

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer

GEN

BREAKING
STEREOTYPES

BORN

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INBRIEF

HM GREETS
PRESIDENT OF
BELARUS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Alexander Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes for further achievements to Belarus. His Majesty also wished for the continued growth and expansion of bilateral cooperation and partnership across various sectors that serve mutual interests.

HM’S GREETINGS
CONVEYED TO
TUNISIAN PRESIDENT



TUNIS: President Kais Saied of the Republic of Tunisia received Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, at the Presidential Palace in Tunis on Wednesday.

The meeting comes within the framework of the Foreign Minister’s official visit to the Republic of Tunisia.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Tunisian President and his best wishes for good health and happiness to him. He also conveyed His Majesty’s wishes for further progress and prosperity to the Tunisian people.

On his turn, the Tunisian President asked the Foreign Minister to convey his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and wellbeing to His Majesty the Sultan. The Tunisian President also wished the Omani people further growth and prosperity.

The meeting underscored bilateral relations between the two countries and the importance of boosting them in all fields to serve mutual interests.

President Saied expressed his country’s appreciation for the sultanate of Oman’s role under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan in consolidating regional and international security and stability. He also lauded Oman’s approach which is based on wisdom and the values of dialogue and cooperation between nations and peoples. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

SUMMER SWEETNESS



The wilayats of Al Sharqiyah North Governorate are witnessing Tabseel, which is the cooking of certain types of dates especially Al Mabsali which are boiled in copper pots. Bidiyah leads the wilayats of Al Sharqiyah North in Al Mabsali with 70,330 palms. — ONA

Three students, bus driver killed in Izki accident

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Three students aged 6, 9 and 10 were killed in a devastating bus accident in Izki on Wednesday, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said. The 20-year-old driver of the minibus also died in the accident, which took place at 7:44 am.

“While the driver was travelling from the Qalaat Al Awamer area towards Izki, the vehicle swerved to the right upon reaching the accident site, collided with a lamp post, then veered off the road and

caught fire,” the ROP said.

Two children with moderate injuries were taken to Izki Hospital, while six children with moderate injuries and five with severe injuries were transferred to Nizwa Reference Hospital.

The passengers on the bus were schoolchildren of a private school. The deceased in the accident at Al Resais area were identified as Suleiman bin Yousef bin Suleiman al Amri, driver of the bus, and the students Yaman bin Suleiman al Amri, Haitham bin Hamoud al Amri, Ayham bin Nasser al

Numani and Basil bin Younis al Amri, all from Qalaat Al Awamer area in Izki.

In a statement issued by the Royal Oman Police, it was reported that the bus driver died at the scene, along with three children. Twelve other children sustained injuries of varying degrees and were transported to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Emergency response teams rushed to the site and provided immediate medical assistance. Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the

circumstances surrounding the accident.

The Ministry of Health responded promptly to the incident, intensifying efforts to treat the injured at both Nizwa and Izki hospitals. It also activated its emergency response plan and coordinated with relevant departments to manage the situation effectively.

The Ministry of Health extended its sincere condolences to the families of the deceased and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.

Iran ends cooperation
with UN nuclear body

IRAN on Wednesday officially suspended its cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog, a move triggered by the unprecedented Israeli and US strikes on its nuclear facilities.

Last month’s 12-day conflict between Iran and Israel has sharply escalated tensions between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency. On June 25, a day after a ceasefire took hold, Iranian lawmakers voted overwhelmingly to suspend cooperation with the Vienna-based IAEA. State media confirmed the legislation had now taken effect.

The law aims to “ensure full support for the inherent rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran” under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, with a particular focus on uranium enrichment, according to Iranian media.

While IAEA inspectors have had access to Iran’s declared nuclear sites, their current status is uncertain amid the suspension. On Sunday, Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Irvani, said the inspectors’ work had been suspended but denied any threats against them or IAEA chief Rafael Grossi.



Uranium enrichment has long been a core sticking point in nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington

He said the “inspectors are in Iran and are safe”, but “their activities have been suspended, and they are not allowed to access our sites”.

Uranium enrichment has long been a core sticking point in nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington, which have since stalled due to the conflict. Israel and some Western countries accuse Iran of seeking nuclear weapons — claims Tehran denies.

The law did not specify exact steps following the suspension.

The ISNA news agency cited lawmaker Alireza Salimi as saying the inspectors now needed approval from Iran’s

Supreme National Security Council to access nuclear sites.

Separately, the Mehr news agency cited lawmaker Hamid Reza Haji Babaei as saying Iran would stop allowing IAEA cameras in nuclear facilities, though it was unclear if this is required by the new law.

After parliament passed the bill, it was approved by the Guardian Council and President Masoud Pezeshkian formally enacted the suspension on Wednesday, according to state television.

In response, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar urged European signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal to trigger the

“snapback” mechanism and reinstate all UN sanctions on Iran. The snapback, set to expire in October, was part of the nuclear accord that collapsed after the United States withdrew in 2018. Iran began scaling back commitments a year later.

Iranian officials have warned the mechanism could prompt their withdrawal from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Israel, widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, is not an NPT signatory.

Germany’s foreign ministry spokesman Martin Giese said Iran’s move to suspend cooperation with the IAEA was a “disastrous signal”. — AFP

Largest graffiti mural launched in Musandam

KHASAB: A massive artistic mural — the largest of its kind in Oman and among the most prominent in the Gulf region — was inaugurated in Musandam Governorate.

Spanning a striking mountain facade at the governorate’s entrance, the contemporary graffiti-style artwork reflects the spirit and unique maritime identity of the region, blending art with the local environment.

The event was held under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam.

The mural, created by Omani artist Abdulaziz al Shehi,



The mural, created by Omani artist Abdulaziz al Shehi, stretches 70 metres in length and 14 metres in height.

stretches 70 metres in length and 14 metres in height. Its execution took 40 consecutive days, with an average of three hours of work daily, utilising

over 500 cans of paint. The artwork vividly depicts scenes of marine life for which Musandam is renowned, including pearl diving, dolphins, coral reefs and various maritime activities, transforming the site into an artistic and tourist landmark that captivates visitors and residents alike.

Sayyid Ibrahim, stated: “We take pride in this artistic work, which showcases the beauty of Musandam’s marine environment and enhances the governorate’s visual identity. We encourage such initiatives that harness art to serve tourism and provide opportunities for the

people of Musandam to innovate and excel.” The Musandam Governorate also announced plans to organise a graffiti festival as part of the upcoming “Musandam Winter” events, featuring a selection of local and international artists. The festival aims to transform several public spaces into open-air art galleries that convey cultural and aesthetic messages reflecting the governorate’s natural beauty and heritage.

This creative momentum aligns with Musandam’s preparations to launch the Musandam International Diving Festival next September. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The project targets the Omani and Gulf markets amid growing demand for low-emission fuel alternatives. — ONA

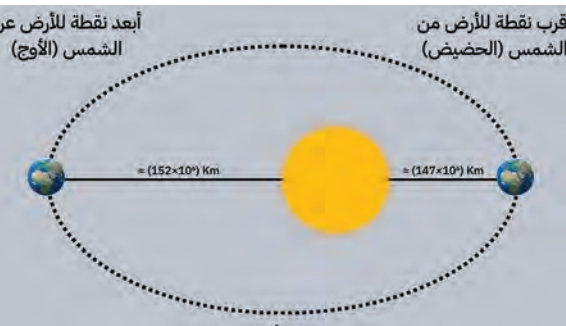
STUDENT COMPANY CONVERTS COFFEE INTO BIOFUEL

SUHAR: The student company “Java Fuel” at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate, has successfully developed an innovative project in sustainable energy by converting coffee waste into clean biodiesel using advanced artificial intelligence technologies.

Tarteel bint Khalid al Naabiyah explained that the project offers an eco-friendly product that serves industrial sectors and government institutions concerned with environmental fields, presenting both an economic and environmental solution. The project targets the Omani and Gulf markets amid growing demand for low-emission fuel alternatives.

She added that the project relies on collecting coffee waste from cafés and converting it into biofuel — a step that helps reduce waste and supports Oman’s efforts to achieve the goals of “Oman Vision 2040” in clean energy.

EARTH TO REACH ITS APHELION TODAY



MUSCAT: The skies of the Sultanate of Oman will show a unique annual astronomical phenomenon on Thursday, as the sun reaches aphelion (farthest point from the sun) at 11.55 pm, according to Oman Society of Astronomy and Space (OSAS).

By Oman time, this represents the farthest point that the Earth reaches in its elliptical orbit around the sun. The distance between the Earth and the sun at this moment stands at approximately 152,087,738 kilometres, a difference of nearly 5 million kilometres from the closest point known as perihelion.

Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Deputy Chairman of Oman Society for Astronomy and Space, said that the phenomena of aphelion and perihelion are linked to the nature of the Earth’s orbit around the sun, which is actually not perfectly circular but rather elliptical in shape. This causes the distance between the Earth and the sun to keep changing throughout the year. — ONA

OMAN, TUNISIA HOLD POLITICAL TALKS

TUNIS: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Wednesday held political consultations with Mohamed Ali Nafti, Tunisia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad, at the Tunisian Foreign Ministry headquarters. The meeting comes within the framework of Sayyid Badr’s official visit to Tunisia.

The two ministers reviewed the long-standing bilateral relations between Oman and Tunisia, characterised by stability, harmony and multifaceted cooperation. They emphasised the fraternal ties between both nations and



The two ministers reviewed the long-standing bilateral relations between Oman and Tunisia. — ONA

explored avenues to enhance political, economic and cultural collaboration,

including knowledge exchange across scientific and professional fields.

Discussions focused on strengthening investment opportunities, with both sides urging private sector companies and investment authorities to expand partnerships and boost trade exchange for mutual economic benefit. The ministers also addressed regional and international issues of common concern, stressing continued coordination in multilateral forums and support for peaceful solutions to current challenges to promote regional security and stability. — ONA

Oman, Egypt support move to achieve peace

THE 16th session of the Omani-Egyptian Joint Committee at the level of the foreign ministers of the two countries was held in Cairo on Tuesday. The Omani side was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, while the Egyptian side was headed by Dr Badr Abdel Aati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Speaking at the opening session, Sayyid Badr expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to Egypt for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, emphasising strong relations between Oman and Egypt. He said, “This session of the Omani-Egyptian Joint Committee represents a new and blessed addition to the positive cooperation between us and a contribution to consolidating our bonds. Today, we enjoy the fruits of these relations for the good and benefit of our two brotherly peoples.”

In his speech, Sayyid Badr called for activating the role of the Omani-Egyptian Business Council and the private sector, and for focusing attention on emerging projects, digitisation and innovation, stressing that “this will enhance the sustainability of the economy and keep pace with global changes.”

Regarding the regional issues, Sayyid



SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY

Foreign Minister

Badr affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s full support for Egypt’s efforts to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, emphasising its categorical rejection of plans to displace the Palestinian people and its full support for the Arab plan for the reconstruction of Gaza. He also affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s firm stance in supporting the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967, borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Sayyid Badr said that the Arab national security is indivisible, affirming the Sultanate of Oman’s support for Egypt’s rights to the waters of the Nile River, based on the rules of international law and the principle of fair and equitable use, in a manner that enhances opportunities for cooperation based on understanding and peaceful solutions.

Sayyid Badr affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman is committed to permanently

contributing to establishing stability and protecting the peoples of the region from all that would hamper their progress towards development.

He underscored the importance of resuming efforts aimed at reaching a just and lasting agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue, based on the rules of international law and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and avoiding imposing solutions by force, which only brings destruction and destabilises peoples.

He emphasised that dialogue and negotiation remain the only way to resolve disputes and contain risks.

The session witnessed the signing of several memoranda of understanding and executive programmes in the areas of investment, labour, training, media, food safety, endowments, mineral wealth and human capital development. The minutes of the 16th session of the Omani-Egyptian Joint Committee were also signed.

At the end of the session, both sides affirmed the importance of continuing coordination and consultation in various fields, strengthening the Omani-Egyptian partnership to benefit both countries and their peoples and contributing to the consolidation of security, stability and development in the region. — ONA

OIA reviews investment projects before Council

MUSCAT: The State Council on Wednesday hosted Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), to review the OIA’s efforts in managing, monitoring, and governing companies to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, the council members, the secretary-general of the State Council, the OIA’s two vice-chairmen for operations and investment, and a number of the council’s employees and specialists from the OIA.

At the meeting outset, the state council chairman



The review highlighted the most prominent features of the OIA’s performance in 2024 and its investment portfolios.

welcomed the chairman of the OIA, pointing to the importance of such meetings in strengthening cooperation between government institutions on one side and the State Council on the other side.

These meetings, he said, aim to shed light on the programmes and initiatives implemented by various state institutions as well as the goals they are working to achieve and the challenges they face.

The presentation highlighted the most prominent features of the OIA’s performance in 2024, its investment portfolios, the geographical distribution of assets, the Generations Portfolio and its developments for 2024 and foreign investment objectives.

It also addressed the features of the National Development Portfolio and its developments for 2024, the OIA’s procedures, and examples of the programmes and initiatives it has implemented to improve the performance of its subsidiaries. The chairman of the OIA shed light on the Rawabet Programme, the OIA’s corporate governance system and the Oman Future Fund.

National Autism Centre first in ME to receive QABA membership

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

Represented by the National Autism Centre, the Ministry of Social Development joined the QABA board (Qualified Applied Behaviour Analysis Credentialing Board) as the first full member in the Arab region. The step reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to improving the quality of services provided to individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Full membership is granted to qualified institutions in recognition of their professional practices and integrated infrastructure of

behavioural services. It offers the members priority in joining international partnerships and advanced training, with chances of upgrading to the status of ‘accredited supervisory bodies’ or ‘approved staff field training institutions’.

The announcement comes as part of the first phase of QABA’s strategic expansion in the Arab world, which aims to enhance cooperation with official bodies, academic institutions, and specialised centres in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

The National Autism Centre is a leading centre providing diagnostic and therapeutic services for children



The announcement comes as part of the first phase of QABA’s strategic expansion in the Arab world.

with autism spectrum disorder in the Sultanate of Oman. It operates under the supervision of the MoSD, with a continued commitment to

implementing international best practices.

Dr Nadia al Ajmi, Director of the National Autism Centre mentioned that full membership in QABA is an important step in improving and developing rehabilitation services for people with autism spectrum disorder, as well as empowering and developing specialised personnel in the field of autism.

“We are proud to be the first centre in the Middle East to receive this membership, which will undoubtedly have a significant impact on improving services,” she said.

Full membership is granted to

institutions in recognition of their professional level and behavioural services infrastructure. They also have priority in international partnerships and advanced training, with the possibility of becoming an accredited supervisory or field training provider for staff.

This membership is expected to contribute to raising the efficiency of autism professionals in the Sultanate of Oman and pave the way for training and qualifying local specialists according to international standards. It will also attract internationally accredited personnel to the professional field in the Sultanate of Oman.

SHORT TAKES



The Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence was briefed on the exercise scenarios and various operational simulations. — ONA

DECISION MAKING
12 PROCEEDINGS
REVIEWED

MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, on Wednesday observed the proceedings of the annual strategic exercise ‘Decision Making 12’ at the National Defence College of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. The exercise is being conducted by participants of the twelfth course at the National Defence College.

Upon his arrival at the college premises, the Secretary General was received by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College, in the presence of Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

The Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence was briefed on the exercise scenarios and various operational simulations. Subsequently, the Secretary General and accompanying officials visited the exercise cells to observe operational mechanisms and review participants’ outputs, which demonstrated the strategic and academic knowledge gained throughout the course curriculum. — ONA



The exercise successfully achieved its intended training objectives. — ONA

AL HAZM MILITARY
EXERCISE
CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The proceedings of the military exercise ‘Al Hazm’ concluded on Wednesday at the Joint Command and Staff College of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

The exercise was conducted by participants of the 38th course, comprising members from various military and security units as well as several Arab and friendly nations.

