partnership model are strong foundations,” she said, “but scaling up will require stronger collaboration on technologies like smart grids, storage and system integration.”

Dr Yves-Laurent Beck, Hydropower Project Manager at French utility EDF, emphasised the suitability of pumped hydro energy storage for Oman's mountainous terrain. Citing EDF's global expertise and its work on the Hatta Pumped Storage Plant in the UAE, he advocated for long-term collaboration and capacity-building in Oman.

“Pumped hydro with variable-speed turbines can offer flexibility and grid stability, particularly as renewable energy sources become

dominant,” Dr Beck noted.

Storage solutions were further explored by Paul Smith, Senior Vice-President of Global Sales at Energy Dome. He introduced the company's CO₂ Battery — an innovative long-duration storage solution with a 30-year lifespan that uses carbon dioxide in a closed cycle. “Our technology is a cost-effective answer to grid intermittency and is fully compatible with green hydrogen production,” Smith explained. “Oman's ambition to lead in hydrogen makes it an ideal partner for such solutions.”

Henrico van den Boomen, CEO of Eigenenergie.net, stressed the importance of modernising grid infrastructure in parallel with the rollout of renewables. Drawing from the Dutch experience, he cautioned against underestimating the complexity of grid adaptation.

“Europe faced delays due to slow planning on local balancing and smart systems,” he said. “Oman has the advantage of foresight

— now is the time to invest in decentralised systems and advanced energy management.”

Khalfan al Burtamani, Chief Commercial Officer at Nama Electricity Distribution, shared Oman's progress in digital infrastructure. He pointed to the deployment of smart meters — now covering 77% of the system — and the SABIQ prepayment platform.

“Advanced Metering Infrastructure is a game-changer,” he said. “But we also need policies that keep pace with innovation, especially as grid pressure, cybersecurity and resilience become more complex.”

The session closed with a consensus on the need for flexible, forward-looking regulatory frameworks and stakeholder coordination. Panellists agreed that technologies like CO₂ batteries and pumped hydro are essential to support the stability and scalability of Oman's renewable and hydrogen ambitions.

ADVERTORIALS

KEYPILLAR



The initiative is a key pillar of BankDhofar’s broader commitment to creating a meaningful and lasting impact on communities across Oman.

BANKDHO FAR
DELIVERS ON
CSR VISION WITH
HOUSING SUPPORT

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR), BankDhofar has contributed to the construction of housing units in the “Hay Al Ataa” neighbourhood in Al Khabourah for families impacted by the extreme weather conditions of 2022.

The first phase of the project was officially inaugurated last week under the auspices of Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

The ceremony was attended by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, alongside other dignitaries and partner representatives.

The initiative is a key pillar of BankDhofar’s broader commitment to creating a meaningful and lasting impact on communities across Oman.

As one of the leading financial institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, BankDhofar champions social investment through initiatives that promote wellbeing, economic participation and sustainability — especially for vulnerable groups and small business owners.

The first phase of the “Hay Al Ataa” housing project includes 35 fully equipped residential units, each measuring 272 square metres, developed at a total cost of RO 1.6 million.

In keeping with Oman’s national sustainability goals, the homes incorporate solar power and water purification systems, setting a benchmark for resilient, environmentally friendly housing.

BankDhofar’s CSR footprint extends beyond housing.

The Bank was also a proud sponsor of the annual “Ataa” exhibition organised by the Dar Al Atta’a Association during Ramadhan.

The event serves a dual purpose: raising funds for charitable causes and providing a marketing platform for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Through such support, BankDhofar contributes not only to social solidarity but also to the long-term viability of Oman’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In line with its ongoing support for SMEs, BankDhofar opened over 13,000 new SME accounts in 2024 alone — boosting financial inclusion and economic resilience.

The Bank also continues to invest in initiatives aimed at enhancing financial literacy, expanding access to banking services and empowering individuals with disabilities, thereby helping build a more inclusive and equitable economy.

Bank Muscat
wins best bank
and customer-
centric services
awards

MUSCAT: In recognition of its role as the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat recently won the award for Best Bank in Oman and Excellence in Customer-Centric Financial Services from Oman Economic Review at the New Age Banking Summit 2025.

The awards were handed over by Ahmed Jaffar al Musalmi, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman to Saleh Mohammed al Maaini, Deputy General Manager — Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, at a special awards ceremony attended by senior bankers, fintech experts, finance and investment professionals, insurance experts and business consultants.

On this occasion, Saleh Mohammed al Maaini, Deputy General Manager — Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, said: “These awards are a recognition not only of recent accomplishments, but also of

the Bank’s enduring leadership over the decades.

Bank Muscat is keen to continue its market-leading position in the Sultanate of Oman’s financial services sector by further enhancing Customer Experience, Digital Transformation and Public-Private Partnership, while also expanding its social impact through a large number of sustainability and social responsibility programmes and initiatives.”

