

OMAN
Observer
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DAILY

SUNRISE 05:27 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:00 AM

DHUHR 12:17 PM

ASR 03:36 PM

MAGHRIB 07:02 PM

ISHA 08:24 PM

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SINNER, SHELTON, SWIATEK
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INBRIEF

HIS MAJESTY GREETSPRESIDENT OF SOUTH SUDAN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent greetings to President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the Republic of South Sudan on his country's Independence Anniversary. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments, wishing South Sudan continuous stability and growth.

VISA RENEWAL GRACE PERIOD ENDS ON JULY 31

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour issued a reminder that the grace period for rectifying legal employment status, including visa renewals without incurring fines, will end on July 31.

The package of waivers covers fines and financial obligations totalling more than RO 60 million. Key exemptions include the cancellation of fines for expired labour cards inactive for over seven years, the waiver of financial obligations related to repatriation tickets for 2017 and earlier, and the removal of obligations against liquidated companies where workers have been repatriated or transferred. The six-month grace period, which began on February 1, has allowed individuals to renew labour cards, cancel work abandonment reports, transfer worker services, and settle repatriation ticket costs without facing penalties.

PDO leads Oman's energy push with \$1 bn gas project

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

Development

PETROLEUM

Oman (PDO) is powering Oman's dual energy strategy with a \$1-billion gas development project and major new investments in renewable energy, according to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' 2024 Annual Report.

The company's flagship gas initiative targets the Haima reservoirs — Amin, Miqrat and Barik — and brought 12 wells online last year. The project is expected to recover 2.22 billion cubic metres of gas and 0.34 million cubic metres of condensate, supporting domestic demand and securing future supply.

"In 2024, the Directorate of Project Delivery focused on the execution of a comprehensive portfolio of oil and gas extraction projects with a total value of \$1 billion," according to the Annual Report.

The development comes at a critical time as Oman seeks to bridge projected gas gaps between 2024 and 2026, and again beyond 2031. PDO's production adds long-term stability to the country's energy mix.

In parallel, PDO advanced into clean energy through three major renewable projects. In partnership with OQ Alternative Energy and TotalEnergies, the company is developing a 100 MW solar PV plant



PDO's flagship gas initiative targets the Haima reservoirs.

The development comes at a critical time as Oman seeks to bridge projected gas gaps between 2024 and 2026, and again beyond 2031.

in north Oman and two wind farms totalling 200 MW in the south.

The projects will come online in 2026 and are expected to generate over 1.4 terawatt-hours of electricity annually — reducing emissions by more than one million tonnes per year. The shift supports Oman's goal to reach Net-Zero emissions by 2050.

PDO also remained Oman's leading exploration company in 2024, drilling 24 of the country's 54 oil wells and 9 of 19 gas wells. It accounted for 62% of the nation's total oil and condensate reserves.

Sur Industrial City attracts RO 9.6 million

SUR: Sur Industrial City, an affiliate of Madayn, signed an investment contract with Al Ghaith Industries to establish a factory for the production of Trichlorosilane. The facility will be built on an area of 20,000 sqm, with an investment size exceeding RO 9.6 million (\$25 million). This value-added project is set to boost the growth of the chemical and energy sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. The factory's commercial production is expected to commence by the end of the first quarter of 2027. Al Mamoun al Badani, CEO of Al Ghaith Industries, said the Trichlorosilane plant represents a major milestone in Oman's chemical sector. "This will be the first facility of its kind in the Middle East, and several projects are planned over the coming years, thanks to Oman's attractive investment environment," Al Badani said.

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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The meeting aimed to strengthen joint efforts and foster continuous communication. — ONA

OMAN VISION
2040 OBJECTIVES
REVIEWED

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit on Tuesday held its third annual meeting with directors of Vision Offices in government entities.

The meeting aimed to strengthen joint efforts in achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, foster continuous communication and provide necessary support to enable these offices to perform their roles effectively. The session was attended by Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The meeting featured presentations by several Vision Offices showcasing their successful experiences, from establishment to sustainability, including technological solutions to address key challenges. This reflects the offices’ progression to advanced levels of institutional readiness.

Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, emphasised that these offices serve as strategic extensions of the Unit within government entities. They were established to enhance planning, accelerate progress, improve alignment between initiatives and projects, and address challenges to advance the Vision’s realisation. — ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATES
IN BASEL TATTOO
MILITARY SHOW

BASEL: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the Basel Tattoo Military Music Show 2025, held in Basel, Switzerland, from July 7-21, 2025.

The event features musical bands from various countries around the world.

The Royal Guard of Oman’s band will perform a variety of musical formations and displays at the festival, showcasing the diversity and richness of Oman’s military music traditions.

Notably, the Basel Tattoo is an annual military festival established in 2006 and organised by the Swiss Ministry of Defence. It brings together international musical bands, performance teams and musicians.

As the second-largest military music festival in the world after the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, the Basel Tattoo attracts approximately 130,000 visitors annually, making it one of the grandest military music spectacles globally. — ONA

STATE COUNCIL DEBATES DRAFT LAWS

ABDULAZIZ AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

The State Council held a regular meeting under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the State Council discussed a number of draft laws and proposed studies including the draft law on Real Estate Registry, the draft law on civil society institutions.

Speaking about the draft law

on Real Estate Registry, Majid bin Abdullah al Alawi explained that the existing law has been around for over twenty years during which many developments took place in the areas of registration, websites and electronic services. He pointed out that the new draft law takes into account the changes and developments and suitably addresses electronic and remote registration.

Regarding the draft law on civil society institutions, Awad bin Said Baqwair, rapporteur of the Social

and Cultural Committees, explained that this draft law is one of the most important laws discussed by the Council and comes twenty-five years after the issuance of the current law.

He explained that the new draft law aims to empower the civil sector in the Sultanate of Oman including professional or charitable associations, voluntary teams and community clubs, noting that the civil organisation sector undertakes a pivotal role in society, particularly with regard to governance, transparency and the

organisation of civil society work.

In addition, the State Council discussed a draft amendment to some provisions of the Law of Arbitration in Civil and Commercial Disputes. Dr Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Rashdi, Vice-Chairman of the Legal Committee, highlighted the importance of the draft, explaining that the current law was issued in 1997. Since then, numerous economic and legal developments have occurred that necessitate updating the legislation.

German firm wins Bausher
‘Design Competition 2025’

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

GERMAN firm KSP Engel, known for its work on cultural and institutional buildings, was awarded first place in the Muscat Municipality Design Competition 2025. The competition was launched to design a landmark multi-use building in the Wilayat of Bausher.



The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and was attended by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, along with other top officials, dignitaries, and a distinguished group of engineering experts and consultants from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Five globally renowned construction and engineering companies participated in the competition, vying for the prestigious project.

The second place was awarded to Bisan Mohammadi Architects (BMA) from North Macedonia, while the third place went to Xavier De Geyter Architects (XDGA) from Belgium.

In his comment, Al Humaidi said, “This competition represents an important milestone in Muscat’s urban development journey. It is inspiring to see how these design proposals embody innovation and sustainability while preserving our rich cultural heritage. We are

Five globally renowned construction and engineering companies participated in the competition, vying for the prestigious project

shaping Muscat’s future in line with our identity and values, which are at the heart of our development strategy.”

The jury witnessed live presentations by the five finalist teams for the final place. These companies are Bisan Mohammadi Architects (BMA) – North Macedonia, Paolo Vimercati Urban Projects and Architectural Designs (POV) – United Kingdom, Samyn and Partners for Sustainable Architecture – Belgium, Xavier De Geyter Architects (XDGA) – Belgium, and KSP Engel – Germany.

Each firm presented comprehensive designs that creatively blended modern innovation with elements of Omani culture, tailored for a prominent civic landmark.

He further explained that the results of the competition will

play a key role in driving urban development in Muscat, ensuring that modernisation aligns with the preservation of Omani architectural identity.

The competition’s jury comprised Don Murphy, jury chairman and founder and partner at VMX Architects, along with a distinguished panel of Omani and international consultants and engineers. The jury adopted clear values and criteria to ensure the highest standards of integrity and transparency in the evaluation process, with a focus on sustainability and cultural alignment.

The winning project will be built on an 8,000-square-metre plot near Oman Avenues Mall, offering a striking architectural presence that blends heritage with the aspirations of a modern city.

Forum highlights equal opportunities for persons with disabilities

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

Under the auspice of Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Oman Human Rights Commission, in cooperation with the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, on Tuesday kicked off the Business and Human Rights Forum from July 8 to 9 seeking to enable persons with disabilities to access employment opportunities in private sector institutions and to establish the principle of equal opportunity and non-discrimination in employment.

The initiative also seeks to link the forum’s outcomes to practical approaches that contribute to supporting the rights of persons with disabilities within the labour market and help achieve the national target for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment.

The forum was organised as part of national efforts to consolidate the

principles of justice and transparency in the workplace and promote a culture of human rights within business policies and practices. This is in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and is consistent with the Oman Vision 2040, which places increasing importance on building a sustainable economy based on empowerment, participation and responsibility.

Dr Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Human Rights Commission, said, “Holding such forum is a practical translation of the Oman Human Rights Commission’s mandate to raise awareness, educate, provide advice and monitor the implementation of relevant international agreements. It also falls within the framework of consolidating a culture of human rights in the business environment and opening windows for constructive dialogue between the public and private sectors, civil society institutions, academic



institutions and international organisations.”

The forum’s objectives included promoting multilateral dialogue among stakeholders in the business environment, expanding awareness of international human rights principles, and sharing national and regional best practices in this field. Eng Faisal bin Abdulaziz al Shanfari, a member of the Labour Market Committee, stated that the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry seeks to align with Oman’s long-term approach to cooperating with

regional and international partners to protect and promote human rights in line with international obligations.

In a statement to the Observer, Dr Jamal bin Eid al Khadouri, a member of the Oman Human Rights Commission and representative of the Ministry of Health, said: “The forum is an important initiative to focus on business and human rights in various institutions, with regard to preserving the rights of companies, individuals, society and the environment. The importance of the forum reflects Oman’s interest in

individuals, especially people with disabilities, in the workplace.

Damilola Olawuyi on behalf of the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, stated: “We are pleased to see that through this forum, Oman is starting an important conversation in this regard.

Given Oman’s climate leadership and prominence as one of the first countries in the Arab region to ratify the Paris Agreement; one of the first to adopt a Net-Zero Strategy; and a strategic hub for entrepreneurship, technology and innovation, we are convinced that if Oman leads in this area, other countries in the region and beyond will draw lessons and follow suit.” The forum’s activities are divided into five main sessions held over two days, during which sixteen scientific papers will be presented, covering various topics, including national legislation, the role of the judiciary, business policies, and field experiences from a number of companies and academic institutions.

SHORT TAKES



STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING 12 EXERCISE CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The National Defence College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Tuesday concluded its annual strategic exercise Decision-Making 12, conducted by participants of the 12th National Defence Course, representing various military, security and civil institutions of the state.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), in the presence of Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS).

The ceremony featured a briefing on the exercise proceedings, followed by a visual presentation highlighting the activities, assigned roles, tasks of the participants and key lessons learned based on the hypothetical scenarios and stages of the exercise.

Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) and Exercise Director, stated: “Today, we conclude the Decision-Making 12 exercise, which served as a crucial intellectual and training milestone in preparing national leaders to address challenges in a complex regional and international environment. This year’s exercise examined current regional and global developments, analysing their potential security, economic and political repercussions on the region.” He added: “This exercise aimed to enhance strategic thinking and decision-making skills during crises, deepen understanding of geopolitical dynamics, and reinforce the importance of joint planning, inter-institutional coordination, and role integration under exceptional circumstances.” The ceremony was attended by senior military commanders and officials. — ONA

INNOVATION FORUM KICKS OFF IN AL DHAHIRAH



The two-day forum aims to empower young talents to present diverse innovations. — ONA

IBRI: The activities of the Innovation Forum 2025 commenced in Al Dhahirah Governorate. The event, organised by the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada), brings together over 100 male and female innovators from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, divided into 32 teams. The two-day forum aims to empower young talents to present diverse innovations in various fields, aligning with market aspirations and future needs. It also seeks to foster innovation within SMEs, which serve as fertile ground for new ideas for ambitious talents, while opening avenues for collaboration and knowledge exchange. The forum highlights success stories of young innovators who have made a tangible impact in practical fields. Additionally, it promotes a culture of creativity and innovation among youth by providing financial support, contributing to the advancement of entrepreneurship and the achievement of economic and social development in communities. — ONA

MOU INKED TO ENHANCE HEALTH ENDOWMENTS SECTOR

MUSCAT: The Health Endowment Foundation (Athar) and Sohar Islamic Bank on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance community partnerships aimed at developing the health endowments sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The MoU seeks to establish cooperation in promoting sustainable health initiatives and exchanging expertise between the Islamic banking sector and the endowment sector.



The MoU deals with methods of providing technical and logistical support for health endowment projects. — ONA

The MoU deals with methods of providing technical and logistical

support for health endowment projects, promoting joint health initiatives and offering specialised training for Athar Foundation’s employees.

The MoU affirms the commitment of the two sides to activate joint action by forming a follow-up team to implement the initiatives that they approve and to ensure the protection of the two parties’ rights and obligations during the implementation of projects that they undertake. — ONA

Conference explores role of emerging technologies

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

THE second edition of an international conference titled ‘Emerging Technologies in Multidisciplinary Fields’ kicked off in Muscat on Tuesday under the auspices of HH Sayyid Nadir bin Al Julanda al Said, Secretary-General at the Diwan of Royal Court. The conference explores the role of emerging technologies in developing higher education and shaping the future of universities with the context of digital transition and is being attended by 35 local and international specialists who exchange views about issues related to emerging technology in the field of education and the latest trends in modern technology applications.

Dr Hamoud bin Amer al Wardi, Dean of Mazoon College and the Conference Chair, highlighted Oman’s firm commitment to digital transformation. “The government has positioned digital transformation and emerging technologies as core pillars to advance strategic and vital sectors. This national direction is clearly reflected in Oman Vision 2040, which carries ambitious goals for building a modern digital society and a thriving knowledge-based economy,” he stated.

He emphasised that the conference represents a tangible embodiment of these national efforts. “Over the course of two days, more than 35 local and international specialists will share their expertise in applying emerging digital technologies to education and explore the latest global trends in this dynamic field,” he said.

The tasks of the conference include five sessions. The first session discusses the future of digital applications, artificial intelligence (AI), financial innovation and visions in Omani higher education institutions. The second session highlights the digital transition in education and



On the sidelines of the conference, a student exhibition highlighting student innovations was held.

human-based AI solutions.

The third session explores solutions of innovative learning, notably through the integration of AI, the Internet of Things and virtual environments. The fourth session explores technology, ethics and innovation in the digital age. The fifth session focuses on the role of AI in linguistics and educational narratives, from classrooms to gaming consoles. In addition, the conference will include a review of AI applications in industry, security and storytelling. Three virtual sessions will be held as part of the conference. They will be titled as follows: “Strategic Transformation from

Green Competencies to Smart Decision-Making”; “Artificial Intelligence, Industry 4.0 and Advanced Intelligence Systems for Resilience, Security and Interoperability” and “Digital Transition and Human-based Innovation in Health, Justice and Markets”.

