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SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Badr with Dr Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda.

Sayyid Badr receives credentials copy of Tajik Ambassador

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received on Sunday a copy of the credentials of Dr Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the Foreign Minister welcomed the Ambassador, wishing him success in performing his duties, and expressing his wishes for further development and progress in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The meeting was attended by Najib bin Yahya al Balushi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry, and a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry. — **ONA**

CONTRACT AWARDED FOR FISH LANDING



QURAYAT: A contract was recently awarded for the establishment of a fish landing centre in the village of Bimmah in the Wilayat of Qurayat, Governorate of Muscat. The project figures among food security initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources as part of its efforts to develop the infrastructure of the fishing sector and support fishermen. — **ONA**

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

Oman's beaches continue to play a vital role in global marine conservation, serving as key nesting grounds for five of the world's seven known sea turtle species, including several that are endangered.

While Ras Al Jinz and Ras Al Hadd remain internationally recognised turtle nesting destinations, Masirah Island has quietly welcomed nesting turtles since February, with the arrival of loggerhead turtles now marking the peak of the season.

Masirah Island hosts four species of sea turtles, each following distinct nesting periods. Olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) and hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) typically nest between February and May, while loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*), locally known as Al Raymani, arrive from May to September. Green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) usually nest between July and November.

Internationally renowned for its loggerhead turtle population, Masirah Island is considered one of



GHAZI AL FARSI
Environmental Systems Supervisor, Environment Authority.

Authorities step up monitoring, tagging and awareness efforts as Island remains one of the world's most important nesting grounds for endangered marine species



Masirah Island hosts four species of sea turtles, each following distinct nesting periods.

the world's most important nesting sites for the species and supports one of the largest loggerhead nesting aggregations globally, making it a critical conservation area for marine biodiversity.

According to Ghazi al Farsi, Environmental Systems Supervisor at the Environment Authority in Masirah, weather conditions during the nesting

season are unique.

"The weather is exceptional during July and August, especially between July 15 and August 20. It resembles monsoon conditions, while currently the weather is cloudy and windy," Al Farsi said.

His work includes morning surveys to monitor turtle nests along nesting beaches and evening activities focused on turtle tagging and identification.

Sayyid Badr reviews ties with Chinese Special Envoy

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received in Muscat on Sunday Zhai Jun, Special Envoy of the Chinese Government for Middle East Affairs.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the trajectory of the strong bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the People's Republic of China, reaffirming their commitment to building upon the partnerships and joint projects achieved in recent years.

They also discussed the regional and international developments, along with associated challenges



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy holds talks with Zhai Jun.

and repercussions. Both parties expressed their countries' support for dialogue and diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving peace and

stability and containing the root causes of tension and conflict. They further emphasised the necessity of adhering to the rules of

international law and the purposes of the United Nations Charter, as well as advancing political tracks capable of addressing crises through peaceful and constructive means, while ensuring the freedom and safety of maritime navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, Lyu Jian, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Sultanate of Oman and officials from both sides. — **ONA**

Oman, Libya discuss ways to expand cooperation

SHAIKH ABDULMALIK BIN ABDULLAH AL KHALILI, Chairman of the State Council, received on Sunday a delegation from the High Council of State in the State of Libya, headed by Hassan Ali Habib, First Deputy President of the High Council of State.

The Chairman of the State Council highlighted the development of Omani-Libyan relations and cooperation across various fields.

He highlighted this progress in light of the historical ties and deep-rooted bonds connecting the two countries, emphasising the importance of continuing to build upon these relations in a manner that serves the mutual interests of the two peoples.

The meeting addressed the course of bilateral relations between Oman and Libya, along with ways to enhance and expand their horizons. Furthermore, the two sides reviewed a number of topics and issues of common interest at both the Arab

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The Chairman of State Council holds talks with Hassan Ali Habib.

and regional levels.

During the meeting, the Libyan delegation was briefed on several key aspects of the State Council, including its competencies and roles within the Omani legislative system; its designated tasks; the stages of its developmental journey since its establishment and its ongoing contributions to supporting the comprehensive development march in Oman.

The official visit programme for the Libyan delegation includes field visits to a number of institutions, projects, as well as cultural and developmental facilities.

These visits aim to familiarise the delegation with the Omani experience in the economic, cultural, and developmental fields, while also allowing them to explore prominent national initiatives and sustainable projects. — **ONA**

Loggerhead turtles return to Masirah for nesting season

Conservation efforts also include protecting nesting grounds and raising environmental awareness among local communities and visitors.

However, marine activity and human interference continue to pose challenges.

"Although the area is not currently protected under a site-specific legal framework, national environmental legislation provides protection for sea turtles, their nests and eggs," Al Farsi explained.

"This remains a significant conservation challenge, requiring continuous awareness efforts and direct engagement with visitors to minimise disturbances to nesting activities."

To strengthen conservation efforts, the Environment Authority plans to install educational signs and launch awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging greater public responsibility in protecting turtles and their nesting habitats.

Under Omani law, sea turtles, their nests and eggs are fully protected, and any disturbance, damage or tampering constitutes a legal violation subject to strict penalties.

SHORT TAKES



The SQU journal advanced 15 ranks compared to last year.

SQU RESEARCH JOURNAL ACHIEVES Q3 RANKING

MUSCAT: The Journal of Engineering Research (TJER), issued by Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), achieved an increase in its CiteScore to 1.5, alongside a rise in its ranking to the third quartile (Q3) in the field of general engineering, advancing 15 ranks compared to last year.

This achievement reflects the growing scientific impact of the journal and its enhanced presence in the international scientific publishing ecosystem.

This classification is considered a significant milestone in the journal's journey, representing an acknowledgement of its scientific standing and its ability to attract specialised research contributions from researchers and academics both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Prof Amer bin Saif al Hinai, SQU Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research, stated that the elevation of the Journal of Engineering Research to the Q3 ranking reflects the university's direction toward enhancing its research presence in international indicators and solidifying its role in producing specialised knowledge with both academic and developmental impact.

He added that this reflects the university's ability to build scientific platforms capable of reaching the international research community and highlighting Omani contributions in the fields of engineering and technology. It also contributes to supporting the university's competitiveness and opening broader horizons for research cooperation with academic institutions and scientific centres worldwide. Al Hinai emphasised that the university continues to invest in the scientific research and academic publishing ecosystem as one of its primary pathways to enhance scientific research and innovation, support national priorities, and raise the scientific impact of its research outputs. — ONA

CHINESE OFFICIAL VISITS MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

MUSCAT: Zhai Jun, Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue, and his accompanying delegation on Sunday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

Upon the guest's arrival at the MSC he was received by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the Maritime Security Centre.

During the visit, the guest and his accompanying delegation listened to a briefing about the centre's role in maintaining maritime security. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment. — ONA



The guest was briefed about MSC's role in maintaining maritime security.

Plan envisions new life for historic Al Saidiya School

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

PLANS TO preserve and revitalise Al Saidiya School, one of Oman's most prominent educational landmarks, are gaining momentum following discussions on a comprehensive development project aimed at transforming the historic institution into a centre for education, culture and community engagement.

The proposed initiative was reviewed during a meeting between Abdulhamid bin Abdulrahman al Kharousi, Deputy Wali of Muttrah, and the school's administration.

Discussions focused on future development plans that would preserve the school's historical identity while expanding its educational, cultural and social contributions in line with the Sultanate's wider urban and cultural development goals.

Officials examined a range of proposals intended to reposition Al Saidiya School as a sustainable educational and cultural destination.

At the heart of the vision is the establishment of a model institution capable of attracting talented students and educators while offering a modern learning environment grounded in academic



Review meeting between the Deputy Wali of Muttrah and the school's administration.

excellence.

The initiative seeks to balance innovation with preservation, ensuring the school's architectural and historical character remains intact.

Among the proposals discussed was the establishment of a museum documenting the history of education in Oman. The museum would showcase the evolution of the country's educational system and highlight milestones that have shaped learning and knowledge development across generations. It is also expected to serve as a repository for educational archives, historical records and memorabilia, preserving an important chapter of Oman's

national heritage.

Plans for a community learning centre were also reviewed, with the facility expected to provide educational and training programmes for different age groups. The centre would further strengthen the school's role as a community hub by promoting lifelong learning, professional development and skills enhancement while encouraging broader public participation in educational activities.

Officials highlighted the strategic significance of the school's location overlooking Muttrah's waterfront, noting its strong potential to emerge as a cultural and tourism destination. By integrating education, heritage and cultural experiences under one framework, the project aims to create a unique attraction for residents, students, researchers and visitors alike.

Participants underscored the historical importance of Al Saidiya School as a pioneering institution that played a key role in Oman's educational journey.

Over the decades, the school has contributed to shaping generations of Omanis who later served the nation across diverse sectors.

Preserving this legacy, they noted, remains essential to maintaining a meaningful link between Oman's educational past and future aspirations.

Tazeez community teams programme enters second phase

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), in partnership with strategic funding from OQ Exploration & Production, has launched the second group of the first edition of the 'Tazeez Community Teams Programme', targeting community teams across Al Batinah North, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Buraimi and Al Wusta governorates.

The programme forms part of ongoing national efforts to empower community teams and enhance their contribution to sustainable development across Oman. During this phase, participating teams will undertake a structured development journey that includes specialised workshops, innovation labs, networking sessions, mentoring, coaching and professional advisory services. These components are designed to strengthen institutional capacities and support the implementation of impactful and sustainable community initiatives.

The workshops will focus on key areas such as community team



The programme is part of national efforts to empower community teams towards sustainable development.

management, administrative and financial planning, initiative design and execution, partnership development and institutional sustainability, enabling teams to enhance operational efficiency and maximise developmental impact at the local level.

In addition, innovation labs and networking sessions will provide interactive platforms bringing together community teams, experts, specialists and supporting organisations. These sessions aim to promote knowledge exchange, collaboration and the development of innovative community-based solutions.

The programme also places strong emphasis on enhancing collaboration between community teams and relevant stakeholders by creating opportunities for dialogue, experience sharing and partnership building.

This approach is expected to support the development of strategic collaborations that strengthen community engagement and expand opportunities for sustainable social initiatives.

The Tazeez Community Teams Programme is a national initiative designed to build the institutional and operational capacities of community teams through specialised training and development pathways.

Circular

FSA sets 30-day limit for completion of accounting and auditing licensing procedures

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued a circular calling on all applicants who previously submitted registration and licensing applications to practise the accounting and auditing profession through the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to update and complete their registration and licensing procedures with the FSA.

The circular comes in line with the transfer of the accounting and auditing profession's regulatory responsibilities to the FSA pursuant to Royal Decree No. 20/2024 establishing the Financial Services Authority and issuing its Statute. The circular specifies that applicants must complete the required registration and licensing procedures and submit all necessary documents within 30 days from 2 June 2026.

The circular further states that any procedures or approvals granted prior to the issuance of the Royal Decree will be deemed invalid if applicants fail to complete the required procedures within the specified period. The FSA has urged all concerned parties to complete their applications through the designated electronic channels.

The issuance of this circular forms part of the FSA's efforts to fulfil its responsibilities in regulating, supervising, and overseeing the accounting and auditing profession. It also aims to ensure the accuracy of the Accountants and Auditors Register and verify that applicants seeking registration meet the approved legal requirements.



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The Tayyibat Diet, a viral nutritional regimen that focuses on starchy food and red meat, falsely claims it can cure chronic diseases

DON'T FALL FOR THIS WELLNESS FAD

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

A fad diet that went viral on social media, promising relief from chronic ailments, is turning out to be fake with many countries in the region issuing warnings after several people were admitted to intensive care when they stopped their medications in favour of this diet.

The Tayyibat Diet promoted by Egyptian physician Diaa El Awady bans a wide range of foods, including chicken, eggs, legumes, most vegetables, dairy products and some types of fish, while encouraging the consumption of rice, potatoes, red meat, natural sugars and certain types of cheese.

It argues that the banned foods are bad for you and that by following it, one can manage chronic ailments, despite no scientific evidence.

But doctors and nutritionists in Oman call for a balanced diet based on scientific research and proper medication to manage lifestyle diseases.

Shamsa bint Ibrahim al Khusaibi, Clinical Nutrition Technician and member of the Oman Nutrition and Clinical Nutrition Association, said the Tayyibat diet excludes a number of foods and products that are traditionally considered important sources of essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients required for maintaining overall health.

According to Al Khusaibi, restricting or eliminating entire categories of food may increase the risk of nutrient deficiencies.

"Many of the foods excluded under this type of dietary approach contribute significantly to meeting the body's nutritional requirements," she said. "Without suitable alternatives and professional guidance,



some individuals may not obtain adequate amounts of key nutrients necessary for normal physiological functions.”

She noted that nutritional needs vary considerably from one person to another depending on age, gender, health status and lifestyle factors, making it difficult to apply a single dietary model universally.

Al Khusaibi explained that although some individuals may report improvements in certain symptoms after modifying their eating habits or avoiding specific foods, personal experiences alone do not to validate the effectiveness or safety of a dietary plan.

"Scientific conclusions should be based on well-designed studies and peer-reviewed research rather than anecdotal reports," she said.

Experts maintain that the success of any nutrition plan should not be measured solely by testimonials shared online, but rather by evidence generated through controlled scientific studies and clinical research.