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OWN a Toyota Prado and get exclusive benefits. Enjoy free service from 3 years / 30,000 km up to 10 years / 100,000 km (whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance and Scratch & Win prizes. In addition, they gain entry into a Raffle Draw to win one of iPhone 16 Pro Max and a chance to win one of five international holiday packages to Istanbul for two adults (4 nights, 5 days) in the Grand Raffle Draw.

(Terms & Conditions apply. Benefits vary by model, variant, model year and manufacturing year. Customers are encouraged to visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for full details.) The campaign that began on June 1 will last until July 31, 2025.

For decades, the Prado has been the trusted companion of off-road adventurers and city drivers alike. Now, in its latest generation, it raises the



The Prado has been the trusted companion of off-road adventurers .

bar even higher with enhanced capability, superior comfort and a bold, retro-inspired presence that commands attention on every road. Built on Toyota’s advanced GA-F platform, the Prado delivers unmatched durability and stability across challenging terrains.

Whether navigating rocky trails, cruising through the city, or taking on long road

trips across Oman’s diverse landscapes, the Prado ensures a confident and controlled drive.

Retaining its robust body-on-frame construction, the Prado introduces Electric Power Steering (EPS), which offers smoother handling, reduces kickback on uneven surfaces and provides effortless manoeuvrability at any speed.

Drivers can choose between a 2.4L Turbo Petrol or a 2.8L Turbo Diesel engine, each paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission, delivering a perfect blend of power, precision and efficiency.

Inside, the Prado offers a thoughtfully designed seven-seat cabin that speaks to both strength and sophistication.

The spacious interior is crafted for families and adventurers who value comfort as much as capability, while Toyota Safety Sense ensures that every journey is safer, smarter and more relaxing.

AL MOUJ MUSCAT WINS AT REAL ESTATE ASIA AWARDS 2025

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat has been recognised with two prestigious awards at the Real Estate Asia Awards 2025, securing international acclaim for excellence in master planning and mixed-use development. The ceremony held recently at the Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore, brought together the region’s leading developments in a celebration of innovation and urban transformation.

Al Mouj Muscat was recognised as “Masterplan Development of the Year — Oman,” highlighting its role as “Oman’s First Integrated, Mixed-Use Waterfront Community” and “Mixed-Use Development of the Year — Oman” for its landmark “Quayside” development. As the only Omani development to be honoured across multiple categories, the achievement



The achievement reinforces Al Mouj Muscat’s competitive standing and innovative approach within the Asia-wide real estate industry.

reinforces Al Mouj Muscat’s competitive standing and innovative approach within the Asia-wide real estate industry. The Real Estate Asia Awards are judged by a distinguished panel of international real estate

leaders and industry experts, recognising outstanding projects and developers that set new benchmarks in urban development.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, commented, “We are immensely proud to receive these awards, which endorse our commitment to excellence, innovation and sustainable urban development.

Al Mouj Muscat continues to be an inspiring benchmark of integrated communities and these honours further motivate us to elevate our standards, delivering exceptional lifestyle experience for our residents, visitors and broader community.”

“Quayside” has been honoured for its visionary integration of retail, lifestyle and community amenities. Its thoughtful design creates a vibrant and welcoming

environment, leveraging advanced architectural solutions to maintain outdoor comfort year-round, effectively enhancing community engagement and the overall urban experience.

The award for “Masterplan Development of the Year” celebrates Al Mouj Muscat’s success in creating a cohesive and sustainable waterfront community.

This integrated master plan strategically combines residential, commercial, leisure and recreational elements, offering residents and visitors a uniquely balanced lifestyle and setting a benchmark for future urban development in Oman and beyond.

These accolades further solidify Al Mouj Muscat’s reputation as an industry leader in sustainable and innovative urban living.

Sidrah 4.0 opens applications: Calling Oman’s next generation of leaders

MUSCAT: Sidrah 4.0, the celebrated youth leadership initiative designed to inspire and equip young Omani women, has officially opened applications.

Since its inception in June 2022, Sidrah has supported over 169 graduates from 11 governorates, who have gone on to launch projects, step into management roles and contribute meaningfully in multiple ways.

Co-designed and co-delivered by Lahunna



Sidrah 4.0 seeks Omani women aged 20-33 from across the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman in collaboration with Outward Bound Oman, Sidrah 4.0 seeks Omani women aged 20-33 from across the Sultanate of Oman.

This three-month programme offers a blend of immersive outdoor experiences, engaging workshops, mentorship, online courses and professional coaching, closely aligning with Oman Vision 2040 priorities.

“Sidrah offers Omani women the tools, confidence

and inspiration to shape their futures and drive positive change in their communities,” said Shatha al Maskiry, Founder of Lahunna Oman.

“We’re excited to welcome a new group of ambitious young women ready to embrace this transformative journey.”