On the sidelines of the conference, a student exhibition is being held. The exhibition showcases specialised projects and highlights student innovations and practical applications of emerging technologies in various fields, including humanities, information technology, business administration, economics and English language studies.

CDAA ramps up Khareef Dhofar preparedness

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 8

As Dhofar enters the height of the khareef season, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has activated a full-scale emergency response plan to safeguard residents and the growing influx of visitors drawn to Salalah’s lush landscapes.

Speaking on national television, Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Al Bakheet Kashoob, Director of Civil Defence and Ambulance in Dhofar, said the authority began early preparations with a comprehensive risk assessment and on-ground mapping of high-traffic areas.

“Each year, after the season ends, we analyse incidents and visitor patterns to better allocate teams and equipment,” he said. “This year, we have deployed specialised teams across more than 15 key tourist locations including Wadi Darbat, Al Mughsail Beach, and natural springs like Ain Athum and Ain



Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Al Bakheet Kashoob, Director of Civil Defence and Ambulance in Dhofar

Razat.” Khareef Dhofar Season — spanning late June to early September — transforms the typically arid terrain into a misty green haven, attracting tourists from across the Gulf and beyond. With waterfalls, flowing wadis and temperatures averaging 23–25°C, the season is one of Oman’s most important tourism windows, offering significant economic stimulus to the local economy.

Lieutenant Colonel Kashoob noted that several new sites popularised on social media have drawn large crowds this year, many of which pose unforeseen

safety hazards such as slippery soil, unstable cliffs, or lack of access to rescue services.

“These are not regulated tourism sites,” he warned. “We are working with other agencies to monitor these locations, place caution signs and deploy trained staff where needed.” The CDAA’s plan is not working in isolation. The response strategy is coordinated with Dhofar Municipality, the Office of the Governor of Dhofar and the Environment Authority, ensuring a unified effort that covers everything from environmental monitoring to regulating access to natural springs and beaches.

Specialised private contractors have also been brought in to supervise water bodies, monitor tide conditions, and ensure signage and awareness boards are in place. Tourist accommodations are being inspected to ensure they comply with civil defence safety codes.

“Our goal is to protect lives and property,” Kashoob said. “This means not only being

ready to respond, but also working proactively to reduce risks.”

The seasonal surge in visitors during khareef brings a positive economic impact to Dhofar’s tourism, hospitality, transport and retail sectors. But it also underscores the importance of crisis preparedness, environmental stewardship and institutional coordination — pillars that align with Oman Vision 2040’s sustainable tourism and disaster resilience objectives.

With teams on standby 24/7, equipped with all-terrain vehicles, rescue boats and advanced communications systems, Dhofar’s civil defence forces are operating on high alert.

Kashoob concluded with a message to tourists: “Your safety is our priority, but it’s a shared responsibility. Please follow instructions, avoid risky locations and cooperate with emergency personnel. We want everyone to enjoy khareef safely.”

SPOTLIGHT



FROM THE INTEGRATION OF ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS (EHRs) TO THE ADOPTION OF TELEMEDICINE AND AI-DRIVEN DIAGNOSTICS, OMAN IS EMBRACING INNOVATION TO ENHANCE PATIENT CARE AND ACCESSIBILITY

DIGITAL HEALTHCARE BOOMING

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THE global healthcare market is undergoing a massive paradigm shift from the conventional way to digital healthcare, a long-overdue transformation, and the reflections are felt across the region too.

In 2024, the market attracted \$25.1 billion globally, reflecting a 5.5-per cent year-on-year increase across thousands of deals. From start-ups to industry giants, tech investment is changing the face of healthcare. AI-driven innovations accounted for nearly half of all digital health advancements globally, with US AI start-ups securing 60 percent of all digital health funding in Q1.

A recent report from CB Insights reveals that digital health start-ups across the globe raised \$5 billion during the first quarter of this year. This huge investment reflects a trend

for fewer, higher-quality deals. In the first quarter of 2025, the average digital health funding deal was \$6.4 million, according to the report.

The MENA region, Europe, APAC and the Americas have all attracted substantial investments in key areas, including oncology, medical diagnostics, and of course, Artificial Intelligence.

“Oman’s healthcare sector is steadily aligning with global trends in digital transformation. From the integration of electronic health records (EHRs) to the adoption of telemedicine and AI-driven diagnostics, the country is embracing innovation to enhance patient care and accessibility,” Dr Viresh Chopra from Oman Dental College says.

But with change comes challenges. And in the inertia-heavy, regulation-rich healthcare landscape, the report suggests that the only way to maintain momentum is through global collaboration.

Going forward embracing the

challenges, the government’s commitment to Oman Vision 2040 has further accelerated this progress, encouraging public-private partnerships and investments in health tech. While challenges such as infrastructure and digital literacy remain, Oman’s forward-thinking approach signals a promising future where technology and healthcare go hand in hand.

“We are witnessing a clear and progressive shift towards digital transformation in the healthcare sector – both nationally and within our organisation. While global investments, like the \$25.1 billion reported by CB Insights in 2024, highlight the momentum of this transformation, Oman is steadily aligning itself with this trend by embracing technology to improve efficiency, patient care and overall health outcomes,” says Ajimsha P A, Head of operations, NMC hospital.

Oman’s hospitals are witnessing how digital tools are reshaping healthcare

delivery. Healthcare providers have invested in Electronic Health Records (EHRs), AI-assisted diagnostics, and cloud-based data systems that streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens. Telemedicine, which gained strong traction during the pandemic, continues to be a critical component in enhancing accessibility for patients, especially in remote areas.

Self registration app and pay from home facility, wherein the patient will be directly coming to the outpatient clinic without hassle of waiting in queue and getting the care needed, are the new additions that Oman hospitals would see soon.

At the national level, initiatives such as Oman Vision 2040 are driving digitisation across sectors, including healthcare. The Ministry of Health has been proactive in launching digital health portals, mobile apps for appointment bookings and e-prescriptions, and even piloting AI-driven patient monitoring systems.

SHORT TAKES



National Health Insurance Platform “Dhamani” was rated among the best digital platforms. — ONA

FSA CROWNED AT INFORMATION SOCIETY FORUM

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), won the fifth position globally after the National Health Insurance Platform “Dhamani” was rated among the best digital platforms in the category of information technology applications for e-government at the World Summit on Information Society Forum “WSIS+20” for the year 2025. The event, held in Geneva, was organised by the International Telecommunication Union.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the FSA, confirmed that the National Health Insurance Platform “Dhamani” ranking fifth in WSIS+20 is an international recognition that confirms the efficiency and ability of the platform to regulate one of the most important and sensitive sectors related to regulating transactions between insurance institutions and private healthcare institutions. He pointed out that the prize is one of the most renowned awards globally at the technological level.

Al Salmi expressed his delight with this national achievement, which reflects the scale of the transformation that the health insurance ecosystem is witnessing with the real-time services it provides in transferring data and documents, obtaining approvals and settling financial claims.

SESSION SHOWCASES INCENTIVES FOR START-UPS



The session highlighted the objectives of the incentive programme.

IBRA: A specialised awareness session on the promotional campaign for the Incentive Programme and the Promising Start-ups Index was held on Tuesday in Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

The event was organised by Muscat Stock Exchange and the National Programme for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development “Estitadama” in collaboration with Al Sharqiyah North branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The session highlighted the objectives of the Incentive Programme and the Promising Start-ups Index, focusing on key incentives for closed and family-owned companies, along with regulatory and technical requirements. — ONA

WORKSHOP SEEKS TO DEVELOP ROAD MAP ALIGNING TRAINING PATHWAYS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Tuesday inaugurated a three-day development workshop on training governance, aimed at conducting a comprehensive assessment and proposing realistic, effective, sustainable and streamlined initiatives and projects for the training system.

Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development, stated that the workshop seeks to reshape the future of government and private training, as well as



Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy stated that the workshop seeks to reshape the future of government and private training. — ONA

vocational education in Oman. It aims to develop a road map aligning all training pathways with the objectives and enablers of Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises human capital development.

The workshop will examine key facts, identify general challenges and reach consensus on solutions. It will also review initiatives, finalise detailed draft plans and assess the quality of planning and implementation of Oman Vision 2040 within the Ministry of Labour. — ONA

Research develops green method to tackle bacteria

THE National University of Science and Technology has developed an innovative and environmentally friendly method to repurpose used aluminium foil as a sustainable source for producing aluminium oxide nanoparticles. A research study demonstrated that these nanoparticles exhibit significant effectiveness in combating bacteria and fungi, making them promising for various biological applications.

Titled “Eco-Friendly Synthesis and Characterisation of Aluminium Oxide Nanoparticles from Waste Aluminium Foil for Antibacterial, Anti-fungal and Anti-Corrosion Applications”, the study addresses the growing issue of aluminium waste, which accumulates in millions of tonnes annually and is typically disposed of in landfills.

The research aligns with the urgent need to develop advanced recycling technologies to reduce waste and minimise environmental impact. By creating a green synthesis method for aluminium oxide nanoparticles from discarded aluminium foil, the study offers a practical solution to aluminium waste accumulation while exploring the nanoparticles’ potential applications in energy storage devices, antimicrobial agents and corrosion protection. This approach transforms waste into high-value functional materials, promoting sustainable practices with broad environmental and industrial benefits.

By creating a green synthesis method for aluminium oxide nanoparticles from discarded aluminium foil, the study offers a practical solution to aluminium waste accumulation while exploring the nanoparticles’ potential applications in energy storage devices, antimicrobial agents and corrosion protection.



Led by Omani researcher Reem al Maamari from the College of Engineering at the National University of Science and Technology, the research team highlighted the nanoparticles’ wide-ranging potential. In healthcare, they could be used to manufacture medical tools and antibacterial coatings, helping reduce infections in hospitals and health centres. For environmental and waste management, the method enables sustainable aluminium foil recycling, significantly cutting waste volumes and delivering long-term ecological benefits.

In the industrial sector, these nanoparticles could be incorporated into anti-corrosion coatings, particularly for metal and architectural applications. Their antimicrobial properties also make them ideal for water purification, where they could be

used in efficient filtration systems — a viable solution for communities facing water scarcity. In the food industry, the nanoparticles show promise in active packaging technologies, extending shelf life and reducing microbial contamination. Agriculturally, they could serve as natural antifungal agents, enhancing soil and plant health.

The research team emphasised the importance of promoting nanoparticle use, particularly in healthcare, for manufacturing antimicrobial medical tools and surfaces to curb infection transmission in medical facilities. They also recommended their adoption in metal industries, where adding them to protective coatings could mitigate corrosion, especially in humid and marine environments.

For water purification, the nanoparticles’ antibacterial properties make them valuable in remote or water-scarce regions. In food packaging, integrating them into materials could enhance product preservation and minimise microbial risks. The team further advocated for their agricultural application as seed or soil treatments to reduce fungal infections and improve crop quality.

The study’s findings underscore the transformative potential of repurposing aluminium waste into high-performance nanomaterials, fostering sustainability across multiple sectors while addressing pressing environmental and industrial challenges. — ONA

‘Our Safe Home’ initiative launched in Musandam

KHASAB: The Ministry of Social Development in Musandam Governorate on Tuesday launched the “Our Safe Home” initiative under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Saif bin Mohammed al Ghaithi, Wali of Bukha.

The programme aims to strengthen family stability and

cohesion.

The event featured three working papers, as Dr Yousef bin Abdullah al Shihi presented a paper on premarital counselling and building strong marital relationships, while Mohammed bin Hassan al Dhuhouri addressed parental guidance in



The programme aims to strengthen family stability and cohesion. — ONA

the digital age, focusing on safe social media use. Meanwhile, Amna al Kamali discussed emotional bonding strategies and conflict resolution within families.

The initiative reflects the ministry’s ongoing efforts to strengthen family values. — ONA

Summer art workshops unleash youth creativity

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 8

In a vibrant celebration of youth talent and artistic expression, the General Directorate of Education in Al Batinah North has successfully concluded its summer programme under the theme “My Summer: Connection and Growth”. The initiative brought together nearly 5,800 students from across six wilayats, transforming school halls into dynamic art studios that encouraged creativity, exploration and self-expression.

Over two weeks, students

immersed themselves in hands-on art workshops, including sculpture, pottery, plaster design, fabric painting and clay modelling. These sessions offered young participants the rare opportunity to engage with fine arts in a relaxed and stimulating environment, often unavailable in traditional classrooms. The workshops buzzed with activity and inspiration as students of various ages worked with brushes, clay and colour palettes.

In the sculpture workshops, Ahmed al Balushi, 12 years old, carefully molded a piece of clay. “When I touch the clay, it feels



like I will not be able to do it but I succeed. It’s like I’m creating something that didn’t exist before.” Fatma al Maamari polished her pottery with pride. “I was nervous

at first, but my instructor helped me trust my hands and imagination. Now, I feel like a real artist,” she shared.

The success of the programme was also credited to the skilled trainers who guided students through every stage from mastering the basics to applying advanced techniques. Their patient, interactive approach helped students develop both technical skills and confidence.

At the fabric painting station, Sara al Shizawi mixed colours with care. “Such workshop encourages me to direct my attention to the field of

art,” she said.

Said al Maqbali added the final touches to a large painting of a tree. “This is where I pour my dreams,” he explained. “I’ll hang this in my room to remind myself that I can always create.”

More than just art classes, the initiative was a transformative journey that empowered young minds to dream, express and thrive.

This summer programme has clearly sown the seeds of creativity, promising a new generation of artists ready to leave their mark on the world starting from schools and simple workshops.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Motorists drive their vehicles along the roundabout at Palestine Square in Tehran. — AFP

IRAN DENIES REQUESTING US TALKS SINCE WAR

TEHRAN: Iran said on Tuesday it has not made any request for talks with the United States, after President Donald Trump said Tehran was seeking negotiations following last month's war with Israel. "No request for a meeting has been made on our side to the American side," said Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei, according to Tasnim news agency.

Trump said on Monday that Iran was seeking talks with the United States and that talks have been scheduled, without specifying the time or the location. "We have scheduled Iran talks. They want to talk," Trump told reporters in the White House where he was meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "They want to meet. They want to work something out. They're very different now than they were two weeks ago."

The attacks began days before a planned meeting between Tehran and Washington aimed at reviving nuclear negotiations. The talks have since stalled. The United States, which had been in talks with Iran since April 12, joined Israel in carrying out its own strikes on June 22, targeting Iranian nuclear sites at Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz. — AFP

SYRIA SEEKS EU HELP AS FOREST WILDFIRES RAGE



Syrian firefighters battle a forest fire in the coastal Syrian province of Latakia. — AFP

DAMASCUS: Syria's minister of emergencies and disaster management on Tuesday requested support from the European Union to battle wildfires that have swept through a vast stretch of forested land. The fires have been burning for six days, with Syrian emergency crews struggling to bring them under control amid strong winds and severe drought.