The ‘Al Hazm’ military exercise, which commenced on June 23, was implemented as part of the course curriculum and represents the culmination of a series of exercises undertaken by the Joint Command and Staff College students.

The exercise successfully achieved its intended training objectives while aligning with the requirements of joint military operations. — ONA

KHAREEF
DHO FAR:
MODERN
PROMENADE
AT ATEEN
PLAIN TO
SHINE

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 2

This year, the Modern Promenade at Ateen Plain will be at the heart of Khareef Dhofar 2025, offering a vibrant programme of interactive experiences curated by Dhofar Municipality. Set against a backdrop of misty hills and cool breezes, the promenade blends entertainment and education in a setting that showcases Oman’s evolving creative scene.

Among the main attractions is “World for Kids”, a mini global village designed for children. The interactive experience leads young visitors on a playful cultural journey — from the Americas and Australia to France, Italy, the Gulf, Egypt and Yemen — through hands-



on workshops, live performances and daily competitions. Local and international street foods complete the sensory immersion.

Also making its return is the enchanting “Princess Palace”, a fantasy space where young girls can explore a fairytale world inspired by royal palaces. With arts and crafts stations, themed photo corners and live shows, the venue offers a safe

and inspiring environment tailored to spark imagination.

Other highlights across the promenade include the Musical Walkway, where live music fills the air; the dazzling Carnival of Illuminated Carts and World of Lights, which create immersive visual spectacles; as well as Band & Box performances that merge theatre, storytelling and learning. Visitors can also enjoy a health-themed walking track and explore an array of gourmet food trucks serving regional and global cuisine.

Now a signature destination of Oman’s Khareef Dhofar season, the Modern Promenade is more than a venue — it is an invitation to discover the Sultanate of Oman’s rich cultural identity and family-friendly vision for tourism.

SALALAH READY TO OFFER
A TREAT TO VISITORS

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

WITH the onset of monsoon, Salalah has once again transformed into the jewel of Arabia, welcoming the much-anticipated Khareef Dhofar Season with a blanket of mist, cool drizzles and lush green landscapes.

The mountains of Dhofar, reaching heights of over 1,500 metres, now resemble a verdant crescent, rolling down gently into fertile plains and golden coastlines that stretch as far as the eye can see.

With temperatures hovering pleasantly between 20–26 °C, Salalah stands in stark contrast to the scorching 45 °C heat engulfing much of the Gulf.

The soft, uninterrupted drizzles over the last few days have confirmed what many were hoping for: Khareef has officially settled in — not just on the mountains, but in the heart of the city itself.

“Every year, this season feels like nature hits a reset button,” said Reem al Balushi, a resident of Salalah. “The grey clouds, the wet air, the smell of rain-drenched earth — it brings back childhood memories”. The mountain villages such as Qairun Hariti, Zeik, Hajif, Titam and Tawi Atir have been receiving consistent drizzling, with most dry patches now replaced by vibrant greenery.

Tourists have begun to trickle in, with long queues of vehicles heading towards Itin Mountain becoming a regular evening sight.

Coffee shops along Iteen Road and open-air cafes in New Salalah are witnessing a renewed buzz, with visitors relishing their cups of ‘karak’ in the misty ambiance.

According to Sultan al Mahri, a hotelier in the city, bookings have begun to pick up. “We’re already seeing GCC families making advance bookings. Compared to



Every year, Khareef Dhofar Season feels like nature hits a reset button.

With temperatures hovering pleasantly between 20–26 °C, Salalah stands in stark contrast to the scorching 45 °C heat engulfing much of the Gulf.

earlier years, the infrastructure has improved significantly — wider roads, better connectivity and more accommodation options make it easier to welcome large numbers”. Indeed, Salalah’s preparations this year are far ahead of the curve. Several new furnished apartments have sprung up across the city, while star hotels have introduced monsoon-themed events and culinary festivals to enhance the visitor experience.

“Last year was amazing, but this year we’re offering even more,” said Mahmoud Zain, who manages a newly opened boutique hotel near Al Haffa beach.

“Our guests can enjoy local seafood delicacies, join guided hikes through the misty valleys, or just relax with the view of waterfalls cascading down the cliffs”. Beyond the mist and rain, the region’s

tropical charm adds to the allure — coconut groves, banana plantations, papaya orchards and, of course, the famed frankincense trees that flourish in the nearby wadis. The seasonal fog acts as a natural shield, creating a microclimate that supports this unique blend of flora.

For many visitors, however, it’s not just the landscape, but the vibe of Khareef that draws them in. “You don’t come to Salalah just for a vacation,” said Ahmed al Khater, a visitor from Bahrain.

“You come here to breathe, to pause and to be part of something timeless”. With the season officially in full swing, Salalah is ready — not just to host tourists, but to immerse them in the magic of monsoon, the warmth of Omani hospitality and the soothing rhythm of nature’s finest performance.

Oman: An ideal platform for space vehicle launches

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman boasts an ideal location for space vehicle launches, with its proximity to the equator reducing fuel consumption for spacecraft as they launch in alignment with Earth’s rotation.

Oman’s coastal launch sites overlooking the Indian Ocean and distance from populated areas have attracted international space companies seeking optimal launch locations.

HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Founder & CEO of National Aerospace Services Company



Oman’s coastal launch sites have attracted international space companies seeking optimal launch locations. — ONA

(NASCOM) and “Etlaq” Spaceport, stated that “Etlaq” pioneered the first Middle Eastern space launch with “Duqm-1”, marking Oman’s inaugural step towards becoming a global space access

hub. The 18-degree latitude spaceport enables multi-orbit launches, including equatorial, sun-synchronous, polar, medium Earth and geostationary orbits.

HH Sayyid Azzan revealed that Etlaq’s master plan will be operational by 2027, with its Formation Programme enabling experimental launches within 14 weeks of planning since 2024.

The programme focuses on Omani workforce development in advanced space specialties, with current expansion including a second launch pad

for experimental missions and a spacecraft assembly facility.

Dr Saud bin Hamid al Shukaili, Director General of Policies & Governance and Head of the National Space Programme at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology emphasised that Oman’s space launch project aims to attract global space investments while building national capabilities in spacecraft engineering, supporting Oman Vision 2040.

— ONA

SPOTLIGHT



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BREAKING STEREOTYPES

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

BORN into a world of digital connectivity, climate concerns and global competition, Generation Z in Oman — those born between the late 1990s and early 2010s — are forging a new path, reshaping traditional ideas about education, work, identity and the future.

Unlike the generations before them, Omani Gen Zs are less focused on simply securing a government job or climbing the corporate ladder. Instead, many are looking for purpose, flexibility and impact.

Whether it is starting a small business on Instagram, producing short films with a message, or launching an app that solves a community need, Gen Z is proving to be both pragmatic and idealistic.

“We are not just job seekers; we’re

problem solvers,” says Sara al Mahrouqi, a 23-year-old computer Science graduate and freelance developer. “We grew up with social media, so our sense of community and impact is global. But we also care deeply about our roots and how we can give back to Oman”. As Oman continues to diversify its economy and embrace innovation, the role of Gen Z will be critical.

Yet, they also face challenges: job market uncertainty, climate anxieties and pressure to meet both traditional expectations and modern aspirations. Still, their outlook remains largely hopeful.

“We are the bridge generation,” says Sara. “And we’re ready to build something different — not just for ourselves, but for the next generation, too”. According to recent studies by Oman Vision 2040 youth initiatives, there is a marked shift among Gen Z towards fields like renewable energy, digital content creation, cybersecurity and sustainable entrepreneurship. Many are

also drawn to hybrid career paths such as combining a day job with a passion project or digital startup.

Ahmed al Shidi, 21, a business student shares: “I don’t want to wait until graduation to start building something. My generation sees opportunities online. We want to learn fast, fail fast and adapt”. This generation is also challenging traditional education models. While higher education remains important, many Gen Zs in Oman are supplementing their degrees with online courses, bootcamps and certifications in digital skills.

“You can learn anything online now,” says Fatma al Rawahi, 19, who is teaching herself graphic design via YouTube and Coursera. “Universities are great, but self-learning makes us agile and independent”. The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has responded by increasing support for research, innovation grants and integrating entrepreneurship in university programmes — an alignment

many Gen Z students welcome.

Despite their tech-savviness, many Gen Zs are also wary of social media’s downsides. Mental health awareness is rising and discussions around digital balance, online identity and cyber safety are increasingly common in schools and university forums.

“We know the dangers of comparison culture and misinformation,” says Salim al Hinai, 20. “That’s why we value authenticity. We use social media as a tool, not a lifestyle”. Gen Z in Oman may be digital natives, but they are also proudly Omani. Their identity is a fusion of global influence and local pride — reflected in the way they celebrate National Day on TikTok or start eco-conscious ventures rooted in traditional crafts.

“They may dress in sneakers and hoodies,” says educator Amal al Hosni, “but their values — family, faith, community — remain deeply Omani. The difference is in how they express and negotiate those values”.

SHORT TAKES



The Council approved two new master’s programmes. — ONA

UTAS COUNCIL
REVIEWS PROGRESS
IN STRATEGIC PLAN

MUSCAT: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Council convened its third meeting for the 2024/2025 academic year on Wednesday.

Chaired by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour and Council Chairman, the meeting was held at the University’s headquarters.

The Council reviewed progress on the University’s 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and approved two new master’s programmes: Master of Science in Energy Transition and Sustainability; and a Master of Science in Food Security. Both programmes will launch in the 2025/2026 academic year.

A key decision involved adopting the “Professional Practices Record” as an official graduation document. This initiative ensures students acquire professional competencies alongside academic qualifications, enhancing graduates’ employability locally and internationally.

The standardised tracking system for student professional development will take effect in Fall 2025.

The standardised tracking system for student professional development will take effect in Fall 2025.

Organisational restructuring approved included elevating the Quality Assurance Department and related divisions to academic units and renaming branch campus quality units as “Quality Assurance Centres”.

The Council also ratified a comprehensive policy restructuring framework to streamline institutional governance during this transformative period. — ONA

SCATTERED
RAINFALL
EXPECTED
ACROSS
WILAYATS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 2

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued a weather forecast indicating varying weather activity across the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the latest forecast maps, scattered rainfall is expected across multiple regions, particularly over the Al Hajar Mountains and surrounding areas. Some showers may be accompanied by

thunderstorms, with estimated rainfall accumulations ranging from 2 mm to over 100 mm in isolated areas. The affected areas include Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North and South, Al Wusta governorates and parts of Dhofar Governorate.

The CAA has warned of potential flash floods in wadis and low-lying areas, occasional hail and active downdraft winds associated with cumulus cloud development, which

may reduce horizontal visibility and lead to flying debris in exposed places.

A separate advisory highlights intensified downdraft wind activity due to the formation of local convective clouds, particularly over Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North and South and Al Wusta governorates. This wind activity may cause a noticeable drop in visibility and the movement of unsecured objects.

Masar initiative: A modern
approach to street vending

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

IN a move that combines urban development with community entrepreneurship, Muscat Governorate, in partnership with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, has completed several key sites under the “Masar” initiative. This initiative aims to reshape the experience of street vending in the capital by providing structured, well-equipped spaces that maintain public aesthetics and service quality.

Three major sites have already opened: Masar Al Amerat (15 carts), Masar Muttrah (12 carts), and Masar Bausher (15 carts). Additionally, preparations are underway for the launch of Masar Bausher 2 and Masar Al Mawaleh in the near future.

The goal of the initiative is to transform informal street vending into a regulated, dignified activity by offering integrated sites that benefit vendors and consumers alike. Beyond just commercial organisation, the project strives to enhance public spaces through uniform cart design and strategic site placement that align with



Three major sites have already opened: Masar Al Amerat, Masar Muttrah and Masar Bausher (15 carts).

The goal of the initiative is to transform informal street vending into a regulated, dignified activity by offering integrated sites that benefit vendors and consumers alike.

Muscat’s modern urban identity.

Health and food safety are also top priorities for Masar. By concentrating vendors in designated areas, the initiative makes it easier for health authorities to monitor practices, ensure food safety and address environmental concerns such as smoke and emissions.

Additionally, traffic flow around popular vending zones has improved, creating a cleaner and safer experience for everyone.

Masar also reflects a broader

vision to empower Omani youth by providing legitimate platforms for running micro-businesses.

Each site has been thoughtfully developed with essential facilities such as lighting, landscaping, restrooms, electricity and water supply; and wastewater management.

Khalid al Bulushi, a resident of Al Amerat, praised the experience, stating, “It’s now a pleasure to come here with the family for dinner or coffee. The area is clean, well-lit and offers a wide variety of food options. I feel safe and relaxed. This is exactly what we needed”.

Laila al Suleimani, a regular visitor to Masar Bausher, shared her positive impression, saying, “I love the layout and the overall vibe. It feels organised and welcoming, especially for families. You can find great street food in one tidy, attractive place. It’s a big upgrade from how things used to be”.

Nasser al Amri, a consumer from Muttrah, expressed his satisfaction, stating, “I always look for quality and hygiene in food; and this setup makes me feel confident. The carts are neat, the area is clean and everything seems professionally run. I visit regularly now”.

Barka Quran Centre inaugurated

BARKA: The Omani Society for the Care of the Holy Quran on Wednesday inaugurated the Barka Quran Centre, marking its twelfth branch across the Sultanate of Oman, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote Quran studies and education.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidy, Wali of Barka.

Dr Ahmed Said al Busaidy, Board Member of the Society, delivered a speech emphasising the significance of the new centre. He highlighted the Omani Society for the Care of the Holy Quran’s commitment to providing an integrated educational environment dedicated to Quran memorisation and the teaching



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidy, Wali of Barka. — ONA

of its studies through specialised programmes tailored for various age groups.

The ceremony featured a visual presentation titled “The Blessed Seed Programme”, detailing the centre’s

key initiatives, including the Quran Ijazah Programme, the Young Reciter Programme and the “Surahs of My Prayer” course, alongside other intensive programmes aimed at fostering Quran literacy. — ONA

OMAN, BELARUS DISCUSS TIES

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday received an official delegation from the Republic of Belarus that comprised government officials, CEOs and business representatives of industrial companies.

The delegation’s visit to Oman was aimed at boosting economic relations and joint cooperation between the two countries, notably in the sectors of industry and information technology.

The Belarusian delegation conferred with Omani officials and representatives of different establishments to explore investment opportunities, incentives and services extended to investors.

The Belarusian delegation made field visits to industrial zones;



The delegation’s visit to Oman was aimed at boosting economic relations. — ONA

and Omani firms and facilities, including Rusayl Industrial City, Khazaen Economic City, Invest Oman lounge, Sultan Haitham City and Karwa Motors. The visit highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s interest in expanding its international partnerships in value-added sectors.— ONA



AL SAHWA SCHOOLS

Al Sahwa Schools wishes to invite experienced Omani Nationals Only for the following position:

1. Secondary Islamic Teacher (Grades 6-12)

- B. Ed. in Islamic Education or an equivalent qualification.
- At least 2 years of experience teaching Islamic Studies in Secondary Schools.

All Candidates need to be able to communicate in English. Interested candidates should submit their application through the school’s website www.alsahwa.edu.om under the careers section with the exact title of the job.

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 9 July 2025.**

TENDER NOTICE



مزون للتعدين ش.م.ش
Mazoon Mining LLC

Mazoon Mining LLC (MMC), a subsidiary of Minerals Development Oman (MDO), is developing the Yanqul Copper Project in Al-Dhahirah Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman. The project consist of five open-pit mines will provide ore to a new processing plant that will produce copper concentrate.

MMC would like to invite qualified and experienced Companies to prequalify for the following tender.