Mohammed al Zadjali, Acting Executive Director of Outward Bound Oman, added: “We look forward to hosting a new group of young

Omani women in our Al Jabal Al Akhdhar training centre where they will embark on an immersive and inspiring educational and training journey through the Sidrah programme. We hope that the programme will build on its success in its fourth edition and contribute to supporting female leadership in the Sultanate of Oman.”

Sidrah 4.0 is proudly sponsored by Oman Shell and OQ, Al Wisal, Merge 104.8 and Virgin Radio Oman.

BUSINESS

NEWS



The two-day meeting was organised as part of the FSA's commitment to engaging with the stakeholder community when developing regulatory schemes.

FSA GEARS UP FOR SECOND PHASE OF DHAMANI PLATFORM

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

THE Financial Services Authority (FSA) convened a meeting of representatives of insurance companies and private healthcare institutions for a discussion on the second phase of the Dhamani national insurance platform.

As part of the second phase, the electronic platform will be prepped for the processing and exchange of medical documents such as x-rays, prescriptions and medical referrals between private healthcare institutions and insurance companies, on the one hand, and between all hospitals, complexes, clinics and specialised health centres, on the other hand.

The two-day meeting was organised as part of the FSA's commitment to engaging with the stakeholder community when developing any regulatory schemes.

The meeting reviewed the nature of the components of the phase with the relevant parties to identify mechanisms for dealing with them, in addition to discussing and addressing key challenges expected during its rollout.

The Dhamani also regulates health insurance transactions by linking operational and financial transactions between insurance companies, private healthcare institutions; health insurance claims administrators and regulators including government entities supervising the insurance market and private healthcare institutions.

It is worth noting that the platform proved its efficiency and digital effectiveness during the operational period, as the number of health insurance transactions concluded through the platform reached more than 4 million transactions until the end of May 2025.

All insurance institutions were linked to this platform, in addition to all 33 private hospitals licensed by the Ministry of Health. As for linkages by other parties, it includes 37 private health complexes so far, 20 clinics, and 44 health centres.

The platform also serves more than 650,000 health insurance policyholders with a data and information exchange rate of up to 40,000 transactions per day.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE INDEX SLIGHTLY INCREASES

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 Index closed on Wednesday at 4,520.45 points, up 0.05 points, or 0.001 per cent, compared to the last trading session's close of 4,520.41 points.

Trading value reached RO 17,284,826, a 15-per cent increase compared to the last trading session's value of RO 15,032,224.

A report issued by the MSX indicated that market capitalisation increased by 0.057 per cent from the last trading day, reaching approximately RO 28.26 billion. — ONA

MORE TRANSPARENT

AliExpress to tackle illegal products



Chinese online marketplace AliExpress is to take stronger action against illegal and potentially dangerous products such as medicines and food supplements following pressure from the European Commission.

The commission said that consumers will be able to report suspicious products more easily, while the platform has promised to make recommendation systems more transparent. — dpa

OQGN AWARDS RO 105 MILLION GAS PIPELINE CONTRACT

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks SAOG (OQGN), the owner and operator of Oman's gas transportation system, has announced the award of a contract worth RO 105 million for the implementation of the Second Loop Line Fahud-Suhar project – a key initiative to boost the country's gas supply network.

In a filing to the Omani bourse on Wednesday, June 18, 2025, OQGN – part of OQ Group – said the contract, covering the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) of the 193-



The 193-km pipeline will boost the capacity of OQGN's gas supply system

km 42-inch pipeline project, was awarded to the Petroleum Projects Company Petrojet and Partners LLC.

Also as part of the project execution strategy, a related contract for the supply of 193 kilometres of line pipe was awarded to Jindal Saw Limited. The planned execution duration of the project is 24 months.

"The project aligns with the company's growth strategy and vision in leading the energy infrastructure," OQGN added.

Boosting egg production amid growing demand

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 18

OMAN Flour Mills, through its subsidiary Arabian Food Production, is producing an impressive 500 million eggs annually and has announced plans to expand output by 15 per cent over the next two years.

According to Dr Suheel Ahmed, CEO of Arabian Food Production, this strategic expansion aligns with the Sultanate of Oman's drive towards food security and self-sufficiency.

"We are committed to strengthening our contribution to the local market while maintaining a robust export base," he said, adding that Oman reached 102 per cent self-sufficiency in egg production in 2024. Currently, 25 per cent of the company's egg production is exported to neighbouring countries including the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait.

However, seasonal shifts in consumption continue to pose a challenge. "Demand typically dips in summer, during school holidays, and throughout Ramadhan. While



Currently, 25 per cent of the company's egg production is exported to neighbouring countries including the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait.

our production cycle can't adapt to these fluctuations, we manage the surplus by expanding our regional distribution network," Dr Ahmed explained.

To ensure top-quality production, the company has invested heavily in advanced technologies at its new farm. Modern equipment minimises human contact, reduces labour costs, and ensures precise control over environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity. "Our automated

systems collect, grade and package over 1.3 million eggs daily, enhancing hygiene and reducing breakage," he said.