Neighbouring countries Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye have already dispatched firefighting teams to assist in the response. "We asked the European Union for help in extinguishing the fires," Minister Raed al Saleh said on X, adding Cyprus was expected to send aid on Tuesday. "Fear of the fires spreading due to strong winds last night prompted us to evacuate 25 families to ensure their safety without any human casualties," he added.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) office in Syria, the fires impacted "some 5,000 persons, including displacements, across 60 communities". An estimated 100 square kilometres (40 square miles) of forest and farmland — more than three per cent of Syria's forest cover — have burned, OCHA said. At least seven towns in Latakia province have been evacuated as a precaution. — AFP

PEACE PROCESS

PKK to begin handing over arms in Iraq



Militant fighters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) will begin handing over weapons in groups in the northern Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah on Friday as part of a peace process with Türkiye. The PKK decided in May to disband and end its struggle, following a public call from the group's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan in February. Ocalan would send a video message to the PKK's base in Qandil region to call for a mechanism for the disarmament process. — Reuters

GANGS ASSAULTS

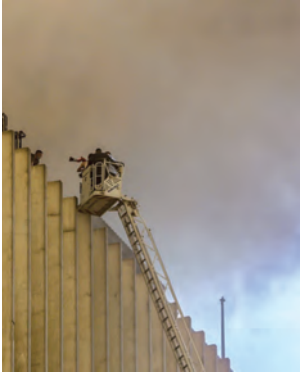
Nigerian gangs kill 40 in 'revenge' attack



An armed gang killed at least 40 members of village self-defence groups in a weekend ambush and related attack in Nigeria's central Plateau state. One resident described the assaults as a "revenge" attack on local vigilante groups set up to defend communities from the gangs. Plateau state Red Cross secretary Nuruddeen Hussain Magaji said "hundreds of vigilantes were ambushed" on Sunday and 30 killed in the village of Kukawa. — AFP

CONNECTION DISRUPTIONS

4 dead in fire at Cairo telecom hub



At least four people were killed and 27 injured in a fire at a major telecom centre in Egypt's capital that caused widespread disruptions. Internet and phone connections were still heavily disrupted in Cairo on Tuesday, with the Egyptian stock exchange suspending operations. "Civil defence forces recovered four bodies from the scene of the incident," the healthy ministry said in a statement. The authorities are yet to announce the cause of the fire. — AFP

2 CREW DEAD, OTHERS WOUNDED IN LATEST RED SEA ATTACK

ATHENS: Two seafarers on the Liberian-flagged, Greek-operated bulk carrier Eternity C were killed in a drone and speedboat attack off Yemen, Liberia's shipping delegation told a UN meeting on Tuesday, the second incident in a day after months of calm.

The Red Sea, which passes Yemen's coast, has long been a critical waterway for the world's oil and commodities but traffic has dropped since Yemeni group Ansar Allah began targeting ships in

November 2023 in what they said was solidarity with Palestinians against Israel in the Gaza war.

The deaths on the Eternity C, the first involving shipping in the Red Sea since June 2024, bring the total number of seafarers killed in attacks on vessels plying the Red Sea to six.

Hours before the latest attack, the Yemeni group had claimed responsibility for a strike on another Liberia-flagged, Greek-operated bulk carrier, the MV Magic Seas, off southwest Yemen on Sunday, saying

the vessel sank.

The vessel's manager said the information about the sinking could not be verified. All crew on the Magic Seas were rescued by a passing merchant vessel and arrived safely in Djibouti on Monday. "Just as Liberia was processing the shock and grief of the attack against Magic Seas, we received a report that Eternity C again has been attacked, attacked horribly and causing the death of two seafarers," — Reuters

ICRC warns Gaza health system overwhelmed

THE International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Tuesday that a "sharp surge" in deaths and injuries in incidents around aid distribution sites in Gaza is pushing the territory's already stretched health system past its capacity. The ICRC said in a statement that its field hospital in south Gaza recorded 200 deaths since the new aid distribution sites were launched in late May. The facility also treated more than 2,200 "weapon-wounded patients, most of them across more than 21 separate mass casualty events", it added.

"Over the past month, a sharp surge in mass casualty incidents linked to aid distribution sites has overwhelmed Gaza's shattered healthcare system," the ICRC said. "The scale and frequency of these incidents are without precedent," it said, adding that its field hospital had treated more patients since late May than "in all mass casualty events during the entire previous year." To cope with the flow of wounded, ICRC said that all its staff were now contributing to the emergency response effort. "Physiotherapists support nurses, cleaning and dressing wounds and taking vitals. Cleaners now serve as orderlies, carrying stretchers wherever they are needed. Midwives have stepped into palliative care," it added.

An officially private effort, the US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation began operations on May 26 after Israel halted supplies into the Gaza Strip for more than two months, sparking



Palestinians inspect the site of an overnight Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced people. — Reuters

Over the past month, a sharp surge in mass casualty incidents linked to aid distribution sites has overwhelmed Gaza's shattered healthcare system," the ICRC said. "The scale and frequency of these incidents are without precedent."

warnings of imminent famine. GHF operations have been marred by chaotic scenes and near-daily reports of Israeli forces firing on people waiting to collect rations.

More than 500 people have been killed while waiting to access rations from its distribution sites, the UN Human Rights Office said on Friday.

The GHF has denied that fatal shootings have occurred in the immediate vicinity of its aid points. Gaza's health system has been at a point of near collapse for months, with nearly all hospitals and health facilities either out of service or only partly functional.

Israel's drastic restrictions on the entry of goods and aid into Gaza since the start of the war 21 months ago has caused shortages of everything, including medicine, medical supplies, and

fuel, which hospitals rely on to power their generators. "The absence of accessible fuel means no ambulances, no electricity for hospitals, and no clean water", the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a report on Monday. Israel had not allowed any fuel to enter the Palestinian territory in four months, it added. "Service providers such as hospitals have been rationing supplies, but this cannot sustain life-saving operations for much longer."

Meanwhile, Gaza's civil defence agency on Tuesday said that 29 people were killed in Israeli strikes across the Palestinian territory devastated of war. Among those were nine people killed in a drone strike on a camp for displaced people near Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza, according to civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal. — AFP

FLOODS LASH AT NEPAL-CHINA BORDER

KATHMANDU: Over two dozen people were missing after torrential rain in China's Tibet region triggered a deluge in the Bhote Koshi River, washing away the "Friendship Bridge" that links China and Nepal, officials said on Tuesday. Weather forecasting experts said the flood might have been the result of an overflowing glacial lake in Tibet since there had been no heavy rainfall in the immediate catchment area of the river in the preceding 24 hours.

At least 18 people are missing in Nepal while China's official Xinhua news agency said 11 people were unaccounted for on the Chinese side of the mountainous border region. In Nepal, the missing included six Chinese workers and three police personnel, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said. — Reuters

BLOCKED ROUTES



Smoke rises from a wildfire in Marseille. — Reuters

MARSEILLE AIRPORT
CLOSED AS HIGH
WINDS FAN WILDFIRE

MARSEILLE: A fast-moving wildfire in southern France, fanned by winds of up to 70 kilometres per hour, led to the closure of Marseille Provence airport on Tuesday and was getting very close to France’s second-largest city itself, officials said. The local fire service said on X that 168 firefighters had been deployed to fight the blaze of around 30 hectares near the town of Les Pennes-Mirabeau, north of Marseille. Fire engines and helicopters were also being used.

“The fire is spreading,” the Marseille municipality said on X. “Avoid all outdoor activities and do not block emergency access routes. Follow instructions and alert messages.” A spokeswoman at the mayor’s office for the 15th and 16th boroughs of Marseille, which border the town of Les Pennes-Mirabeau, said the area on the outer limits of the city was increasingly threatened by the fire, and covered in thick smoke. The spokeswoman said they were awaiting instructions from firefighters on whether to begin evacuations, and said residents were very concerned.

As the fire was spreading, residents of the 16th borough were also instructed by the prefecture to stay home, close doors and shutters and put damp cloths on any openings. A spokesperson for Marseille airport, France’s fourth-busiest, said planes had not been taking off or landing since around midday and some flights had been diverted to Nice, Nîmes and other regional airports. It was unclear when the airport would reopen.

Meanwhile, a wildfire that started near Narbonne, in southwestern France, on Monday was still active, fanned by winds of 60 kilometres per hour. Some 2,000 hectares have burnt, the local prefecture said. Wildfires were also raging in northeastern Spain, where large parts of the country were on high alert for fires. Last week there were fires on the Greek island of Crete and in Athens, as much of Europe sweltered in an early summer heatwave. — Reuters

FRANCE’S
MACRON
KICKS OFF
‘HISTORIC’
UK STATE
VISIT

WINDSOR: French President Emmanuel Macron received a warm and pomp-filled welcome on Tuesday from King Charles III as he began a three-day state visit to Britain, the first by an EU head of state since Brexit. Macron, accompanied by his wife Brigitte, hailed an “important moment for our two nations” after landing and heading straight for Windsor, west of London, to meet the British monarch.

“Together, we will address the major challenges of our time: security, defence, nuclear energy, space, innovation,



King Charles III and France’s President Emmanuel Macron travel during a carriage procession at Windsor Castle in Windsor west of London. — AFP

artificial intelligence, migration, and culture,” he posted on X. The French leader added that Paris and London were seeking to “deepen our cooperation in a concrete, effective, and lasting way”. The first state visit by an EU head of state since the UK’s acrimonious 2020 departure from the European Union, it is also the first by a French president since Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008. During his visit, Macron will hold several meetings with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. — AFP

ICC issues arrest warrant
for senior Taliban leaders

THE International Criminal Court on Tuesday issued arrest warrants for two senior Taliban leaders, accusing them of crimes against humanity for persecuting women and girls. Judges said there were “reasonable grounds” to suspect Taliban Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and chief justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani of committing gender-based persecution.

“While the Taliban have imposed certain rules and prohibitions on the population as a whole, they have specifically targeted girls and women by reason of their gender, depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms,” the court said in a statement.

Afghanistan’s Taliban authorities rejected the International Criminal Court’s arrest warrants and called the move “nonsense”.

“Such nonsense announcements won’t affect the strong commitment and dedication to sharia (Islamic law)” of Taliban authorities, spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement, adding that the Taliban government does not recognise the court.

The Taliban had “severely deprived” girls and women of the rights to education, privacy and family life and the freedoms of movement, expression, thought, conscience and religion, ICC judges said.

The court said the alleged crimes had been committed between August 15, 2021, when the Taliban seized power, and continued until at least January 20, 2025.

Taliban authorities did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The ICC, based in The Hague, was set up to rule on the world’s worst crimes, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.



A Taliban security personnel stands guard as Afghan women march during a religious procession in Kabul. — AFP



While the Taliban have imposed certain rules and prohibitions on the population as a whole, they have specifically targeted girls and women by reason of their gender, depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms

THE
INTERNATIONAL
CRIMINAL
COURT

It has no police force of its own and relies on member states to carry out its arrest warrants — with mixed results.

In theory, this means anyone subject to an ICC arrest warrant cannot travel to a member state for fear of being detained.

After sweeping back to power in August 2021, the Taliban authorities pledged a softer rule than their first stint from 1996 to 2001. But they quickly imposed restrictions on women and girls that the United Nations has labelled “gender apartheid”.

Edicts in line with their interpretation of Islamic law handed down by Akhundzada, who rules by decree from the movement’s birthplace in southern Kandahar, have squeezed women and girls from public life.

The Taliban government barred girls from secondary school and women from university in the first 18 months after they ousted the US-backed government, making Afghanistan the only country in the world to impose such bans.

Authorities imposed restrictions on women working for non-governmental groups and other employment, with thousands of women losing government jobs -- or being paid to stay home.

Beauty salons have been closed and women blocked from visiting public parks, gyms and baths as well as travelling long distances without a male chaperone.

A “vice and virtue” law announced last year ordered women not to sing or recite poetry in public and for their voices and bodies to be “concealed” outside the home. — AFP

Hopes fade for missing Texas flood victims as death tops 100

KERRVILLE: Search teams plodded through muddy riverbanks and flew aircraft over flood-ravaged central Texas as hopes dimmed of finding survivors among dozens still missing from a disaster that has claimed at least 104 lives, many of them children.

Three days after a torrential predawn downpour transformed the Guadalupe River into a raging, killer torrent, a Christian girls’ summer camp devastated by the flash flood confirmed that 27 campers and counselors were among those who had perished.

Ten girls and a camp counselor were still unaccounted for, officials said on Monday, as search-and-rescue personnel faced the potential of more heavy rains and thunderstorms while clawing through tonnes of muck-laden debris. The bulk of the death toll from Friday’s calamity was concentrated in and around the

riverfront town of Kerrville and the grounds of Camp Mystic, situated in a swath of Texas Hill Country known as “flash flood alley.”

By Monday afternoon, the bodies of 84 flood victims - 56 adults and 28 children - were recovered in Kerr County, most of them in the county seat of Kerrville, according to the local sheriff.

As of midday on Sunday, state and local officials said 12 other flood-related fatalities had been confirmed across five neighboring south-central Texas counties, and that 41 other people were still listed as missing outside Kerr County.

The New York Times, one of numerous news media outlets publishing varying death tolls, reported that at least 104 people had been killed across the entire flood zone.

Debate also intensified over questions about how state and local officials reacted to weather alerts



A woman wipes away tears during a vigil for the victims of the floods. — AFP

forecasting the possibility of a flash flood and the lack of an early warning siren system that might

have mitigated the disaster.

On Monday, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick vowed that the state

would “step up” to pay for installing a flash-flood warning system in Kerrville by next summer if local governments “can’t afford it.” “There should have been sirens,” Patrick said in a Fox News interview.

“Had we had sirens here along this area...it’s possible that we would have saved some lives.”

While authorities continued to hold out hope that some of the missing would turn up alive, the likelihood of finding more survivors diminished as time passed.

“This will be a rough week,” Kerrville Mayor Joe Herring Jr said at a briefing on Monday morning. Camp Mystic, a nearly century-old Christian girls’ retreat on the banks of the Guadalupe was at the epicenter of the disaster.

“Our hearts are broken alongside our families that are enduring this unimaginable tragedy,” the camp said in a statement on Monday.