Nutrition professionals further highlight that healthy life is influenced not

only by food choices but also by broader lifestyle factors, including regular physical activity, adequate sleep, stress management and routine medical check-ups.

Al Khusaibi called for further independent scientific studies to assess the Tayyibat diet and similar dietary approaches that are gaining popularity across the region.

Such research, she said, would help provide objective information that enables individuals to make informed decisions regarding their health and nutrition.

The man behind the trend, El Awady, was an Egyptian doctor trained in anaesthesia and intensive care who reinvented himself online as a nutrition guru. He died in April this year at the age of 47.

He argued that most chronic illnesses, from diabetes to hypertension, could be treated by “healing the gut” and eliminating supposedly toxic food, with medication playing only a secondary role. His system prescribes a diet that is starkly at odds with much of the mainstream nutrition advice.

Many experts in GCC have warned against following any scientifically unproven diet or using such diets as a substitute for prescribed medical treatment without specialist supervision.

They cautioned against categorising foods in absolute terms as “beneficial” or “harmful,” or eliminating essential food groups without medical justification.

It also warned against promoting excessive consumption of sugars or saturated fats as a safe option for everyone.

*Tayyibat diet
aims to cure most
chronic illnesses by
“healing the gut”*

There is no scientific evidence to prove the benefits of this type of diet

A balanced diet and proper medication are essential to manage lifestyle diseases

*Personal experiences
alone do not validate the
effectiveness of
a dietary plan*

SHORT TAKES

CIVIL SOCIETY LAW
A MILESTONE

FROM PAGE 1

The ministry noted that the law provides precise and clear definitions for each type of civil society institution, a step towards clarifying the legal framework and defining competencies, enabling each institution to exercise its powers efficiently and effectively. The law grants voluntary teams the legal personality, similar to other civil society institutions, providing them with a stable legal foundation that regulates volunteer work, safeguards their rights and obligations, and enhances the sustainability of their work and community initiatives.

The law establishes a number of controls and prohibitions, the ministry said. These include a ban on sending delegations abroad or hosting members of foreign associations in Oman without ministry approval, a ban on providing assistance to individuals or entities outside Oman except through Oman Charitable Organization, and a prohibition on forming bodies of a military or security nature, interfering in religious, sectarian or tribal affairs, inciting discrimination, racism or hatred, or financing, supporting or promoting electoral campaigns. However, associations may open their premises for election campaigning under rules set by the Ministry of Interior.

The law allows professional associations to establish technical bodies related to their activities in coordination with relevant authorities. It also permits, by decision of the minister after the Council of Minister’s approval, the granting of public benefit status to an association upon or after its establishment. Additionally, the minister may entrust public benefit associations with the management of a social institution under the ministry or the implementation of certain projects or programmes. — ONA

CDA
RECEIVES
NEW BATCH
OF GED
HOLDERS

MUSCAT: A new batch of Omani citizens who are holders of the General Education Diploma (GED) and the Post-GED diploma recently joined the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority. The recruits were admitted after passing a series of tests to assess their ability to perform the tasks and responsibilities assigned to the Authority. The recruitment, which took place in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, was part of



The recruits will receive an integrated programme of the highest standards.

efforts aimed to provide employment opportunities for Omani nationals and to consolidate the volume of human resources in different engineering, technical and administrative specialisations. The recruits will receive an integrated programme that will enable them to carry out their future tasks in accordance with the highest standards of efficiency, discipline and readiness. — ONA

Research unveils drug
discovery applications

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

DR ANWAAR BINT SAID AL MAQBALI, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University, has conducted a pioneering research project exploring advanced methods in molecular synthesis with promising applications in future drug development. Her study, titled ‘Stereoselective Asymmetric Syntheses of Molecules with a 4,5-Dihydro-1H-[1,2,4]-Triazoline Core Possessing an Acetylated Carbohydrate Appendage: Crystal Structure, Spectroscopy, and Pharmacology,’ focuses on designing and analysing a new class of biologically active molecules and was among the winning research papers at the 12th National Research Award, organised by the Research and Innovation Authority, in the Culture, Social and Basic Sciences field under



Dr Anwaar bint Said al Maqbali, Assistant Professor, SQU, explaining her research study.

the Young Researcher category. Dr Al Maqbali states the research successfully synthesised a new series of chiral triazoline compounds using a precise chemical process known as 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition. These compounds incorporate

carbohydrate-based components, enhancing their potential biological relevance. Advanced analytical techniques, including high-resolution mass spectrometry, nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), and single-crystal X-ray analysis, were used to confirm the molecular structure and properties of the synthesised compounds, providing detailed insights into their three-dimensional configurations and intermolecular interactions. The study also demonstrated significant pharmacological potential. Selected compounds showed strong biological activity when tested across 60 cancer cell lines, with some derivatives exhibiting high effectiveness against leukaemia cells. In addition, promising anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties were observed, highlighting the compounds’ potential as versatile therapeutic agents.

Hadatha Centre grooms talents in cybersecurity

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

The Hadatha Centre for Cybersecurity Industry at SQU continues its efforts to strengthen the cybersecurity ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman by fostering innovation, supporting student projects, and building strategic partnerships with government and industry stakeholders. Inaugurated in July 2025 through a strategic collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Centre has become a platform for nurturing cybersecurity talent and developing practical solutions to address rapidly evolving digital challenges. During its first year, the Centre engaged 18 students from various

colleges across the university in its cybersecurity innovation programmes. It also received 14 research proposals for student projects, which underwent a rigorous evaluation and selection process that resulted in the identification of six high-impact cybersecurity projects with strong potential for practical application and future development. As part of its efforts to build national capabilities, the Centre organised a range of intensive workshops, training sessions, awareness programmes, and specialised mentoring activities in collaboration with the National Centre for Information Safety and the Communications and Information Research Centre. The Centre also supported and guided students through two dedicated tracks, the



The Centre has successfully created an environment that encourages creativity, technical excellence and entrepreneurship among students.

Foundation Programme and the Development Programme, with the aim of transforming innovative ideas into market-ready prototypes. The selected projects focused on addressing emerging cybersecurity

challenges across several critical areas, including ransomware detection, artificial intelligence-powered online child protection systems, intrusion detection systems for Internet of Things (IoT) environments, privacy tracking in Android systems, and phishing simulation platforms. Among the most notable innovations developed by the students was VoiceGuard, a large language model designed to simulate voice phishing (vishing) attacks for cybersecurity training and awareness purposes. Another outstanding project was the Windows Malware Detection System, a lightweight and efficient solution for detecting malware and intrusion attempts, specifically developed for Microsoft Windows operating systems.

Through continuous mentoring, close collaboration with industry partners, and the provision of hands-on learning and applied research opportunities, the Centre has successfully created an environment that encourages creativity, technical excellence and entrepreneurship among students. The Centre’s first cohort has already demonstrated promising results, developing prototypes with strong potential for commercialisation and adoption within industry. Looking ahead, the Centre aims to expand its strategic partnerships, organise additional technical workshops and specialised competitions, and further enhance student engagement through innovation initiatives and advanced training programmes.

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

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

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

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

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TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Retender:-

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
52/2026/ MAFWR/ HQ-4 Recall	DESIGN AND BUILD SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF FISH LANDING SITE AT YENKIT IN WILAYAT MUSCAT.	Tuesday 9/6/2026	Monday 22/6/2026	Monday 29/6/2026	Specialized companies registered with excellent grade	(60/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402244 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

IRAN QUESTIONS US COMMITMENT



A man clammers over the rubble choking a street in the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanon. — NYT

IRAN'S TOP negotiator questioned the United States' commitment to peace efforts after Israel carried out new attacks on Lebanon, dimming prospects of Tehran and Washington signing a framework agreement on Sunday on ending their war. US President Donald Trump and mediator Pakistan said on Saturday they expected the deal to be signed on Sunday, but Tehran cast doubt over the timing and hardline protesters in Iran voiced opposition.

But Iranian negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Israel's attack on Sunday on the southern suburbs of Beirut, which Israel said targeted Hezbollah, showed the US lacked the will or ability to fulfil its commitments. "If you lack the will and ability to fulfil your commitments, speaking of continuing the path is not possible," he said.

Iranian negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Israel's attack on Sunday on the southern suburbs of Beirut, which Israel said targeted Hezbollah, showed the US lacked the will or ability to fulfil its commitments. "If you lack the will and ability to fulfil your commitments, speaking of continuing the path is not possible," he said.

the path is not possible," he wrote on X, in an apparent reference to peace moves. Mohammad Jafar Assadi, deputy commander of Iran's top joint military command, was quoted by state media as saying Israeli "crimes" in Beirut's southern suburbs would not go unanswered. The US-Israeli war on Iran, launched on February 28, has stoked conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Israeli military said on Sunday that Hezbollah had launched three projectiles towards communities in northern Israel in violation of a ceasefire in Lebanon.

Israel then fired at what it called Hezbollah targets in the Dahiyeh neighbourhood of Beirut in an attack that Lebanon's civil defence said killed three people. Fox News quoted an unidentified diplomat involved in the talks as saying the Israeli strikes were complicating efforts to finalise the US-Iran deal, and

describing them as an attempt to sabotage those efforts. Israel did not immediately respond to the assertion.

Israel has said it will retain freedom of operations in Lebanon, while Tehran has made a full ceasefire there an important component of its demands. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also clashed with Trump over US demands that Israel curb military action in Lebanon to allow Washington to reach a deal with Tehran.

Thousands of people have been killed, mostly in Iran and Lebanon, since the US and Israel began strikes on Iran. Iran has struck Israel and Gulf states that host US bases, and has effectively blockaded the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery for global oil supplies. The blockade has pushed up global energy prices, while the US navy has blocked Iranian ports.

Trump posted on Saturday that the deal

OBAMA SLAMS TRUMP IRAN DEAL VERSUS HIS PACT

Barack Obama said it was unrealistic to expect that any Trump deal with Tehran would mark a "significant improvement" over his own nuclear pact 11 years ago.

ISRAEL SAYS PREPARING FOR 'POTENTIAL' INCOMING FIRE

The Israeli military said it was bracing for a possible retaliatory attack "in the coming hours", after carrying out a strike on Beirut's southern suburbs earlier on Sunday.

IRAN SAYS 'NO POINT' IN US TALKS AFTER BEIRUT STRIKE

Iran said on Sunday there was "no point" in peace talks with the United States, accusing it of failing to uphold its commitments and casting doubt on deal.

3 DEAD AS ISRAEL SAYS STRIKES BEIRUT'S SUBURBS

Israel struck Beirut's southern suburbs, killing three people, in response to what it said was Hezbollah fire, while its military also carried out broader strikes on Lebanon.

LEBANON COMPLAINS TO UN OVER ISRAELI HERBICIDE

Lebanon's foreign ministry said it had lodged a complaint with the United Nations over Israel's alleged spraying of herbicide glyphosate in Lebanese territory.



UK Royal Marine Commandos take part in a maritime interdiction operation on the vessel SMYRTOS off the south coast of England. — Reuters

UK intercepts Russian shadow fleet vessel

LONDON: British forces on Sunday intercepted a sanctioned oil tanker belonging to Russia's shadow fleet in the English Channel, the defence ministry said, in a six-hour operation hailed by Kyiv. Navy commandos boarded the ship under cover of darkness by fast-roping from a helicopter in the dark, according to footage released by the ministry. The interception in the early hours was supported by Chinook, Merlin Mk4 and Wildcat helicopters and a maritime patrol aircraft, a statement said.

The frigate HMS Sutherland and the minehunter HMS Leadbury were also involved. "In the first UK-led operation of its kind, the vessel Smyrtos was boarded by Royal Marine Commandos and specially trained law enforcement officers from the National Crime Agency, despite Russia's best efforts to evade sanctions and continue fuelling its barbaric war with Ukraine," the ministry statement said. The vessel will now be moved to an anchorage off the south coast of England

and monitored, it added.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga welcomed the operation. "Russia's shadow fleet is a tool of war. Every such vessel stopped means less money for Russia's war machine," he posted on social media. "Cutting off these revenues helps reduce Russia's ability to finance missile and drone attacks against Ukrainian cities." "Russia relies on its shadow fleet to fund their conflict in Ukraine and our interdiction delivers a blow to Putin's illegal war," said newly appointed UK Defence Minister Dan Jarvis. He said the operation was carried out in "close coordination with the French".

The UK has sanctioned hundreds of vessels suspected of being part of the shadow fleet used by Russia to bypass Western embargoes since the attack of Ukraine in 2022. The ships are banned from accessing UK ports and services. Jarvis said disrupting the shadow fleet was "directly bearing down on the resources sustaining Russia's aggression

in Ukraine and reducing its capacity to threaten security across Europe and beyond". Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the operation delivered "yet another blow to Russia and reminds those fuelling Putin's war in Ukraine that they cannot hide".

In March, the government announced that British forces would be able to board and seize shadow fleet vessels passing through its waters. The announcement followed the easing of restrictions by Washington on Russian oil to soften prices sent soaring by the US-Israel war against Iran. France, Belgium, Finland and other European countries have also recently seized sanction-busting vessels believed to belong to the so-called shadow fleet.