Beyond productivity gains, sustainability is also a core focus. The company has introduced energy- and water-efficient systems and ensures all poultry waste is treated on-site to reduce environmental impact.

Additionally, culled birds are processed into poultry meal and fat, which are supplied to other industries such as pet food

manufacturing.

Dr Ahmed emphasised that maintaining high standards would not be possible without strong international partnerships. Arabian Food Production sources its birds from the German Lohmann breed and collaborates with leading global machinery manufacturers. Japanese firm ISE Foods, a key shareholder, also provides technical expertise to support ongoing improvements.

Musandam meeting seeks to boost exports, imports

KHASAB: Sayyid Ibrahim Said Al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam chaired a meeting today with government officials, private sector representatives, specialists, and members of the municipal council to discuss ways to enhance export and import activities through the governorate's official ports, particularly Khasab Port, which serves as a vital hub for economic development in the region.

The meeting comes as part of broader efforts to maximise the benefits of Musandam's strategic location and logistical potential, supporting economic growth and contributing to the national



The meeting comes as part of broader efforts to maximise the benefits of Musandam's strategic location. — ONA

objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Discussions focused on streamlining the movement of goods, developing infrastructure to strengthen the logistics sector, and exploring mechanisms to boost cross-border trade while increasing local value-added through export promotion and import diversification.

The attendees also emphasized the importance of generating direct and indirect employment opportunities for the locals of Musandam through these activities, reinforcing sustainable development in the governorate. — ONA

GAINS SHORTLY

Dollar steadies, Yen rises after BoJ decision



The dollar yesterday steadied while the yen rose following the Bank of Japan's (BoJ) rate decision. Against a basket of currencies, the dollar was little changed at 98.13.

The yen swung between losses and gains shortly after the decision before turning decisively higher, and was last up roughly 0.2% at 144.50 per dollar.

In the broader market, the dollar held largely steady. — ONA

SUPPLY DISRUPTION

Oil steadies as conflict enters sixth day



Oil prices steadied on Wednesday, after a gain of 4% in the previous session, as markets weighed up the chance of supply disruptions from the Iran-Israel conflict and as they ponder a direct US involvement.

Brent crude futures gained 16 cents, or 0.2%, to \$76.45 a barrel by 1058 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 17 cents, also 0.2%, to \$73.28 per barrel. — Reuters

OPINION

Strengthening the MSX is a national imperative



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

THE Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is working to strengthen the institution's activities to position it among the region's financial markets in the coming period and to attract more investments to the Omani capital market.

Recently, the MSX, in cooperation with the Gulf Capital Markets Association (GCMA), hosted a financial conference attended by several prominent figures in the financial and investment sectors.

The conference focused on discussing the most prominent challenges and opportunities facing the region's financial markets in light of current economic and technological changes, and ways to develop a more efficient and attractive investment environment.

The goal of this activity was to enhance the position of the Omani capital market, making it an advanced financial centre, and to provide an integrated investment environment in line with international best practices.

The question raised in this regard is related to the causes required to make the Muscat Stock Exchange an attractive market for domestic and foreign investments, and to understand the challenges facing the market at this stage.

There are several factors that can be worked on to improve the stock market's operations and make it more attractive, including diversifying investment

instruments and developing and expanding trading mechanisms and securities, such as providing investment funds and new financial instruments to increase diversity and attract a larger segment of investors.

It is also crucial to enhance transparency and corporate governance standards and implement international standards to ensure the protection of investor rights and reduce risks.

Furthermore, it is important to improve the systems and technologies used in trading to provide a faster and safer environment, while relying on financial technology (FinTech), facilitating procedures, reducing bureaucracy and improving registration and approval procedures to make the market more flexible and responsive to investor demands.

Finally, it is important to raise awareness about investment opportunities and the importance of sustainability and social responsibility to attract investors who focus on these standards.

In addition, it is important to encourage foreign direct investment, issue legislation that encourages foreign investors, and provide incentives and facilitation for market entry. The Omani stock market faces several challenges, including a lack of liquidity and weak trading volume, which reduces its attractiveness and limits investors' ability to enter and exit easily. It also relies heavily on changes occurring in the oil and energy

There are several factors that can be worked on to improve the stock market's operations and make it more attractive, including diversifying investment instruments and developing and expanding trading mechanisms and securities, such as providing investment funds and new financial instruments to increase diversity and attract a larger segment of investors.

sector, making the market vulnerable to global economic fluctuations.

Some believe there is a need to further improve governance and disclosure standards, increase investor confidence and close legislative gaps that could lead to uncertainty or reduce investment incentives.

They also believe there is a need to increase the number of financial institutions and related services to provide adequate investment support tools and mechanisms.

It is also important to enhance financial literacy and raise awareness of the importance of long-term investment and sustainability.

The market must have a comprehensive strategic vision focused on diversifying the economy and achieving political and regulatory stability to attract more investment.