— Reuters

OPINION

You’re not lazy – you’re in survival mode



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

In a world that idolises productivity, output and constant motion, the word “lazy” is often cast at the very moment we need the most compassion. It’s a label we assign when we feel unmotivated, stuck, or unable to meet our usual pace. However, beneath that judgment, something quieter and more essential is often at play — the nervous system whispering: “I’m not ready. I’m still trying to keep you safe.” The truth is, you’re not lazy. You’re in survival mode. When the body perceives threat — whether from a single event or the accumulation of emotional strain over time — it shifts into protective states: fight, flight, freeze or fawn. This isn’t a conscious choice, but a deeply embedded automatic response designed to preserve life. Your biology takes over, redirecting energy from long-term planning and creativity, towards short-term safety. In survival mode, motivation doesn’t disappear because you’re flawed. It disappears because your system is flooded. Chronic stress changes brain function. The prefrontal cortex, responsible for logic, focus and willpower, becomes less

active. Meanwhile, the amygdala, our internal danger sensor, grows louder. This neurological shift makes it difficult to prioritise, organise or care about what once mattered. It’s not that you’re unwilling – it’s that your brain is protecting you from further overwhelm. What we often call laziness is actually a sign of internal overload. A nervous system stretched thin. A body quietly exhausted from managing what hasn’t been fully felt, held or healed. Sometimes it looks like inertia. Other times it wears the mask of procrastination, emotional numbness, forgetfulness or fatigue. Each of these is a signal – not a failing. We must stop mistaking stillness for sloth. Rest, withdrawal, and even emotional disconnection are often strategies of survival. If you’ve had to remain strong for too long, if you’ve been operating on depleted reserves, your system may down-regulate as an act of preservation. It’s not giving up, it’s protecting what’s left. Healing begins with understanding. Instead of asking, “What’s wrong with me?” we can begin to ask, “What has my system

Remember, you are not failing. You are responding. Your body is extremely wise and it’s asking for tenderness, not toughness. Listen to it more.

endured?” and “What does it need now to feel safe again?”. These are not indulgent questions, but essential ones. Rest in this context isn’t luxury – it’s therapy. Slowness becomes the form of medicine. Gentle practices: grounding exercises, time in nature and safe connection with others send signals of safety back to the body. Progressively, the nervous system learns that it’s no longer under threat, and slowly, energy begins to return. The language we use with ourselves matters. When we say “lazy”, we shut the door on understanding. When we say, “I am overwhelmed”, or “My system needs rest”, we make time and space for healing. Remember, you are not failing. You are responding. Your body is extremely wise and it’s asking for tenderness, not toughness. Listen to it more. What we sometimes perceive as laziness is in fact our nervous system holding the weight of what’s been too much for too long. In time, with softness and space, you’ll rise again – not as who you once were, but as someone more rooted, more whole.

After the revolution, Bangladesh warms to China as India fumes

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

Protests in Bangladesh that toppled the government last year triggered a diplomatic pivot, with Dhaka warming towards China after neighbouring India was angered by the ousting of its old ally Sheikh Hasina. “India-Bangladesh relations have probably never experienced such intense strain before,” said New Praveen Donthi of the International Crisis Group. There is deep resentment in Dhaka over the fate of fugitive ex-prime minister Hasina, who escaped a student-led uprising by helicopter in August 2024 and flew to New Delhi as thousands of protesters stormed her palace. Interim leader Muhammad Yunus said popular anger in Bangladesh had been “transferred over to India” because Hasina was offered sanctuary by New Delhi. Md Touhid Hossain, who heads Bangladesh’s foreign ministry, said that “the relationship is now at the readjustment stage”. Nobel Peace Prize winner Yunus’s first state visit was to China in March, a trip that saw him secure \$2.1 billion in investments, loans and grants. Beijing has also courted leading politicians directly. Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, a senior leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) — the expected election frontrunner — said China is “keen” to work with the next elected government with “sincerity, steadfastness, love and affection”. India has long been wary of China’s growing regional clout and the world’s two most populous countries compete for influence in South Asia, despite a recent diplomatic thaw. Bangladesh has also moved closer to Pakistan, India’s arch-enemy. In May, more than 70 people were killed in four days of missile, drone and artillery fire between the forces of New Delhi and Islamabad, sparked by a deadly militant attack on civilians in Kashmir. The following month, officials from Dhaka and Islamabad met counterparts in China. Bangladesh and Pakistan — which split in 1971 after Dhaka’s independence war — began trade by sea last year, with direct flights also slated. That sparked worry in New Delhi. Both New Delhi and Bangladesh have imposed trade restrictions on each other. India, which encircles much of Bangladesh by land, has imposed multiple trade restrictions — including tightening rules on Indian imports of jute fibres, ready-made garments, plastic products and food. But trade between the neighbouring nations remains high, said Md Humayun Kabir, a former Bangladeshi ambassador to Washington, who has also served in India. But he urged caution, saying Dhaka should “tread carefully forming alliances”, and seek to strengthen “multilateral relations” as a balance. — AFP

Democracy is for people

On June 2, I got a sense of history coming full circle in the Polish town of Sopot, on the Baltic Sea just a few miles from the Gdańsk Shipyard. Sharing a stage at the Plenary Session of the European Financial Congress with Lech Wałęsa, the legendary trade unionist who led the 1980 Solidarity strike at the Lenin Shipyard (as the Gdańsk Shipyard was then known) and later became Poland’s first post-communist president, I felt I was witnessing the end of an era. To be sure, Wałęsa is sprightly at age 81. His spirit seemed subdued, and the Polish bankers, financiers and business elites who filled the room seemed downright stunned. Just hours before, the country had learned that the far-right populist Karol Nawrocki — a historian, former boxer and political outsider – had won Poland’s presidential election, narrowly defeating Warsaw’s cosmopolitan, progressive mayor, Rafał Trzaskowski of Civic Platform. Wałęsa had posted a stark message on social media that morning: “Goodbye Poland.” But since then, the outcome has been contested, with Poland’s controversial Supreme Court reviewing a flood of complaints about uncounted votes, mostly for Trzaskowski. Although it was my first trip to Poland, the situation felt eerily familiar. Like post-Brexit Britain and the US over the past decade of Donald Trump’s political dominance, here was a country split down the middle. Frustratingly for liberals, the allegations levelled against Nawrocki appear to have confirmed his “authenticity” and bolstered his support among some segments of the electorate. The fight for the presidency was but one front in a broader political struggle that emanates from the Solidarity movement itself. At the centre of the confrontation are two titans of Polish politics: Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the right-wing populist Law and Justice (PiS) party, and Prime Minister Donald Tusk, the head of Civic Platform and a former



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On July 1, after allegedly reviewing allegations of voting irregularities, the Polish Supreme Court upheld the election result, clearing the path for Nawrocki’s scheduled inauguration in August.

president of the European Council. Kaczyński casts himself as a defender of the workers and trade unionists who have been “betrayed” by liberal reforms, globalisation and the EU. Tusk, his longtime rival, has emerged as the face of a pro-European, democratically committed Poland. The feud is as much personal as it is political. Kaczyński once worked under Wałęsa, before turning against him, and Wałęsa endorsed Tusk’s successful 2023 prime ministerial bid. Moreover, Kaczyński blames Tusk – with no evidence – for the plane crash that killed his twin brother, then-president Lech Kaczyński, in 2010. Poles will proudly tell you that it was Solidarity, not the fall of the Berlin Wall, that really lifted the Iron Curtain. How, then, did a country once so united by Wałęsa’s Solidarity movement become so polarised and splintered? His triumph – ultimately against the Communist regime itself, in 1989 – demonstrated not just the power of the common man, but the strength of coalition-building. He had brought together workers, intellectuals, religious conservatives and liberals. At its peak, Solidarity boasted ten million members – one-third of the working-age population – vividly illustrating the power of grassroots mobilisation and civic participation. It gained widespread legitimacy because it was deeply democratic, rather than bureaucratic. In an era of cherry-picked histories, there are many competing explanations for why the Solidarity consensus fragmented. Kaczyński and his ilk blame Wałęsa’s personality. Depicting the former president as autocratic, narcissistic, or irrelevant, they accuse him of squandering Polish freedom by cutting secret deals with the old regime. Others see the right-wing nostalgia for “sovereignty” and identity as the “post-traumatic” disorder of a scarred nation that has been repeatedly bullied into statelessness by outsiders. And still others treat the alliances that

Solidarity established as an anomaly – a fleeting moment of unity in the face of a common enemy. But perhaps the real problem lies elsewhere. Whether it was influenced by the “neoliberal moment” of the 1980s or the practical need to curry favour with Western powers, the Solidarity movement did pivot abruptly to the economic orthodoxy of “shock therapy.” As a result, “the Polish revolution” became more about private property than popular participation. True, Poland’s post-communist economic record has been remarkable. With 30 years of uninterrupted growth, it was the only EU country to avoid recession in 2008-09. But the full social costs of this economic transformation have been underappreciated. After the so-called Balcerowicz Plan – named for the Polish economist and early democratic-era finance minister, Leszek Balcerowicz – had ushered in radical free-market reforms, inequality soared alongside growth. While privatisation and deregulation lifted GDP, the same processes also fractured the body politic. On July 1, after allegedly reviewing allegations of voting irregularities, the Polish Supreme Court upheld the election result, clearing the path for Nawrocki’s scheduled inauguration in August, even as the fate of Poland’s Third Republic hangs in the balance. Wałęsa helped usher in Poland’s democratic era, but as he recently conceded: “We did one thing wrong. We forgot about the people.” Poland today is not just a bellwether. It is a battleground – between the legacies of communism and capitalism, between liberal democracy and populist nationalism, and between memory and manipulation. What is at stake is not only Poland’s soul, but the European project and democracy itself. Wałęsa – a figure both exalted and embattled – reminds us that history is often cyclical, and that the revolution must never forget whom it is for.

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Embracing a plastic-free world is a collective journey



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

WHEN John Wesley Hyatt discovered the first practical artificial plastic in 1869, the American Inventor might not have anticipated that his revolutionary invention would later place a strain on the environment.

Hyatt's intention in his invention was to create a synthetic substitute for ivory to manufacture billiard balls. As natural ivory sources became limited, the demand for ivory led to the increased killing of elephants and tortoises.

In 1907, Belgian-American chemist Leo Baekeland invented Bakelite, the first completely synthetic plastic composed entirely of artificial molecules. Bakelite is known for its heat resistance and durability, making it an excellent insulator.

These were just the beginning! While Hyatt and Baekeland initially sought plastics with specific properties, they eventually entered an era of exploring new materials for their intrinsic value. Its durability, versatility, and low production cost became a solution for industries ranging from packaging to automotive manufacturing. Chemical companies invested substantial resources in the development of innovative polymers.

Since 1950, the production and use of plastics have increased 230-fold.

However, this trend poses significant environmental and health risks, particularly for plastics designed for short-term applications.

Reports indicate that 31per cent of plastics produced are used for packaging—often single-use and with an average lifespan of six months—which significantly contributes to waste generation and can easily end up in the environment.

Heads of State, ministers of the Environment, and representatives from other UN Member States endorsed a historic resolution at the UN Environment Assembly to develop a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution by 2024.

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the nations participating in negotiations for a global treaty aimed at combating plastic pollution. The goal is to establish legally binding regulations to address this issue on a global scale.

Significantly, in response to global efforts to combat plastic pollution, Oman has initiated the third phase of its plastic bag ban, which took effect on July 1, 2025. The goal of this initiative is to eliminate this pervasive issue by mid-2027.

While the first phase of the ban was implemented on July 1, 2024, targeting the use of single-use plastic bags in pharmacies, hospitals, and clinics, the second phase, which commenced in January 2025, will focus on textile shops, tailoring services, eyewear retailers, mobile phone stores, watch outlets, and furniture stores.

Oman has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to combating environmental degradation and has demonstrated regional

Significantly, in its efforts to combat plastic pollution, Oman has initiated the third phase of its plastic bag ban, which took effect on July 1, 2025. The goal of this initiative is to eliminate this pervasive issue by mid-2027

leadership in marine protection. The latest phase of this initiative has broadened the ban to encompass food stores, fruit and vegetable vendors, bakeries, confectionery shops, and gift shops.

The initiative aims to combat plastic pollution, protect terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and promote the use of eco-friendly alternatives, such as fabric and paper bags. It aligns with Oman's international commitments under the Stockholm and Basel Conventions.

The Environment Authority, responsible for enforcing the ban, has clearly articulated its intentions. During the launch of the third phase, it stated, “Even a single plastic bag can cause lasting harm, profoundly impacting marine life and our environment for decades.”

Plastic bags, frequently mistaken for food by marine animals such as turtles, whales, and fish, have caused fatalities due to ingestion and entanglement. “Your simple decision to use sustainable alternatives makes a significant difference,” adds the statement from the Authority.

But let me conclude that organisations like the Environment Authority undeniably have a disproportionate impact on the plastic crisis and a greater capacity to implement systemic change.

However, the path to a plastic-free world is a collective journey, with both institutions and individuals holding critical pieces of the puzzle.

EVEN WITHOUT WINS, MUSK’S PARTY MAY BE THREAT TO TRUMP

FRANKIE TAGGART

Donald Trump has shrugged off Elon Musk’s plans for a new political party as “ridiculous” — but the announcement underscored the threat the disaffected former ally poses to US Republicans defending paper-thin congressional majorities.

Musk’s weekend launch of the “America Party” came in the wake of Trump signing into law a sprawling domestic policy bill that the tech mogul has slammed over estimates that it will balloon the deficit. Musk has been light on policy detail, but is expected to target a handful of House and Senate seats in next year’s midterm elections, where the sitting Republican voted for Trump’s bill after preaching fiscal responsibility.

“Elon Musk’s America Party is a wild card that could upend the midterms in 2026, particularly for Republicans,” said political analyst Matt Shoemaker.

“With bare majorities in Congress, the Republicans should be worried.”

Unlike previous third parties, his would have almost limitless resources, and a talisman with a large constituency of young American men who see him as a maverick genius and a superstar.

With a personal wealth estimated at \$405 billion, Musk has already demonstrated that he is willing to spend big on politics, lavishing \$277 million on Trump’s 2024 campaign.

Yet a more recent foray into Wisconsin politics — he spent \$20 million only to see his candidate for the state supreme court lose handily — has underlined the limits of wealth and celebrity in politics. And then there is the political difficulty of building support in the American heartland, among voters who are not part of Musk’s Silicon Valley “tech bro” bubble.

Time magazine’s 2021 Person of the Year was once liked by a broad cross-section of Americans, but he saw his numbers plunge after joining the Trump administration as the president’s cost cutter-in-chief.

While multiple Republicans and Democrats have switched to independent, wins for third parties have been rare in modern US history.

The Conservative Party of New York State in the 1970s and the Farmer-Labor Party in the 1930s are the only minor parties to win Senate seats in the last century.

Smaller parties saw more success in the House in the early 20th century but have only won one seat since the 1950s. Analysts pointed to the many hurdles thrown in front of third-party candidates trying to get onto the ballot in a system designed to favour the status quo. They agree that winning seats in Congress may be a stretch, but say Musk can inflict pain on Trump by syphoning votes from vulnerable sitting Republicans or throwing cash at primary opponents of the president’s preferred candidates. — AFP

Junk food for the mind

I’M generally optimistic about all the ways artificial intelligence is going to make life better — scientific research, medical diagnoses, tutoring and my favourite current use, vacation planning. But it also offers a malevolent seduction: excellence without effort. It gives people the illusion that they can be good at thinking without hard work, and I’m sorry, that’s not possible.

INSIGHTS FROM STUDY

There’s a recent study that exposes this seduction. It has a really small sample size, and it hasn’t even been peer reviewed yet — so put in all your caveats — but it suggests something that seems intuitively true. A group of researchers led by Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Nataliya Kosmyna recruited 54 participants to write essays. Some of them used AI to write the essays, some wrote with the assistance of search engines (people without a lot of domain knowledge are not good at using search engines to identify the most important information), and some wrote the old-fashioned way, using their brains. The essays people used AI to write contained a lot more references to specific names, places, years and definitions. The people who relied solely on their brains had 60 per cent fewer references to these things. So far so good.

But the essays written with AI were more homogeneous, while those written by people relying on their brains created a wider variety of arguments and points. Later the researchers asked the participants to quote from their own papers.