London has said such ships are suspected of damaging undersea cables in the Baltic Sea on several occasions. The government has said it will propose new legislation aimed at preventing "Russia and other hostile states" from sabotaging vital subsea internet cables. — AFP

Israel intensifies attacks on Beirut suburbs

BEIRUT: Israel struck Beirut's southern suburbs on Sunday for the second time in a week in response to what it said was Hezbollah fire at northern Israel, while its military also carried out broader strikes on southern Lebanon. The latest escalation came despite expectations that a deal between the United States and Iran to end the Middle East war could be imminent, as Tehran insists a ceasefire in Lebanon must be part of any deal.

Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) said a strike hit an apartment in the Ghobeiry neighbourhood of Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold known as Dahiyeh. A correspondent saw smoke and dust rising near a heavily damaged apartment as debris covered the street and people searched for survivors, with panic in the area after the strike along a busy road filled with shops.

Israeli officials including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have warned that Israel would strike south Beirut should Hezbollah target northern Israeli communities, a position they say has the backing of Washington. The Israeli military earlier on Sunday said three drones, suspected to have been launched by Hezbollah, struck northern Israel in separate incidents, causing no casualties. Hezbollah on Sunday claimed several attacks on Israeli troops who have invaded south Lebanon but did not immediately claim any attack on north Israel.

Israel's military also struck Beirut's southern suburbs last Sunday, hitting apartments in two buildings after saying it had intercepted rockets launched by Hezbollah into Israeli territory. Iran launched missiles towards Israel in response to that attack, triggering Israeli retaliatory strikes before both sides halted fire. Iran had repeatedly warned it would strike Israel if the Lebanese capital was targeted.

On Sunday, Lebanon's NNA reported Israeli strikes on more than a dozen locations in the country's



People gather at the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted a building in Beirut's southern suburbs. — AFP

The latest escalation came despite expectations that a deal between the United States and Iran to end the Middle East war could be imminent, as Tehran insists a ceasefire in Lebanon must be part of any deal. A dozen locations were reported in the country's south, both before and after the Israeli army issued evacuation warnings for almost 30 locations

south, both before and after the Israeli army issued evacuation warnings for almost 30 locations ahead of strikes there. Israel's military activity in recent days has been focused on the region around the major south Lebanon city of Nabatieh, and many of Sunday's Israeli army evacuation warning locations were north of the city.

A military source said on Sunday that a small Lebanese army force which had been present in Kfar Tibnit, adjacent to Nabatieh, evacuated its position there a day earlier after Israeli incursions into the village. Requesting anonymity, the source emphasised that the Lebanese army was still present at the army barracks in Nabatieh city. A correspondent saw around a dozen vehicles, including some military trucks and heavy machinery as well as civilian vehicles, heading out of Nabatieh on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Lebanon's foreign ministry said it had lodged a complaint with the United Nations

over Israel's alleged spraying of herbicide glyphosate in Lebanese territory near the border earlier this year. In a statement circulated on Sunday, the ministry said it had sent a letter to the UN Security Council and the UN secretary-general this week to complain about the incident.

The ministry said "laboratory tests and chemical analyses carried out on soil samples" in the south Lebanon border villages of Aita al-Shaab, Ras Naqura and Dhayra "confirmed the use of glyphosate at high levels of concentration". It said the levels "greatly exceed" those usually found in agricultural areas after regular use by farmers. The statement said the complaint was based on a report from Lebanon's government-linked National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS).

At the time, the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon said Israel had notified it of its plans to spray a "non-toxic chemical substance" near the border and had warned peacekeepers to take shelter. — AFP

GEOPOLITICSFOCUS



TRUMP TO MEET SISI ADDRESSING REGIONAL ISSUES

CAIRO: US President Donald Trump is set to hold talks with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al Sisi on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France this month, the Egyptian presidency said on Sunday. In a statement, the presidency said Sisi is expected to hold a series of meetings with world leaders during the summit, "including a bilateral meeting with US President Donald Trump". It added that Sisi's meetings would focus on "discussing ways to resolve international geopolitical crises and address their repercussions on trade, energy and supply chains".

The G7 summit will be one of the first major international gatherings since the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran in late February, upending the Middle East and widening transatlantic tensions. French President Emmanuel Macron, who is hosting the summit in the city of Evian on June 15-17, said that leaders from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates had been invited to discuss the Middle East war, according to the French presidency. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said he would not attend the summit due to "prior commitments", the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Thursday.

The G7 brings together the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States, along with invited leaders from several other countries, including Brazil and India. Macron is due to arrive in Evian on Sunday evening, with other leaders, including Trump, expected on Monday. Leaders are set to have a packed agenda of potentially explosive issues. — AFP

AID FUNDING CRISIS LEAVES DISPLACED IN LIMBO



Rising numbers of Chadians fleeing the Sudan war are arriving at the Adre border post in Chad, but funding shortages could force UN agencies on the ground to stop operating. The civil conflict in Sudan has already cost tens of thousands of lives and forced more than 12 million people to flee their homes, more than a million of them Chadian, according to UN figures. Government forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been fighting since April 2023.

A steady stream of horse-carts arrived at the Adre border post, under the region's scorching desert sun, during a recent visit. In the swirling dust and the crack of whips, some of the makeshift wagons toppled under the weight of their loads, dragging the horses onto their backs, hooves in the air.

They leave loaded with cans of petrol and food for Sudan, and return to Chad, in some cases carrying people fleeing the war. Last week Sung Ah Lee, deputy

director general of the UN's International Organization for Migration, visited Adre as part of a three-day visit to the Assoungba region.

She met Chadians who had been in Sudan and had fled the war to return home. "When I go there and meet the beneficiaries and hear from them, then go back and meet ambassadors and the donor protective measures and temporarily affecting some banking services. It said no unauthorised access to customer information had occurred. — Reuters

TARGETING COMMUNICATIONS

Cyberattack disrupts Iran bank services



A cyberattack disrupted services at four major Iranian banks, though no customer data was compromised, the country's banking coordination council said. The attack targeted a shared communications infrastructure used by Bank Mellat, Bank Tejarat, Bank Saderat and the Export Development Bank of Iran, prompting technical teams to implement protective measures and temporarily affecting some banking services. It said no unauthorised access to customer information had occurred. — Reuters

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

Qatari delegation in Tehran for war talks



A Qatari delegation arrived in Tehran on Sunday, Iranian media and a diplomat said, as part of the mediation process to end the war between Iran and the United States. An adviser to Qatar's foreign minister had been dispatched to the Islamic republic. An Iranian news agency said the purpose of the visit was to "go over the latest developments regarding the diplomatic process". The delegation travelled "to help facilitate the finalisation of the agreement". — Reuters

OPPOSING VIOLENCE

Protests to grip Geneva ahead of G7 summit



Thousands of protesters were expected to rally in Geneva under a heavy police presence ahead of the G7 summit, amid fears of a repeat of the violence that marked a similar summit in 2003. The "No-G7" coalition of more than 60 associations, unions and left-wing groups aims to denounce "fascism and imperialism". The G7 summit will be one of the first major international gatherings since the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran. — AFP

OPINION

Engaging children needs creativity and active parenting



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

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schools and colleges across Oman close in a sweltering summer, keeping children engaged in a productive manner is going to be a key challenge. Not only will the heat keep families indoors, but it also means that the number of activities available to them is limited. This is where parents, adult siblings and extended family come into the picture. There is sufficient research which suggests the human mind needs stimulation that comes from exposure to new ideas, skills and information. But the challenge to developing these skills is not hard to find. Relentless exposure to multiple screens, endless loops of social media, and short videos of a variety of influencers all make it possible to spend hours on a screen without much outcome. In fact, researchers have concluded that the more hours one spends on social media, the less a person is able to actually remember any of the content. This is apart from the trolling and negativity that is part of this discourse.

Nor is it obvious that parents are happy to allow children to passively absorb this lifestyle. The rise of participation in book festivals, art competitions and community engagement through social and cultural activities show that all stakeholders, whether parents, teachers, or educational institutions, acknowledge their role in creating opportunities for young learners to engage with their community in various ways. Encouraging children to engage in any activity that they may be interested in is crucial to their development and growth. This is easier said than done, as it asks parents to be sufficiently involved with their children and actually act as role models for them. There are some tips that parents can benefit from to keep children engaged, active and socialised while not making it seem as if it is a chore for either. Keeping to a routine is seen to be important. This could be a uniquely summer routine – waking up a bit later, extra movie viewing time in the nights, or even a midday nap. But keeping to an established routine

Encouraging children to engage in any activity that they may be interested in is crucial to their development and growth

without making it sound like a rule would allow children to adapt to it during a long summer break. A summer camp for children is often a good idea as it encourages socialisation, establishes a routine for part of the day, and is a learning opportunity. However, that may not be practical for many due to access and affordability issues. Engaging in a shared skill between a parent and child has no equivalent in terms of its outcomes. Whether it is building something in clay, wood, or paper, trying a new dish, or learning a new language, all of these activities help to bond children with each other and create valuable memories. Whatever the activity, being a role model is the most important requirement for a parent. Children cannot be expected to engage in meaningful activities when they see their parents glued to a phone or just not being around. Emerging from the summer with a sense of shared achievements and joy is not only possible but necessary for the development of a child, and indeed society.

GERMAN ASTRONAUT SET FOR MOON MISSION

MIA BUCHER

The European Space Agency (ESA) is confident that a German astronaut will be selected to fly to the moon on one of two lunar missions that Nasa will mount under its Artemis programme. A German astronaut is slated for either the Artemis 4 or Artemis 5 mission, ESA said last week. However, the decision has not yet been finalised. It is also still not determined which of the two German candidates, Matthias Maurer and Alexander Gerst, will blast off from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. “We are convinced that a German astronaut will soon make it to the moon,” Maurer said last week. Exploration of the moon is still in its infancy, Gerst added. “We plan to conduct long-term research on the moon, so there will be numerous other opportunities for international astronauts in the coming years.” Last Tuesday, the US space agency announced that Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano will participate as the European astronaut on the next mission, Artemis 3, scheduled for 2027. However, the mission will not fly to the moon but will remain in Earth orbit where it will perform docking manoeuvres with lunar landers. On the sidelines of the International Aerospace Exhibition (ILA) currently taking place in Berlin, ESA Director-General Josef Aschbacher said he would be the one to decide which astronaut would participate in the two lunar flights. ESA is currently engaged in very productive discussions with Nasa about those missions, he added. Previously, a statement by Maurer had given the impression that he and Gerst would fly to the moon on two consecutive missions. ESA later refuted this in a press release. There have been repeated delays in the Artemis programme in the past. However, nothing has changed recently regarding plans for missions 4 and 5, according to Aschbacher. Responsibility for the missions lies with Nasa, with ESA providing support in the form of components, he said. Both Gerst and Maurer are experienced astronauts. Gerst flew to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2014 and 2018, and Maurer in 2021. Meanwhile, German space startup Isar Aerospace is preparing to launch its Spectrum rocket on a second test flight after months of delays, aiming for a launch window that opens on Monday at Norway’s Andøya Spaceport, the company said on Sunday. The rocket is designed to carry satellites into low-Earth orbit. IsarAerospace is trying to make Spectrum suitable for commercial space flight with fewer test flights than those required by Elon Musk’s space company SpaceX, which conducted four test launches. — **dpa**

Help kids to reduce screen time in summer

SCHOOL

PSYCHOLOGISTS and counsellors are increasingly asked to support children and families in navigating healthy screen use. Excessive screen use among children is a growing concern and is associated with adverse health outcomes. In their recent study, Rajagopal, Nisar, Morawska, J Edwards and Khan (2026) synthesised global evidence on family-based interventions for managing screen use among children and adolescents aged 5-18 years. A comprehensive search across eight databases (January 2000-November 2024) identified 45 interventions, 62 per cent of which were school-based, examining screen use duration, content, context, and interactions. A random-effects meta-analysis showed a reduction in total screen time (SMD = -0.11, 95% CI [-0.20, -0.02]); however, the effects on other outcomes, including television viewing, computer use, and gaming time, were inconsistent. An intervention component analysis and a qualitative comparative analysis were conducted on 15 high-quality, effective interventions. Six of the 17 components demonstrated high consistency, including individual-focused components (classroom lessons, educational resources, interactive activities, and content designed to build children’s knowledge, awareness, and digital skills) and family-focused components (informative materials and parent education). The same review further highlighted that most school-aged children and adolescents globally exceed recommended daily limits for screen time, with consistently high levels of excessive use observed across age groups and countries. Screen time is defined as the total duration spent using electronic devices such as smartphones, laptops and televisions, whereas



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School psychologists and counsellors are increasingly asked to support children and families in navigating healthy screen use



Guidance from paediatric and public health authorities emphasises the importance of parental regulation and structured media use within the home environment.

screen use refers to a broader range of activities facilitated by these devices, including watching television, online learning and social media engagement. Discretionary or recreational screen use refers to leisure-based activities unrelated to educational or occupational purposes, typically characterised as passive or sedentary in nature (Celis-Morales et al., 2018; Tremblay et al., 2017). Guidance from paediatric and public health authorities emphasises the importance of parental regulation and structured media use within the home environment. Recommendations include limiting total entertainment screen time to less than 1-2 hours per day, avoiding screen media exposure for children under the age of two, and keeping televisions and Internet-connected devices out of children’s bedrooms (Council on Communications and Media, 2013). Parents are also encouraged to actively monitor the content their children access, including websites and social media platforms, to co-view media with children and adolescents as an opportunity to discuss values, and to establish a

family media plan that includes clear rules regarding mobile phone use, texting, Internet access and social media engagement, particularly during mealtimes and before bedtime (Council on Communications and Media, 2013). Building on these recommendations, a wide range of interventions have been developed across home, school, community, and digital settings to support the regulation and balancing of children’s screen use. These interventions primarily focus on behaviour change strategies aimed at reducing screen time and minimising problematic use. Among these approaches, school-based interventions are particularly prominent, as schools provide structured environments for delivering classroom education, counselling and peer-learning opportunities (Friedrich et al., 2014; Throuvala et al., 2020). In conclusion, family engagement is a critical component, with evidence indicating that household rules, parental modelling, and active monitoring are associated with reduced screen time among children and adolescents.