In order to enhance the daily buying and selling activity in the Omani stock market and increase trading volume, there are several factors and methods that can be developed and improved, the most important of which are increasing market liquidity, improving the market's ability to provide diverse and attractive financial instruments, in addition to encouraging investors to submit their trades by offering incentive programmes, especially for individual investors that can increase investors' ability to execute transactions quickly and without delay.

CHINA AI PUSH
WRITES SOURCE CODE
FOR TECH M&A BOOM

ROBYN MAK

Artificial intelligence is powering China tech's M&A resurgence. Video-games giant Tencent and Alibaba are eyeing acquisitions again, in the latest sign that sidelined stars are out of the sin bin. But chipmaking is driving most deals this year, like Hygon's \$16 billion mega-merger with supercomputer maker Sugon.

A crackdown to rein in what Beijing deemed the "reckless expansion of capital" had cast a chill on dealmaking among the country's once-acquisitive private-sector giants.

The campaign, which kicked off when officials derailed Ant's public debut in late 2020, saw antitrust regulators hit e-commerce group Alibaba with a record \$2.8 billion fine and scupper Tencent's \$5 billion merger of two local streaming units, among other things.

By 2022, onshore M&A activity in tech and publishing had more than halved in value from the previous year, to \$51 billion, according to data from Dealogic. Last year, just \$42 billion worth of deals were announced. Outbound acquisitions have similarly slowed, hitting just \$8 billion in 2024.

Things are starting to look up. Last week, Tencent's music streaming arm said it would buy domestic podcast specialist Ximalaya for \$2.4 billion in cash and stock.

The parent company may also be keeping an eye overseas: Bloomberg reported that it had studied a deal for Tokyo-listed Nexon, though someone close to Tencent said that it was not considering an acquisition of the \$16 billion game developer.

Even Alibaba, which has focused more on offloading non-core assets under boss Eddie Wu, is back on the hunt: last month, it bought \$250 million worth of convertible bonds in photo app Meitu as part of a broader partnership.

Even so, a new crop of chipmakers and AI outfits, rather than established Internet giants, has taken the lead in M&A activity. That's largely thanks to Beijing pushing for consolidation in the country's fragmented semiconductor industry, which has been hobbled by US export controls and sanctions.

AI chipmaker Hygon Information Technology is answering the call by merging with Sugon in what will be this year's biggest local tech deal.

Other recent chip-related activity includes memory specialist YMTC's \$1.3 billion fundraising and National Silicon Industry's near-\$1 billion investment in a peer.

More tie-ups are on the way. According to media reports, the government wants to consolidate some 200-plus chip equipment suppliers to just 10, though officials have yet to confirm this. Regardless, in both state policy and boardrooms, AI is taking centre stage. — Reuters

Finance chiefs call for
'clearer' tax policy

UK Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, is facing pressure to provide a "clearer, more stable tax environment," when she delivers her growth strategy next month. The Chancellor is once again in the spotlight after a damning report from finance bosses indicated the industry was prepped to support growth ambitions, but structural barriers were holding them back.

Top players in the financial services ecosystem – KPMG, UK Finance and PIMFA (Personal Investment Management & Financial Advice) – said "potential will remain untapped unless underlying structural challenges' are addressed". The report said reforms to tax policy posed a "valuable opportunity" to drive up greater confidence".

Business confidence sank in the fall out of Reeves' maiden Budget, where taxes were hiked £40bn. The Chancellor's controversial change to employer's national insurance came into effect last month, with rates for firms upped from 1.2 per cent to 15 per cent.

Managing director of personal finance at UK Finance, Eric Lendeers, said: "Investors and firms need stability to make informed decisions and to invest for the future. Mixed signals on taxation only compound the problem."

He added it was crucial to avoid "knee-jerk reactions" on tax policy. The Chancellor is facing mounting speculation of another tax hike after it was calculated half of her £9.9bn in fiscal headroom had been wiped out just 48 hours after the Spring Statement.

Chief executive at PIMFA, Liz Field, said: "Uncertainty surrounding non-dom tax status has driven more capital and talent overseas which impacts UK investment and competitiveness."

Field added: "Frequent shifts and speculations around issues like tax-free cash, pensions, and ISAs undermine confidence and disrupt financial planning for clients."

Reeves inaugural Financial Services Growth and Competitiveness Strategy is



Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves gives a speech at the Treasury in London, Britain. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

pencilled in for July 15, when the industry will be anticipating the Chancellor's plans to boost the economy.

Partner at KPMG UK, Daniel Barry, said: "As risk to the UK's finance stability are rising, the government has a significant opportunity to instil greater confidence among sector leaders at a time of great uncertainty and geopolitical volatility."

The report from KPMG, UK Finance and PIMFA compiles views from chief executives and senior leaders across the private bank and wealth management industry, as well as financial advice and related services.

The sector holds over £1.6 trillion in assets and bosses said reforms were needed to "unlock the full potential".