Tender No.	MMC-TD-2025-05
Tender Title	Mining Operations Services.
Closing Date of Selling	10 July 2025
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Applicants must have proven experience of undertaking similar base or precious metal open pit mining services contracts. Applicant's must demonstrate their previous open pit mining services experience on two contracts with a minimum operating period of at least three (3) consecutive years on each contract. And with a minimum annual production capacity of twelve million tonnes (12 Mt). The prequalification of Applicants will be based upon previous track record of satisfactory work, considering, mining operations services, organizational structure, quality management, HSSE systems, and financial status.
Tender Fee	OMR 1,500 - One Thousand five hundred Omani Riyals Only

- Tenders fees shall only be accepted through bank deposit in the following bank account:

Account Name	:	Mazoon Mining LLC.
Bank Name	:	Sohar International Bank SAOG
Branch	:	Gurum Branch
Account	:	005020042486
IBAN	:	OM720300000005020042486

- A copy of the original bank deposit receipt confirming deposit and identifying the Bidders' name and the Tenders number must be forwarded via email, to tenders@mazoonmining.om to request the release of the tender documents. Payments received after the submission date will not be refunded. MMC retains the right to correspond solely with companies satisfying the mandatory tender requirements before the release of the tender document. Responses received that do not comply with the eligibility(mandatory) requirement will be removed from evaluation and will not be eligible for shortlisting.
- For any inquiries, clarifications, or submissions, please email: tenders@mazoonmining.om



معدن عمان
MINERALS DEVELOPMENT OMAN

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama addresses via a video message at the 15th Tibetan Religious Conference, in Dharamshala, India. — Reuters

DALAI LAMA REASSURES FOLLOWERS OF HIS SUCCESSOR

McLEOD GANJ: The Dalai Lama said on Wednesday that the 600-year-old Tibetan spiritual institution would continue after his death, reassuring Buddhist followers around the globe and saying his office “exclusively” would name his successor, even as China insisted it would. Followers of the Dalai Lama laud his tireless campaign for greater autonomy for Tibet, a vast high-altitude plateau in China about the size of South Africa.

It is a landmark decision for Tibetans, many of whom had feared a future without a leader, as well as for global supporters who see the Dalai Lama as a symbol of non-violence, compassion and the enduring struggle for Tibetan cultural identity under Chinese rule.

According to Tibetans, Tenzin Gyatso is the 14th reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. He and thousands of other Tibetans have lived in exile in India since Chinese troops crushed an uprising in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 1959.

The charismatic Nobel Peace Prize-winning Buddhist had previously said the institution of Dalai Lama would continue only if there was popular demand. He said on Wednesday he had received multiple appeals over the past 14 years from the Tibetan diaspora, Buddhists from across the Himalayan region, Mongolia and parts of Russia and China, “earnestly requesting that the institution of the Dalai Lama continue”. “In particular, I have received messages through various channels from Tibetans in Tibet making the same appeal,” he said in a video broadcast at the start of a meeting of religious leaders in the Indian Himalayan town where he has lived for decades.

“In accordance with all these requests, I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue,” he added, according to an official translation. The announcement was made ahead of his 90th birthday on July 6.

The Dalai Lama said on Wednesday that responsibility for identifying the 15th Dalai Lama “will rest exclusively” with the India-based Gaden Phodrang Trust, the office of the Dalai Lama. Samdhong Rinpoche, a senior Tibetan leader from the Gaden Phodrang Trust, told reporters that the Dalai Lama was “in excellent health” and that, at this time, there were “no further instructions for succession”.

However, Rinpoche said the next Dalai Lama could be of “any nationality”, and would come from a place where there is “access to freedom”. China said on Wednesday that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama “must be approved by the central government” in Beijing, and that it would be carried out “by drawing lots from a golden urn”, foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters. The Dalai Lama’s announcement about the continuation of the role was welcomed with relief by Tibetans, including by Jigme Taydeh, a civil servant with the India-based Tibetan government. — AFP

BANGLADESH EX-PM HASINA IN ABSENTIA GETS SIX MONTHS IN JAIL

DHAKA: Bangladesh’s ousted and self-exiled Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was sentenced to six months in prison by the country’s International Crimes Tribunal on Wednesday in a contempt of court case, a top prosecutor said. Hasina has been facing multiple cases since she fled to India after deadly student-led protests in August, but it was the first time the former leader was sentenced in one of them.

Shakil Akand Bulbul, a leader of the Awami League party’s banned

student wing Chhatra League, was also sentenced to two months in prison in the same case, Chief Prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam told reporters. The party had been led by Hasina for years.

A three-member ICT tribunal, led by Justice Golam Mortuza Mozumder, delivered the verdict in their absence, noting that the sentences will take effect upon arrest or surrender, the prosecutor added. The contempt charges stem from a leaked phone recording where Hasina

was allegedly heard saying, “There are 227 cases against me, so I now have a licence to kill 227 people.” A forensic report by a government investigative agency later confirmed the audio’s authenticity.

The tribunal has so far issued three arrest warrants for Hasina, including charges of crimes against humanity linked to the July violence. Hasina’s Awami League party remains banned while trials continue against the party and its former leaders. — Reuters

Israel kills 33 as Trump teases Gaza ceasefire push

GAZA’S civil defence agency said that Israeli strikes killed at least 33 people on Wednesday, as US President Donald Trump urged Palestinian group Hamas to agree to a 60-day ceasefire. After nearly 21 months of war which has created dire humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip, home to more than two million people, the Israeli military said this week it had expanded its operations.

In southern Gaza on Wednesday, civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that five members of the same family were killed and several others wounded in an Israeli air strike that hit a tent housing displaced people in the coastal Al Mawasi area. Images from the nearby Nasser Hospital, in Khan Yunis city, showed medics treating young children covered in blood. Some appeared terrified while others lay still on hospital beds in bloodied bandages and clothes.

Despite being declared a safe zone by Israel in December 2023, Al Mawasi has been hit by repeated Israeli strikes. Further north, Bassal said that four people from the same family were killed in a pre-dawn Israeli air strike on a house in Gaza City, and another five in a drone strike on a house in the central Deir el-Balah area. The Israeli military requested precise coordinates for the targeted locations and said it “will try to look into” the reports.

On Tuesday, the military said that in recent days its forces had expanded operations across Gaza. After months of stalled mediation



Mourners pray during a funeral of displaced Palestinians, at Khan Yunis’ Nasser hospital. — AFP

Images from the nearby Nasser Hospital, in Khan Yunis city, showed medics treating young children covered in blood. Some appeared terrified while others lay still on hospital beds in bloodied bandages and clothes

efforts to bring an end to the war, Trump on Tuesday said on social media that a new ceasefire proposal has Israel’s support. “Israel has agreed to the necessary conditions to finalise the 60-Day CEASEFIRE, during which time we will work with all parties to end the War,” Trump said. He added that Qatari and Egyptian mediators, who have been in direct contact with Hamas throughout the war, would deliver “this final proposal”. “I hope, for the good of the Middle East, that Hamas takes this Deal, because it will not get better — IT WILL ONLY GET WORSE.” Trump is due to host Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House next week. Israel’s retaliatory military campaign has

killed at least 56,647 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to Hamas-run territory’s health ministry. The United Nations considers these figures to be reliable.

Israel’s top diplomat said any chance to free hostages held in Gaza “must not be missed”, after US President Donald Trump urged Palestinian group Hamas to agree to a 60-day ceasefire that he said had Israel’s backing. Without directly mentioning Trump’s remarks, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said that “a large majority within the government and the population is in favour of the plan to free the hostages” held by Hamas in Gaza. “If the opportunity arises, it must not be missed!” Saar wrote on X. — AFP

INDIA CHEMICAL FACTORY BLAST TOLL RISES TO 40

BENGALURU: The death toll from an explosion at an Indian chemical factory rose to 40, the company said on Wednesday, as teams scoured the site for a third day. Factory owner Sigachi Industries said in a statement that 40 workers were killed and 33 others injured in the explosion in Sangareddy in India’s southern Telangana state. It increases the earlier toll of 36 dead.

The company said it offered compensation of 10 million rupees (\$116,000) to the families of those killed, while those injured will receive medical support. The factory makes components that can be included in medical pills. A fire department official said on Wednesday that search operations were ongoing at the factory site. State Chief Minister Revanth Reddy visited on Tuesday, with a video released by his office showing piles of twisted metal in the wreckage of the factory. — AFP

SMUGGLING ROUTES

Turkish police seize 825 kg of heroin



Police have seized 825 kilogrammes of heroin and arrested 30 people in a string of raids largely in southern Türkiye, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said. “In operations across seven provinces, centred in (the southern city of) Adana.. we seized 825 kilogrammes of heroin and arrested 30 suspected drug traffickers,” he wrote on X. Straddling Asia and Europe, Türkiye lies on several major smuggling routes and is the main entry point for heroin on the European market. — AFP

HORRIFIC ACCIDENT

AU helicopter crashes at Somalia’s airport



A Ugandan military helicopter deployed with the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia crashed at Mogadishu airport, killing five passengers. Another three of the helicopter’s eight occupants survived the incident but with severe injuries and burns, said the spokesperson, Felix Kulayigye. The African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) said that “search and rescue operations are underway. — Reuters

BLAST ATTACK

Explosion kills four Pakistani officials



An explosion in northwest Pakistan on Wednesday killed at least four local government officials and police officers. “One senior government official, along with another government official and two police officers, were killed in the attack. Eleven people were wounded,” said Waqas Rafiq, a senior police official stationed in Bajaur. The officials were travelling in a car when “the attack happened in a market in Bajaur city”, Rafiq added. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius looks on, on the day of a cabinet meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin. — Reuters

GERMANY, UK TO SIGN MUTUAL DEFENCE PACT

BERLIN: Germany and Britain will on July 17 sign a defence treaty that includes a mutual assistance clause in the event of a threat to either country, the Politico news outlet reported on Wednesday. The report came almost a year after British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and then-German Chancellor Olaf Scholz issued a joint declaration promising closer cooperation on issues from trade to security. That broad agreement is now being finalised, according to Politico, and a key area is defence.

It will include a section stating that any strategic threat to one country would represent a threat to the other and the accord is expected to be signed on July 17, it reported, citing two London-based officials. Although both countries are committed to Nato, the defence agreement highlights a shift among European states, including Germany under Chancellor Friedrich Merz, to work more closely together and rely less on the US under President Donald Trump. A spokesperson for the German defence ministry said on Wednesday that he had no new developments to impart when asked about the Politico report at a government press conference in Berlin. — Reuters

HEAT, WILDFIRE CRIPPED SPAIN



Smoke rises from a wildfire over the fields of Torrefeta i Florejacs vile, near Lleida. Wildfires have killed two people in Spain and two others have died in France because of a heatwave that has gripped Europe and forced the closure of a nuclear reactor at a Swiss power plant. With scorching temperatures again on Wednesday, Spanish officials said a wildfire in Catalonia had killed two people a day earlier. — Reuters

EU unveils long-delayed 2040 climate target, with wiggle room

BRUSSELS: The EU on Wednesday unveiled its long-delayed target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, but with contested new flexibilities built in to win over the most sceptical member states. After months of tough negotiations, Brussels announced it would stick to the headline objective announced last year of cutting emissions by 90 per cent by 2040, compared to 1990 levels. The proposal comes as much of Europe roasts in an early summer heatwave, which scientists say are becoming more intense, frequent and widespread due to human-induced climate change.

The 2040 target — which needs sign off from the European Union's member states and parliament — is a key milestone towards the bloc's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Brussels says the EU has

already cut climate-warming emissions by 37 per cent relative to 1990 but its green agenda faces pushback with a rightward shift and rising climate scepticism in many European countries.

EU climate chief Wopke Hoekstra acknowledged the “sensitive” debate, saying Brussels was keeping an “ambitious” goal while being “pragmatic and flexible on how to achieve it”. To sway resistant capitals, the European Commission proposes that from 2036, the bloc's 27 countries can count carbon credits purchased to finance projects outside Europe, for up to three per cent of their emission cuts.

Climate campaigners are broadly opposed to the measure.

Backed by scientific studies and the commission's own science advisers, they say factoring in



European Commission Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition Teresa Ribera speaks during a press conference, in Brussels. — Reuters

international credits -- for things like tree-planting or renewable-energy projects -- risks undermining the EU's own efforts to shift away from

INQUIRY ACCUSES FRENCH PM OF FAILING TO ACT OVER SCHOOL ABUSE

PARIS: Physical violence at a Catholic school in France persisted for years without any action from Prime Minister Francois Bayrou, who served as education minister between 1993 and 1997, a parliamentary inquiry said on Wednesday. The scathing report issued by several French lawmakers, who have investigated the claims of abuse at the Notre-Dame de Betharram boarding school, also pointed to “persistent violence” in other French schools, accusing the

state of failing to act.

Bayrou, 74, has in recent months faced accusations from the opposition that as education minister he knew of widespread physical abuse over many decades at the Notre-Dame de Betharram school to which he sent some of his children. “In the absence of action that the former education minister... had the means to take, this physical violence against the pupils of Betharram continued for years,” the two co-rapporteurs of the

inquiry, Violette Spillebout and Paul Vannier, said in a 330-page report.

A member of Bayrou's team took issue with the findings that accused the prime minister of inaction. “It's exactly the opposite,” the official said on condition of anonymity. “No minister after Francois Bayrou organised any verification checks or inspections.” The centrist politician has denied any wrongdoing and denounced what he calls a campaign of “destruction” against him. — AFP

US halts missile support, sparking worry in Kyiv



Sappers talk to each other before operating in a minefield near the village of Zaliman, in Kharkiv. — AFP

relied on to destroy fast-moving ballistic missiles. Fedir Venislavskiy, a member of the Ukrainian parliament's national security and defense committee, called the decision to halt the shipments “very unpleasant for us”.

“It's painful, and against the background of the terrorist attacks which Russia commits against Ukraine, it's a very unpleasant situation,” he told reporters in Kyiv. In an email, the Pentagon said it was providing Trump with options to continue military aid to Ukraine in line with the goal of ending Russia's war there. “At the same time, the department is rigorously examining and adapting its approach to achieving this objective while also preserving US forces' readiness for administration defense priorities,” said Elbridge Colby, the undersecretary for policy.

All weapons aid was briefly paused in February with a second, longer pause in March. The Trump administration resumed sending the last of the aid approved

under Biden but no new policy has been announced. The Kremlin on Wednesday welcomed the news of a halt, saying the conflict would end sooner if fewer arms flowed to Ukraine.

Residents in the Ukrainian capital, where missile strikes on residential neighbourhoods over the past two weeks had killed more than two dozen people, expressed alarm at the Pentagon's decision. “If we end up in a situation where there's no air defence left, I will move (out of Kyiv), because my safety is my first concern,” Oksana Kurochkina, a 35-year-old lawyer said in central Kyiv. “I am already having thoughts about moving out now.”