The quiet work that keeps cities running



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THERE IS a sound that visits our neighbourhoods before the day truly begins. It is not the call to prayer, nor the rush of commuters, nor the chatter of schoolchildren preparing for another day. It is the low roar of a garbage truck moving steadily through quiet streets while most of us are still asleep. A garbage truck turned the corner slowly, as if it understood it was the only loud thing allowed in a soundless street. Two workers stood on the back, moving with a rhythm that didn't need conversation. One bin, lift, empty and move on. No rush, no pause and no audience. They didn't look like they were performing a job. It looked more like a ritual the city depended on, but never attended. The first time I really noticed them, I was awake too early for no good reason. The city was still half-asleep. Streets washed in that dim, uncertain light that comes before sunrise, when everything looks temporarily forgiven. I had stepped outside thinking I was alone in the world. But I was not! I remember thinking, abnormally, that the street looked different after they passed. Not

just cleaner, but lighter somehow. As if the night had left behind more than darkness, and they had come to carry it away. Later, I learned that June 17 is observed as Global Garbage Man Day, a recognition that began in 2011 when the American waste management promoter John D Arwood created National Garbage Man Day. What started as a small attempt to honour sanitation workers has since then grown into a global acknowledgment of something most of us only notice when it stops working. And that is the strange truth about their work; it is most visible in its absence. We don't think about sanitation workers when the system is running smoothly. However, standing there that morning, watching them move from house to house, I realised something many of us had never considered properly before. They are not just collecting waste, but they are holding back consequence. Every bag they lift is a small interruption in what would otherwise become an accumulation. Every street they clear is a refusal to let waste remain there. They are, in a way, working against time itself because without them, time leaves behind a mess we

What started as a small attempt to honour sanitation workers has since then grown into a global acknowledgment of something most of us only notice when it stops working

would all have to live inside. The truck moved on, the sound faded and the street was empty again. But it wasn't as empty as before. There is a kind of order that feels earned, and a kind of silence that feels maintained, not accidental. Same routes, same tasks and same early hours when the rest of the world is still negotiating with sleep, and still, they show up. That kind of work doesn't ask to be admired; it simply insists on being done. Global Garbage Man Day tries, in its own way, to return some of that unnoticed effort back into highlight. What happens before dawn is not background noise; it is care. It is the quiet agreement that civilisation should remain functional even when no one is watching. I sometimes think about that morning again when I hear a truck in the distance. It doesn't feel like an interruption anymore. It feels like maintenance of a promise. It is the sound of responsibility. It is the sound of people making the world a little better before the rest of us even wake up. And that is a contribution worth celebrating not just on June 17, but every day of the year.

SWISS VOTERS REJECT 10M POPULATION CAP IN REFERENDUM

CHRISTIANE OELRICH

Swiss voters have rejected a proposal to cap the country's population at 10 million people by 2050 by limiting immigration, according to projections released after Sunday's referendum, dealing a setback to the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP).

Exit polls indicated that approximately 55 per cent of people voted against the proposal, while around 45 per cent voted in favour.

In rural regions such as Appenzell Innerrhoden in the north-east, where there are few foreigners, nearly 66 per cent of people approved of the initiative.

City dwellers, however, voted decisively against it. The SVP, Switzerland's largest political party, has for decades vehemently opposed immigration and the European Union, and has raised various proposals in referendums. Most of these have failed, though some - including a ban on minarets in 2009 and a ban on face coverings in 2021 - have been successful.

The right-wing party presented the referendum to limit the population as a sustainability initiative that would conserve resources and combat further urban sprawl, overcrowded buses and trains, and crime.

However, it consistently made it clear that the focus was on limiting the number of foreigners in the country. The proposed measure would have seen restrictions on asylum and family reunification apply once the population reached 9.5 million, which is likely to happen in the 2030s.

Switzerland is currently home to around 9.1 million people. If those measures proved insufficient, the Alpine country would have ended its freedom-of-movement agreement with the EU, which allows reciprocal rights to live and work across borders, even though Switzerland is not a member of the bloc.

If approved, Switzerland would have become the only country in the world to cap its population.

Monika Rühl, head of the business association Economiesuisse, welcomed the result. "We still need access to skilled workers," she said, pointing to the problem of population ageing if immigration is restricted. "We need uncomplicated access through the free movement of persons with the EU."

Stephanie Gartenmann, an SVP lawmaker in the Bern regional parliament, meanwhile sought to frame the 45 per cent approval rate as a success. "This is a clear signal that we need to take action," she told the SRF broadcaster.

Gartenmann said the country needed to focus on "qualitative immigration" to "keep Switzerland just as it is: a place worth living in, with prosperity and a high quality of life."

Although the SVP has been the Swiss party with the most voters since 1999, the four largest parties have governed in a coalition at the national level for decades, keeping the right-wing party from implementing its policies.

Other parties and associations nonetheless agree that immigration is a concern for the public. "We need to make greater use of domestic potential," said Yvonne Bürgin, a lawmaker from the Centre party. — dpa

Pricey World Cup keeps fans away, hits US hotels, airlines

HOURS BEFORE the World Cup kickoff, the boost to travel and tourism expected from this year's biggest sporting event has yet to materialise.

For years, the tournament was expected to deliver a windfall for America's travel industry, now grappling with declining international visitors amid what rights groups describe as a climate of fear. Flight bookings have slumped as ticket prices have skyrocketed.

Expensive match tickets have further stymied demand, and industry analysts say excitement has been muted compared with past World Cups.

The weak start suggests the traditional World Cup travel playbook - typically dependent on international fans willing to travel long distances and spend heavily to follow their teams - is faltering. Instead, the costs, visa hurdles and the logistics of attending matches across 16 host cities in three countries have proved a deterrent.

US travellers, in a country where football is less popular than in Europe, are not filling the gap.

It is "overall a disappointment. There's no other word that I can say," said Vijay Dandapani, CEO of the Hotel Association of New York City. The association has cut its forecast for hotel room revenue tied to the World Cup by 60 per cent to roughly \$60 million, he said. The International Federation of Association Football declined a request for comment.

Flight bookings from Europe into most host cities for June and July are down 3.8 per cent on average year-over-year, according to Cirium, even after Europeans had already pulled back from travel to the US last year. Bookings from Europe into New York, host of the July 19 final, have plunged 15.8 per cent, Cirium said.

Fifa had projected 1.2 million fans would descend on the city, but Dandapani said the New York hotel association is only expecting half a million.

Dandapani said there has been a small uptick in bookings from UK and Norway fans recently, which he called a "positive sign."

Hotels are hoping for a last-



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A man carries a TV set he received for free after showing his US visa denial during a promotion by TV manufacturer Noblex for people unable to travel to the World Cup due to visa rejections, in Buenos Aires. — Reuters

minute surge after the group stage concludes, despite discouraging early data. Average bookings across host cities are up just 0.5 per cent from a year earlier, according to analytics firm CoStar.

Several New York hotels are discounting hotel rooms, said Dandapani, including the New York Hilton Midtown, the city's largest hotel, which has slashed rates for the tournament in half to \$415 per night, compared to advertised rates in December, he said.

Hilton in April said it was seeing strong bookings, driven by New York. The following month, Marriott said, "There obviously is still a lot left to book given that the exact matchups for the latter half of the competition have not yet been decided."

Hilton declined to comment, while Marriott did not immediately respond to a comment request. "Some fans are skipping the World Cup altogether," said Andy Milne, England superfan and author of the book That World Cup Guy. "Friends of mine are heading to Ibiza to watch every match on TV

for a fraction of the price. Others are going to Vegas. It'll still cost money, but far less than tickets, travel, hotels, and transport to the stadiums."

Even affluent fans, who have buoyed the performance of US travel companies, are waiting for matchups to crystallise or for their teams to advance before committing to travel, luxury sports travel company Roadtrips said.

Fans from more than half the qualified countries need visas to enter the United States, adding cost and uncertainty for travellers already wary of stricter border enforcement.

The Trump administration denied a Somali referee entry over alleged links to 'suspected members of terror organisations.'

Fifa's ticketing practices have also soured some fans. Organisers introduced record-high base prices and, for the first time, dynamic pricing that raised costs as the tournament neared. Fifa's decision to allow uncapped resale pricing inflated costs further and drew regulatory scrutiny.

The cheapest ticket in host cities like New York and Miami now approaches \$1,000, according to TicketData.

Even if ticket prices halve closer to key matches, last-minute demand may remain muted, as overseas fans still face the cost and complexity of booking travel and securing visas on short notice, said Dana Lattouf, CEO of Tickitto, a UK ticket distributor.

Vacation rentals, which allow groups to split costs, are a rare bright spot. Airbnb told investors in May that the World Cup was on track to be its largest event ever. Data from short-term rental analytics firm AirDNA shows bookings, particularly for budget and economy rentals, are tracking higher in host cities, including Boston and Los Angeles.

Booked average daily rates for rentals across host cities were \$218, while travellers looking now would pay about \$335 as of June 8, AirDNA said, as hosts raise prices to capture last-minute demand. "There is way more leisure demand in all these cities because of the World Cup. That is unmistakable," said Jamie Lane, chief economist at AirDNA.

— Reuters



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



CRITICS CIRCLING, FRANCE’S MBAPPE TURNS TO FAVOURITE STAGE

KYLIAN MBAPPE heads into France’s World Cup opener against Senegal on Tuesday with questions swirling around him after a season that has left the country’s biggest football star under immense pressure.

The France captain drew a blank in warm-up games against Ivory Coast and Northern Ireland and ended the season at Real Madrid without a trophy, despite finishing as La Liga’s top scorer.

His performances, leadership and behaviour away from the pitch have become regular talking points after Real Madrid fell short in both the Champions League and the domestic title race.

Mbappe has also come under fire over his leadership since succeeding Hugo Lloris as captain in 2023, with 1998 World Cup winner Frank Leboeuf among those to question whether he is the right man to lead Les Bleus.

Yet inside the France camp, support for Mbappe appears unwavering.

Ballon d’Or winner Ousmane Dembele, who has emerged as one of the team’s most influential figures, said the criticism directed at his long-time team-mate and close friend had gone too far. “The criticism towards him is very, very unfair,” Dembele told Spanish newspaper Marca this week. “Some people overdo the criticism

because he’s Kylian Mbappe. They shouldn’t keep going after him. Whether he ties his shoelaces or not, whether he pulls up his socks or not, it’s too much. He’s still a human being.

“With the France team, he’s very good with us, he’s a leader.”

Defender Lucas Hernandez struck a similar tone, saying Mbappe remained fully focused despite the noise around him.

“When you’re Kylian Mbappe, everyone looks at everything you do, on the pitch and off the pitch,” Hernandez said. “He’s 100% motivated for the World Cup. All the criticism there has been this season, he’s going to silence it.”

France are among the favourites to lift the trophy and Didier Deschamps is embarking on his final tournament in charge, giving Mbappe an immediate opportunity to turn the conversation back to what he does best.

If there is one stage on which Mbappe rarely disappoints, it is the World Cup, where France will also face Iraq and Norway in Group I.

He has struck 12 times in 14 World Cup matches, leaving him only four goals short of Miroslav Klose’s all-time record of 16 and offering a reminder of how quickly he can silence his critics.

Another goal would put him top of the list of France’s all-time scorers alongside the retired Olivier Giroud (57).

— Reuters



France’s forward #10 Kylian Mbappe (C) and France’s forward #07 Ousmane Dembele (L) take part in a training session at Bentley University. — AFP





FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



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SHORT TAKES



Egypt player Mohamed Salah

EGYPT PLAY DOWN SHIRT CHANGES FOR WORLD CUP

Berlin: The Egyptian FA has said that changes made to their World Cup shirts were not last-ditch efforts but had been communicated well in advance. The world governing body Fifa has told the team of superstar Mohamed Salah that they can't have the seven stars for their seven Africa Cup of Nations titles above their emblem because World Cup shirts can only have stars for world titles.

The Egyptian FA told dpa they had already received a notification from Fifa several months ago and that "consequently, the necessary measures were taken and arrangements made with the relevant authorities in good time."

"This is therefore not a new or unexpected development just before the start of the tournament." Egypt must also change the golden numbers on the shirts which will now be white for better visibility. The FA said that "this, too, is a standard organisational and technical requirement." Egypt play their first World Cup game on Monday against Belgium, with Iran and New Zealand their other opponents in Group G.