Field said: "There's a concern across our sector that without a more stable, proportionate and joined-up policy environment, we risk missing a vital opportunity to unlock investment, drive innovation, and promote greater financial resilience across society."

The Chancellor is facing mounting speculation of another tax hike after it was calculated half of her £9.9 bn in fiscal headroom had been wiped out just 48 hours after the Spring Statement.

A separate issue that is causing concern to firms in the UK is the Employment Rights Bill which is currently progressing through parliament and expected to become law in the coming months.

Small business owners would continue hiring new staff despite fears around the government's workers' rights package if it contained a rebate on the overhaul's new sick pay rules.

According to a poll by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), 35 per cent of entrepreneurs and small business owners believe that a rebate for their firms over sick pay would make them employ people currently out of work.

The government claims its Employment Rights Bill represents the biggest overhaul of workers' rights in a generation. Other important changes within the package include outlawing 'exploitative' zero-hours contracts and so-called 'fire and rehire' practices.

Under the current package, bosses have to grant staff statutory sick pay from their first day of employment, removing the current waiting period of three days.

But small businesses fear the sick pay reform will cost them millions and deter them from taking on new employees.

Of the 92 per cent of FSB members who have concerns about the workers' rights bill, 74 per cent believe they will recruit fewer workers. Executive director of the FSB, Craig Beaumont, said the spending review was an opportunity for the Chancellor to incorporate the sick pay demands of small businesses.

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ART/LIFE



A R T

HOW AN OMANI ARTISAN CRAFTS STORIES IN CLAY BRINGING TRADITION INTO THE FUTURE > 20

ENTERTAINMENT

Tom Cruise, Dolly Parton to receive honorary Oscars



ACTION MOVIE star Tom Cruise and singer and actor Dolly Parton are among the luminaries selected to receive honorary Oscars this year for lifetime achievements, Hollywood’s film academy said on Tuesday.

Actor and choreographer Debbie Allen and production designer Wynn Thomas also were selected for recognition by the board of governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

The honourees will receive their Oscar statuettes at the annual Governors Awards gala in November.

Cruise, currently starring in “Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning,” was selected for his decades of work in “Risky Business,” two “Top Gun” movies and several other films. He was nominated for best actor twice, for “Born on the Fourth of July” and “Jerry Maguire,” as well as best supporting actor for “Magnolia.”

“Tom Cruise’s incredible commitment to our film-making community, to the theatrical experience, and to the stunts community has inspired us all,” Academy President Janet Yang said in a statement.

Parton, a country music singer and star of movies including “Steel Magnolias” and “The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas,” will receive the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for her charitable efforts. Parton’s Imagination Library has provided more than 284 million free books to children over 30 years, according to the organisation’s website. She received two Oscar nominations for best song, for the films “9 to 5” and “Transamerica.”

Allen, an actor in movies such as “Fame” and “Ragtime,” choreographed the Academy Awards ceremony seven times and several films.

Production designer Thomas worked on several Spike Lee Films including “She’s Gotta Have It” and “Do the Right Thing,” as well as best picture winner “A Beautiful Mind.” — Reuters

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



MUSIC

British singer Neil Tennant of Pet Shop Boys band performs at Iconica Fest in Seville, southern Spain. —AFP



FILM

US actor Brad Pitt attends the world premiere of “F1” at Times Square in New York. —AFP



TRAVEL

A full moon, known as the Strawberry Moon, rises over the ancient Greek temple of Poseidon on Cape Sounion, near Athens, Greece. — AFP

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‘Jurassic World: Rebirth’ brings fans back to dangerous dinosaur realm



SCARLETT JOHANSSON’S role in “Jurassic World: Rebirth” made her recall her earliest memories of the dinosaur film franchise. The “Black Widow” actor recalled seeing the first “Jurassic Park” film at the movie theatre when she was 10 years old. “It imprinted on me very deeply,” she told Reuters at the London premiere at Odeon Luxe Leicester Square. “For the next three decades, I was like, I would have done anything to be in a Jurassic movie in any capacity,” she added. The franchise, created by Michael Crichton, has spawned several films, merchandising deals and video games. “Jurassic World: Rebirth,” directed by Gareth Edwards, follows a team of specialists that embarks on an expedition to a forbidden island, home to a research

facility for the original “Jurassic Park”. The specialists, played by Johansson and “Bridgerton” actor Jonathan Bailey, must obtain DNA samples from three dinosaurs to achieve a life-saving medical breakthrough. The Universal Pictures film arrives in theatres on July 2. For Rupert Friend, this instalment in the franchise is exhilarating. “I love adventure. I love being taken on a ride where you don’t know what’s going to happen. I love the unknown. I love risk,” he said. For well-known science fiction director, Edwards, the pressure for the film to succeed did not hit until he arrived at the premiere. “It’s all front and centre here. It feels a bit weird, to be honest. I can’t quite get my head around it,” the “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story” director added. — Reuters