On the battlefield, a halt in precision munitions would limit the capacity of Ukrainian troops to strike Russian positions farther behind the front line, said Jack Watling, a military analyst at the Royal United Services Institute. “In short, this decision will cost Ukrainian lives and territory.” — Reuters

OPINION

What Europe’s heatwave tells us about ourselves



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

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STEPPING out just after dawn in Muscat, heat drapes across my shoulders, heavy as a wool cloak. The car thermometer already blinks 35, yet a news alert says Brussels will match us by mid-afternoon. A heat dome now stretches from Seville to Warsaw; two deaths reported in Italy, thousands may follow when Spanish tarmac tops 40. The European Environment Agency’s new dashboard lays bare the pattern behind that alert. Last year, weather- and climate-related disasters drained Europe of €45 billion, pushing accumulated losses to €790 billion since 1980. Only a third was insured; the rest fell on households and small firms. Heatwaves remain the continent’s deadliest hazard, claiming more lives than storms and floods combined. That is the backdrop against which the European Commission is still debating whether to propose a ninety-per cent emissions-cut target for twenty-forty. Half the commissioners’ chiefs argued it was “the wrong moment.” The irony is painful: outside the Berlaymont, pavements buckle; inside, policy stalls. Europe’s paralysis matters far beyond its borders. In Bonn last week, technical negotiators laboured to keep global climate

diplomacy on track ahead of COP 30 in Belém. Talks opened two days late because parties fought over adding adaptation finance to the agenda and they closed with bracket-ridden draft texts nobody loved. A leaked note from an EU delegate warned “disappointed camps” now threaten progress unless gaps in finance, trust and accountability narrow quickly. I caught myself asking: If even seasoned diplomats cannot agree on protecting the vulnerable, what chance do ordinary citizens have? And yet we cannot afford to disengage. Oman should care about gridlock six thousand kilometres away because Europe is already living the climate future we are racing towards. Why should Oman care about gridlock six thousand kilometres away? Because Europe is living the climate future we are racing towards. Extreme heat, water scarcity and infrastructure strain are postcards from a world already 1.4 °C warmer than the nineteenth-century baseline. If one of the wealthiest blocs struggles to insure losses or align on policy, waiting for perfect consensus is a gamble we cannot afford. The European data suggest three priorities we would do well to accelerate. First, put worker dignity at the centre of our heat-response playbook, from rig crews to construction workers to date farmers, whose bodies bear the brunt of soaring

Oman should care about gridlock six thousand kilometres away because Europe is already living the climate future we are racing toward.

temperatures. A national heat-health dashboard with a publicly graded system for such people can save lives. Productivity cannot outrun the pulse of those who build our ambitions. Second, we must sew up the insurance gap before disaster strikes. Transparent climate-risk disclosures under Oman Vision 2040 should guide banks and insurers towards affordable cover, sparing public coffers and family savings alike. Third, we must treat adaptation finance as growth capital. Coastal protection, smart irrigation and heat-resilient housing create today’s jobs and tomorrow’s resilience. Our sovereign funds can ring-fence a slice of their portfolios for precisely that mission. Diplomatically, Oman can help bridge the finance-adaptation divide splitting talks. A Gulf coalition linking exporters with importers, technology haves with have-nots, could shift the mood music before ministers gather in Belém. Bonn’s procedural knots must not become COP 30’s opening chord. Europe’s struggle is our warning flare and Bonn’s procedural knots mirror challenges in every capital. Either hesitation scorches the opportunities still within reach, or we act, insuring what we cherish, shielding whom we love and investing in the resilient future Oman deserves. The oud-like drone of the AC reminds me: a single sustained note can fill a room.

Public or private?
Funding debate splits
reeling aid sector

IMRAN MARASHLI

As cuts by rich donors decimate aid budgets for the world’s most vulnerable, private financing has been touted as the sector’s saviour — but not everyone is convinced. The United Nations puts the annual funding deficit for aid at more than \$4 trillion, with chilling consequences for health, education and humanitarian programmes in the poorest countries. The yawning gap left by traditional aid sources such as governments, development banks and philanthropy thrusts private investment into the spotlight at a UN aid conference in Spain this week. “We need the private sector and the jobs it creates because jobs are the surest way to put a nail in the coffin of poverty,” World Bank chief Ajay Banga told attendees at the event in Seville. Banga said the private sector could succeed with the “right conditions”, including infrastructure, transparent laws and institutions; and an environment favourable for business. The document adopted in Seville, which will frame future development cooperation, pledges to generate funds “from all sources, recognising the comparative advantages of public and private finance”. Private resources appeal to developing nations as “a more sustainable source of finance that doesn’t lead to debt spirals and dependency on external resources”, said Laura Carvalho, an economics professor at the University of Sao Paulo. But they have so far failed to deliver at the scale required and are “perceived as a way to deviate from commitment” for rich nations, with many pledges becoming “fictional”, she said. The UN Development Programme said tapping into potentially trillions of dollars of private capital had a role to play for development finance alongside traditional external aid and increased domestic resources, notably taxation. “We have a lot of private capital... not all aligned to national development priorities. They are primarily motivated by profit,” the agency’s head Haoliang Xu said. According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only 12 per cent of private finance mobilised from 2018 to 2020 went to projects in low-income countries. These are typically viewed as riskier investments with costlier interest on their loans, compounding their debt burden. — AFP

Oman’s urban vision and
insights from Singapore

AS cities worldwide navigate climate change, rapid urbanisation and digital transformation, Oman is emerging as a quiet innovator — one that blends tradition with ambition and culture with forward-thinking strategy. From Sultan Haitham City to Yiti Sustainable City, Oman is investing in smart, livable and ecologically conscious urban environments. These projects are more than real estate — they are expressions of a national vision that places people, place and progress in balance.

SMART CITIES WITH OMANI CHARACTER Oman Vision 2040 provides a bold framework for sustainable development, aligned with global priorities like the UN Sustainable Development Goals. But Oman’s approach to smart cities is refreshingly its own.

SINGAPORE INSPIRATION While every city’s path is unique, learning from others is key. Singapore, a global leader in integrated urban development, offers a set of complementary insights that can inspire Oman’s evolving approach.

FIVE AREAS WHERE OMAN CAN DRAW STRENGTH AND DIRECTION:

- 1. HOLISTIC POLICY PLANNING** Singapore demonstrates the power of long-term, cross-sector planning. Oman is on a similar path and further coordination between ministries, municipalities and private sector actors can unlock even greater results.
- 2. PEOPLE-CENTRED INNOVATION** In Singapore, smart solutions are



Oman stands out for its commitment to people-centred progress

designed with and for citizens — from user-friendly e-services to participatory urban platforms .

3. SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Singapore’s zero-waste efforts and water management systems are backed by long-term investment and national buy-in. Oman is taking promising steps through Yiti and Sultan Haitham City — now is the time to embed climate resilience and resource efficiency across the urban system.

4. DIGITAL TRUST Oman’s investments in AI, IoT and digital infrastructure are commendable. Building on this, introducing open urban data platforms could enhance transparency, foster innovation and strengthen public trust — beginning with new city developments.

5. INCLUSIVE GROWTH Ensuring that smart city benefits reach all segments of society is a hallmark of Singapore’s approach.



IMAD EDDINE
OUBIRI

Oubiri is a public policy and international cooperation expert. He is an adept of smart cities, sustainable development and strategic government partnerships.

Oman has an opportunity to deepen its commitment to digital inclusion — especially for SMEs, communities and underrepresented groups.

- UNLOCKING THE NEXT PHASE** Policy Enablers To continue advancing, Oman could consider a few practical enablers:
- **Urban Living Labs:** Establish community-driven innovation spaces in Muscat, Al Duqm and Sultan Haitham City, where public and private actors collaborate on real-world urban solutions.
 - **Smart Oman Charter:** A values-based national policy framework to guide ethics, data governance and sustainable standards in urban development.
 - **Smart Infrastructure Fund:** A blended finance mechanism to scale urban infrastructure, supported by public-private partnerships and global green capital.

These initiatives would not only strengthen domestic capacity — they would also signal Oman’s role as a regional convenor and thought leader in smart and sustainable urbanism.

A VISION WORTH BUILDING Oman is not simply adapting to change — it is helping define what a smart city means for the Arab world. The Sultanate of Oman’s approach stands out for its grounded optimism, cultural depth and commitment to people-centred progress. Where Singapore offers lessons in systems thinking and precision execution, Oman brings something equally powerful: a model of smart urbanism rooted in identity, resilience and vision. As the country moves forward, this blend of local values and global openness will be its greatest strength. The future Oman is building is not just smart — it is wise.

Conflict communication: Then and now



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

AS the digital landscape develops, the confluence between social media and conflict becomes an integral part of the narrative. A myriad of stories, perceptions, fake information, and imagery can ignite or amplify tensions. Artificial intelligence and social media have the potential to polarise or create scenarios with real-world implications.

In times of war and conflict, government officials and influential figures address the public with messages in support of one side. Typically, it employs hostile narratives, propaganda, and disinformation for the convenient simplification of complex scenarios. This communication strategy is fertile ground for spreading deception and misinformation, but also for rallying support.

In the past, the mainstream media aligned with the countries’ governments, and their policies to play the drums for ‘saving the world’ from dictators and armaments; now, however, there is a fragmented media landscape in which people rely on social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) for information or to ally with peers who share similar ideologies.

Then-prime minister Tony Blair led the United Kingdom to war in Iraq in 2003 based on ‘unquestionable intelligence’ regarding weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. The goals of the war for the United States were to free the

Iraqi people, remove WMDs from the country, and stop Saddam Hussein from supporting terrorism.

The British newspapers on Fleet Street championed Tony Blair’s ‘journey’ to Baghdad. Years later, the former prime minister apologised for the use of ‘wrong intelligence’ in the run-up to the war. The intelligence report was presented as fact, rather than information that may not be accurate. The media didn’t play the drums as enthusiastically as it did pre-war. There are journalistic lessons yet to be learned.

Two decades later, the ghosts of the Iraq War still haunt the region. The ‘mission accomplished’ staged by the President of the United States, George W. Bush, has barely materialised. Media organisations have failed and continue to fail in addressing the numerous military interventions in the region. The trumpets are still blowing.

The mainstream media often offers one-sided, biased coverage. There are political barriers and ideological challenges; also, there is usually a gap in examining the political and historical context of the conflict.

In today’s digital landscape, people increasingly turn away from mainstream media for information. A vast array of channels is available, each offering either accurate information or potentially harmful misinformation. While social platforms facilitate quicker and decentralised

Social media news, especially about war, can mislead and give a false sense of understanding. The global political landscape and interest relations have become more complex.

communication, they also contribute to societal division. Social media is increasingly influencing conflict and contentious politics. The ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza exemplifies how wars are now intertwined with social media. From images depicting military action to narratives crafted by various participants, the impact is significant.

Yet, while offering alternative narratives and perspectives, social platforms are filling the gaps and addressing the vacuums in mainstream media coverage. The negative side is that, at the core of war rhetoric, there is a chaotic, senseless, and unreliable flow of information.

Recent media studies suggest a staggering amount of artificial intelligence-generated misinformation online, as a result of the Israel-Iran war. According to a BBC article, the writers indicate that outdated clips and AI-generated content are being shared as real events, with X users turning to the platform’s AI chatbot-Grok to establish the posts’ veracity. In some cases, Grok asserted that the AI videos were authentic.

Social media news, especially about war, can mislead and give a false sense of understanding. The global political landscape and interest relations have become more complex. Even though social media merely offers snippets of selective information, it has added a new dimension to how conflict plays out both online and on the ground.

Starmer’s patchy record after unhappy one year in power

JAMES PHEBY

A year after coming to power British Prime Minister Keir Starmer already appears seriously weakened, with an internal rebellion this week dealing the latest blow to his authority.

Here’s a look back at the Labour Party leader’s record on six issues over an eventful past 12 months since winning an election on July 4, 2024:

ECONOMIC GROWTH

The centre-left government has struggled to deliver on its top priority: reviving economic growth. While there was a surprise 0.7 per cent growth in the first quarter, most analysts agree that it will likely not last as US tariffs and business tax hikes threaten progress. To kickstart the economy, Labour has pledged to cut red tape and launched a multi-billion pound investment plan.

FOREIGN POLICY

Starmer found himself playing a key role in diplomacy following Donald Trump’s return as US president, taking advantage of the UK’s relatively positive relations with Washington and improving ties with Brussels. This was evident in the Ukraine war, when Starmer led a European “coalition of the willing” to support Kyiv after Trump’s threats to withdraw US support.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration is a key political issue, with Labour promising to reduce net migration and “smash the criminal boat gangs” ferrying migrants across the Channel. Net migration nearly halved in 2024, although that drop was largely attributed to policies implemented by the previous Conservative that Starmer kept in place. But people making small boat crossings for the first half of 2025 hit a record high of 19,982, and hard-right party Reform UK is capitalising on the issue.

TRADE, A RARE WIN

Trade has been a bright spot for the Starmer government. It secured three deals in May: easing tariffs with the US, repairing ties with the EU, and striking a long-awaited agreement with India. These wins suggest the government is finding its footing in international trade.

PUBLIC SPENDING

Finance minister Rachel Reeves promised “iron discipline” to restore public finances. But plans to scrap winter fuel payments for millions of pensioners were rolled back and a proposed cut in disability benefits was shelved on Tuesday following a rebellion by Labour MPs. Reeves must now find savings elsewhere.

HEALTH

Starmer vowed to rebuild the cherished NHS, promising improvements after a decade of austerity, the pandemic and political upheavals left it in crisis. Starmer and Health Secretary Wes Streeting will on Thursday unveil a 10-year “health plan” to make the NHS “fit for the future”, while Reeves recently announced an extra £29 billion per year for the NHS in England. — AFP

How Europe toughened stance on immigration

WHEN Nicola Procaccini was elected to the European Parliament six years ago, colleagues seemed to avoid stepping into elevators with him at the towering glass Parliament building in Brussels, he said. He belonged to a tiny, fringe party on the right of Italian politics whose hard-line stances on immigration were scorned.

“My hand would hang midair because they don’t shake hands with fascists,” Procaccini said in an interview, derisively characterising how he thought his opponents saw him. Meanwhile, migrant rights activists were invited into the Parliament chamber and cheered.

Now those tables have turned, he said. “Those who told us our approach was racist, xenophobic, are slowly starting to say, ‘Well, maybe they’re a bit right,’” Procaccini said, noting that mainstream politicians are now embracing more of his party’s policies on migration.

Procaccini’s party, Brothers of Italy, is now very popular in Italy. Its leader, Giorgia Meloni, is the country’s prime minister. And Procaccini is a chair of the European Conservatives and Reformists group, a big force in the European Parliament.

Across the political spectrum in Europe, leaders, right and left, are pushing a tougher line on migrants lacking permanent legal status. The shift has not set off the same turmoil that President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown has stirred in the United States, but it is already being seen as entrenched and profound.

In nations across the European Union, centrists are joining staunch conservatives to roll back protections in an effort to make it easier to deport migrants lacking permanent legal status. Denmark’s “zero” refugee policy has become a model other leaders want to replicate. European Union officials are working on new rules that would help to send asylum-seekers to third countries. The bloc struck



EMMA BUBOLA

The authors cover Europe for The New York Times



AND JEANNA SMIALEK

a recent deal to deploy agents in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is not an EU member, to better police borders.

Some of those ideas have previously met with criticism from European Union officials.

The shift has steadily built with the voter backlash that helped fuel nationalist, far-right and populist parties after Europe took in more than 1 million Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans and others seeking asylum a decade ago.

Migration picked up again, though less drastically, just after the peak of the coronavirus pandemic. But since then, the number of migrants arriving has fallen. They declined about 20 per cent in the first five months of 2025, after a sharp decline last year, according to preliminary data collected by Frontex, the European Union’s border agency. At the same time, expulsions have slowly increased.

But migration along some routes remains significant. Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the bloc’s executive arm, emphasised in a recent letter to political leaders that arrivals from Libya into Greece are surging, and said that Europe must “insist on strengthening border management.”

Hofmann said that because anti-immigrant sentiments are often a proxy for wider frustration with a perceived lack of opportunities, high costs of living and a loss of social status, a drop in migrant arrivals alone was unlikely to blunt the issue’s potency.

Not long ago, when the British government proposed sending asylum-seekers to Rwanda, the Council of Europe’s commissioner for human rights said the plan was another representation “of an ongoing trend towards externalisation of asylum and migration policy in Europe,” which he said was “a matter of concern for the global system of protection of the rights of refugees.” Now, the policy of offshoring asylum requests has become a signature of Meloni, who has tried to hold asylum-seekers in Albania while

their cases are processed.

Though Italian judges have blocked her effort for now, von der Leyen called it “an example of out-of-the-box thinking.” Now the European Union is seeking to redirect applicants to third countries while it works to streamline the deportation process for asylum-seekers whose applications have been rejected.

The depth of the change was on full display last month when Mette Frederiksen, the Social Democratic, left-leaning Danish prime minister, stood alongside the staunchly conservative Meloni in Rome to support tougher migration rules.