— dpa



(FILES) Somali referee Omar Abdulkadir Artan during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN). — AFP

DENIED US ENTRY SOMALI REFEREE WILL RECEIVE FULL FIFA FEE

MIAMI: Somali football referee Omar Abdulkadir Artan, who was denied entry into the United States to officiate at the World Cup, will be paid his full tournament fee. The Trump administration said the United States had denied Artan entry for the World Cup because of his links to "suspected members of terror organisations". A source familiar with the matter said even though Artan will take no part in the World Cup, Fifa has committed to paying his salary.

Artan, Africa's referee of the year in 2025, was set to become the first Somali to officiate at soccer's global showpiece, but was turned back by US Customs and Border Protection. However, he returned home to a hero's welcome while European soccer body UEFA appointed him to officiate the UEFA Super Cup match between Paris St Germain and Aston Villa in August.

— Reuters

SPAIN ARE 'FAVOURITES' DESPITE KNOCKOUT WOES



Spain's Lamine Yamal and Alex Baena during training. — Reuters



PABLO MELIAN Alex Grimaldo believes Spain can emulate their Golden Generation by winning the World Cup two years after being crowned European champions.

The Bayer Leverkusen left-back was part of the squad that dazzled in Germany in 2024, beating the hosts and richly talented France and England sides to win the trophy.

But La Roja have not won a World Cup knockout game since Andres Iniesta's winning goal in the 2010 final.

An ageing squad, who had won the Euros in 2008 and 2012, crashed out in the group stage at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and failed to get past the last 16 in Russia and Qatar.

However, blessed with the prodigious talent of Barcelona's Lamine Yamal, the European champions arrive in the United States in top form.

Excluding penalties, Luis de la Fuente's side are unbeaten in 31 competitive games stretching back to March 2023.

Spain will face tournament debutants Cape Verde, Saudi Arabia and Uruguay in Group H.

"I see us as favourites," a confident Grimaldo told AFP ahead of his first World Cup.

"The stats are things of the past. We have to concentrate on the day-to-day and go into the first game against Cape Verde as well-prepared as possible.

"The team is full of confidence and very motivated. We are desperate to do a good job because we have the team to do so."

ONLY MESSI BETTER

A set-piece specialist, Grimaldo came through the ranks of Barcelona's fabled La Masia academy but was forced to move to Portuguese giants Benfica to find regular football.

After seven seasons in Lisbon, his move to Leverkusen propelled him into the national team for the first time in 2023.

Grimaldo was one of the stars as Leverkusen won the Bundesliga for the first time and completed a league and cup double under Xabi Alonso in the 2023/24 campaign.

In three seasons in Germany, the 30-year-old has scored 30 goals and provided 45 assists from left-back.

"I am a full-back that offers a lot going forward. I think that makes people think that I don't know how to defend, when I have defended all my career," he said.

"I think I am in very good form. I have played at an incredible level for many years, which has brought me to where I am today."

No other player has scored more than Grimaldo's six goals from free-kicks over the past three seasons in Europe's top five leagues.

And he believes only the great Lionel Messi can claim to be better from dead ball situations.

"I think the distance that is best for me is 25 metres out, more or less. I don't know if there is anyone that hits it better than me, excluding Messi because Messi is Messi," he said with a smile.

"From further out there are players that hit it very well like Julian Alvarez or Dominik Szoboszlai."

Despite his prolific Bundesliga form, Grimaldo remains behind Chelsea's Marc Cucurella in the battle to be De la Fuente's starting left-back.

He believes he suffers as only two players in the Spain squad not to play in La Liga or England's Premier League.

"It is something that I have said a number of times and I don't hide it. I think (a return to) Spain is the objective I have for the future, but it depends on many things," he said.

For now the burning desire is to return home as a World Cup winner.

— AFP



FIFA WORLD CUP 2026



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USA | CANADA | MEXICO

OMAN DAILY
Observer



Germany fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



Germany fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



Germany fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



Curacao fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



Germany fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



A Curacao fan inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



A Curacao supporter poses in the tribunes prior to the match. — AFP



Germany fans with his face painted in the stands before the match before the match. — Reuters



Curacao supporters pose prior to the match between Germany and Curacao. — AFP



Football fans attend the unveiling of Germany's 7.5 kilometres (4.7 miles)-long national flag in Bangladesh. — AFP



Germany fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters

FANS ADD COLOUR TO GERMANY AND CURACAO MATCH

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,648.751

BUSINESS

IGC plans for long-term gas growth

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

OMAN'S natural gas market is entering a more complex phase of structurally rising demand, even as supply growth remains comparatively constrained, according to Integrated Gas Company (IGC), which continues to play a central role in balancing allocations across power generation, industry and strategic economic projects.

Speaking on the evolving gas landscape, CEO Abdulrahman al Yahyaiei said that while the Sultanate of Oman's gas balance remains secure, managing future demand growth is becoming increasingly complex amidst accelerating consumption from industrial expansion, petrochemicals, urban development and emerging sectors.

"The gas balance remains secure, although managing future demand growth is becoming increasingly complex", he said, adding that demand is now being shaped not only by traditional users but also by the broader economic transformation agenda, requiring allocation decisions to focus on where gas creates the highest national value while maintaining reliability, affordability and long-term supply security.

According to Al Yahyaiei, gas demand trends over the past three years have reflected strong industrial and petrochemical growth, alongside seasonal fluctuations in power generation driven by cooling demand.



ABDULRAHMAN AL YAHYAEI
CEO, IGC

"The power sector continues to be one of the largest variable consumers due to cooling demand. At the same time, we have seen significant year-on-year increases driven by large industrial projects, while industrial users are becoming more diverse across steel, cement, chemicals, food processing, manufacturing and downstream sectors.

We are also seeing stronger demand signals from emerging sectors, including potential future demand from data centres, digital infrastructure and low-carbon industrial projects".

Demand growth is increasing faster than domestic supply growth; however, Oman continues to maintain a secure gas balance through effective planning, infrastructure development and close coordination with producers.

"IGC is optimising the national gas system through better forecasting, improved allocation governance, contractual discipline, take-or-pay structures, network debottlenecking, coordination with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and producers; and the prioritisation of high-value domestic use", Al Yahyaiei said.

In parallel, IGC continues to work closely with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, upstream producers and infrastructure partners to unlock new gas supplies, optimise existing



Large-scale energy-intensive projects are expected to significantly reshape long-term gas demand in Oman (Picture for illustration).

resources, improve infrastructure utilisation and support long-term energy security.

This includes evaluating new domestic gas projects, enhancing network efficiency and exploring innovative solutions that strengthen the resilience and flexibility of Oman's energy system.

Looking ahead, IGC expects sustained growth in gas demand over the next two to three years,

driven by major industrial and infrastructure developments.

"We expect gas demand to continue growing, mainly from

industrial projects, infrastructure expansion, petrochemicals, steel, cement, manufacturing, mining and power demand", he said, noting that the key challenge lies not only in volumes but also in the timing, location and flexibility of supply arrangements.

At the same time, IGC has begun assessing gas demand growth in Al Buraimi, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Duqm, Suhar, Sur, Salalah and other emerging industrial centres through structured demand planning undertaken in coordination with Madayn and OPAZ.

"We assess forecast volumes, project maturity, investment value, job creation, Omanisation, In-Country Value, network proximity, infrastructure requirements and strategic alignment with Oman's diversification priorities. This enables us to distinguish between mature, investment-ready projects and those at earlier stages of development," he said.

Construction begins on Muttrah Square waterfront landmark

BALARAB AL TAHIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

Muscat Municipality has begun construction work on the Muttrah Square project, an award-winning waterfront development designed to reshape the historic district's urban identity and strengthen its appeal to visitors.

The municipality announced the start of building work this week, describing the scheme as a qualitative addition to the capital's urban landscape that will reinforce the wilayat's spatial identity and highlight its cultural and aesthetic character.

Muttrah Square won first place in the inaugural Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design in 2022, a competition open to Omani architects, designers and urban planners under the age of 35.

The square was designed by Ahmed al Jahdhami, Omaima al Hinai and Abdullah al Bahri.

The project's centrepiece is a striking pedestrian bridge, shaped like a bird in flight, drawing inspiration from the sword of Imam Al Salt bin Malik al Kharousi.

Positioned above the



Once complete, Muttrah Square is expected to become a prominent architectural and tourism landmark in the capital.

sea opposite the Muttrah Fish Market, the bridge is designed to frame some of Muttrah's most iconic sites while connecting the various elements of the project.

The bridge will be surrounded by a multi-use plaza that includes a dancing water fountain, retail spaces, cafes and lighting designed to complement the natural rhythm of the sea waves.

The scheme is intended to create a new public gathering space along the cornice.

The construction contract worth RO 8.959 million covers site preparation, including earthworks and groundwater extraction,

construction of the pedestrian bridge, two wings housing commercial units, installation of the fountain; rainwater drainage and core utilities; and landscaping and public amenities.

The project is being delivered under Royal Directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik directing the municipality to implement the Muttrah Square project.

Once complete, Muttrah Square is expected to become a prominent architectural and tourism landmark in the capital, adding to a waterfront that already features the redeveloped Muttrah Fish Market and cornice.



TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Site Visit	Grade	Tender Price (ر.ع.)
NESC/2026/016	Design, Supply, and Execute interlock paving works for the external parking area of Nama Electricity Supply Company - Muscat	28/06/2026	05/07/2026	30/06/2026	Specialist	26.250
NESC/2026/017	Outsource IT Audit Services	28/06/2026	05/07/2026	-	Specialist	26.250

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

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The account is designed to balance financial prudence with quality-of-life enhancements.

Sohar International launches banking account for pensioners

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to delivering purpose-driven financial solutions across every stage of life, Sohar International recently announced the launch of a dedicated banking Pensioners Account, marking a strategic step towards addressing the distinct priorities of customers transitioning into retirement.

The initiative presents a carefully structured proposition that aligns financial security with broader wellbeing considerations, positioning the bank to serve this segment with greater relevance while fostering deeper engagement and trust.

Abdul Qadir al Sumali, Chief Retail & Wealth Management Officer from Sohar International stated, “At Sohar International, we view banking as a long-term relationship that evolves alongside our customers’ life journeys. Retirement represents a significant shift in priorities, where financial confidence must be complemented by stability, access and a sense of continuity. Our approach is grounded in understanding these transitions in a more holistic manner, ensuring that our customers continue to feel supported.

This initiative reflects our broader commitment to building a customer-centric institution that anticipates needs, adapts with purpose and delivers meaningful value across every life stage”. Structured to address both immediate and evolving priorities of pensioners, the Pensioners Account is designed to balance financial prudence with quality-of-life enhancements.

Preferential rates on deposits and financing solutions enable more effective management of retirement income, while a lifetime free credit card ensures continued access to flexible payment options without incurring additional costs.

Recognising the increasing importance of healthcare planning in this life stage, the bank has established partnerships with leading healthcare providers to offer preferential access to medical services, enabling pensioners to approach their healthcare needs with greater confidence and predictability.

This is complemented by a curated set of lifestyle privileges and card-linked benefits, including airport services and travel privileges, supporting a more enriched post-retirement experience.

To enhance day-to-day convenience and reinforce a more personalized banking experience, the newly launched account introduces tailored service elements such as customised pensioner debit cards and priority servicing, ensuring greater ease of access and responsiveness in routine interactions.

These benefits reflect the bank’s commitment to delivering practical value and supporting customers as they transition into this new phase of their financial journey. Through initiatives such as this, Sohar International continues to advance a more progressive approach to banking, one that is shaped by changing customer expectations and a deep awareness of how financial needs transform over time.

Lexus NX: Engineered to thrill with special offer

THE “Own the Momentum” summer campaign brings a wealth of exclusive privileges to the Lexus NX, making it an exceptional time to experience this luxury crossover.

Running until July 8, 2026, the seasonal promotion delivers outstanding value and complete reassurance to luxury car buyers across the Sultanate of Oman.

Customers upgrading to the Lexus NX can benefit from a comprehensive 3-year or 30,000 km service package. To ensure total peace of mind, the premium summer package also includes one year of comprehensive insurance and one year of vehicle registration (Terms and conditions apply).

Designed to captivate from every angle, the Lexus NX combines a bold, diamond-like aesthetic with highly responsive engineering. The luxury crossover makes an instant statement on Oman’s roads with its defiant signature grille, striking 3-eye headlamps and commanding 20-inch alloy wheels.

Under the hood, the NX delivers a thrilling sports performance specifically engineered to handle both daily city drives and weekend getaways. An 8-speed automatic transmission works seamlessly with an electronically controlled



The Lexus NX combines a bold, diamond-like aesthetic with highly responsive engineering.

full-time AWD system, while an Adaptive Variable Suspension system ensures a smooth, perfectly composed ride.

The cabin of the Lexus NX serves as a refined sanctuary where high-end aesthetics meet advanced, user-friendly technology. Drivers are greeted by an intuitive 14-inch navigation screen that acts as the vehicle’s central control hub, paired with a rich 10-speaker premium surround sound system.

The interior prioritises spatial convenience with an expansive boot, wide armrests and an innovative inside E-latch door handle system.