Roughly 83 per cent of the large language model, or LLM, users had difficulty quoting from their own paper. They hadn’t really internalised their own “writing” and little of it sank in. People who used search engines were better at quoting their own points, and people who used just their brains were a lot better.

Almost all the people who wrote their own papers felt they owned their work, whereas fewer of the AI users claimed full ownership of their work. Here’s how the authors summarise this part of their



DAVID BROOKS

The writer is a book author and political and cultural commentator

It would be nice if there were more stigma and more shame attached to the many ways it’s possible to use AI to think less.

research:“The brain-only group, though under greater cognitive load, demonstrated deeper learning outcomes and stronger identity with their output. The search engine group displayed moderate internalisation, likely balancing effort with outcome. The LLM group, while benefiting from tool efficiency, showed weaker memory traces, reduced self-monitoring and fragmented authorship.”

MORE EFFORT MORE REWARD

In other words, more effort, more reward. More efficiency, less thinking.But here’s where things get scary. The researchers used an EEG headset to look at the inner workings of their subjects’ brains. The subjects who relied only on their own brains showed higher connectivity across a bunch of brain regions. Search engine users experienced less brain connectivity and AI users least of all.

Researchers have a method called dynamic directed transfer function, or DDTF, that measures the coherence and directionality of the neural networks and can be interpreted in the context of executive function, attention regulation and other related cognitive processes. The brain-only writers had the highest DDTF connectivity. The search engine group demonstrated between 34 per cent to 48 per cent lower total connectivity, and the AI group demonstrated up to 55 per cent lower DDTF connectivity. The researchers conclude, “Collectively, these findings support the view that external support tools restructure not only task performance but also the underlying cognitive architecture.”

THINK HARD

In their public comments over the past few weeks, the authors of the study have been careful not to overhype their results. But the neuroscience cliché is that neurons that fire together wire together. That’s the key implication here.

Thinking hard strengthens your mental capacity. Using a bot to think for you, or even just massaging what the bot gives you, is empty calories for the mind. You’re robbing yourself of an education and diminishing your intellectual potential.

It’s not clear how many students use AI to write their papers. OpenAI says 1 in 3 students uses its products. I think that’s a vastly low estimate. About a year ago I asked a roomful of college students how many of them used AI, and almost every hand went up.

There’s a seductiveness to the process. You start by using AI as a research tool, but then you’re harried and time pressured, and before long, AI is doing most of the work. I was at a conference of academics last month in Utah, and one of the professors said something that haunted me: “We’re all focused on the threat posed by Trump, but it’s AI that’s going to kill us.”

Hua Hsu recently published a piece in The New Yorker titled “What Happens After AI Destroys College Writing?” that captures the dynamic. Hsu interviewed a student named Alex who initially insisted that he used AI only to organise his notes. When they met in person, he admitted that wasn’t remotely true. “Any type of writing in life, I use AI,” Alex said. Then he joked, “I need AI to text girls.”

In 1960 college students were assigned about 25 hours a week of homework, and by 2015 that number was closer to 15. But most students I encounter are frantically busy, much busier than I remember my friends and me being, often with many student activities overshadowing academic work. So of course they are going to use a timesaving technology to take care of what they consider to be that trivial stuff that gets assigned in the classroom.

EXERCISE YOUR MIND

AI isn’t going anywhere, so the crucial question is one of motivation. What do students, and all of us, really care about — clearing the schedule or becoming educated? If you want to be strong, you have to go to the gym.

If you want to possess good judgment, you have to read and write on your own. Some people use AI to think more — to learn new things, to explore new realms, to cogitate on new subjects. It would be nice if there were more stigma and more shame attached to the many ways it’s possible to use AI to think less. — The New York Times

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Spain's Alexia Putellas scores their sixth goal. — Reuters

SPAIN THUMP BELGIUM 6-2 AT WOMEN’S EUROS

THUN, Switzerland: Striker Alexia Putellas scored twice for world champions Spain as they shook off a slow start to beat Belgium 6-2 in their Women’s Euros Group B clash on Monday, a result that will guarantee the Spaniards’ progress to the knockout stage if Portugal fail to beat Italy later in the day. On a chilly, windswept evening far removed from the recent Swiss heatwave, Putellas blasted Spain into the lead, picking up the ball after some deft one-touch passing and lashing it into the net in the 22nd minute with a characteristically powerful left-foot shot. The lead lasted only a couple of minutes as the Belgians went up the field and won a corner, which Justine Vanhaevermaet headed home at the near post but, despite struggling to maintain a consistent rhythm, Spain managed to take a lead into the break after Irene Paredes scored with a towering header from a corner in the 39th minute.

Recently returned from a health scare, Aitana Bonmati came on for Vicky Lopez at halftime and almost scored four minutes later but instead Belgium levelled again in the 50th minute, with Hannah Eurlings running on to a long ball and slotting home. The goal was initially ruled out for offside but after a lengthy VAR review Eurlings was found to have been onside when the ball was played.

Belgium’s joy was short-lived as Esther Gonzalez restored Spain’s lead a minute later, with Spain finally beginning to show their class.

Mariona Caldentey’s fourth goal for Spain in the 61st minute put them at ease and they began to toy with the Belgians, with a brilliant curled effort from Claudia Pina in the 81st minute effectively ending the contest.

There was still time for Putellas to net her second goal four minutes from time to put Spain top of the group on six points and leave the Belgians, who lost their opening game against Italy 1-0, on the brink of elimination.

“I’m happy because the important thing is to win. We don’t like conceding goals. If you

concede two goals, that’s something we need to correct,” Spain captain Paredes said.

“We’ve been good, we struggled to find our rhythm, we were imprecise at the start. Once we got into the rhythm, we were at our best.”

Despite the sluggish start and the concession of two goals, Spain coach Montserrat Tome was pleased with how her players managed to solve the problems posed by the Belgians, especially the substitutes who were brought on in the second half.

“We have a luxury of having so many options, because this allows us to create solutions depending on the moment,” she told reporters.

“As for goals, I believe the activity is very high, we are generating chances, we are scoring goals which is very good, this gives us confidence.”

Tome said playmaker Bonmati had fully recovered and could have started but that the team were going to take it slowly with her.

“We must be patient to see the progression. According to the medical team she’s fine but we don’t want to risk it. She’s a key player,” she said.

— Reuters

Tough start for Oman U-16 in Asian qualifiers

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

OMAN’S U-16 national basketball team began its Gulf region qualifiers campaign for the Asian Championship with a heavy defeat against Bahrain, losing 44-96 in a match held on Monday evening at the Bahrain Basketball Association Arena in Umm Al Hassam, Manama.

The game saw clear dominance from the Bahraini team, which imposed its rhythm from the very first minutes, taking advantage of its superior physical and technical preparation. Bahrain’s players demonstrated accuracy in shooting and quick transitions in both offense and defense, while Oman’s team struggled with rushed decisions and a lack of focus for most of the game.

In the first quarter, Bahrain came out strong, asserting control through fast play and scoring from various ranges. Oman’s players had difficulty penetrating Bahrain’s defense, and the quarter ended 31-11 in Bahrain’s favor.

The second quarter showed a slight improvement in Oman’s performance in terms of positioning and ball pressure. However, defensive lapses and repeated turnovers gave Bahrain easy scoring opportunities, allowing them to widen the gap further and close the quarter 29-12.

In the third quarter, fatigue became apparent among Oman’s players, whose defensive performance declined alongside a lack of concentration in passing and slow coverage. Bahrain capitalised on this, scoring heavily through fast breaks and ending the quarter 19-8.

The fourth quarter witnessed individual attempts by Oman players to reduce the deficit, notably by Al Mulhim al Obaidani



Oman U-16 national basketball team



The Omani squad in the tournament includes 12 players, coached by Tunisian Zouheir Al Ayashi

and Adam al Hinai, but Bahrain’s defense remained solid and maintained their dominance. The quarter ended 17-13, sealing a comprehensive 96-44 win for Bahrain.

From Oman’s side, standout player Al Mulhim al Obaidani scored 17 points, followed by Adam al Hinai with 12 points, Rashid al Siyabi with 7 points, and Saif al Yahyai with 6 points. For Bahrain, Somto Patrick led with 15 points, while Mohammed Adel added 12, and Hassan Abdulqadir contributed 11 points.

The Omani squad in the tournament includes 12 players, coached by Tunisian Zouheir Al Ayashi, with Omani assistant coach Ali al Balushi. Team management is overseen by Ghassan al Busaidy, with Amer al Zaidi serving as the team’s physiotherapist. Also present to support the team is Abu Bakr al Jahwari, Vice-President of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA).

UPCOMING MATCHES FOR OMAN: Oman continues its qualifying campaign with a crucial match against Kuwait on Wednesday. The third game will be against Saudi Arabia on Friday, July 11, followed by the final group match against the UAE on Saturday evening.

Oman Kite Festival 2025 to kickoff soon

MUSCAT: There are just one week remaining until the Oman Kite Festival 2025 gets underway in Barr Al Hikman. Set to commence on July 15th and run until July 24th, the festival promises an exhilarating fusion of world-class kitesurfing action, cultural immersion, and family-friendly entertainment, all against the breathtaking backdrop of Oman’s pristine coastline.

The Oman Kite Festival, an initiative by OMRAN Group in collaboration with Oman Sail, aims to position key coastal destinations as premier international venues for adventure and sports tourism. Building on the resounding success of last year’s Oman Downwinder, the Oman Kite Festival 2025 has been expanded in both geographical scope and duration, inviting a larger contingent of international athletes and offering a richer, more diverse experience for all attendees.

Abdulfahidh al Harthy, Assets Manager Experiences at Oman Tourism Development Company (Oman Group), expressed his excitement for the event as it draws closer, outlining how the Oman Kite Festival 2025 is a cornerstone of the Group’s commitment to showcasing Oman’s unique natural assets and diversifying our tourism offerings.



The festival will kick on July 15 and run until July 24

At the festival’s core is the multi-stage “Downwinder” race, an awe-inspiring journey that will traverse some of Oman’s most picturesque coastal regions. Kitesurfers will navigate four challenging phases from Barr Al Hikman to Masirah Island on July 16, Masirah Island to Ras Al Ruwais on July 20, Pink Lagoons to Al Ashkharah on July 21, and finally from Ras

Al Jinz to Ras Al Hadd on July 23.

Beyond the “Downwinder,” the festival boasts a dynamic calendar of complementary competitions, including the Kite Course Race in Barr Al Hikman on July 15th, the Big Air Show and Freestyle Show in Masirah Island on July 17 and 18 respectively, the Coastal Race in Masirah Island on July 19, and the Slalom Race

at Ras Al Hadd Lake on July 24 — promising an action-packed experience for both participants and spectators.

Off the water, the Oman Kite Festival is designed to be a comprehensive cultural and recreational experience. Visitors can look forward to a range of family-friendly activities and a vibrant SME exhibition at Ashkharah Municipal Park, showcasing local businesses and Omani traditions.

This truly unique event not only elevates Oman as a world-class destination for international sporting events but also supports the tourism diversification objectives outlined in the National Tourism Strategy 2040.

The organisers extend a warm invitation to local residents and international visitors to join us in this extraordinary celebration of sport, nature, and culture: Prepare to be captivated by the artistry of kitesurfing and the unparalleled beauty of Oman. The festival is organised by the OMRAN Group, Oman Sail, Visit Oman, and Oman Adventures Centre.

Further details, including specific event timings and spectator information, can be found on the official Oman Kite Festival website <https://omankitefestival.om> and across Social Media channels.

SHORTTAKES



Anthony Elanga

NEWCASTLE AGREE
£55M FEE FOR
ELANGA: REPORTS

LONDON: Anthony Elanga is set to become Newcastle’s first major signing of the transfer window after the Magpies reportedly agreed a £55 million (\$75 million) deal with Nottingham Forest.

The Athletic, BBC and Sky Sports all reported on Tuesday that the Swedish international is on his way to St James’ Park.

Elanga was one of the stars of Forest’s surprise seventh-placed finish in the Premier League last season, scoring six goals and providing 11 assists.

Forest paid just £15m to sign Elanga from Manchester United two years ago.

Newcastle’s attempts to strengthen their squad in preparation for a return to the Champions League next season have so far been frustrated.

Despite being backed by the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, the League Cup winners have been limited in what they can spend in recent seasons by financial sustainability rules. — AFP



Kota Takai

TOTTENHAM
SIGN JAPAN
DEFENDER TAKAI

LONDON: Tottenham signed Japense international Kota Takai from Kawasaki Frontale on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old centre-back has signed a five-year deal with the Europa League winners and will cost a reported fee of £5 million (\$7 million), according to Sky Sports.

Takai, who has been capped by his country four times, was named Japan’s young player of the year in 2024 having broken into Kawasaki’s first team two years previously.

He made a total of 81 senior appearances in all competitions for the club, scoring four goals, and helped them reach the 2025 Asian Champions League final.

Takai faces stiff competition for a place in Thomas Frank’s side up against Micky van de Ven, Cristian Romero, Kevin Danso and Radu Dragusin.

However, reports have linked Argentine international Romero with a move to Atletico Madrid.

Takai is Spurs’ second signing of the transfer window after Mathys Tel’s six-month loan from Bayern Munich was made permanent. — AFP

Merlier wins stage three
of Tour de France

BELGIAN TIM MERLIER pipped Italian Jonathan Milan right at the line to win stage three of the Tour de France at Dunkirk on Monday, as Mathieu van der Poel retained the race lead.

The stage was marred by a series of falls, but the two favourites for the title Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard finished safely in the main pack and remain in second and third place overall behind Van der Poel.

The flat 179 km run from Valenciennes along the Belgian border was marked above all by a nasty fall that caused Jasper Philipsen to quit with severe grazing and a suspected fracture.

The fall happened during an intermediate sprint 60 km away from Dunkirk and ripped the green best sprinter’s jersey from Philipsen’s back as he slid along the road in the 70kph crash.

Much of what Philipsen’s team Alpecin had planned for the Tour revolved around the sprinter, team-mate Van der Poel revealed.

“It’s always one of our goals to win stages so this is a bad day,” the 30-year-old said.

Van der Poel suggested the wind had emboldened the sprinters.

“In a head wind it’s easier to come from behind in the sprints, it made things more chaotic,” he said.

There were three more falls, including two nasty looking ones in the finale with Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel, Merlier’s teammate, involved.

A MESS Merlier, 32, grew up just over the border from Dunkirk and had been hoping to win the opening stage on Sunday.

“That was a mess,” Merlier said of the falls. “I lost a great deal of energy getting in position but it was a good bike throw. I knew I’d beat Milan.”

Lidl-Trek’s Milan led over most of the final 150m, but even without sealing the stage win his efforts were still rewarded as he inherited the green sprint points jersey from the stricken Philipsen.

Van der Poel in the leader’s yellow jersey is the grandson of French cycling legend Raymond Poulidor, who came second in the Tour de France seven times, but never won and never got to don the yellow tunic. Another Belgian, the national champion Tim Wellens, gave cross-border fans even more to celebrate as he won the day’s only climb, the 2.3 km ascent of Mont Cassel at 31 km from the finish line.

The 34-year-old will now hold the king of the mountains polka dot jersey overnight.