Frederiksen, whose country has relatively few asylum requests, has for several years overseen one of Europe’s most restrictive policies. Others are now seeking to adopt a similar approach.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany, the centre-right leader of Europe’s largest economy, this month called Denmark a “role model” on migration policy.

Germany has now instituted checks on its land borders, a step that opponents, including some of its neighbours, have criticised as undermining the commitment of EU members to free movement within the bloc.

Some worry that the shift in tone around migration could harm newcomers who remain in Europe. In recent Polish presidential elections, the nationalist candidate won by running in part on a “Poland first, Poles” platform. The shift in tone is striking even to those who have long been proponents of tougher measures.

A decade ago, when Australia barred migrants trying to enter the country by sea from resettlement and sent asylum-seekers to Papua New Guinea, rights groups said the policy provoked human rights violations. The European Union was also critical, said Alexander Downer, an Australian former foreign minister.

“They used to give me lectures all the time about how naughty we were,” Downer said. “Von der Leyen has embraced it now.”

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Kepa Arrizabalaga

ARSENAL SIGN GOALKEEPER ARRIZABALAGA FROM CHELSEA

LONDON: Arsenal have signed goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga from Chelsea.

The 30-year-old Spaniard spent last season on loan at Bournemouth, making 35 appearances in all competitions. Arsenal had brought in Neto from the Cherries as back-up to David Raya, but the Brazilian has returned to the Cherries following the end of his own season-long loan. Kepa, who spent the 2023/24 campaign at Real Madrid, has signed a three-year deal, the PA news agency understands. The fee is reported to be around £5 million (\$6.9 million), with the transfer subject to the completion of regulatory processes.

“I’m really, really happy to be here, really excited and looking forward to what is coming,” Kepa told Arsenal’s website.

“The ambition that is shown in this club, when I talk with coach Mikel Arteta and goalkeeping coach Inaki Cana, how much they show me their desire to win, I think we are so close to winning and, hopefully, altogether, we can achieve it.”

Kepa became the world’s most expensive goalkeeper when he joined Chelsea from Athletic Bilbao in a £71 million deal during the summer of 2018, going on to win the Europa League and Champions League with the Blues as well as the 2023 Nations League with Spain.

Arteta is confident Kepa will provide plenty of competition for his compatriot Raya.

“He is a player we know, having come up against him many times in recent seasons,” Arteta said. “He brings a wealth of experience, which his team-mates will benefit from, and he has a real hunger to win. “Kepa works hard and will elevate our levels. I know he will fit in perfectly, already knowing some of his team-mates, and we are really excited about his future with us.”

Arsenal also appear to be closing in on deals for Brentford midfielder Christian Norgaard and Real Sociedad’s Martin Zubimendi. — dpa

Next season, 14 clubs to play in Omantel League

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

THE Oman Football Association (OFA) has announced its decision to increase the number of clubs participating in the Omantel League from 12 to 14 teams, starting from the 2025–2026 season. This step aims to enhance the most prominent football competition in the Sultanate of Oman and open the door for more clubs to compete at the highest level, thereby contributing to the technical and organisational development of Omani football.

The Association also decided to organise the First Division League and the Olympic League at the governorate level, as part of a broader vision to promote sports decentralisation, expand the base of players and teams, and enable talents across various wilayats to emerge within a competitive environment closer to their local communities.

The Association clarified that the decision to increase the number of clubs is the result of a series of urgent meetings and studies conducted by the Board of Directors. The findings indicated that increasing the number of teams would lead to more matches per season, thereby boosting fan attendance and creating more opportunities for competition and technical development for both clubs and players.

Based on this decision, the Association has resolved to retain Sur and Ibri clubs in the Omantel League for the upcoming season, despite their results warranting relegation to the First Division.

However, their continuation is contingent upon meeting technical and administrative requirements, most importantly obtaining the professional league license issued by the Association after reviewing each club’s licensing file.

If one or both clubs fail to meet these conditions, the opportunity will be given to the highest-ranked teams in the First Division, provided they fulfill the same requirements. This decision came during a meeting of the Board of Directors held on



The increase of clubs is the result of a series of urgent meetings and studies conducted by OFA.

Tuesday at the Association’s headquarters, chaired by Sayyid Sulaiman bin Hamood al Busaidy Chairman of OFA, and attended by the vice-president, board members and the secretary-general.

The meeting included discussions on several key matters, most notably the financial situation of the Association, reviewing the general budget, cost-reduction strategies and plans to increase revenue.

The Board also discussed activating the work of the standing committees and restructuring them in line with the upcoming phase’s requirements. Several technical and administrative committee heads were approved and appointed.

The national senior team was also a focal point of the meeting. The Board reviewed the upcoming preparation plan, especially for the intercontinental play-off qualifying for the 2026 Fifa World Cup, and preparations for the West Asian

Football Federation friendly tournament, which is considered a crucial opportunity for competition and readiness. Several internal and external training camps are also scheduled for the coming period.

To support the sustainability of football activity, the Board announced its intention to hold a series of meetings with clubs that had suspended their senior team activities in recent seasons.

These meetings aim to explore ways to support and gradually reintegrate them, offering appropriate facilitations within available capacities, particularly on technical and organisational fronts. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board expressed its deep appreciation for the efforts of the previous board, commending their role in maintaining the Association’s stability during challenging times.

The Board affirmed its commitment to building on past achievements to ensure further progress in the future.

Oman table tennis players gear up for next tournaments

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

The Oman national table tennis team players began an intensive domestic training camp at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat as part of their comprehensive preparations for several significant upcoming international and regional tournaments. The week-long internal camp, which began on Sunday, featured participation from both senior and youth players representing various clubs across the Sultanate of Oman, and is being held under the close supervision of the national technical staff.

Led by national team head coach Omid Shamas Sharbabaki, alongside newly appointed assistant head coach Adnan Fawakherji, the camp will aim to deliver maximum technical and tactical outputs. The coaching duo are focused on building team cohesion, enhancing skill sets, and developing game strategies that align with the high standards of international competition. This camp will play a critical role in shaping the future of Omani table tennis not only by refining the skills of the current senior players but also by evaluating promising

young talents who may soon earn the national jersey. The coaching staff will end the domestic training camp by finalising the lineup for the upcoming WTT Star Contender Muscat which is one of the prominent events on the global table tennis calendar. The prestigious tournament, scheduled to take place in mid-November in Muscat, will feature a lineup of world-class players and will offer Oman’s athletes a golden opportunity to compete against international elites on home soil.

Simultaneously, the youth segment of the national team is undergoing a performance evaluation during the camp, as part of the selection process for the 3rd Asian Youth Games, which will be held in Bahrain in October 2025. The technical staff is closely assessing the youth players’ progress and adaptability to international standards, with the aim of forming a competitive squad that can represent Oman honorably in the continental multi-sport event.

Adding to the busy calendar, Oman is also gearing up to host the Arabian and West Asian Table Tennis Championship for Clubs this coming September. The Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex



This next stage of preparation will focus on refining techniques and strategies developed during the current camp

will once again serve as the host venue for this prestigious regional championship. Oman will be represented by its top three clubs including Salalah, Ibri, and Seeb who were shown consistent performance domestically in the last season and earned the right to compete at this level. The tournament is expected to draw strong participation from top club teams across the Arab and West Asian region, promising high-level competition and great exposure for the local players.

Following the conclusion of the current training phase, the national team’s preparation will continue with another internal camp phase starting from July 17 to 24 in Muscat. This next stage of preparation will focus on refining techniques and strategies developed during the current camp. The coaching staff will aim to capitalise on the momentum, strengthen areas of improvement identified in previous evaluations, and ensure that both senior and youth squads are progressing in line with international expectations. This multi-phase training programme aim to provide a competitive generation of athletes capable of representing the country at major regional and global events.

SHORTTAKES



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Gilgeous-Alexander agrees \$285 million contract extension

LOS ANGELES, United States: Oklahoma City Thunder star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander has agreed a four-year \$285 million contract extension, the richest per-year contract in NBA history, US media reports said on Tuesday.

Gilgeous-Alexander, who guided the Thunder to the NBA championship last month after a campaign that saw him win regular season and finals Most Valuable Player awards, is now tied to the club through 2031.

The 26-year-old Canadian point guard has two years remaining on his existing contract with Oklahoma City worth \$79.1 million (67.2 million euros).

The four additional seasons of his contract extension will see him receive \$62.5 million, \$68.6 million, \$73.7 million and then \$78.7 million in 2030-2031.

The deal gives Gilgeous-Alexander the highest annual salary in the NBA, eclipsing the average \$64.3 million salary of the Philadelphia 76ers’ Joel Embiid and the \$62.8 million earned by the Boston Celtics’ Jayson Tatum.

Gilgeous-Alexander was the fulcrum of the Thunder’s dazzling 68-win Western Conference season, before inspiring the team to a 4-3 NBA Finals victory over the Indiana Pacers last month.

The Thunder ace averaged a league-high 32.7 points during the regular season and 30.3 points in the NBA Finals on his way to completing his MVP double.

He became only the fourth player in history to win both NBA regular season and finals MVP awards as well as the league’s scoring title, putting him into an exclusive club alongside Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Michael Jordan and Shaquille O’Neal.

News of Gilgeous-Alexander’s contract extension came as the NBA’s free agency window cranked into top gear after the opening of the window on Monday. In other significant early moves reported on Tuesday, the Milwaukee Bucks have waived all-star guard Damian Lillard after two seasons. — AFP



Serbia’s Novak Djokovic in action during his first round match. — Reuters

Gauff ousted of Wimbledon as Djokovic advances

COCO Gauff crashed out of Wimbledon on a day of first-round shocks on Tuesday but defending women’s champion Barbora Krejcikova and history-chasing Novak Djokovic are up and running. US second seed Gauff arrived at the All England Club with high hopes after winning the French Open last month but was beaten 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 by Ukranian world number 42 Dayana Yastremska.

Other high-profile casualties on day two of the grass-court Grand Slam were women’s third seed Jessica Pegula and fifth seed Zheng Qinwen.

Instead of building on her success on the Paris clay, 21-year-old Gauff suffered her earliest Grand Slam exit since another first-round loss at Wimbledon in 2023.

The two-time Grand Slam champion said she would learn from her experience, suggesting she would like more grass-court tennis in the build-up to Wimbledon in future.

“I feel like mentally I was a little bit overwhelmed with everything that came afterwards (following the French Open triumph), so I didn’t feel like I had enough time to celebrate and also get back into it,” said Gauff.

“But it’s the first time in this experience of, like, coming off a win and having to play Wimbledon. I definitely learned a lot of what I would and would not do again.”

Earlier, US Open runner-up Pegula suffered a shock defeat against Italy’s



Coco Gauff of the US in action during her first round match. — Reuters

Elisabetta Cocciaretto, losing 6-2, 6-3 and was followed out of the tournament by Olympic champion Zheng, who went down 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 against unheralded Katerina Siniakova.

Men’s third seed Alexander Zverev also bowed out, beaten in five sets by French world number 72 Arthur Rinderknech, giving a bleak assessment of his state of mind after the match.

The German, who reached the Australian Open final earlier this year, suffered his earliest Grand Slam exit since 2019 after a marathon match that started on Monday evening.

Afterwards he made surprisingly frank comments, saying he was considering therapy to talk through his mental health issues.

“It’s funny, I feel very alone out there at times,” he said. “I struggle mentally. I’ve been

saying that since after the Australian Open.”

MIRACLE PILLS

Seven-time champion Djokovic was kept waiting until the evening to make his return to Centre Court as he targets a record 25th Grand Slam, which would take him clear of his tie with long-retired Margaret Court.

The veteran Serb struggled with feelings of discomfort and dropped a set but recovered to beat French world number 41 Alexandre Muller 6-1, 6-7 (7/9), 6-2, 6-2 in the final match on Centre Court.

Afterwards he admitted he had found it tough.

“I went from feeling my absolute best for a set and a half to my absolute worst for about 45 minutes,” he said.

“Whether it was a stomach bug, I don’t know what it is.

“I struggled with that but the energy came back after some doctors’ miracle pills and I managed to finish the match on a good note.”

Earlier, Krejcikova, who came to Wimbledon with just six matches under her belt this year, overcame a sluggish start to beat Philippines star Alexandra Eala 3-6, 6-2, 6-1.

Krejcikova has endured a difficult time since defeating Italy’s Jasmine Paolini in the final last year.

The 29-year-old was out of action this season until May after suffering a back injury and pulled out of last week’s Eastbourne Open before the quarter-finals with a thigh problem. — AFP

Stokes makes Jaiswal breakthrough in second Test at Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom: England captain Ben Stokes again proved his worth as a Test-match partnership-breaker at Edgbaston on Wednesday by denying India dangerman Yashasvi Jaiswal his second hundred of the series.

India were 182-3 at tea on the first day of the second Test after Jaiswal had fallen for 87, with the tourists looking to level the five-match series at 1-1 after last week’s five-wicket loss at Headingley.

India captain Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant, who between them scored three of the team’s five hundreds at Headingley — something no other losing side had achieved in more than 60,000 games of first-class cricket — were 42 and 14 not out respectively.

Jaiswal was closing in on a century after another dazzling display of stroke-play when the left-handed opener cut flat-footedly at a short and wide ball from all-rounder Stokes, bowling from around the wicket, only to edge a poor delivery straight to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith.

It was a tame end and meant Jaiswal was unable to match his excellent 101 at Headingley — a game England won as they made light of chasing 371 for victory.

The 23-year-old’s exit also saw the end of a third wicket partnership of 66 with India captain Shubman Gill that had taken the tourists to 161-3.

New batsman Pant, fresh from becoming just the second wicketkeeper in Test history to score hundreds in both innings of a match



England’s Ben Stokes in action. — Reuters

with 134 and 118 in Leeds, waited a relatively restrained 23 balls until he scored his first boundary Wednesday — a six over midwicket against off-spinner Shoaib Bashir.

Earlier Stokes, as he had done at Headingley, opted to field after winning the toss, with England having achieved their all-time record fourth innings victory chase of 378 at Edgbaston, against India three years ago.

KL Rahul, fresh from a second-innings hundred at Headingley, rarely looked comfortable Wednesday as he took 26 balls to score two in an innings that ended when he played on to Chris Woakes, on his Warwickshire home ground.

Brydon Carse kept things tight at the other end as India were held to

37-1 off 13 overs in the first hour of play.

But there was a release of pressure when he was replaced by Tongue.

Jaiswal went to his fifty with consecutive boundaries off Tongue, a hook followed by a rasping cut. It took him a mere 59 balls to reach the landmark, with 40 of his runs coming in fours.

But shortly before lunch, Karun Nair (31) was undone by a lifting ball from the admirable Carse that lobbed gently to second slip.

The most eye-catching of the three changes made by India saw Jasprit Bumrah rested after it was announced before the series he would only feature in three of the five Tests in order to protect his fitness following a back injury. — AFP

SPORTS

REAL MADRID,
DORTMUND INTO
CWC QUARTERS

SPANISH giants Real Madrid beat Juventus 1-0 on Tuesday to set up a Club World Cup quarterfinal clash against Borussia Dortmund, who edged Mexican side Monterrey.

Serhou Guirassy struck twice for the German outfit as they scraped past Sergio Ramos's side 2-1 in a tight last-16 clash in Atlanta and denied the former Real Madrid skipper a match-up against his former team.

Youngster Gonzalo Garcia headed home his third goal of the tournament to help Madrid edge Italian side Juventus at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami earlier.

It was an impressive display from Xabi Alonso's Madrid side, unbeaten under the new coach, and they were further boosted by Kylian Mbappe's return from illness as a substitute.

"We had a lot of chances in the second half, but their goalkeeper was really good," said Madrid shot-stopper Thibaut Courtois.

The first half was a finely-balanced contest with Igor Tudor's Juventus starting brightly before Real ended it on top.

Los Blancos kept turning the

Madrid's coach was pleased with his team's performance, including that of Gonzalo — who he had compared to former Real great Raul — but also suggested that Mbappe might be ready for a bigger contribution in the next game.