A power backdoor with a kick-open sensor adds everyday practicality, while a panoramic moonroof with UV and IR cut glass keeps the entire cabin airy and well-protected from the intense summer heat.

Safety forms the foundation of the Lexus NX, utilising advanced technologies that work with split-second precision to protect families on every journey.

The crossover comes equipped with a comprehensive safety suite, including a Pre-Collision System, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control and Lane Tracing Assist to build driver confidence.

For complex manoeuvres and tight parking situations, features like Safe Exit Assist and a Panoramic View Monitor offer complete peace of mind. Discerning motorists looking to experience this blend of craftsmanship and seasonal value are invited to visit their nearest Lexus showroom before the campaign concludes on July 8, 2026.

National Finance strengthens finance offering

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to responsible financing and sustainable economic development, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, continues to strengthen its sustainable finance offering, empowering individuals, SMEs and corporates to contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future.

Through its comprehensive suite of Sustainable Financing solutions, the company is playing a pivotal role in advancing the nation’s sustainability agenda, while fostering the adoption of greener technologies and practices.

Responding to the need of the hour and aligned with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040, National Finance’s expansive Sustainable Finance portfolio is rooted in its comprehensive Sustainability Strategic Framework, which integrates Environmental, Social, Operations and Governance (ESG) considerations across every aspect of the business.

Going beyond product development, the framework guides the company’s

commitment to embedding responsible and sustainable practices throughout its operations, while advancing its ESG agenda through innovative financing solutions, strategic partnerships, community initiatives and responsible lending practices.

Through this holistic approach, National Finance continues to support environmental stewardship, inclusive growth, innovation and long-term value creation, while empowering customers to achieve their own sustainability objectives.

Through its Sustainable Finance offering, National Finance provides customers with

accessible financing solutions designed to encourage the adoption of sustainable technologies and environmentally conscious practices.

As part of this commitment, eligible Sustainable Finance customers benefit from waived processing fees and a 1% reduction in financing rates, making sustainable investments more affordable and attainable.

The offering encompasses a broad range of sustainability-focused financing categories. These include electric and hybrid vehicles that support the transition towards cleaner mobility, solar energy solutions that promote renewable energy adoption and smart home technologies that enhance energy efficiency and resource management.

For SMEs and corporates, the offering provides access to dedicated financing for a diverse range of sustainability-linked projects and initiatives, enabling organisations to advance their environmental objectives while supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Bank Muscat introduces special competitive rates on personal loan

MUSCAT: Following the strong response to its instant personal loan service launched earlier through Mobile Banking and the growing demand for fast convenient and flexible digital loan solutions, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced a limited time offer on its instant digital loan service through the Mobile Banking app.

Under the offer, eligible customers can benefit from competitive loan rates starting from 4%, making it easier than ever to access fast, convenient and fully digital solutions. The offer provides customers with greater flexibility to select loan tenures that best suit their financial needs while benefitting from competitive rates through a seamless application process.

Bank Muscat previously introduced the instant digital loan service through its Mobile

Your Personal Loan,
One Tap Away

Starting from
4% p.a.

Offer valid until 30 June 2026. Terms and conditions apply.

Banking application as part of its ongoing efforts to lead digital transformation in Oman’s banking sector. The service allows government employees to apply for personal loan and complete the entire process electronically within minutes, without the need to visit a branch or submit physical documents.

Once approved, the loan amount is credited directly to the customer’s account.

The service delivers a seamless and fully digital banking experience. The system instantly verifies the customer’s credit eligibility and enables the application process to be completed electronically using a one-time password (OTP).

Financing documents and the repayment schedule are also made available digitally through the application, further enhancing the speed, convenience and efficiency of banking transactions.

Customers interested in using the service can log in to the Mobile Banking application and navigate to Requests > Loans > Instant Personal Loan Application, then follow the on-screen instructions.

The launch of this service further reinforces Bank Muscat’s position as a key driver of digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman by proactively adopting the latest banking technologies and developing smart solutions that align with customers’ evolving expectations while enhancing service efficiency.

Through such initiatives, Bank Muscat continues to advance digital innovation and deliver modern banking services that support the aspirations of the community and enhance the overall customer experience by offering simple, secure financial solutions accessible anytime and from anywhere.

SHORTTAKES



For National Gas, the award provides access to a major Saudi consumer market.

NATIONAL GAS SAUDI UNIT AND ZAMIL WIN LPG LICENCES

MUSCAT: National Gas Company SAOG said its wholly owned Saudi subsidiary, NGC Energy Saudi LLC, has secured liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) licences in partnership with Zamil Group, expanding the Omani-listed company's presence in Saudi Arabia's downstream gas market.

The licences cover the establishment of LPG cylinder filling and storage facilities in Jeddah and Jazan, as well as wholesale LPG distribution to consumers across Saudi Arabia, National Gas said in a disclosure. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Energy named a consortium comprising NGC Energy Saudi LLC and Zamil Group Holding Company among the winners of eight LPG filling, storage and bulk distribution licences, following a tender and bid assessment process.

For National Gas, the award provides access to a major Saudi consumer market. The proposed cylinder facilities will target Jeddah and Jazan, two high-demand regions with a combined population of about 6.5 million, according to the company.

Citing Saudi Ministry of Energy projections, National Gas said annual demand in the two markets is expected to reach around 36.4 million LPG cylinders by 2030, based on a 21-litre cylinder size.

The company said development of the proposed LPG facilities, including identifying suitable land for two plants and securing regulatory, civil defence, compliance and other statutory approvals, is expected to take around 24 months.

The wholesale distribution licence gives the consortium scope to distribute LPG to consumers across Saudi Arabia, which National Gas described as a national market of around 35 million people.

The company said projected annual bulk LPG demand is expected to reach around 676 million litres by 2030, with wholesale distribution operations expected to begin within about 12 months.

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

OMAN'S cybersecurity market is projected to grow to \$214.27 million by 2031, supported by digital transformation, data residency requirements and the expansion of locally developed cyber solutions, according to the Cybersecurity Market and Investment Report 2026.

The report, prepared under the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Oman National CERT, Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Programme and Invest Oman, said the domestic market is expected to rise from \$135.33 million in 2025 to \$146.12 million in 2026, before expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 7.97 per cent through 2031.

The sector's growth comes as Oman moves to position cybersecurity not only as a protective function but also as an economic activity linked to investment, innovation, job creation and service exports.

"The Sultanate of Oman is rapidly emerging as a regional leader in cybersecurity, driven by the strategic mandates of Oman Vision 2040 and the National Digital Economy Programme", said Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in the report.

The report said Oman has achieved a Tier 1 global ranking



Domestic market is expected to rise from \$135.33 million in 2025 to \$146.12 million in 2026.

in cybersecurity readiness, while the Hadatha programme has helped shift the local industry from a service-focused model to one increasingly driven by local innovation and exportable expertise.

Oman's local cybersecurity industry has expanded sharply since the launch of Hadatha.

The number of local cybersecurity companies rose from 16 in 2020 to 48 following the 2021-2025 programme period, while total companies providing cybersecurity services in Oman reached 56, including 34 local and 22 global firms.

Accredited cybersecurity service providers increased from four in 2021 to 11 by the end of 2025.

The report also identified 17 locally developed cybersecurity products and three local companies that obtained international accreditation. These figures point to a maturing ecosystem that is beginning to move beyond consultancy and managed services into product development, certification and specialised capabilities.

"Oman has pioneered the region's first national programme dedicated to cybersecurity industry development, strategically shifting the paradigm from purely defensive measures to cybersecurity as a core economic enabler", said Eng Badar al Salehi, Director-General of Oman National CERT.

Human capital remains a central component of the sector's expansion.

The report said 18 academic institutions in Oman offer cybersecurity majors, with 445 cybersecurity students currently in academic institutions and 1,870 job seekers in the field.

Hadatha has served around 13,000 beneficiaries over five years through training, events, workshops and competitions.

Between 2021 and 2025, Hadatha delivered 36 approved initiatives, 120 events,

workshops and competitions, six new startups, 36 frameworks and studies, 32 memorandums of cooperation, two international awards and three cybersecurity industry centres.

"The vision of the Hadatha programme is to establish a specialised cybersecurity industry that enhances and diversifies economic growth, grounded in innovation, creativity and excellence", the report said.

The next phase, covering 2026 to 2030, aims to support the development of 15 local cybersecurity products, establish eight local cybersecurity companies and create 28 per cent more cybersecurity job and income opportunities.

It will be implemented through eight tracks and 22 initiatives covering capability building, startup launch, product development, investment stimulation, digital trust, partnerships and performance excellence.

Smart water meter coverage reaches 99.5% across Oman

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

The Sultanate of Oman's move towards expanding the use of smart meters in the water sector represents a significant step in its efforts to enhance the efficiency of natural resource management and improve public spending.

The adoption of these technologies is part of Oman's broader economic diversification efforts, where improving the efficiency of public services is a key pillar for enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy and its attractiveness to investment.

Furthermore, introducing digital solutions in the water sector opens the door to the development of supporting industries and services such as smart metering systems,



Nama Water Services is implementing a phased plan to complete the smart meter rollout.

data analytics and network management solutions, thus contributing to the creation of new economic opportunities linked to the digital economy.

Nama Water Services explained that it is implementing a phased plan to complete the smart meter rollout, prioritising densely populated areas, older meters and cases relying on estimated readings, in addition to locations that contribute to increased water loss and revenue.

It noted that achieving full coverage depends on site readiness, the availability of communication networks, ongoing upgrades; and addressing technical and field challenges. Currently, coverage has reached approximately 99.5%.

Nama Water Services emphasised that smart meters have directly contributed to reducing reliance

on estimated billing by providing accurate and regular readings, improving the billing cycle, minimising manual intervention, increasing data accuracy and reducing disputes related to unavailable or delayed readings.

Regarding prepaid metering, the company explained that it enables subscribers to directly manage their consumption, continuously monitor their balance and control their monthly spending.

This reduces the accumulation of debt, enhances transparency between the company and subscribers; and improves the efficiency of revenue collection.

It was also explained that smart meters contribute to detecting abnormal consumption patterns such as leaks, tampering, malfunctioning meters and illogical readings by analysing and

comparing data between different areas and main meters.

This supports the analysis of technical and commercial losses and enables faster corrective action. On the technical side, the company indicated the use of multiple communication technologies to ensure continuous data transmission.

These include Internet of Things networks such as 4G and NB-IoT, LoRaWAN technology, as well as remote reading systems or hybrid solutions. The appropriate technology is selected based on the nature of the area, coverage quality, energy consumption and connectivity, which aligns with the diverse geographical characteristics of Oman. The company emphasised that meter data is linked to central systems for data management, billing and digital applications.

ENERGY POLICY

Poland to end fuel caps



Poland plans to end fuel price caps this summer as expectations grow that tensions involving Iran will ease and energy markets will stabilise, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said.

The government had reduced fuel taxes and imposed price controls in March to shield consumers from rising costs. While VAT cuts and fuel price caps remain in place, excise duty reductions have already expired. — Reuters

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

UK, Japan deepen partnership



Britain and Japan are set to launch new investment and technology partnerships worth more than \$24 billion.

The agreements include Japanese investments in UK infrastructure, financial services and offshore wind projects, alongside cooperation in artificial intelligence, semiconductors and quantum computing. The deals are expected to strengthen economic ties ahead of the G7 summit. — ONA

MARKET VOLATILITY

Investors pull back from oil



Investors are retreating from oil markets at a record pace as prolonged price volatility and geopolitical uncertainty reduce confidence.

Data showed open interest in Brent crude futures has fallen nearly 17 per cent this year. Traders cited uncertainty surrounding the Iran conflict and rapidly changing market signals as key factors driving lower participation and reduced liquidity. — Reuters

OPINION

The Earth could get even hotter: The El Niño effect



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

AS our planet warms and extreme weather intensifies under climate change, a new weather warning has cast its shadow across the oceans: a natural event known as El Niño has begun in the tropical Pacific.

El Niño is a periodic warming of surface waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, driven by the weakening of the usual east-to-west trade winds. The El Niño is not a storm but a basin-wide reorganisation of Pacific winds and currents that tips the climate system towards heat and hydrological extremes.

El Niño does not have the same impact everywhere; it redistributes risk across geographies. Sea temperatures in the tropical Pacific have risen sharply in recent months, adding to decades of human-induced warming. 2027 will most likely be another record-hot year with disruptions to food supplies, weather and economies.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the last 11 years were the warmest in records dating back to the 1850s. The planet is gaining more heat energy than it can release, driven by the warming gases such as carbon dioxide. This record-high energy imbalance is melting our planet's ice caps.

According to the WMO secretary general, human activities are increasingly disrupting the natural equilibrium and the world will

have to live with these consequences for hundreds and thousands of years to come.

To amplify climate change, scientists have predicted that the El Niño effect has begun, with a rise in recent sea temperatures. Some forecasts predict that this could also be called a super El Niño, even among the strongest ever recorded.

Sea temperatures in the central and tropical Pacific have now exceeded the 0.5°C above-average threshold used to define El Niño. The winds above the Equatorial Pacific have begun to shift, a sign that the atmosphere is now responding to the warmer ocean rather than the ocean warming on its own.