Tim Merlier celebrates on the podium after winning stage 3. — Reuters

The 34-year-old will now hold the king of the mountains polka dot jersey overnight.

Frenchman Kevin Vauquelin is in the best under-25’s rider’s white jersey after staying in the finishing mix in all three stages.

Regional police said one million spectators had lined the roadsides on the opening day, and while rain dissuaded that kind of turnout for stage two, huge crowds turned out again for the run to Dunkirk.

The eleven bikes stolen from outside the Cofidis team hotel early on Sunday were all found before the stage’s end — five of them were recovered abandoned in a forest early on Monday with the others

being tracked down by the police later in the day. Tuesday’s fourth stage is a 174 km run from Amiens, as the Tour leaves the North region, to Rouen in Normandy, with five hills in the final 25 km designed to spark a series of race-splitting attacks.

The first section of the Tour is raced through the north and west of France. The volcanic landscape of the Puy de Dome presents the first mountains as late as stage 10, with two more colossal climb days in the Pyrenees before the blockbuster final week in the Alps. — AFP

South Africa complete routine Test win over Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe: South Africa completed a comprehensive win by an innings and 236 runs after Zimbabwe collapsed after lunch on the third day of the second Test at Queens Sports Club on Tuesday.

Fast bowlers Corbin Bosch (four for 38) and Codi Yusuf (two for 38), together with left-arm spinner Senuran Muthusamy (three for 77) were mainly responsible for bowling out Zimbabwe for 220 in the second innings.

Despite fielding what was effectively a second-string team, South Africa were in control of the match from the start as stand-in captain Wiaan Mulder’s South African record 367 not out led them

to a total of 626 for five declared.

“Everything came together,” said Mulder.

“A lot of guys put up their hands. Everybody contributed in their own way and that is promising for South African cricket.”

Zimbabwe provided resistance in losing only two wickets before lunch on Tuesday after resuming on 51 for one.

Nick Welch made 55 and captain Craig Ervine scored 49 after the early dismissal of overnight batsman Takudzwanashe Kaitano (40).

But Zimbabwe collapsed after the interval against the pace bowling of Yusuf and Bosch. Six wickets fell for 31 runs before Wellington



Masakadza and Tanaka Chivanga added 36 for the last wicket.

“Guys got in but then got out, including myself,” said Ervine.

“The South African guys who got in scored big. If we are going to compete at Test level we need those big hundreds.”

It was the 10th successive Test win for world champions South Africa, one more than their previous most successful streak between 2001 and 2003.

South Africa, who won the first Test at the same venue by 328 runs, completed a dominant 2-0 series win despite resting most of the players who won the World Test Championship final against

Australia at Lord’s in London last month.

Zimbabwe were without two leading batsmen in Brian Bennett, who was concussed in the first Test, and Ben Curran, who missed the series with a broken hand.

But Mulder and wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne were the only players who featured in South Africa’s win against Australia.

The world champions introduced five debutants over the two matches but still outclassed their neighbours.

Zimbabwe and South Africa meet again in Harare on Monday at the start of a T20 triangular series which also includes New Zealand.

— AFP

SPORTS



SINNER,

SHELTON,

SWIATEK

AND

ANDREEVA

INTO

WIMBLEDON

QUARTERS



player, a good friend of mine also, and we understand each other very well off the court too.

"Seeing him in this position... if there would be a chance that he could play in the next round, he would deserve it. Now I hope he has a speedy recovery. Very, very unlucky from his side.

"I don't take this as a win at all... just an unfortunate moment to witness for all of us."

Sinner next faces American 10th seed Ben Shelton, who beat another Italian in Lorenzo Sonego 3-6 6-1 7-6(1) 7-5 to advance to the quarterfinals at Wimbledon for the first time, as did Flavio Cobolli, who downed Marin Cilic 6-4 6-4 6-7(4) 7-6(3).

ROCKY ROAD

Djokovic marched into the Wimbledon last eight for the 16th time but the Serbian trod a rocky road before defeating De Minaur 1-6 6-4 6-4 6-4 to keep alive his quest for a 25th major title to surpass Margaret Court.

Watched from the Royal Box by another great in Roger Federer, the man whose record eight All England Club trophies Djokovic is trying to equal, the sixth seed surrendered the first set in 31 minutes before roaring back to win.

"We did catch up very shortly," Djokovic said of his meeting with Federer afterwards.

"We greeted each other. He congratulated me and said it was a great match. That's all. It was a very short greeting, but it was really nice to have him around.

"He's one of the greatest legends of our game. So it always is extra special when he's on the stands. I'm glad to break the curse and win in front of him. It's a big relief."

Federer's fellow Swiss and former doubles partner Belinda Bencic made her first Wimbledon quarterfinal in nine attempts after dismissing 18th-seeded Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-6(4) 6-4 in a little under two hours on a breezy Court One.

The 28-year-old Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion shed tears of joy after she finally broke the fourth-round barrier 15 months since giving birth to her daughter Bella and she said she was surprised at her high level.

"I'm really happy about it. Of course, I try not to think about it. I feel great on the practice court. When I was coming back, that's why I felt like I came back earlier than expected, than I expected for myself," Bencic said. — Reuters

Djokovic marched into the Wimbledon last eight for the 16th time but the Serbian trod a rocky road before defeating De Minaur 1-6 6-4 6-4 6-4 to keep alive his quest for a 25th major title to surpass Margaret Court.

TOP

seed Jannik Sinner struggled with an elbow problem and was given an almighty scare before advancing to the quarterfinals of

Wimbledon after a cruel twist of fate for his 19th-seeded opponent Grigor Dimitrov who retired injured while two sets up.

Novak Djokovic continued his quest for Grand Slam glory at the All England Club with a battling victory over Alex de Minaur while five-times major champion Iga Swiatek found her grasscourt wings to fly past Clara Tauson.

The drama was reserved for the evening clash on Centre Court as Dimitrov, who had pulled out injured in his last four majors, played exquisite tennis to go up 6-3 7-5 2-2 but then crashed to the ground after a big ace to hold serve.

Sinner, who had been hampered for much of the contest by a right elbow issue after slipping and falling to the turf early on, was left feeling sorry for his opponent who threw in the towel after a short assessment by a doctor.

"I don't know what to say because he's an incredible player. I think we all saw this today," said Sinner, who was by a tearful Dimitrov's side while the Bulgarian was attended to.

"He's been so unlucky in the past couple of years. He's an incredible

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LOCALISINGINDUSTRY



Eng Al Mamoun al Badani, CEO of Al Ghaith Industries, and Eng Nasser bin Hamoud al Mabsali, Director-General of Sur Industrial City, sign the agreement.

New trichlorosilane plant to boost chemical sector in Sur

SUR: Sur Industrial City, part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has signed an investment agreement with Al Ghaith Industries Company to establish a trichlorosilane production facility.

Spanning 20,000 square metres, the plant involves an investment exceeding RO 9.6 million (\$25 million).

The project adds significant value by supporting the development of Oman's chemical and energy industries. It aims to localise advanced-technology-based manufacturing and create various job opportunities for Omani nationals.

Eng Nasser bin Hamoud al Mabsali, Director-General of Sur Industrial City, stated the project opens new prospects in high-purity silicon production and serves as a foundation for renewable energy and electronics sectors.

He noted its strategic contribution to both Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and Sur Industrial City.

Meanwhile, Eng Al Mamoun al Badani, CEO of Al Ghaith Industries, said the plant marks a major milestone in Oman's chemical manufacturing landscape. He confirmed that commercial production is expected to start by the end of the first quarter of 2027. — ONA

New green steel project planned in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 8

SINGAPORE—based Meranti Green Steel (MGS), a leading player in low-carbon steel production in the Asia-Pacific region, has announced further progress in its plans to invest in a major green steel project at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in southeastern Oman.

Project capacity details and investment figures have not yet been disclosed. However, the company announced in a post on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, that it has received a provisional commitment for the supply of natural gas for the project from the Omani authorities.

“Meranti Green Steel has received the conditional gas allocation from IGC in Oman. With the project site confirmed and raw material supply in place, the foundation for our green iron production in Duqm is now established,” Meranti commented in the post, referencing the Integrated Gas Company (IGC) — the sole aggregator and supplier of natural gas in the Sultanate of Oman.

The company further noted: “Discussions with a range of potential green hydrogen partners are underway, and we are engaging closely with our financing partners, including KfW IPEX.”

The latter refers to the



‘With the project site confirmed and raw material supply in place, the foundation for our green iron production in Duqm is now established,’ said Meranti. Picture for illustration only.

import-export financing arm of KfW IPEX-Bank, a major German-based financial institution.

The announcement underscores Duqm's rising international profile as a prime destination for investment in so-called ‘hard-to-abate’ sectors, particularly steel and aluminium manufacturing — industries traditionally associated with high carbon emissions.

With several large-scale green hydrogen projects set to be implemented near Duqm, the anticipated availability of green hydrogen as a clean energy source is boosting the zone's attractiveness as a hub for low-carbon heavy industry.

Jindal Duqm Steel (formerly Vulcan Green Steel) — part of India's Jindal Group — is already advancing construction work on the first phase of a 5-million tonne per annum (mtpa) hydrogen-enabled green steel plant in Duqm, with an estimated investment of around \$3 billion.

In addition, two other international consortiums have announced plans to establish low-carbon iron projects in Duqm. Kobe Steel, in partnership with Mitsui & Co, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and the Port of Duqm Company to explore

a low-carbon iron metallics facility in the SEZ.

The project aims to produce 5 million tonnes annually of direct reduced iron (DRI), starting with natural gas and transitioning to hydrogen in the future.

Similarly, Brazilian mining giant Vale has announced plans to invest in a Green Metallic Mega Hub in Duqm, intended to produce low-carbon DRI as feedstock for steel mills across the wider Middle East region.

Meranti is concurrently developing an integrated green steel project in Rayong, Thailand, with a planned capacity of around 2.5 million tonnes per year. The facility, which integrates DRI, HBI (Hot Briquetted Iron), Electric Arc Furnace (EAF), and a Hot Strip Mill, will produce certified green Hot Rolled Coil (HRC) steel. Operations are scheduled to begin in late 2027 or early 2028.

“The (Oman) green iron project is central to our integrated green steel value chain. It will not only feed our low-emission steel plant in Thailand, but will also serve emerging HBI demand from European offtakers.

“With competitive access to gas and green hydrogen, we are confident that green iron from Oman can boost the competitiveness of European steelmakers and help secure jobs—not threaten them,” Meranti added in its post.

Oman among world’s top ten in IAREM ranking

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

OMAN has once again secured a position among the world's best-performing economies, according to the latest Independent Australia Ranking on Economic Management (IAREM), reinforcing its reputation as a stable and attractive investment destination.

In the 2025 edition of the IAREM index, Oman ranked 8th globally, with a score of 18.78, maintaining its position in the top ten economies worldwide.

The Sultanate of Oman had previously ranked 6th in the 2024 edition with a score of 18.12, reflecting consistent improvement across key macroeconomic indicators.

The IAREM rating evaluates countries based on eight critical metrics: income per person, GDP growth, median wealth, employment levels, inflation, tax burden, budget balance and public debt. Oman's ranking reflects its strong fiscal governance, robust employment environment



The IAREM rating evaluates countries based on eight critical metrics: income per person, GDP growth, median wealth, employment levels, inflation, tax burden, budget balance and public debt.

and prudent macroeconomic management, attributes that continue to bolster investor confidence.

Oman's sustained high ranking is underpinned by strategic reforms aimed at economic diversification, efficient public spending and investment in infrastructure, logistics and technology.

The government's commitment to Oman Vision 2040 has catalysed significant progress in reducing reliance on oil revenues and enhancing the role of the private sector.

Further reinforcing investor confidence is Oman's investment-grade credit rating of BBB– with a stable outlook, as affirmed by

Standard & Poor's. The rating reflects improvements in fiscal sustainability, debt reduction and greater transparency in public financial management.

International observers have taken note of Oman's trajectory.

According to IAREM's analysis, Oman has outperformed several larger economies in overall economic management, positioning it ahead of countries like France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

This achievement is particularly significant in a global landscape marked by rising debt levels, inflationary pressures and sluggish growth in many regions.

In 2024, Oman achieved an impressive 6th place globally in the IAREM, earning a score of 18.12.

This marked a significant leap from previous years and placed Oman ahead of major economies such as Australia, South Korea and Singapore.

The ranking reflects Oman's strong performance across key indicators including income per capita, employment, inflation

control, budget balance and sustainable public debt.

Analysts attributed this success to Oman's fiscal discipline, economic diversification efforts under Oman Vision 2040 and stable macroeconomic environment, factors that continue to enhance its appeal as a competitive and secure destination for global investment.

Oman's top-tier ranking not only enhances its global economic standing, but also signals a welcoming climate for foreign direct investment. With economic zones such as Duqm, Salalah and Suhar offering competitive incentives, Oman is increasingly viewed as a strategic hub linking Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

As the global economy continues to navigate uncertainty, Oman's fiscal discipline, policy reforms and strong economic governance are proving to be key differentiators.

The IAREM ranking confirms that Oman is not only on the right path, but is also steadily emerging as one of the most capable and well-managed economies in the region and beyond.

ADVERTORIALS

FINANCIAL SOLUTION



The Sarooj Oasis Project is an integrated mixed-use development project located in Sultan Haitham City.

MUZN ISLAMIC BANKING SIGNS MOU TO FACILITATE HOUSING FINANCE FOR SAROOJ OASIS PROJECT

MUSCAT: NBO Muzn Islamic Banking has announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sarooj Development Company to provide Shari’ah-compliant home financing solutions for eligible customers purchasing properties developed under Sarooj Oasis Project, an integrated mixed-use development project located in Sultan Haitham City.

Held at NBO’s Head Office, the MoU was signed by Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, Mohammed bin Yahya al Jabri, Assistant General Manager of Global Transaction Banking at NBO and Sulaiman bin Khamis al Qasmi, Deputy CEO of Sarooj Development Company.

Commenting on the partnership, Salima bint Obaid bin Issa al Marzooqiyah, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, stated, “This MOU comes as a part of our broader commitment to empower individuals through providing ethical financial solutions and supporting the national development goals. At Muzn Islamic Banking, we are proud to be a trusted partner in Oman’s housing journey, ensuring citizens have access to home ownership opportunities that align with their values and aspirations.”

From his end, Sulaiman bin Khamis al Qasmi, Deputy CEO of Sarooj Development Company, added, “At Sarooj Development Company, we are committed to shaping integrated communities that offer real value to Omani individuals. This agreement with NBO Muzn Islamic Banking represents more than just financial facilitation; it reflects our responsibility to ensure that home ownership is accessible, sustainable and aligned with Oman’s long-term urban development goals. We are proud to help deliver a project that supports both personal aspirations and national priorities.”

This agreement allows eligible Omani nationals to access financing through Muzn Islamic Banking in accordance with Islamic principles, enabling them to purchase homes in one of Oman’s most strategically planned urban developments.

The financing solution is structured to protect the interests of all stakeholders, including the bank, the developer and the customer, while maintaining full alignment with regulatory requirements.

Sarooj Oasis is being developed under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and forms part of the Sultan Haitham City initiative. The project aims to reduce pressure on land demand by providing integrated living environments with quality infrastructure and services.