Real Madrid's Federico Valverde shoots at goal. — Reuters

screw and found their goal when Trent Alexander-Arnold crossed for Gonzalo to head home after 54 minutes.

Alonso decided to introduce Mbappe to the delight of the 62,149 crowd but the striker did not find any clear openings as Juve pushed for an equaliser.

Madrid's coach was pleased with his team's performance, including that of Gonzalo — who he had compared to former Real great Raul — but also suggested that Mbappe might be ready for a bigger contribution in the next game.

"We will keep watching him... I think he will be much better for the quarters," Alonso said.

Alonso added that he was satisfied to see Real produce the necessary grit to grind out the result in the second half.

"We had to be patient, we had to mature into the game," said the coach. "With the players and myself, you know you have to grit your teeth and do what you have to do. And in the end, we had to hold on a bit, and I'm happy about that too."

Juve boss Tudor said his team became exhausted as the game developed.

"In the end there were 10 of them asking to be substituted. Obviously you can't do that but there was an incredible tiredness," he said, offering his reasons.

"There is the tension of the game which burns energy but then there is the heat and humidity," explained Tudor, also noting they were at the end of a long season.

In Atlanta, Guirassy's brace was enough to help Dortmund past Monterrey in a hard-fought clash, setting them up to play a Madrid side who beat them in the 2024 Champions League final.

"Real has a great team, they have many good individual players," Dortmund coach Niko Kovac told reporters.

"If we put everything on the pitch, (giving) the same performance as we saw today, I think that we will have a good chance."

Guirassy netted a first-half double but German Berterame pulled one back for the Mexican side who came close to an equaliser when a late Ramos header span just wide. — AFP

Weekend

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Liverpool defender Quansah signs for Bayer Leverkusen

MUNICH: Centre-half Jarell Quansah has joined Bayer Leverkusen from Premier League champions Liverpool for a reported club record fee, the Bundesliga side announced on Wednesday.

According to British and German press, the transfer fee for the 22-year-old could go up to 40 million euros (\$47 million), including 10 million euros in add-ons.

German specialist media Kicker and The Athletic also reported the inclusion of a 60-million-euros buy-back clause in the contract, which Liverpool could activate from summer 2027 to re-sign Quansah.

"We are very happy to be able to sign Jarell Quansah, one of the most promising English central defenders," said Leverkusen managing director of sport Simon Rolfes.

"He made a very impressive contribution to a Liverpool defence full of world-class players. Jarell will give our defence extra dynamism, tempo and strength."

Quansah becomes the most expensive signing in Leverkusen's history, following on from the previous record arrival of midfielder Kerem Demirbay for 32 million euros in 2019.

The 2025 European under-21 champion with England joined Liverpool's academy as a five-year-old, and rose through the ranks before making his first-team debut in 2023.

Jarell Quansah

He went on to appear 58 times for the Merseysiders, winning the League Cup in 2022 and 2024, as well as the Premier League title last season.

After playing second fiddle to first-choice defensive duo Virgil van Dijk and Ibrahima Konate for much of the 2024/25 campaign, Quansah arrives at Leverkusen to replace departed former captain Jonathan Tah at the heart of the Bundesliga club's defence.

"The ambitious targets here were clearly explained to me during the negotiations. It's a great role and challenge for me to be part of the current Leverkusen rebuild," said Quansah.

After creating league history by winning the Bundesliga undefeated in 2024, Leverkusen endured a difficult title defence last term, finishing 13 points adrift of winners Bayern Munich.

Stars of their league-and-cup double from two seasons years ago, Florian Wirtz and Jeremie Frimpong, have recently gone in the opposite direction from Quansah, joining Liverpool from Leverkusen this close-season. — AFP



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SIGNIFICANTGROWTH



Dhofar Governorate contributed 76 per cent of Oman's total wheat production this year, yielding 7,723 tonnes.

VALUE OF WHEAT OUTPUT TOPS RO 3 M IN 2024-2025 SEASON

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has affirmed that wheat production has seen significant growth across various governorates of Oman following the implementation of a local wheat support plan starting in 2023. This initiative falls within national efforts to enhance food security and achieve self-sufficiency in staple grains.

The ministry clarified that the total production for the 2024-2025 season reached 10,128.341 tonnes, with a market value of RO 3,038,502, cultivated across 8,327 acres.

Dhofar Governorate contributed 76 per cent of Oman's total wheat production this year, yielding 7,723 tonnes, followed by Al Dhahirah Governorate with 1,118 tonnes and Al Dakhiliyah with 877.185 tonnes, while the remaining quantities were distributed among other governorates.

Dr Khair bin Tuwair al Busaidy, Director of the Palm and Plant Production Department at the MoAFWR, stated that the local wheat support plan aims to strengthen food security systems in line with the objectives of "Oman Vision 2040". This, he pointed out, is achieved by enabling farmers to cultivate high-yield, high-quality improved wheat varieties, providing assistance in harvesting operations, and offering technical and advisory support. He added that the ministry, in coordination with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, is expanding wheat cultivation by allocating new land for wheat and offering them as usufruct lands for farmers and investors.

Dr Al Busaidy said the ministry's research centres, continues to develop wheat farming, improve local varieties, and launch strains adapted to Oman's climate while maintaining high productivity and quality. — ONA

4th I-REC auction to advance clean energy

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 2

NAMA Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP), the sole procurer of power and water capacity in the Sultanate of Oman, has launched its fourth auction round for International Renewable Energy Certificates (I-RECs) – a move aligned with the Sultanate of Oman's broader strategy to advance decarbonisation and its Net-Zero targets.

Over 3 million I-RECs are on offer in this latest round, building on three previous auctions that have reinforced Oman's efforts to provide avenues for businesses and strategic sectors within the country to decarbonise their operations.

Two years ago, Oman became the first country in the GCC to register the first wind farm – the 50 MW Dhofar I Wind Project – with the I-REC Standard Foundation.

Since then, PWP has successfully registered Manah I Solar IPP and Manah II Solar IPP with the globally recognised I-REC Standard Foundation, which promotes an internationally recognised methodology for issuing and redeeming I-RECs.

This system is implemented globally with the support of national governments and local stakeholders.

The I-REC certificates in this auction round represent renewable energy generated by the three projects between July 2024 and December 2025. The grid-connected Manah I and Manah II solar PV



Around 3 million International Renewable Energy Certificates (I-REC) are on offer in the latest auction.



AHMED BIN SALIM AL ABRI
Nama PWP CEO

projects – each with a capacity of 500 MW – are expected to generate around 1.5 million I-RECs annually, while the Dhofar I Wind project is estimated to contribute approximately 150,000 certificates per year.

Commenting on the significance of this latest auction, Nama PWP CEO Ahmed bin Salim al Abri stated: "Through this market-based solution, PWP is enabling local businesses to decarbonise their operations by purchasing the I-RECs, while offering domestic and international buyers a credible pathway to meet voluntary sustainability targets."

According to PWP, certifying the flow of energy from clean sources has become increasingly important for consumers who demand greater choice in how they procure electricity.

Some companies seek to demonstrate compliance

with renewable energy procurement requirements, while others aim to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

To accurately report the use of renewable energy in emissions disclosures, companies must own and redeem a verified environmental attribute certificate, such as an I-REC.

Well-known Omani environmental services specialist Three Pillars Consulting (TPC) serves as the local issuer of I-RECs in the Sultanate of Oman.

As the accredited issuer, TPC supports the registration of renewal and issuance of I-REC renewable energy tracking system.

Oman, Belarus ink deals to boost industrial and digital cooperation

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in Muscat aimed at strengthening cooperation and facilitating technology transfer in the automotive and smart technology sectors.

The first MoU, signed between Karwa and Belarusian firm Amkodor, establishes a joint framework for industrial and commercial collaboration, enabling both parties to expand into markets across Oman, the GCC, and Africa.

The second MoU, also involving Karwa and Belarusian company MAZ, focuses on cooperation in the manufacture and distribution of transport vehicles, specialised



The MoUs are aimed at strengthening cooperation and facilitating technology transfer in the automotive and smart technology sectors.

equipment and trailers. It includes joint market studies, marketing initiatives, and the development of a full production line at the Karwa Automobile Plant in Oman.

The agreement also facilitates the transfer of technical expertise,

training programmes, and technical support to build the capacity of national talent.

Representing Karwa at the signing was CEO Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, with Aleksey Zanduk, Deputy General Manager of Marketing at Amkodor, and Alexander Atroshik, Deputy Commercial Director at MAZ, signing for their respective firms.

The third MoU, between the Omani National Engineering and Investment Company (ONEIC) and Belarusian firm Delivery Software, targets the deployment of cutting-edge digital solutions in Oman and the wider region.

Areas of collaboration include ICT innovation, AI applications, fintech, and other digital services that enhance automation and

operational efficiency. The agreement was signed by Eng Aziz al Hasani, ONIC's General Manager of IT and E-Business, and Andrey Sudakov, CEO of Delivery Software.

The ceremony was attended by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Dr Abdullah bin Masoud al Harthy, Honorary Consul of Belarus to Oman, and several senior officials from both nations.

These agreements stem from efforts by the Omani-Belarusian Joint Committee to strengthen strategic partnerships, promote knowledge exchange, and position Oman as a hub for high-quality investments and future-focused projects. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

PREMIUMBENEFITS



The INEOS Grenadier is purpose-built to conquer Oman's diverse and demanding terrain.

INEOS GRENADIER UNLEASHES ITS SUMMER OFFER: BUILT FOR OMAN, BUILT FOR MORE

MUSCAT: This summer, the INEOS Grenadier continues to prove its capability across Omani roads — and beyond. MHD Automobiles LLC, the exclusive distributor of INEOS Grenadier in Oman, is pleased to announce their Summer Offer that empowers customers to embrace every journey with confidence, durability and premium benefits.

The exclusive summer package includes: 5 years / 105,000 km service package; 5 years unlimited mileage warranty; 5 years roadside assistance; BFGoodrich all-terrain T/A KO3 tyres (legendary off-road durability); and complimentary side steps for added accessibility and rugged flair.

From the towering peaks of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to the golden dunes of Rimal Al Sharqiya, the INEOS Grenadier is purpose-built to conquer Oman's diverse and demanding terrain.

This summer offer is a celebration of freedom, durability and adventure — values that are at the very core of the INEOS Grenadier,” said Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD Automobiles. “With this comprehensive ownership package, we’re not only offering our customers peace of mind but also ensuring they experience the Grenadier’s full potential, from the city streets to the most remote destinations”.

At the heart of the Grenadier is a full box-section ladder frame chassis, reinforced with heavy-duty solid beam axles, up to three locking differentials and a two-speed transfer case — offering unmatched traction from rocky trails to desert crossings.

Its BMW 3.0L turbocharged inline-six gasoline engine delivers the power and endurance required for any expedition. Practical features include a 70:30 split rear door, integrated roof bars, pre-wiring for auxiliary lamps and accessories; and a front bumper to sit on. An ‘open-source’ approach to accessories means owners can tailor the vehicle to their specific requirements.

Built with galvanised steel body panels, underbody protection and rock sliders, the Grenadier is a fortress on wheels. It features off-road and wading modes, water-resistant interiors and optional raised air intakes — every element designed to rise to Oman’s most extreme challenges.

BIDS FOR PHASE ONE OF WATER DRAINAGE PROJECT IN AL RAWDAH SEZ

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) announced the launch of a tender for the construction works of surface water drainage channels in the Al Rawdah Special Economic Zone, located in the Wilayat of Mahadha in Al Buraimi Governorate.

OPAZ has invited specialised companies to purchase tender documents and submit bids via the e-tendering platform ‘Etimad’.

The tender coincides with the Ministry of Finance’s signing of a financing agreement with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) to fund the first phase of the surface water drainage project in Al Rawdah Special Economic Zone.

Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, planning adviser to the Chairman of OPAZ, stated that the project aims to provide essential protection for the zone, including safeguarding tourism, industrial, commercial and agricultural

facilities.

The project will implement an integrated network of open channels and effective water barriers to control the flow of surface water resulting from rainfall across the lands designated for the SEZ.

He added that the tender includes the construction of an 850-metre barrier, a 25 kilometre rainwater drainage channel and associated excavation, backfilling, grading and other works necessary to support the zone’s economic and social goals.

Own the Lexus ES with exclusive benefits

COOL down this summer with a brand-new Lexus ES. Lexus Oman presents a distinctive opportunity for you to own the remarkable Lexus ES with its latest summer campaign. Buy a Lexus from the ES range, which includes the gasoline-powered ES250, ES350, or the Hybrid ES300h, with each trim designed to enhance your driving experience.

The campaign that began on June 1, 2025 will last until July 31, 2025. Conditions apply. Please visit a Lexus showroom for details. Get to experience the ES, one of the top-selling sedans in the Lexus lineup with service coverage for up to years 10 years/100,000 km of free service and 1st year free registration.

Mapping perfect everyday journeys, the ES features luxurious interiors all while delivering exhilarating city-life experience.

Indulge in sublime comfort, spaciousness and advanced intelligent safety technologies



Buy a Lexus from the ES range with each trim designed to enhance your driving experience.

by Lexus. Under the hood, each trim features a powerful engine variant: The ES250 consists of a 2.5L engine that produces 204 hp, the larger ES350 features a 3.5L V6 engine delivering 298 hp and the eco-friendly hybrid ES300h comes with a 2.5L engine and a dual-motor setup.

All trims are paired with a Direct Shift 8-Speed Automatic Transmission and front-wheel-drive dynamics.

The exceptional power of the ES300h combines cutting-edge engineering with fuel-efficient output, saving fuel on braking or decelerating. The Lexus ES300h, with its dual-motor setup and hybrid capabilities, is both powerful and fuel-efficient.

With the advanced hybrid technologies, the ES offers an impressive 24.1 km/L mileage, saving fuel and delivering peace of mind. Step into the

era of advanced mobility and experience the luxury, innovation and cutting-edge features of Lexus vehicles.

The avant-garde interior features a 3-spoke leather and wood-finished steering wheel, a wireless charging tray, a head-up display, 7-inch multi-information display, tri-zone air conditioning with driver, passenger and rear side wooden trims with ambient lighting and inner handle illumination.

It also includes an interactive 12.3-inch touchscreen display, a 17-speaker Mark Levinson Audio System and a rear camera monitor with a panoramic view of the road to make reversing easier. Feel welcomed by the 8-way power-adjustable front seats with cushion length adjustments and memory settings for the driver seat.

Lexus has pioneered journeys through innovations. Offering a comprehensive set of safety features, each feature has been designed to keep your mind at ease and make your journey more pleasurable.

BANKDHOFAR’S ONGOING COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER PROTECTION

MUSCAT: From the earliest stages of its digital transformation journey, BankDhofar has prioritised the implementation of robust cybersecurity frameworks.

Through advanced systems, strict policies and comprehensive procedures, the bank continues to safeguard its digital infrastructure against cyberattacks. This strategic focus not only ensures safe, seamless and reliable services for customers



but also aligns with Oman’s broader objective of building a resilient digital economy as

envisioned in Oman Vision 2040. BankDhofar remains a pioneer in the digital evolution of the banking and financial sector in Oman, consistently investing in cutting-edge technologies and secure banking systems to protect customer transactions.

One of its notable security enhancements is the deployment of the 3D Secure protocol, which adds an extra layer of verification

for online card transactions to reduce fraud. The bank also ensures full compliance with regulatory standards and directives set by the Central Bank of Oman.

Among the latest frameworks is the Cybersecurity Regulatory Framework introduced in 2023. This directive outlines requirements for all banks and financial institutions in Oman to maintain robust cybersecurity governance.

Bank Muscat showcases premier banking and wealth management solutions

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing communication with media outlets and showcasing its premier banking services, products and wealth management solutions, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently organised a media visit at its Head Office, Airport Heights, attended by Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager of Personal Banking at Bank Muscat, as well as journalists and representatives from various media organisations.