There is a 63% chance that a very strong El Niño will occur during November to January and could be among the largest El Niño events ever recorded. A very strong El Niño would typically raise global air temperatures by about 0.2°C, releasing heat stored in the ocean into the atmosphere. That extra hot air would land in a world already setting record-high temperatures. It is predicted that, at the end of this year and into 2027, we will likely see very high temperatures globally.

El Niño and La Niña are naturally occurring warm and cool phases of a climate pattern in the tropical Pacific known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, or ENSO cycle. La Niña, the cooler phase of the ENSO cycle, is still weakly present in the Pacific Ocean and

El Niño does not have the same impact everywhere; it redistributes risk across geographies. Sea temperatures in the tropical Pacific have risen sharply in recent months, adding to decades of human-induced warming. 2027 will most likely be another record-hot year with disruptions to food supplies, weather and economies.

has largely been in charge since December 2024. This has led to a temporary drop in global temperatures; 2025 was slightly cooler than 2024, the world's hottest year on record.

This amplified cycle translates into more extreme and frequent ENSO-linked droughts, floods, heat waves, wildfires and severe storms.

However, things are about to change, as global scientists report that the current La Niña is close to its end. Whilst most climate prediction models favour the development of El Niño later this year, there remains considerable uncertainty about how strong it might be and, hence, how much the world's climate and weather patterns could be affected.

The United Nations, World Economic Forum, WMO and other national weather agencies are releasing global bulletins and urging countries to treat this as a forecast-driven emergency, not just another piece of climate noise.

Moving forward, the next step is for nations to prioritise climate risk, draft climate-change-disaster laws and budgets, build early warning systems and coordinate policies across water, agriculture, health and social protection. With technological advancements such as artificial intelligence, the government must institutionalise early action rather than rely on last minute crisis management.

SpaceX's \$2 trillion lift-off inaugurates new IPO era

ROBERT CYRAN

SpaceX now hovers in a rarefied orbit. Shares in Elon Musk's rocket, satellite and AI company secured lift-off on Friday, starting trading at \$150, 11% above the price at which it sold \$75 billion of shares in the biggest stock market float of all time.

At a \$2 trillion valuation, the launch is a measured success for an audacious and bizarre offering. It sets the stage for a parade of even brasher market debutants.

Musk is a master at turning hype, capital and economies of scale into astonishingly valued technology companies. Think of the rocketeer CEO as a modern amalgam of aerospace engineer Wernher von Braun and 19th-century showman PT Barnum.

His carmaker Tesla popularised electric vehicles and SpaceX's constellation of over 10,000 satellites created the Starlink worldwide broadband service. He parlayed credibility from these victories into ever-more outlandish and headline-grabbing promises, like plans to land humans on Mars by 2025 or establish mass transit via pneumatic tubes.

Investors seem to credit the successes and the failures alike. At its opening price, SpaceX is valued at 105 times the revenue it generated in 2025, a nonsensical multiple for any firm facing even a whiff of competition.

It implies a huge premium for Musk's imagination while ignoring challenges from physics and economics to realising orbital data centres or a Martian colony. The company's listing prospectus added fuel, laying claim to markets equivalent to a fifth of the global economy.

SpaceX's perch is precarious, however. It sold only about 5% of its shares and waves of potential exits by insiders could cancel out future demand for the stock. The company's AI business has thus far proven a financial black hole. It is now pivoting to selling spare computing capacity, but that capital-intensive middleman role may become commoditised.

More simply, two trillion-dollar-plus companies run by Musk on the public market may be one too many, raising questions of whether he — and the investors captivated by him — are spread too thin.

Yet Wall Street underwriters have done their part, pulling off the biggest IPO just days after Google owner Alphabet completed the biggest secondary equity offering.

A first-day closing price for SpaceX around \$160 would translate into a pop of 19%, roughly matching the historical average for stock-market debuts, according to data from Jay Ritter of the University of Florida.

It may prove an appetiser for Anthropic and OpenAI, the prime movers of the AI frenzy that are both angling for a public listing. Those offerings may be even more absurd, providing a locus for arguments about whether their chatbots pose an existential threat to humanity or will propel it into the stars. — Reuters

The cost of waiting for the perfect information

THERE is a pattern that repeats itself with striking regularity across organisations of every size and sector: a decision that should take days takes months and a decision that should take weeks quietly disappears into the next planning cycle.

Not because the matter is genuinely unresolvable, but because the people responsible for it are waiting — for one more report, one more consultation, one more dataset that might finally make the right answer self-evident.

What makes this pattern difficult to confront is that it does not look like avoidance. It looks like rigour.

The language surrounding it is almost always the language of quality: due diligence, thorough analysis, stakeholder alignment, evidence-based decision-making.

These are not empty phrases. They reflect genuine organisational values and in many contexts, they reflect hard lessons learned from decisions made too hastily. The culture of caution has a history behind it.

But something else is also happening and it tends to go unexamined.

Beneath the stated desire for better information lies a more uncomfortable truth: organisations often pursue additional analysis not because the existing information is insufficient, but because no amount of information feels sufficient when the stakes are high and the outcome is uncertain.

The reports are commissioned not to answer the question, but to share the burden of answering it. If the analysis recommends a course of action and things go wrong, responsibility is distributed. If the analysis is still ongoing, the decision remains suspended — and so does accountability.

This is the dynamic that rarely surfaces in conversations about organisational decision-making, because it implicates something more personal than process.

The appetite for more data is, in many cases, a structural response to a leadership environment where



Information and judgement are not the same thing and the relationship between them is not linear.



KAMLA AL RAHBI

The writer is a leadership and business strategist

When organisations consistently punish poor outcomes more than they reward timely judgement, they produce exactly the behaviour they claim to find frustrating: committees that meet indefinitely, strategies that are perpetually refined and senior leaders who have mastered the art of forward-scheduling a decision without ever quite making one.

being wrong carries a heavier cost than being slow.

When organisations consistently punish poor outcomes more than they reward timely judgement, they produce exactly the behaviour they claim to find frustrating: committees that meet indefinitely, strategies that are perpetually refined and senior leaders who have mastered the art of forward-scheduling a decision without ever quite making one.

The organisational cost of this is real, though it is almost impossible to measure directly. Missed opportunities do not appear on a balance sheet.

The partnership that drifted elsewhere while approval processes ran their course leaves no trace. The competitor who moved while the internal working group finalised its terms of reference does not announce what window they exploited.

The erosion of credibility among people inside the organisation — those who brought the decision forward, built the case and watched it stall — rarely surfaces until those people have already left. Delay distributes its damage quietly and across time.

What goes largely unnoticed is how thoroughly this pattern reshapes the organisation over years. Teams learn to read the system. They understand that decisions require insulation,

that recommendations need pre-approval before formal approval, that the real skill is not analysis but navigation. The energy that might otherwise go towards judgement goes towards process management.

The organisation becomes progressively more sophisticated at preparing to decide and progressively less practised at actually deciding.

There is an assumption embedded in all of this that deserves closer attention: that the quality of a decision is primarily a function of the quality of the information supporting it. It is an assumption so widely held that it rarely gets stated at all.

It simply shapes behaviour — the calls for more data, the extended timelines, the reluctance to act on what is already known. But information and judgement are not the same thing and the relationship between them is not linear.

Beyond a certain point, more analysis does not produce better decisions. It produces more elaborate justifications for not making one.

Uncertainty is not a temporary problem that careful preparation can eventually resolve. It is the permanent landscape in which all consequential decisions are made.

And yet organisations continue to behave as though the right process, applied with sufficient patience, will eventually produce conditions clear enough to act without risk.

It will not. What distinguishes leaders who move organisations forward from those who preside over elaborate standstills is not access to better information.

It is the willingness to exercise judgement precisely when the information runs out — to accept that leadership was never the elimination of uncertainty, but the disciplined, considered decision to act in its presence.

That capacity cannot be commissioned in a report or confirmed in a meeting. It has to be practised. And the organisations that understand this tend to be led by people who have stopped waiting for certainty they know will never arrive.

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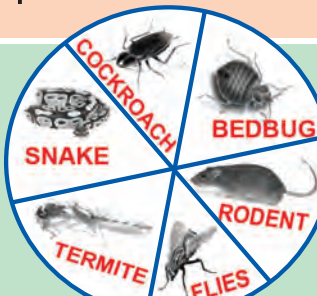
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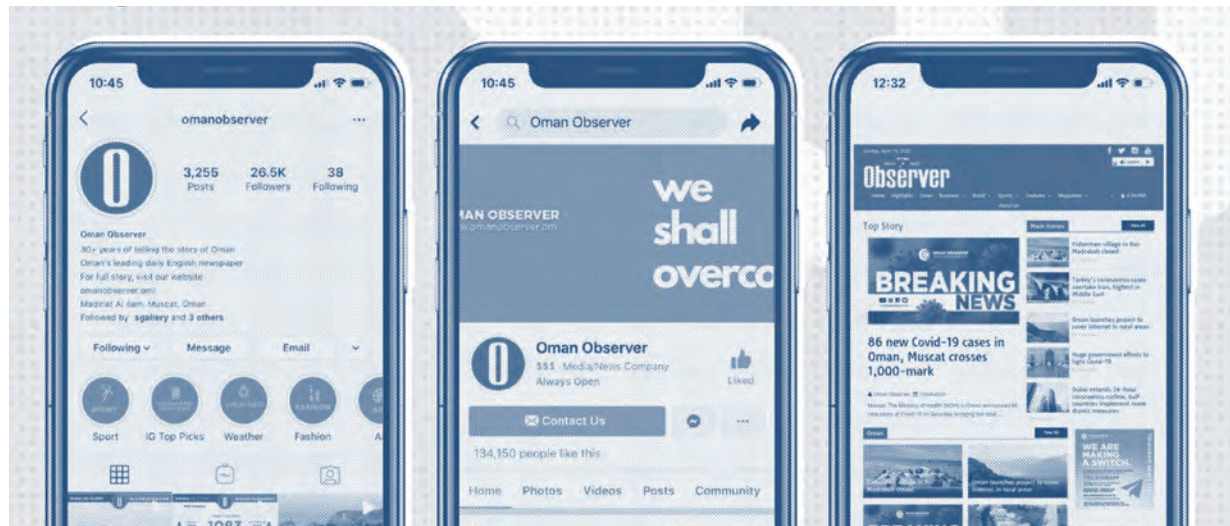
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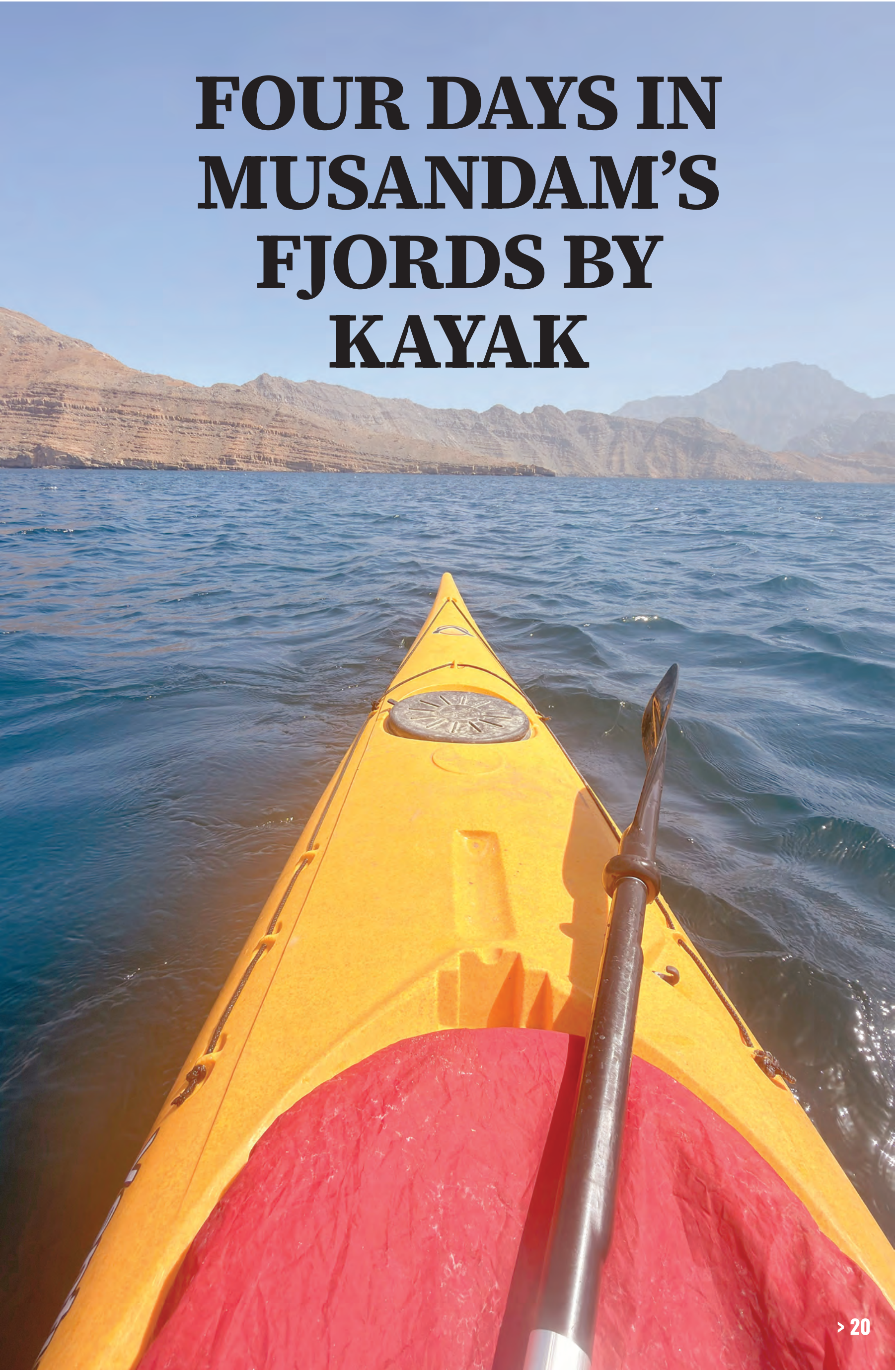
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ART/LIFE



FOUR DAYS IN MUSANDAM'S FJORDS BY KAYAK

> 20

ENDURING **LEGACY**

BRITISH ART HAS LOST A GIANT: DAVID HOCKNEY DIES AT 88



British artist David Hockney, one of the most influential and celebrated painters of the modern era, died on Thursday at the age of 88, according to a statement from his publicist. No cause of death was announced.