MUSCAT: Reinforcing their commitment to delivering value-driven customer experiences, Sohar International and its Islamic window, Sohar Islamic, have announced the first round of winners in their ongoing Credit Card Acquisition Campaign.

The prize distribution ceremony honoured 40 winners — 30 from Sohar International and 10 from Sohar Islamic — each receiving a smart device. The awards were presented by Abdul Qader al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, and Fahad

bin Akbar al Zadjali, Head of Islamic Banking, in a ceremony that underscored the campaign’s success in engaging customers and promoting the banks’ diverse credit card offerings and associated benefits.

Commenting on the occasion, Abdul Qader al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated: “At Sohar International, our ambition is to go beyond traditional banking by embedding real value into our customers’ financial journeys.

This campaign reflects our

BANKDHO FAR’S VISA LADIES CARD ELEVATES LIFESTYLE WITH ENHANCED BENEFITS

MUSCAT: BankDhofar is reaffirming its commitment to women-centric financial solutions by highlighting the wide range of lifestyle and travel benefits available through its Visa Ladies Credit Card.

As one of the bank’s flagship offerings for female customers, the card provides a rewarding banking experience that is tailored to the needs and preferences of modern women.

Holders of the exclusive card benefit from 0.75 per cent value-



back points on international purchases and 0.5 per cent on purchases made within Oman, making it an ideal choice for both everyday use and travel.

The card also offers unlimited complimentary access to airport

lounges, including the PrimeClass Lounge at Muscat International Airport, PrimeClass Lounge at Duqum Airport and the Khareef Lounge at Salalah International Airport.

Guests accompanying cardholders can also enjoy a 20 per cent discount on lounge entry at “PrimeClass” lounges.

Further enhancing daily life, the card provides a generous 50 per cent discount on movie tickets at VOX Cinema and Cinépolis.

Own the LC Coupe with Lexus’ summer offer

GET the chance to experience the powerful, stunning, and exciting Lexus flagship coupe with incredible benefits from Lexus. This summer, get amazing benefits of 10 years/100,000 km of free service and 1st-year free registration by Lexus, when you purchase a Lexus LC. The campaign that began on June 1, 2025, will last until July 31, 2025. Conditions apply. Please visit Lexus showroom for details.

The Lexus LC is a flagship coupe which represents the evolution of Lexus as a lifestyle. Immediately identifiable as a Lexus thanks to its hallmark spindle grille and dynamic character lines, the LC represents power and luxury, both expressions that echoes the ethos of the brand.

Powered by a high-performance 5.0L V8 engine at a 7,300-rpm and a blistering 4.4-second 0-to-60 time makes every drive exceptional. Paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission the LC takes the lead among the luxury automobile segment.

Lexus also ensured that the in-cabin experience is exceptional. The LC has 12-speaker Mark Levinson audio systems , a 12.3-inch



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touchscreen display with Apple and Android compatibility, a head-up display for more intuitive control, SmartAccess with push-button Start/Stop, an illuminated entry system, Enhanced Active Noise Control, and a Panoramic View Monitor, among a plethora of other advanced features.

The LC is equipped as standard with Lexus Safety System+, an array of active safety features that can help the driver avoid an accident or help lessen the consequences

PDO SECURES GLOBAL ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFICATION IN ICV

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has achieved a significant national milestone, becoming the first entity in Oman dedicated to In-Country Value (ICV) to be awarded the ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System certification. This international recognition reinforces PDO’s leadership in delivering the highest standards of quality and institutional excellence.

The certification was granted to PDO’s ICV Directorate following a rigorous audit of its processes, underscoring the company’s structured and consistent approach to strengthening the ICV ecosystem in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. The vision aims to diversify the national economy, increase private sector participation, and develop local talent and capabilities. ISO 9001:2015 is the world’s



This international recognition reinforces PDO’s leadership in delivering the highest standards of quality and institutional excellence.

leading quality management standard, assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional processes and their alignment with stakeholder needs and expectations. This achievement reflects PDO’s unwavering commitment

to performance excellence, transparency and continuous improvement — delivering tangible economic and social impact across Oman.

The certification was formally presented by NQC, a local quality consultancy firm, during an internal ceremony attended by PDO’s Managing Director, senior leadership and the ICV Directorate team. The event recognised the team’s dedication and efforts in securing this distinguished accreditation.

Commenting on the achievement, Saud al Jabri, ICV Development Manager at PDO, said: “Securing ISO 9001:2015 certification is a landmark achievement that demonstrates our team’s steadfast commitment to excellence, transparency and delivering real value for Oman. It

embodies the culture of quality we cultivate at PDO, empowering us to lead with responsibility and set a new national benchmark for In-Country Value performance.”

He added that this accomplishment further strengthens PDO’s position as a key driver of sustainable economic development in Oman by supporting local content, increasing employment opportunities in vital sectors, expanding the local supplier base, and building national capabilities to prepare Omani talent for future leadership roles.

The certification represents an important step in embedding a quality-focused approach across all ICV projects and initiatives, enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the best possible outcomes at both institutional and national levels.

Sohar International, Sohar Islamic rewards 40 lucky customers



The awards were presented by Abdul Qader al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, and Fahad bin Akbar al Zadjali, Head of Islamic Banking.

strategic intent to recognise and reward responsible financial behaviour through practical and meaningful incentives. Such initiatives play a pivotal role in deepening customer trust, enhancing engagement and contributing to a more rewarding banking experience.”

Fahad al Zadjali, Head of Sohar Islamic added: “Sohar Islamic remains committed to offering value-led financial solutions grounded in ethical principles. Through this campaign, we aim to cultivate responsible spending habits while reinforcing the

tangible benefits of Sharia-compliant banking. Initiatives like this reflect our vision to empower customers through impactful solutions that support their financial wellbeing.”

Launched earlier this year, the Credit Card Acquisition Campaign is designed to encourage both new and existing customers to adopt and actively use their Sohar International or Sohar Islamic credit cards. Customers spending a minimum of RO 50 are automatically entered into a monthly raffle draw, running until the end of the year.

BUSINESS

TECHEXHIBITION



The landmark tech exhibition will spotlight global innovation, national initiatives and investment opportunities.

COMEX 2025 TO PROPEL OMAN AS REGIONAL POWERHOUSE FOR DIGITAL INNOVATION

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 8

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) and Arabian Research Bureau hosted a press conference yesterday to showcase this year’s edition of COMEX, Oman’s premier digital economy and technology innovation exhibition. COMEX 2025 will be held during September 7–10, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, stressed the catalytic position COMEX still enjoys in Oman’s national development priorities.

“COMEX is a premier platform for digital innovation and collaboration,” he stated. “This year’s conference will have success stories of the public and private sectors to demonstrate how technology is shaping our economy”.

COMEX 2025, he said, will feature major international announcements and more participation from countries like Pakistan, China and India as a testament to Oman’s growing presence on the global digital map. In the 2024 edition of the exhibition, 60 agreements worth over RO 85 million were signed — a figure organisers are poised to beat this year. The event speaks directly to the pillars of Oman Vision 2040 and specifically to those for economic diversification, private sector leadership, digital governance and human capital development, the Under-Secretary said.

An area devoted to a government pavilion will highlight key national digital initiatives such as the National Centre for Cybersecurity (Hadatha), the National Centre for AI and Space Technologies and government service integrated platforms.

Themed areas will be devoted to cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, smart cities, space technology and renewable energy — all vision areas of Oman Vision 2040.

Amr Baabood, CEO, OITE Group, noted COMEX’s strategic alignment with Oman’s national vision. “Oman Vision 2040 is a road map for an economy fit for the future. COMEX is not just on this road map’s path — it is building the ecosystem to bring it to life,” he stated. “COMEX closes the gap between technology and national priorities through innovation zones and public-private partnerships”.

This year’s agenda also includes the Cybersecurity Investment and Local Product Forum; and the AI and Quantum Computing Forum to stimulate local capabilities, facilitate research collaboration and push innovation.

There will also be a 24-hour cybersecurity hackathon (CTF) that will challenge participants to develop solutions to real-world threats.

Sultan al Busaidy, Marketing Executive with Arabian Research Bureau, announced the inauguration of national pavilions wherein each country will have a unique space to showcase digital advancements.

SOME GROUND

Yen slides on US tariff threats



The yen weakened against major currencies after US President Donald Trump reaffirmed plans to impose 25% tariffs on imports from Japan and South Korea. Although the yen hit a two-week low of 146.44 to the dollar, it later regained some ground.

Meanwhile, the Australian dollar rose after the central bank held interest rates steady at 3.85 per cent, defying expectations. — ONA

OMAN OIL PRICE RISES \$1.18 TO REACH \$70.89 PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil for September delivery reached \$70.89 on Tuesday, July 8, 2025. The price of Oman oil yesterday increased by \$1.18 compared to Monday’s price of \$69.71.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for July delivery reached \$63.62 per barrel, a decrease of \$4.25 compared to the price for June delivery.



Meanwhile, international oil prices retreated on Tuesday, having climbed almost 2% in the previous session, as investors assessed the latest developments on US tariffs and a higher than expected increase to Opec+ output for August.

Brent crude futures fell 12 cents, or about 0.2%, to \$69.54 a barrel by 10:43 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude lost 25 cents, or about 0.4%, to \$67.79. — Agencies

RO 3.01 bn petrochem investments in SFZ

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 8

SALALAH Free Zone (SFZ) continues to solidify its position as a major investment hub, boasting a significant portfolio of 97 projects with investments exceeding RO 4.74 billion. According to the latest *Duqm Economist* magazine, these investments span a wide array of economic sectors, underscoring the zone’s robust appeal to both local and international investors.

As of the end of April this year, the impressive total of 97 projects highlights the dynamic growth and diversification within the SFZ. The petrochemicals sector stands out as a leading contributor to this investment surge, accounting for a substantial RO 3.01 billion across 14 projects.

While petrochemicals dominate in terms of investment volume, the chemical industries sector also plays a vital role with RO 747 million in investments, complemented by significant contributions from data processing, which has attracted over RO 327 million.

Beyond these major players,



As of the end of April this year, the impressive total of 97 projects highlights the dynamic growth and diversification within the SFZ.

the SFZ’s investment landscape is remarkably varied. Metallurgical industries, with 8 projects, have drawn considerable investment, as have pharmaceutical industries with 5 projects.

Electronics, featuring 3 projects and sectors such as automotive, data processing and recycling, each with 2 projects, further contribute to the diverse industrial base. Niche yet important sectors like green energy, education, telecommunications, automation, marine services and consumer goods are also

part of the SFZ’s portfolio, each represented by a single, impactful project.

The detailed breakdown of projects and investments by sector illustrates the breadth of opportunities available within the free zone.

Food Industries lead in the number of projects with 18, commanding RO 86.68 million in investment. General Trade follows closely with 17 projects, investing RO 20.13 million and Logistics Services contributes 15 projects with RO 20.12 million.

Petrochemicals, despite

TENDER LAUNCHED FOR \$103M SPRAY BOULEVARD PROJECT IN SALALAH

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 8

WITH its lush landscapes and monsoon mist, Salalah has always been a magnet for visitors seeking escape and serenity. Now, that natural beauty is being transformed into something lasting. Oman has officially launched the tender for the first phase of Spray Boulevard, a new cultural and tourism destination designed to capture the spirit of Dhofar’s Khareef season and share it with the world.

The project will rise in the Ittin highlands overlooking the city, with a total investment of RO 40 million (\$103 million). The Ministry of Finance has committed RO 10 million to fund the first phase of infrastructure and public works, while the remaining investment will come through private-sector partnerships.

Together, this marks one of the country’s most ambitious regional development efforts under the banner of Oman Vision 2040.

The project’s name — Spray Boulevard — pays homage to the fine mist that drifts through Salalah during the Khareef Dhofar season. That



Artist’s rendering of the Spray Boulevard project.

same seasonal magic has inspired a plan to create an open, living space where locals and tourists alike can gather, explore and experience Dhofar through design, culture, food and nature.

The tender is open exclusively to Omani contractors classified as Grade 1 in road and infrastructure works. In a nod to inclusivity and local empowerment, SMEs are encouraged to participate, with a discounted fee of just RO 100, compared to RO 1,500 for larger firms.

Contractors have until July 17, 2025 to acquire the tender documents and must submit bids by August 12, 2025, using Oman’s national procurement platform, [etimad.tenderboard.gov.om](#).

The scope of this first phase includes critical enabling works: grading, internal roads, utility lines, drainage and supporting infrastructure. These are the foundations upon which the broader vision will rise.

Spray Boulevard will stretch across 470,000 square metres, offering a mix of public markets, canals, performance spaces, restaurants, gardens and innovation hubs.

Among its planned features are the Grand Market, The Square, a central Fountain Island, botanical gardens, elevated walkways, open-air theatres and a newly revitalised Al Murooj Amphitheatre.

The project will also include spaces for creative industries, cultural exhibitions and environmental education. Once complete, Spray Boulevard is expected to attract around 800,000 visitors each Khareef Dhofar season, with an additional 200,000 people visiting throughout the year.

SAFE HAVEN

Gold holds steady amidst uncertainty



Gold prices remained steady as investors weighed safe-haven demand against rising US Treasury yields.

Spot gold dipped 0.1% to \$3,331.85 an ounce, while US futures settled at \$3,341.80.

Other precious metals showed mixed movement: silver was unchanged at \$36.75, platinum slipped 0.1% to \$1,368.93 and palladium rose 0.2% to \$1,112.88. — ONA

SHARP GAINS

Rare earth prices surge on China curbs



Prices of rare earth metals surged in May following China’s decision to tighten export restrictions. A Bavarian Industry Association index reported an 8% rise in dollar terms. Some critical minerals saw sharper gains — terbium climbed 19%, gadolinium 17% and samarium 15%.

These metals are essential for advanced technologies including electronics and defence. — ONA

OPINION

Seaweed farming: A green opportunity for Oman’s blue economy



DR KHALID
AL SUBHI

The writer is a researcher at the Center of Excellence in Marine Biotechnology, Sultan Qaboos University.

AS nations worldwide grapple with the twin challenges of feeding a growing population and confronting climate change, seaweed is emerging as a quiet but powerful ally in the quest for sustainable development.

In Oman, researchers and policymakers are turning their attention to the rich potential of seaweed cultivation as a tool for environmental resilience, food security and economic diversification.

With over 3,100 kilometres of coastline bordering the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman, the Sultanate of Oman is uniquely positioned to develop a thriving seaweed industry. Seaweeds — marine macroalgae known for their rapid growth and diverse applications — are used globally in food, animal feed, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and as bioactive compounds in the bioeconomy.

They also play a vital role in environmental management, absorbing carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus from seawater, thus helping combat climate change and marine pollution.

Globally, seaweed farming is dominated by Asia, with China accounting for nearly 59% of global production, followed by Indonesia (29%), South Korea (5%) and the Philippines (4%), according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022).

While Oman is yet to enter the global

seaweed market in a significant way, its waters host more than 400 species of benthic marine algae. An updated checklist by Wynne (2018) identified 238 red algae, 89 green algae and 75 brown algae species along Oman’s northern Arabian Sea coast.