How Paris’s Seine River keeps the Louvre cool in summer

AS PARIS braces for a heatwave this weekend, a little-known network of underground pipes will be cooling the Louvre museum and other storied landmarks using water from the Seine River. Since 1991, the river water has been cooling more than 800 buildings via a humble but hard-working system that is still relatively under-utilised worldwide. Paris boasts the largest such urban cooling network in Europe: 110 kilometres (68 miles) of subterranean pipes criss-crossing the City of Light, reducing its need for energy-guzzling air conditioning. “It’s like ‘Batman!’” exclaimed a

in reverse: heat is transferred from the air to chilled water pumped via pipes to buildings around the city. But unlike conventional air conditioning, it does not blast hot air into the streets, according to Fraicheur de Paris, which manages the Seine cooling network and others in Barcelona, Singapore and Dubai. The company, co-owned by the French energy utility Engie, says it also offers significant savings in electricity consumption, chemical use and emissions of planet-warming carbon dioxide. **BEAT THE HEAT** Heatwaves could push summer temperatures to 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) by 2050 in Paris,

the city, including the national parliament building. Even in winter, the river can prove useful for cooling server rooms and other technology and heat-intensive operations across the city. **SONG OF THE SEINE** In the eighth district, 30 metres underground and spread over four floors, the river’s water is pumped through a series of black tanks and large green pipes with a shrill din. “It’s a bit like the song of the Seine,” Raynal said with a smile over the whirring of compressors. The process is subject to numerous environmental standards. To prevent damage to the Seine ecosystem, water drawn for cooling cannot be discharged back into the

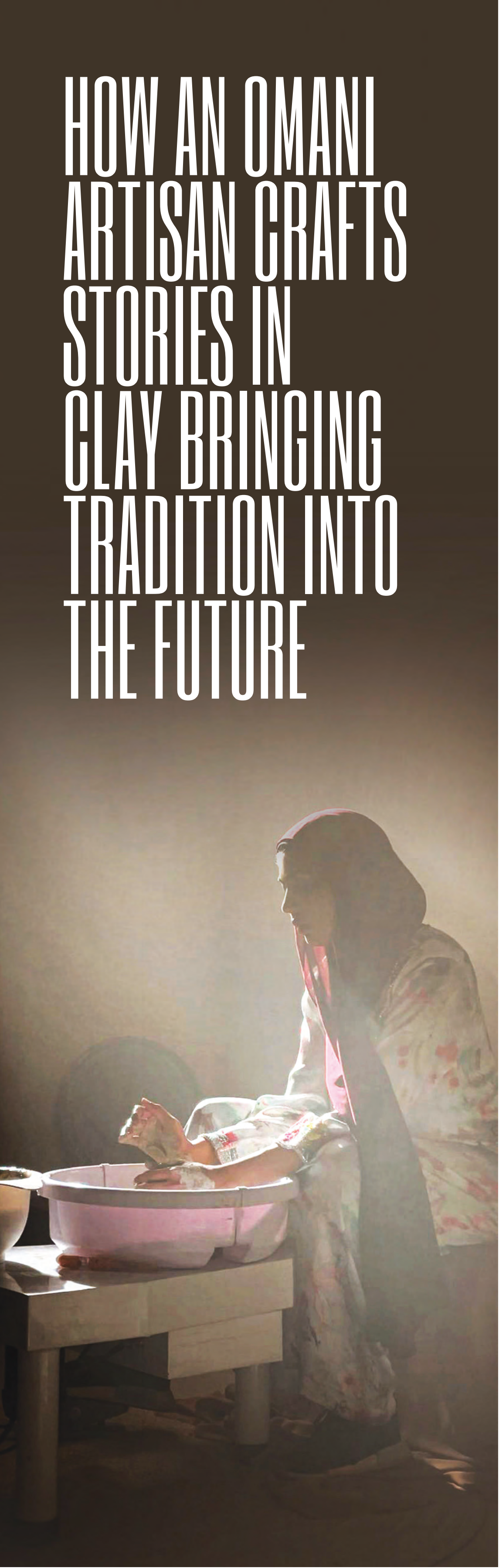


passer-by in the chic and touristy eighth arrondissement or district of Paris, as a manhole cover was removed to reveal a spiral staircase to the cooling network below. The technology is not new: the headquarters of the United Nations in New York has been using water from the East River for cooling since the 1950s. But much planning and construction is necessary and as such, these efficient and sustainable cooling systems remain relatively rare. But in Paris, the network has grown considerably in recent years to confront more intense and frequent heatwaves, with the first of the summer forecast this coming weekend. The process works much the same as a district heating network, but