Hockney's lifelong fascination with light began during his childhood in northern England. Growing up in Bradford, he was captivated by the bright sunlight and sharply defined shadows he saw in Hollywood films featuring comedy duo Laurel and Hardy. The contrast between those images and the grey industrial landscape of his hometown left a lasting impression and would later inspire his move to California.

Born to an accountancy clerk father and a devout Methodist mother, Hockney studied art in Bradford before moving to London in 1959. There, he quickly became a leading figure in the British pop art movement, earning recognition for his distinctive style and creative approach. During the cultural energy of the 1960s, he moved among some of the era's most prominent figures, including dancer Rudolf Nureyev and Mick Jagger.

Seeking the colour and vitality he admired in American art, Hockney first visited New York in 1961, where he became friends with Andy Warhol. He later settled in Los Angeles, a city whose sunshine, swimming pools and relaxed lifestyle became central subjects in his work.

His vivid paintings of pools, landscapes and portraits helped redefine contemporary art and established him as one of Britain's most important artistic voices. Although some critics initially dismissed his focus on everyday life and leisure, his reputation continued to grow internationally.

In 2018, one of his most famous works, *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, sold for \$90.3 million, setting a record at the time for the most expensive artwork sold at auction by a living artist. Later in life, Hockney turned increasingly to the landscapes of Yorkshire, where he spent years painting changing seasons, winding country roads and rolling hills. The period became one of the most productive of his career, producing hundreds of works inspired by the English countryside.

A constant innovator, Hockney embraced new technology throughout his career, experimenting with photography, fax machines, computers and iPads as artistic tools. His Yorkshire paintings also led to the creation of a stained-glass window for Westminster Abbey.

In 2018, he moved to Normandy in France, where he created the monumental artwork *A Year in Normandie*, inspired by the historic Bayeux Tapestry and the changing beauty of the countryside around him.

Known for his tireless work ethic and curiosity, Hockney continued creating art well into his later years. Reflecting on his dedication, he once remarked: "You don't retire doing this. You just do it until you fall over". His remarkable career leaves behind a legacy that transformed modern art and inspired generations of artists around the world.

— Reuters

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



RED CARPET
Hong Kong actress Cecilia Yip Tung arrives on the red carpet of the 28th Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) in Shanghai. — AFP

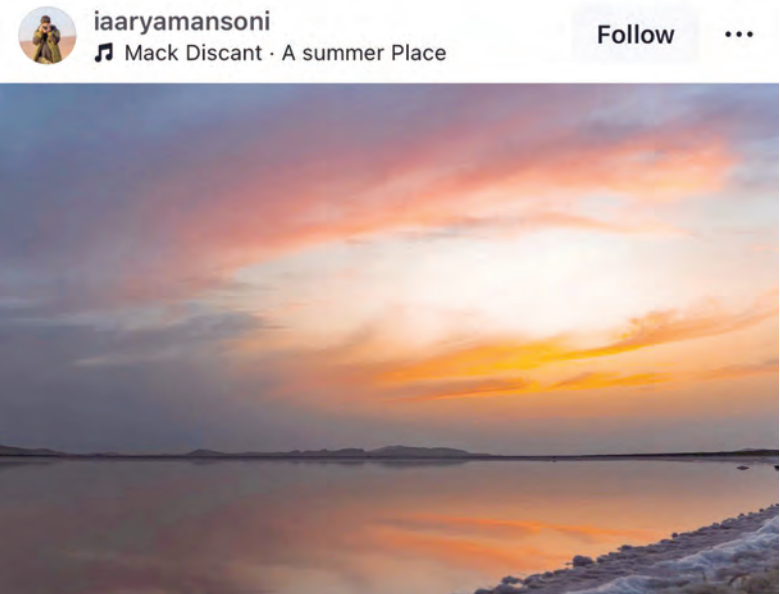


WORLD CUP PARADE
A woman holds a stuffed toy of "Zayu", one of the official mascots of the 2026 Fifa World Cup, during the Great World Cup Parade. — Reuters



THEATRE
Actors perform in the theatre play "The Pillars of Society" at the American University of Beirut (AUB) campus. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Pink lake blushing bright in Oman



Yellow-feathered bird in Dhofar

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MONGOLIAN DINOSAUR FOSSILS RETURNED AFTER TWO DECADES

Mongolia has recovered a rare dinosaur skeleton and a trove of fossils illegally exported two decades ago, authorities said on Wednesday, concluding years of efforts to return the palaeontological treasures.

The collection includes a *Tarbosaurus bataar* skeleton, estimated to be more than 50 per cent intact, along with 28 groups of fossilised dinosaur remains originally found in Mongolia's Gobi Desert, according to police.

The bones had been illegally taken from Mongolia in 2006 "with the aim of making a profit", said D Munkhkhuyag, head of the police public relations department.

French customs agencies confiscated the fossils between 2013 and 2015; and began returning them a year later to Mongolia under international conventions to combat the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage.

Following the lengthy process of returning the fossils, they arrived in the capital Ulaanbaatar on Thursday and will be housed in Mongolia's new National Museum of Natural History, where they will be studied and eventually put on public display.

"The dinosaur fossil is priceless and a unique piece of heritage", Manchuk Nuramkhan, the museum's director, told a news conference.

"We are delighted that



children and young people will have the opportunity to see Mongolia's dinosaur heritage first-hand and learn from it", she said.

Tarbosaurus bataar, a close relative of *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, lived around 70 million years ago, with evidence of its existence almost exclusively found in Mongolia's Gobi Desert.

Manchuk said the return of the fossils was an important victory for efforts to recover cultural and scientific heritage taken from Mongolia and highlights growing international cooperation against the illegal trade in antiquities and fossils.

Mongolia has intensified efforts in recent years to recover dinosaur fossils smuggled abroad, as demand from private collectors and auction houses has fuelled an international black market in rare palaeontological specimens.

— AFP



David Beckham poses with media members after unveiling his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, in Los Angeles, California. — Reuters

Beckham gets Walk of Fame star in LA World Cup week



David Beckham speaks during his star unveiling ceremony on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, in Los Angeles, California, US.— Reuters



David Beckham signs autographs during his star unveiling ceremony on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, in Los Angeles, California. — Reuters

SIR David Beckham, the first English player to win league titles in four countries, was honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Friday, the day the US-hosted portion of the 2026 World Cup kicked off with eight matches set for Los Angeles.

Rather than a traditional Hollywood red carpet, the ceremony featured a green soccer-themed pitch carpet to commemorate the occasion.

Radio host Ellen K introduced speakers including Tom Cruise and Beckham's wife, Victoria Beckham. Cruise praised Beckham's journey, saying it was "a Hollywood story" of hard work, determination and global influence on sport and culture.

Victoria Beckham said the honour felt timely ahead of the World Cup in Los Angeles. She noted that soccer in the US is entering "one of the most exciting chapters in its history". Taking the podium, Beckham called the moment "surreal". He reflected on growing up in East London with dreams of playing soccer, never imagining recognition in Hollywood.

He spoke about scepticism he faced after joining Major League Soccer's LA Galaxy in 2007, as many fans questioned why the US was so late to embrace the globally popular



English former footballer David Beckham poses at his newly unveiled Hollywood Walk of Fame star during a ceremony in Hollywood, California. — AFP



David Beckham poses during his star unveiling ceremony on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, accompanied by his wife Victoria Beckham and Tom Cruise. — Reuters

sport.

Beckham, who is now president and co-owner of Inter Miami CF, said he was proud of the sport's growing popularity in the US. He also had a special message for his children.

"I'm going to get emotional now. Kids, I hope you bring my grandchildren here one day and tell them about a boy who dreams big to make you all proud is my greatest achievement", he said.

Over a 20-year career, Beckham played for some of the world's most prominent teams, including Manchester United, Real Madrid, AC Milan, LA Galaxy and Paris Saint-Germain.

Primarily a right midfielder, he was renowned for his precise passing and crossing ability and is widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time.

Beckham's influence extended into pop culture with projects such as Netflix's docuseries "Beckham", chronicling his soccer journey and "Victoria Beckham", focusing on his wife's evolution from Spice Girl to fashion mogul. The film "Bend It Like Beckham" was also inspired by his legacy.

Since retiring as a player in 2013, Beckham has remained a global figure through partnerships with major brands including Adidas, Bank of America, Hugo Boss, Stella Artois and Sands. — Reuters

FEATURES

FOUR DAYS IN
MUSANDAM’S
FJORDS BY
KAYAK



YERU EBUEN

THE sea had already begun to turn against him by the time Hamdoon al Hashmi reached the fjords of Musandam. Winter was fading, but the weather had not settled. Waves rolled heavily across the water, winds shifted unpredictably against the limestone cliffs and the kayaking route he had planned through the peninsula’s isolated inlets suddenly became too dangerous to pursue alone.

For many travellers, it would have been enough reason to turn back. But standing at Khor Najd harbour, watching the sea roughen beneath mountains rising dramatically from the water, Al Hashmi felt something else entirely: curiosity.

“How come we haven’t given the opportunity to explore this part of Oman?” he later reflected.

It is a question that has stayed with the Omani adventurer for years. As the founder of Navigator Community, Al Hashmi has become known for documenting Oman beyond postcard imagery.



His journeys are not simply about adventure, but about understanding landscapes through architecture, forgotten settlements and human encounters. He explores how villages adapt to mountains, how communities survive isolation and how traditional structures continue to shape identity long after many have been abandoned.

Musandam, however, remained unfinished business.

Often reduced to the title of the “Norway of Arabia”, the peninsula is far more layered than its tourism shorthand suggests. Separated from mainland Oman by the UAE, Musandam developed almost as a world of its own. Villages cling to mountain edges accessible only by boat, ancient stone homes blend into the cliffs and daily life still follows the rhythm of the sea.

After postponing the expedition for years, Al Hashmi finally decided winter’s final weeks offered an opportunity. Packing supplies for several days alongside his kayak, he drove north, stopping briefly in Madha before continuing to Khasab.

“The road towards Khasab was breathtaking”, he recalled. “High cliff mountains and how the road was tailored along the Arabian Gulf”.

Yet Musandam itself quickly reshaped the expedition. Rough seas forced him to abandon his original route and focus instead on exploring Khor Najd by kayak. While preparing for four days at sea, he witnessed a scene that revealed another side of the peninsula.

“While I was packing my kayak, a Land Cruiser stopped by the harbour and dropped young students who walked towards the boat”, he said. “Thirty minutes later another pickup brought more students. As they finished school, it was time to hop into a car and boat to reach their village”.

The moment stayed with him because it reflected daily life in Musandam, where boats remain a necessity rather than a tourist attraction.

Over the following days, Al Hashmi paddled through fjords where mountains stood like walls around isolated settlements. In Al Hablayeen, he encountered white-sand beaches beneath towering rock formations, wooden dhows resting beside fibre boats and a mosque at the centre of village life.



“The mountains stood tall like guards”, he said.

But it was the abandoned villages that fascinated him most.

Near Maqaqah Island, he hiked towards an old signal tower where crumbling stone houses remained scattered across the mountainside. The trail eventually opened to Maqlab village overlooking Khor Sham fjord.

“As I walked past the houses, in my mind I said one day this place would be a heritage house”.

Across Oman, restored villages such as Misfat Al Abriyeen and Al Suwgra have shown how heritage tourism can revive abandoned settlements. Yet Musandam still contains countless forgotten villages slowly disappearing into the landscape.

His final campsite on Maqaqah



Island revealed the contrast clearly. Roofless homes stood silently against the mountains while schools of sergeant major fish moved through the clear waters below.

Before leaving Musandam, one destination continued to occupy his thoughts: Kumzar, the isolated village known for the Kumzari language, a rare linguistic blend shaped by centuries of maritime trade across the Strait of Hormuz.

“My journey had to end”, he said, “but no wonder that I’m coming back next winter”.

In Musandam, perhaps that is inevitable. The peninsula never fully reveals itself in a single journey. The mountains, the sea and the villages between them continue to hold back just enough to pull travellers into returning once more.