This event aimed to inform the audience of the latest developments at the Bank and to present the high-quality banking services available to different segments of society.

The visit provided a platform for exchanging ideas and information regarding these services and banking solutions designed to meet customer needs and enhance their overall banking experience. This visit is part of a series of periodic media engagements that the Bank conducts



The visit provided a platform for exchanging ideas and information regarding these services and banking solutions

to highlight its notable achievements and to offer journalists opportunities to interact with Bank’s officials.

During the visit, the Bank’s representatives delivered 3 key presentations covering Asalah Priority Banking, Al Jawhar Privilege Banking, private banking and wealth management. Journalists actively

engaged by posing questions related to the banking services and facilities offered through these specialised sectors, fostering a dynamic dialogue between the attendees and Bank’s employees.

Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager — Interior Regions at Bank Muscat, expressed his

satisfaction with organising the media visit and meeting with media professionals and emphasised the importance of collaboration with various media, including digital platforms, in raising awareness about the Bank’s innovative services.

He said: “Bank Muscat offers a wide range of diverse banking products and services across several key categories, including “Asalah” Priority Banking, “Al Jawhar” Privilege Banking, Private Banking and Wealth Management.

These services and solutions are specifically designed to meet the varied needs of customers, aiming to provide them with a comprehensive and exceptional banking experience.

These offerings combine elements of excellence, innovation and modern technology. The Bank’s commitment to continuously developing and enhancing the features and offerings of these services to ensure they meet customers’ expectations and individual needs includes providing

diverse investment solutions and launching exclusive promotions on debit and credit cards.

From his side, Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital Banking at Bank Muscat said: “The Bank offers these services through dedicated centres located in its branches across various governorates of Oman.

For example, Asalah centres are available at select branches and are staffed with specialised relationship managers who provide consultations and inform customers about the services and offers available to this segment.

We would like to assure our customers the Bank will continue its commitment to developing its banking services and facilities in line with market developments, while strengthening innovation and sustainability practices across all operations. We extend our sincere appreciation to all customers for their continued trust in the Bank’s products and services”.

BUSINESS

DEEP APPRECIATION



MoTCIT celebrated the International Day of the Seafarer under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

OMAN CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE SEAFARER

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) celebrated the International Day of the Seafarer on July 2, 2025, under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

In his keynote address, Capt Mazin bin Hamad al Rashidi, Director of Maritime Transport at the Ministry, underscored the significant role seafarers play in the global economy. “Our celebration of the International Day of the Seafarer is a reminder of their central and indispensable role in the international economic system, despite the significant challenges and sacrifices they endure to ensure the steady flow of goods and maintain the continuity of the global economy.

“We reaffirm our deep appreciation for the pivotal role our esteemed seafarers play in sustaining supply chains and global trade, and for their essential contributions to maritime safety and security — benefiting all nations and strengthening the global economy,” he stated.

According to the Director, the maritime sector has witnessed notable progress over the past year. “The ministry has worked on developing the Maritime Law by adding modern investment-related provisions in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and in harmony with international maritime conventions, with the aim of keeping pace with global maritime transport developments and enhancing the business environment in Oman,” he said.

The official added that the ministry has also accomplished significant strides in digital transformation. “In the realm of digital transformation, the ministry has provided over 95% of seafarer services electronically, enabling seafarers and relevant entities to complete transactions and verify certificates and competencies efficiently and with high quality.”

The ministry has also signed various international agreements, “On the international cooperation front, the ministry signed 9 agreements and memoranda of cooperation in the field of maritime transport, along with 16 memoranda of understanding for the mutual recognition of seafarer certificates, and 10 agreements with international classification societies, all of which enhance Oman’s competitiveness and credibility within the international maritime community,” he said.

In terms of regulatory operations, the ministry inspected 74 foreign ships at Omani ports, in addition to issuing over 100 navigation permits for vessels operating within the Oman’s waters during the first quarter of 2025.

Moreover, the ministry delivered 9,950 maritime services through its ship registration departments across various regions, alongside issuing 315 maritime activity permits and 188 sailing certificates.

The ministry also launched the Seafarer Complaints Service, which aims to protect the rights of seafarers and ensure secure and fair working conditions.

OMAN COMPLETES NATIONWIDE SHUTDOWN OF 3G NETWORKS

MUSCAT: Oman has successfully completed the nationwide shutdown of its 3G networks, replacing them with upgraded 4G and 5G infrastructure. The phased switch-off began in less densely populated areas in the third quarter of 2024, in line with a national strategy to modernise telecommunications services.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) confirmed that the shutdown enhances energy efficiency and allows the reuse of spectrum for more advanced technologies. In



July 2024, 700 3G stations were decommissioned across Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah and Musandam. A further 584 stations in Al Dakhiliyah were shut down in December, followed by 864 stations in Al Wusta and Dhofar.

In January 2025, the process expanded to the governorates of Al Batinah South, Al Batinah North, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Sharqiyah North, affecting 1,835 stations.

By the second quarter of 2025, a further 1,699 stations in Muscat were deactivated, with the exception of a few near Muscat International Airport due to technical requirements. The 3G frequency bands have since been reallocated to support 4G, 5G and IoT networks. In total, the upgrade affected more than 5,600 stations nationwide.

Mattress manufacturing plant in SOHAR Freezone

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 2

SOHAR Port and Freezone has signed a land lease agreement with Sweet Night Fine Home (FZC) LLC to establish a mattress manufacturing facility in SOHAR Freezone.

This investment reinforces SOHAR Freezone’s role in driving industrial diversification and sets the foundation for clustering opportunities within the home and comfort manufacturing sector.

The project also advances integration into global supply chains, with the potential to localise sourcing and strengthen regional value chains in the long term.

The factory will cover an area of 96,000 square metres, with a total investment of \$70 million. It is designed to produce up to three million mattresses annually, with an initial export focus on the United States, followed by expansion into GCC



The project advances integration into global supply chains, with the potential to localise sourcing and strengthen regional value chains in the long term.

markets, India the European Union, and the local market in Oman.

Raw materials will be sourced from China, Thailand, Japan and Korea, enabling the company to manufacture high-quality sleep products for international markets from a single strategic base in SOHAR Freezone.

Johnson Lim, General Manager of Sweet Night

Fine Home’s upcoming factory in SOHAR Freezone, commented, “Our decision to invest in SOHAR Freezone was driven by its unmatched location, efficiency and long-term potential as a regional manufacturing hub. This investment marks a crucial step in our regional expansion, and SOHAR Freezone provides the ideal environment to support

our manufacturing ambitions.”

“We’re proud to welcome Sweet Night Fine Home (FZC) LLC to SOHAR Freezone as part of our expanding base of international manufacturers,” said Mohammed al Shizawi, Acting CEO of SOHAR Freezone.

“At SOHAR, we focus on attracting investments that drive economic growth and introduce new industrial capabilities. This project underscores the strength of our integrated logistics ecosystem and supports our efforts to build a diversified, resilient industrial base aligned with Oman Vision 2040.”

The establishment of this manufacturing hub is expected to stimulate the local value chain by attracting complementary industries such as textiles, packaging and logistics, thereby fostering the development of a specialised sleep-products ecosystem within the freezone.

SOHAR Freezone reaffirms its role as a catalyst for sustainable industrial development and a key player in global supply chain diversification.

TRAINING INITIATIVE STRENGTHENS OMAN’S STATUS IN GLOBAL TRADE

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

AS PART of Oman Vision 2040, Asyad Shipping has trained 230 Omanis to work on commercial vessels under a first-of-its-kind initiative launched in 2023. The programme is a strategic step forward towards bolstering Oman’s maritime strength, accelerating Omanisation, and advancing the status of Oman on global trade routes.

Out of the total trainees, 30 were posted as deck officers and engineers and 200 as assistant engineers and navigational support staff. Omanis are being systematically trained for such work at sea for the very first time, hitherto held by expatriates— reflecting a shift towards specialist national recruitment and long-term sustainable workforce.

The work was highlighted at the Omani Seafarers Day event by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology as a national seafaring development success.

Offered by intensive study in conjunction with hands-on practice on Asyad’s ships, training gave participants the technical and operational skills



Asyad Shipping has trained 230 Omanis to work on commercial vessels under a first-of-its-kind initiative launched in 2023.

they needed.

The majority were successful in overcoming initial challenges in acclimating to ship life, assisted by other Omanis on the ship, which provided high esprit de corps and perseverance.

Kamila al Wahaibi, the responsible official for Omani sailors at Asyad Shipping, said: “Oman Vision 2040 invites us to cultivate a skilled and competitive national talent pool. This effort not

only prepares Omanis with essential maritime skills, but also secures the future of our national shipping fleet by investing in domestic talent.”

In addition to being a national workforce initiative, the programme brings Oman into the main fold of global maritime trade. As global shipping lanes become more strategically valuable, Oman’s location — at the crossroads of East-West trade — makes it an essential hub for logistics.

Preparing Omanis to crew and manage commercial vessels directly addresses the nation’s capacity to facilitate and grow as part of global networks in commerce.

The initiative, led under the guidance of Asyad’s leadership, is a public-private partnership, which reflects the pillars of Oman Vision 2040’s economic diversification, private sector empowerment and human capital development.

By opening new opportunities to the sea profession, Asyad is not only revamping Oman’s transport and logistics sector, but also playing its part in cementing the Sultanate of Oman’s place in the global economy as an educated, connected and competitive trade nation.

FINANCIAL HUB

Hong Kong to regain IPO crown this year



Hong Kong is expected to lead the world in IPO financing this year despite uncertainty from geopolitical tensions and trade tariffs, PwC said on Wednesday.

The financial hub’s capital market has rebounded strongly, with dozens of Chinese companies piling into the city to raise overseas capital despite pressure from Beijing and uncertainty over its national security laws. — Reuters

MARKET OFFSET

Venezuela’s oil exports on the rise



Venezuela exported some 844,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude and fuel in June, an 8% increase from the previous month as the loss of the US and European markets was offset by more cargoes sent to China.

Washington terminated a group of licences that had authorised partners of oil company PDVSA to take Venezuelan crude bound for US and European refineries. — Reuters

ESG COMMITMENT

Malaysia cuts green electricity tariff rates



Malaysia has cut its green electricity tariff premium rates by up to 80% beginning on July 1 in an effort to diversify its green electricity supply access options for companies to meet their ESG commitments.

The rates that were previously set based on user categories will now be combined into a single tier of pricing, the Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry said. — AFP

Promoting integration between the academic and industrial sectors



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

COLLABORATING, coordinating, and integrating with both academic and industrial sectors is essential for supplying the labour market with qualified national talent capable of advancing various aspects of this vital sector. Such cooperation ensures the availability of skilled personnel needed by modern industrial institutions — particularly those that rely on advanced technologies for production, export, marketing, and related fields. From this standpoint, it has become imperative to organise joint activities that bring these two sectors together and to promote initiatives that strengthen industrial integration and advance research, development, and innovation. These efforts are crucial for driving industrial growth and creating employment opportunities for the national workforce. In alignment with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040 — which positions education as a key pillar for developing Omani citizens capable of contributing effectively to sustainable development — the First Annual Forum to Enhance Integration between the Academic and Industrial Sectors was recently held. The forum reflected national ambitions to build an economy grounded in diversification, knowledge, and innovation,

while also facilitating knowledge exchange, the enhancement of academic programmes, and the creation of job opportunities for university graduates. During the forum, several partnership agreements were signed between higher education institutions and industrial and endowment entities. These agreements aim to support modern educational models, strengthen community solidarity, and assist students in need by providing an enabling environment for learning, innovation, and scientific exploration. Additionally, they include funding for academic research and innovation activities — further reinforcing the role of academia in national development. This type of collaboration demands ongoing development to align with the evolving needs of the Omani market, particularly in high-priority areas such as renewable energy and advanced technology. It also calls for the strengthening of partnerships with the private sector and universities to drive forward research and training initiatives, and the establishment of technology incubators that bridge academic innovation with industrial application. Such cooperation enhances the added value of industrial projects, accelerates the adoption of artificial intelligence and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions within the manufacturing sector, and facilitates partnerships with industrial zones across the country.

This type of collaboration demands ongoing development to align with the evolving needs of the Omani market, particularly in high-priority areas such as renewable energy and advanced technology.

It also enables government institutions to better meet food security needs and adopt critical technologies in relevant sectors. To realise the full potential of this collaboration, it is important to overcome challenges that may hinder progress — particularly those related to research funding and academic project implementation. At the same time, it is vital to enhance qualification, training, and educational programmes in line with industry requirements. Broadly speaking, academic-industrial collaboration plays a pivotal role in any society’s economic and social development. It brings numerous benefits, including the advancement of human capital by aligning training curricula with the practical needs of the industrial sector. This ensures the preparation of skilled, job-ready citizens. Moreover, such collaboration fosters innovation, accelerates R&D, and promotes the exchange of cutting-edge knowledge between academic experts and industry professionals. These synergies ultimately improve the quality of industrial products and services. Furthermore, this integration supports economic growth by boosting high-value industries and creating employment opportunities. It contributes to industrial diversification, encourages entrepreneurship by supporting start-ups and SMEs, and provides the training and resources necessary to build a sustainable and resilient industrial ecosystem.

HARNESSING THE WAVES: COULD THE WORLD’S FUTURE BE POWERED BY THE SEA?



NAJAH AL RIYAMI
The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate

FROM the moment French inventor Pierre-Simon Girard filed the first patent to capture wave motion in 1799, engineers have dreamt of lighting homes with the rhythm of the ocean. Throughout the 20th century, that dream surfaced intermittently — Masuda’s navigational wave-powered buoys in wartime Japan, early oscillating water column trials off the coast of France, and a brief research boom during the oil crisis of the 1970s. Yet for decades, ocean energy remained more promising than power.

Today, the tide is turning. Around the world, wave, tidal and ocean thermal technologies are no longer just experimental concepts - they’re operating in open waters and contributing clean electricity to national grids. The global capacity for ocean energy has passed 500 megawatts, with the majority generated by two tidal range powerhouses: Sihwa Lake in South Korea and La Rance in France. But smaller, more nimble projects are making waves too. In Scotland, the MeyGen tidal array has already delivered more than 50 gigawatt-hours of electricity to the grid. Europe’s cumulative ocean energy output reached 106 gigawatt-hours in 2024 alone, and an additional 165 megawatts is expected to come online by the end of the decade. The technologies driving this shift are as diverse as the seas themselves. Wave energy devices - like point absorbers and oscillating water columns - harness the rise and fall of waves to generate power, while overtopping reservoirs store wave energy like miniature hydro dams. Tidal stream turbines, submerged rotors placed in fast-moving coastal currents, spin steadily with each ebb and flow. Newer concepts, such as tidal kites that “fly” underwater to capture energy even in slower currents, are unlocking more locations. Meanwhile, ocean thermal energy conversion, or OTEC, is gaining renewed interest. By exploiting the temperature difference between warm surface water and cold deep water, OTEC can produce continuous, baseload electricity - especially valuable for island nations or coastal industrial zones. Countries like South Korea, India and the United States have launched demonstration units, with ambitions to scale these systems for co-producing electricity, desalinated water, and even green hydrogen.