said Raphaëlle Nayral, Secretary-General of Fraicheur de Paris. The city needs a more sustainable solution than air conditioning units with their associated heat and energy burden, she added. “Otherwise we will make this city completely uninhabitable,” Nayral said. Studies have shown that air conditioners can increase the heat in urban centres by around 0.5C when used in large numbers, a figure that rises as more units are installed. Air conditioning also accounts for seven per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the UN estimates. This is in part due to energy use but also leaking refrigerant gases, which are potent warming agents. For the Paris network, 12 cooling power stations pump chilled water from the Seine to 867 sites across

river if there is a difference of more than 5C (9F) between the two. Other sites served by the Paris network include department stores and offices, the train network, concert halls, and arguably the world’s most famous museum, the Louvre. One hospital has been also connected, and there are hopes of extending the cooling benefit to retirement homes, schools and daycare centres across the city. “By 2042, the network should more than double, with 245 kilometres of distribution... to provide new cooling when the city is overheating,” Nayral said. For individual homes, it could be a longer wait, with extensive renovations required to connect residential buildings to the network. — AFP

FEATURES



HOW AN OMANI ARTISAN CRAFTS STORIES IN CLAY BRINGING TRADITION INTO THE FUTURE

BY BUTHAINA AL RIYAMIYA

OMAN'S relationship with clay pots can be traced even in ancient times. Today, visiting a bustling market in Muscat, you might stumble across a small stall displaying simple, yet beautifully crafted ceramic mugs and bowls. These aren't just ordinary tableware — they tell stories, carry memories and connect generations. That's the world Fatema al Muttawa is shaping with her hands every day. She's not just moulding clay; she's creating pieces that speak. Each of her ceramic works holds a story, a reflection of her homeland and her personal experiences. For her, clay isn't simply a material — it's a living thing that carries history and emotion.



Fatema's journey into the world of ceramics started with a simple question: "Why don't I design my own mugs instead of importing ready-made ones?" It might seem like a small thought, but for her, it was the spark that ignited a whole new passion. Within just two years, she transformed her hobby into a full-fledged creative pursuit, and her work now exudes a freshness that belies her short time in the craft. What makes Fatema's pieces truly stand out is her unique perspective on clay. Unlike many others, she sees the material as more than just dirt to be shaped and fired. She believes clay is alive — it has a soul, a voice that calls to her. Her connection to clay is rooted in centuries of tradition, yet she explores it through a modern lens. In Oman, pottery has a special place in history. For generations, Omani artisans have created beautiful, functional objects from clay, often decorated with intricate patterns that reflect the country's rich culture. Bahla, in particular, is famous for its pottery. The ancient fort town has been a hub for ceramic artisans for centuries, with each vessel telling a story of the land and its people. Many of those designs, patterns, and techniques are passed down from father to son or mother to daughter, shaping Oman's identity. That depth of tradition is what Fatema respects and draws inspiration from, even if her work isn't always explicitly patterned. For the newer generations of Omani artisans, embracing this traditional craft means reconnecting with their roots at a time when modernity often pushes ancient skills aside. It's more than just making pretty objects; it's

about keeping alive a cultural identity, about honouring ancestors who shaped the craft with patience and humility. As Fatema puts it, "Omani pottery is full of stories — stories of the land, of how we live, of poetry woven into everyday life." Poetry itself is a core part of Oman's cultural fabric. The tradition of storytelling and poetic expression is woven into daily life — a humble art that celebrates patience, history and a sense of community. Unlike Western ceramics, which often lean towards the experimental and avant-garde, traditional Omani pottery is grounded, deliberate, and soulful. Fatema believes that understanding this difference helps her craft pieces that are both rooted in tradition and meaningful in today's world. Interestingly, Fatema sources her clay from the UK. That might sound surprising — why not use local clay? She explains she combines the best of both worlds: by importing high-quality British clay, she achieves a level of precision and smoothness that's hard to find elsewhere. It's a balancing act between traditional spirit and modern techniques, bringing her closer to her artistic goals. In her studio, each piece isn't just about aesthetics. There's emotion wrapped up in every fingerprint and every colour choice. Sometimes she leaves a fingerprint as a tiny mark — a reminder that a human hand touched this piece, that it embraces imperfection, humility and authenticity. It's her way of telling people: here is a craft that's alive, direct from a person's heart. Over time, Fatema's journey has not been without hurdles. Like many artists, she wrestles with logistics — getting her work shipped, marketing herself, finding the right audience. But she views these obstacles not as roadblocks, but as lessons. Her perspective is that every challenge is part of her craft, helping her grow and improve. What's inspiring about Fatema's story is how she's part of a wider trend — people finding new ways to entertain themselves and express their creativity. Across the world, artists are exploring crafts like pottery, embroidery or painting, not just to make a living, but to reconnect with traditions and delve into personal reflection. This rising movement is about more than just hobbies; it's about rediscovering a sense of purpose and mastery in a digital age often dominated by instant gratification. As her creations begin to find audiences both locally and internationally, Fatema feels proud that she's helping to keep Oman's craft scene alive. She hopes her work inspires others, especially young women, to explore their cultural roots and see craft not just as a pastime, but as a meaningful way of life.