Chancellor’s IPO push still lacks momentum

THE most recurring question in the financial district of London is: how do you reverse the alarming decline in the capital’s attractiveness as a destination for Initial Public Offerings (IPOs). Going by the statistics, it’s a question that needs to be addressed with some urgency. Data compiled by EY, the professional services firm, shows that in the first quarter of this year, only five companies listed on the London stock market. Collectively, they raised just £74.7m in proceeds – a 74 per cent year-on-year fall in the same period in 2024. It was hoped that the Chinese on-line fashion giant, Shein, valued at \$100 billion, might be the panacea to London’s listing struggles. But the company dumped its plan for an IPO in London after failing to win support from regulators in China, as sources said. They now plan to list in Hong Kong. Economic secretary to the Treasury Emma Reynolds met executives from technology companies including the bank Revolut, Monzo, Oaknorth, to seek to address London’s IPO conundrum. Ministers’ level of engagement with industry cannot be faulted – both Reynolds and the Chancellor Rachel Reeves have held numerous meetings with company bosses on this matter hoping to convince them to list on the London Stock Exchange. Listing of these top fintech names would provide a badly needed boost to the embattled LSE. The prospect of meaningful action remains unclear, however, in the latest meeting, executives cited the need for tax breaks both on buying UK shares and a capital gains tax cut for employees when offloading their stock, according to people close to the discussions. They called for restrictions on non-executive directors holding – or being paid – shares in order to give them greater incentive to benefit



A man with umbrella walks past the London Stock Exchange in London. — Reuters



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from the growth of their businesses to be removed. One of those who attended the meeting put it starkly: unless a cluster of the companies represented in the meeting choose to list in London, the potential for any real momentum to be injected back into UK markets will be severely curtailed, they warned. For that to happen they will need significantly greater incentives than those currently on offer. While both Revolut and Monzo have been rumoured to be considering IPOs, and have engaged with UK authorities about listing in London, neither has made a formal announcement or set a date for an IPO. Revolut has expressed interest in listing on either the London Stock Exchange (LSE) or Nasdaq, but has also indicated a preference for the US market. A potential IPO for Revolut has been discussed. They have been given a banking licence but are building out their banking operations before launching fully as a bank. Revolut CEO Nik Storonsky has publicly stated that a London listing is “not rational” compared to the US

market’s liquidity and lower trading costs. Monzo, the UK-based digital bank, is also considering an IPO, with potential listings in London or New York. While the LSE is a likely contender due to Monzo’s UK headquarters and customer base, the company is also weighing the benefits of a US listing. Some investors fear Monzo may snub the LSE for a US listing, particularly given Monzo’s rapid expansion in the US. Oaknorth has been the subject of discussions with UK authorities regarding a potential London listing. The UK government is reportedly trying to persuade these fintech companies to list in London, rather than New York. While Oaknorth is also considering an IPO, details about their plans are less publicly available than those of Revolut and Monzo. Changes have been encouraged by a task force set up to try to revive London’s market. But LSE boss Julia Hoggett, who is spearheading the campaign, admitted in a speech last week: “We still have not seen the real turning point in terms of risk capital within and into the UK.”

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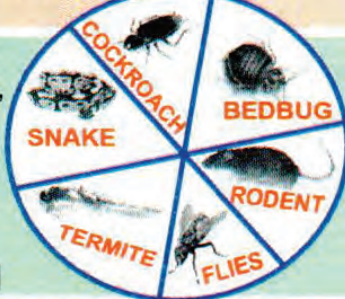
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L I F E S T Y L E

REVOLUTIONISING ARABIC IN THE DIGITAL WORLD > 20

FASHION

Late fashion icon Lagerfeld's villa sold for 4.7m euros



A VILLA OUTSIDE Paris once owned by late fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld sold at auction on Tuesday for 4.7 million euros, under a traditional method where time is counted by candles.

Bought in 2010 by Lagerfeld, who died in 2019, the villa in Louveciennes west of Paris fetched just above the asking price of 4.6 million euros (\$5.4 million).

Abandoned after his death, the house was purchased in 2023 by a real estate company.

Held in a style the late designer himself may have approved of, the sale took place according to the traditional notary auction method, as a so-called "candle auction".

In a candle auction, which is still commonplace in France, the sale time is defined by the burning of two small candles, each lasting about fifteen seconds.

The villa is in a two-hectare (five acre) park with three separate houses, a swimming pool and a tennis court. The house is surrounded by trees or walls ensuring "discretion and anonymity", said Jerome Cauro, of Arias, the firm handling the sale.

The designer's studio occupied a large part of the first floor of the main house.

"He put everything into this last house; he really loved it. He called it 'the true version of himself,'" his muse and associate, Amanda Harlech, told Vogue in 2021.

The former Chanel creative director even had his childhood bedroom recreated in a small room with leopard-print walls.

According to Arias, the fashion legend carried out "colossal works" on the property, which belonged to the 19th century poet Leconte de Lisle and members of the Rothschild family in the first half of the 19th century.

"We don't have the bill, but we estimate that the cost of the work is close to the asking price," said Arno Felber, also a notary at Arias.

Legend has it that Lagerfeld only slept there one night.

The mansion was above all "a property for peace, rest and study", where Lagerfeld liked to entertain guests, said Felber.

In March 2024, Lagerfeld's futuristic three-room Paris apartment was sold for 10 million euros, twice its asking price. — AFP

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



CULINARY

A copy of the new cookbook titled Boustany by Palestinian-British chef, food-writer and restaurateur Sami Tamimi is seen during an interview with Reuters at his home in London, Britain. — Reuters



MUSIC

French electronic musician composer Jean-Michel Jarre performs at the Paleizenplein - Place des Palais square on the second day of the first edition of Brussels Palace Open Air event, in Brussels. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Egyptian dancer Amie Sultan poses during a photo session at her studio in Cairo. Young Egyptian performers are working to restore the reputation of the art at home. — AFP

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Rare Michael Jordan rookie card sells for record \$2.5m



A SIGNED 1986-87 Fleer Michael Jordan rookie card sold for a record \$2.5 million at auction on Thursday. And the kicker? There was only one bidder. It is the highest price ever paid for a Jordan rookie card, according to the sports collectibles media platform Clct. The winning — and only — bid of \$2 million was placed at the auction house Joopiter, which charges a 25-per cent buyer's premium to bring the total price to \$2.5 million. "It's a shocking amount of money," Clct reporter and editor Will Stern told Front Office Sports. "I don't think there's anybody who I spoke to within the industry that expected this." FOS cited another memorabilia appraiser that said the "fair market value" of the card is about \$1 million. The PSA certified card is rated as a 9 out of 10 for overall condition, while Jordan's autograph is rated a 10. While the record price from a sole bidder, whose name

remains unknown, has raised questions within the trading card industry, Joopiter told FOS that the sale had "strong activity from potential buyers in 50 countries." The card is also part of 10 Fleer cards that Jordan secretly signed for a collector in Florida last year. Clct reported that Jordan typically doesn't sign Fleer cards because he has a deal with Upper Deck, but that the collector paid for Jordan to fly to Florida so the signing could be witnessed by PSA. Sources told Clct that at least six of the 10 cards were PSA 10s worth \$180,000 apiece before the signings, while the PSA 9s had a value of around \$16,000 before the autographs. The 10s have not come up for public sale yet. Joopiter was founded in 2022 by singer and music producer Pharrell Williams. The most money paid to date for a Jordan card was \$2.928 million for a 1-of-1 2003-04 Upper Deck Ultimate Collection autographed Logoman card in June 2024. — Reuters



Colour and ease lift Paris Men's Fashion Week

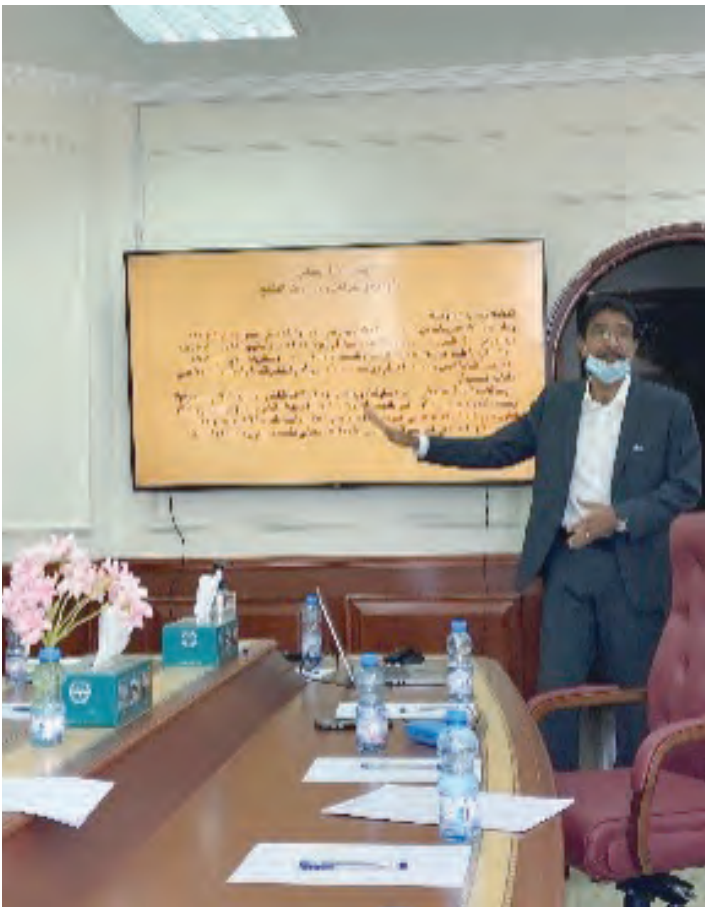
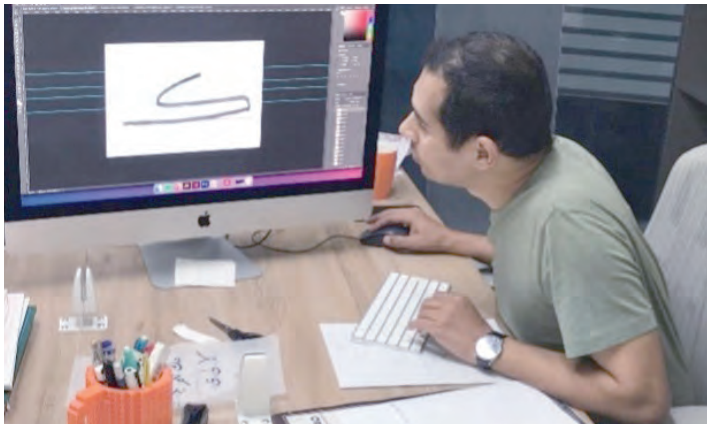


COLOURS ran wild and silhouettes softened at Paris Men's Fashion Week, which ends on Sunday, as designers brought a rare breath of fresh air to a gloomy fashion climate. Despite the heavy news cycle and economic turbulence affecting the luxury sector, this Fashion Week was a "shot of creativity that felt incredibly good", Alice Feillard, men's buying director at Galeries Lafayette, said. The spring-summer 2026 season "is much more creative than the previous ones, which were a bit duller", said Adrien Communier, the fashion editor at GQ France. Both experts observed a more relaxed vibe, with Feillard pointing to "good humour" and "optimism", while Communier noted a "lighter mood". "With so many debuts, there was a sense of renewal. And so, I found that people were more curious," he added. After a notable women's show in March, Julian Klausner made waves

on Thursday with his first menswear show for Dries Van Noten, while Jonathan Anderson's long-awaited debut at Dior drew applause on Friday. A renewed burst of creativity lit up the runways, most visibly through bold colour choices. Brown tones and pastels made way for a richer, more saturated palette for next summer. Saint Laurent opened the week with violet, navy, orange and moss green, while Pharrell Williams at Louis Vuitton channelled Indian motifs and hues. Dries Van Noten made a splash with bold fuchsia and blood red, while Kenzo exploded with candy pink, aquatic blue and chick yellow. - 'NONCHALANT ELEGANCE' - Dior Homme took a more restrained approach, showcasing rich tones like a deep forest green on structured pieces. The tones sometimes appeared as prints — tiger at Kenzo, childlike safari at Louis Vuitton and floral at Dior. At Comme des Garçons Plus,

prints leaned into pop-style 1970s geometry — a look also seen at Amiri, Saint Laurent and Junya Watanabe, who embraced flared trousers. Stripes were ubiquitous but subtle, adding detail without overwhelming. Designers leaned into fluidity with flared trousers, long jackets, open shirts and an ongoing pyjama trend. "There's a sort of nonchalant elegance in having a very fluid yet thoughtfully designed silhouette," Communier said. Last season's neo-dandy look is now much more relaxed. "Tailoring is still omnipresent in the collections, but it's becoming more fluid. There's still formality, but it's far more relaxed and remains very elegant," said Feillard. Bags were omnipresent, from clutch to shoulder, styled for both casual outings and evening occasions. Finally, flip-flops made a major comeback, seen at Officine Generale, Auralee and even Hermes, "worn in an almost formal way", said Communier. A perfect example of relaxed chic. — AFP

FEATURES



BY RUQAYA AL KINDI
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ARABIC is one of the world's oldest and most beautiful languages, holding a profound cultural and religious significance across the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. As one of the six official languages of the United Nations, it plays a vital role in global diplomacy and international relations. Despite its importance, Arabic content online makes up less than 1% of all digital information, highlighting a significant gap in digital accessibility for speakers and learners worldwide. This challenge is not unique to Arabic; many historically rich languages face similar hurdles amid rapid technological advancement. However, efforts to enhance Arabic's presence in the digital realm underscore a broader global movement towards linguistic diversity, cultural preservation and inclusive communication.

Across the globe, countries and organisations are investing in digital initiatives to safeguard and promote their linguistic heritage. For instance, China has ramped up investments in Mandarin language technology, while India bolsters Hindi and other regional languages through AI-powered translation and speech recognition tools. Latin, a historic language of academia and religion, is also experiencing a digital renaissance by digitising ancient texts and creating accessible learning platforms. These collective efforts demonstrate a worldwide recognition that digital integration is vital for sustaining linguistic diversity and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

In this context, organisations like Ebanah, based in Oman, are pioneering efforts to harness advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) to support Arabic in the digital age. Their goal is to develop tools that make Arabic more accessible, useful and engaging for users globally, whether they are scholars, students, or everyday learners. This approach not only preserves the language, but also expands its reach — aligning with the global movement to digitise and democratise cultural heritage.

One of their flagship projects, Al Khalil, is an interactive online Arabic learning platform offering courses, tools and rich content for learners of all ages. Similarly, Tashkeel, an AI-powered diacritic tool, helps add correct vocalisation to Arabic text — an essential component for proper pronunciation and comprehension — boasting over 95% accuracy. These

innovations support international efforts to make Arabic more functional in digital media, publishing and education.

Moreover, Ebanah has developed Arabic-enabled chatbots for institutions and businesses worldwide, enabling natural, real-time communication in Arabic. Such tools facilitate not only commerce and customer service, but also contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding — crucial elements in today's interconnected world.

Of course, developing these technologies presents challenges. Arabic's rich morphology, complex grammar and numerous dialects require high-quality, culturally authentic data to train effective AI models. As Salim al Mantheri, CEO of Ebanah, emphasises, "AI should serve to support and enhance Arabic, not compromise its richness. Our goal is to develop solutions that respect the language's depth and tradition while making it more accessible in today's digital environment." This sentiment reflects a global recognition that technological innovation must be culturally sensitive and inclusive.

International collaboration plays a critical role in these efforts. Ebanah partners with cultural, academic and tech institutions worldwide to ensure their AI models accurately reflect genuine Arabic usage, emphasising the importance of local linguistic expertise in global AI development. These partnerships are vital for developing reliable, culturally authentic tools that serve both regional and international needs.

Looking ahead, the future of Arabic in the digital space is promising, paralleling global movements to digitise and revitalise endangered and heritage languages. Technology alone cannot achieve this; it requires a supportive environment across education, media, governance and business sectors. As the world progresses towards a more connected and inclusive digital era, Arabic's preservation and growth will contribute to cultural diversity and mutual understanding on a global scale.

Ebanah's work exemplifies how innovative technology can be a powerful force for cultural preservation and modernisation. By investing in smart solutions, fostering international collaboration and respecting linguistic roots, they are helping Arabic not only maintain its historical richness, but also thrive in the digital future. This approach aligns with global efforts to ensure that linguistic diversity remains a vital part of our digital and cultural landscape, demonstrating that language, technology and culture can evolve hand-in-hand.

REVOLUTIONISING ARABIC IN THE DIGITAL WORLD