Notable among these are Hypnea and Gracilaria — red algae valued for their production of agar and carrageenan, substances widely used in food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products.

Recent extraction studies have shown that intensified alkaline processes can yield carrageenan at rates nearly three times higher than traditional methods, suggesting untapped industrial potential.

However, despite the rich biodiversity, Oman’s macroalgal resources remain underexplored. Studies by Jupp (2002) revealed extensive seaweed presence in the upwelling zones along the Arabian Sea coast, while the Sea of Oman was found to be relatively barren due to high salinity, elevated temperatures and limited nutrient availability.

This disparity underscores the need for targeted research to assess the viability of large-scale seaweed farming in Oman’s varied marine environments.

Seaweed cultivation is now being discussed as a key component in Oman’s strategy to

In Oman, researchers and policymakers are turning their attention to the rich potential of seaweed cultivation as a tool for environmental resilience, food security and economic diversification.

achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, a central pillar of Oman Vision 2040. A 2023 report by The Nature Conservancy and Bain & Company identified seaweed farming as a nature-based solution with strong potential for carbon sequestration.

By absorbing CO₂ and depositing organic material into marine sediments, seaweed farms could help offset emissions while improving ocean health by mitigating eutrophication and deoxygenation.

Yet challenges remain. Experts emphasise the urgent need for comprehensive studies to map seaweed resources, identify the most suitable species for cultivation and assess both environmental and economic impacts.

Critical to this effort is understanding the market demand for seaweed-based products and determining how best to integrate seaweed farming into Oman’s coastal communities without disrupting existing ecosystems or livelihoods.

If done strategically, seaweed farming could offer Oman a win-win opportunity: a tool for environmental restoration and climate mitigation and a new pillar of the blue economy. As the world looks towards scalable, nature-based solutions, Oman’s extensive coastline and ecological diversity could position it as a regional leader in sustainable aquaculture.

TRUMP’S TRADE WAR PROMISES NO REAL ENDGAME

GABRIEL RUBIN

THE reward for negotiators from South Africa to Malaysia working to reach a deal with the White House: three more weeks in the pressure cooker.

On Monday, President Donald Trump again extended his deadline to seal country-by-country trade agreements, this time until August 1. The announcement came posed as a threat, with letters sent to a group of world leaders declaring that their exports would be subject to levies ranging from 25% to 40% next month. Effectively a reminder of Trump’s “Liberation Day” tariff threats, his whack-a-mole demands portend ill for any deals that are struck.

Japan and South Korea provide cautionary tales. Trump’s April trade announcement applied levies of 24% and 25%, respectively, only to be delayed for negotiations.

He has since vented that Japan does not buy enough American rice and cars. Yet half of all the tariff-free rice Japan imports comes from the US already. Meanwhile, US rice exports to all countries account for a measly \$2 billion, less than the \$13 billion Japanese tourism contributed to the domestic economy in 2019, according to the State Department. Trump and spokesperson Karoline Leavitt nonetheless fixate on this one issue.

South Korea shows the cost of failing to satisfy such whims. The country sealed a free trade agreement with the US that came into force in 2012. It did nothing to prevent today’s broadside.

Now, Trump’s agenda could slow Korean industrial giants’ efforts to ramp production on American shores: recent cuts to electric-vehicle subsidies may ding the likes of battery maker SK On and automaker Hyundai.

Tariff threats against smaller countries are particularly difficult to appease. Look at, say, Laos. Its goods imports from the US amounted to \$40 million, versus \$803 million in goods exports, in 2024. This is infinitesimal in the scheme of the US’s overall \$1.2 trillion goods trade deficit, yet a promised 40% tariff on its exports would be extremely material to Laos’s own \$16 billion economy.

Furthermore, what any country gets for reaching a “deal” is still nebulous beyond lowering rates that have never been imposed. Look at Vietnam, where Trump announced a tentative agreement setting a 20% tariff and a levy designed to target products passing through the country from elsewhere.

Monday’s announcements for South Korea and Japan, where there is no deal, involve the same “trans-shipment” charge plus a 25% baseline rate.

Meanwhile, new bugbears — like an additional threatened 10% duty on the BRICS nations — creep up. Whether the tumult can ever really end is unclear. The best outcome for any country might be the framework sealed with the UK, which softened some trade barriers but little else. It’s a small win now, without relying on Trump not to simply change his mind in the future. — Reuters

Managing price risk in mineral and metals sector

THE Sultanate of Oman is richly endowed with natural resources, including key metallic minerals such as copper, chromite, manganese, lead, zinc and gold, as well as industrial minerals like limestone, marble, dolomite, gypsum, laterite, silica, salt and quartzite.

These substantial mineral deposits offer significant opportunities for exploration, commercialisation and value-added processing. Oman also hosts several aluminium manufacturing companies, including the globally renowned Sohar Aluminium, which has helped place the country on the global map in non-ferrous metal manufacturing.

However, one of the major challenges facing miners, producers and traders is managing the inherent price volatility of metals and minerals. Prices of these commodities are largely influenced by international market dynamics — ranging from global demand-supply imbalances to geopolitical developments, currency fluctuations and broader economic cycles.

In such an unpredictable environment, merely focusing on production and sales is no longer sufficient to ensure financial stability or protect profit margins.

To address these uncertainties, hedging has emerged as a powerful and essential tool in the risk management arsenal of businesses operating in the commodities space.

Hedging allows companies to lock in prices for future transactions, thereby reducing exposure to price fluctuations and providing a greater degree of certainty for planning and budgeting purposes.

The London Metal Exchange (LME) plays a vital role in this ecosystem by offering a platform for hedging non-ferrous metals such as aluminium, copper, tin, nickel, zinc and lead. Oman based producers who export or import these commodities can directly benefit from this established global framework.

When a miner or manufacturer decides to hedge, it is akin to taking out an insurance policy against



These substantial mineral deposits offer significant opportunities for exploration, commercialisation and value-added processing.



MRUTYUNJAYA
MOHANTY

The writer is a chartered accountant and a CFO professional.

adverse price movements. Although hedging does not prevent price volatility, it significantly cushions the financial impact of such volatility. This enables businesses to focus on operational efficiency and long-term strategy without being derailed by short-term market fluctuations.

Hedging in the commodities market typically involves the use of derivative instruments such as forward contracts, futures, options and swaps. These instruments allow parties to agree on prices today for transactions that will take place in the future, thereby limiting their risk exposure.

A forward contract is an agreement between two parties to buy or sell a specific quantity of metal at a predetermined price on a future date.

This arrangement is particularly useful for miners and traders looking to secure revenues by locking in sales prices that align with their budgeting and

profitability targets. Being customised, forwards are flexible but come with counterparty risk.

Futures contracts, on the other hand, are standardised agreements traded on exchanges. They are similar to forwards in function but differ in structure.

Because they are exchange-traded, futures offer enhanced transparency, liquidity and reduced counterparty risk. They are ideal for businesses seeking regulatory oversight and ease of exit or rollover.

Options contracts add another layer of flexibility. An options contract grants the buyer the right — but not the obligation — to buy or sell an asset at a specified price within a defined timeframe. A call option gives the right to buy, while a put option gives the right to sell.

In both cases, the buyer pays a premium to the seller for this privilege. Options are particularly valuable for companies that want to protect themselves against downside risk while still retaining the potential to benefit from upward price movements.

Swaps are another important financial instrument used in hedging. In a typical commodity price swap, one party agrees to pay a fixed price over a given period, while the counterparty pays a floating market price.

If market prices rise above the fixed rate, the hedger benefits from cash compensation; if prices fall, they make up the difference. These contracts are often arranged through financial institutions and help businesses stabilise cash flows and revenues across fluctuating markets.

In Oman’s context, the use of such instruments is steadily gaining ground as companies in the mining and metals sector become more financially sophisticated.

As Oman continues to diversify its economy and strengthen its position in global supply chains, robust price risk management strategies will become increasingly vital. Hedging is not merely a financial technique — it is a strategic necessity for ensuring resilience and sustainability in the face of global commodity market volatility.

BUSINESS

WASHINGTON/TOKYO: Powerhouse Asian economies Japan and South Korea said on Tuesday they would try to negotiate with the US to soften the impact of sharply higher tariffs that President Donald Trump now plans to impose from the start of August.

Trump ramped up his trade war again on Monday, telling 14 nations that they would face tariffs ranging from 25% for countries including Japan and South Korea, to 40% for Laos and Myanmar.

However, with the start date pushed back to August 1, those countries were focusing on the new three-week window to press for an easier ride.

Japan wants concessions for its large automobile industry, top trade negotiator Ryosei Akazawa said on Tuesday.

Akazawa said he held a 40-minute phone call with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in which the two agreed to actively continue negotiations.

However, he said he would not sacrifice Japan's agriculture sector — a powerful political lobby domestically - for the sake of an

JAPAN, S KOREA TO NEGOTIATE ON TARIFFS BEFORE AUGUST DEADLINE

Trump ramped up his trade war again on Monday, telling 14 nations that they would face tariffs ranging from 25% for countries including Japan and South Korea, to 40% for Laos and Myanmar.



New vehicles from the Japanese auto makers Subaru and Honda are seen at a parking lot in the Port of Richmond, at the bay of San Francisco, California. — Reuters

early deal.

South Korea said it planned to intensify trade talks over the coming weeks "to reach a mutually beneficial result."

Asked if the latest deadline was firm, Trump replied on Monday: "I would say firm but not 100% firm. If they call up and they say we'd like to do something a different way, we're going to be open to that."

Global stocks were flat to marginally higher on Tuesday, as investors took in their stride the latest twist in the tariff saga, but the yen slid on the prospect of duties on Japanese goods.

Economists warned that the long-running tariff disputes risked stunting growth and pushing up prices, causing headaches for policymakers.

"The ongoing threat of higher tariffs intensifies stagflationary risks in the United States and puts pressure on Europe to stimulate domestic demand further in order to offset headwinds in international trade," said David Kohl, chief economist at Swiss-based bank Julius Baer.

— Reuters

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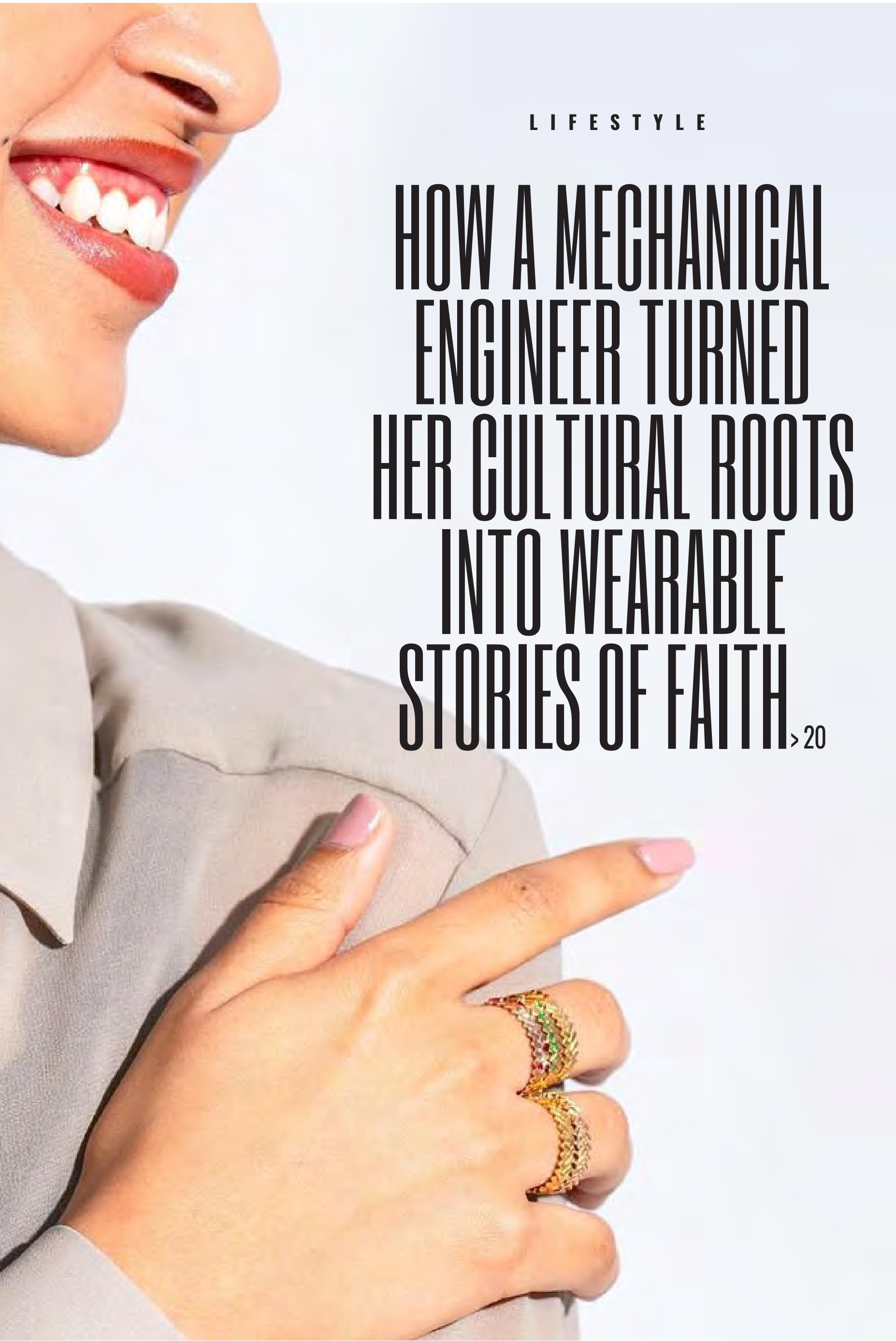
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L I F E S T Y L E

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ENTERTAINMENT

‘Jurassic World: Rebirth’ roars to top of N American box office



“JURASSIC WORLD: REBIRTH” — the latest installment in the blockbuster dinosaur saga — stomped the July 4th weekend competition at the North American box office, raking in a whopping \$91.5 million in its debut, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

The Universal film, starring Scarlett Johansson, Jonathan Bailey and Mahershala Ali, takes viewers to an abandoned island research facility for the original Jurassic Park theme park, where secrets — and genetically mutated dinosaurs — are lurking.

“This is an excellent opening for the 7th episode of an action-adventure monster series,” said analyst David A Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.

“The series has been especially good overseas and so far foreign business is outstanding. Dinosaur action is understood in all languages and across all cultures”.

“F1: The Movie,” the Apple and Warner Bros flick starring Brad Pitt as a washed-up Formula One driver who gets one last shot at redemption, slipped to second place at \$26.1 million, Exhibitor Relations said.

“How to Train Your Dragon,” Universal and DreamWorks Animation’s live-action reboot of the popular 2010 film, held in third place at \$11 million. The family-friendly film tells the story of a Viking named Hiccup (Mason Thames) who strikes up a friendship with Toothless the dragon.

In fourth place was Disney/Pixar Animation’s latest original film “Elio”, at \$5.7 million in the United States and Canada.

“Elio” tells the story of a young boy who is mistaken by aliens as an intergalactic ambassador for Earth. The voice cast includes Oscar winner Zoe Saldana.

In fifth place was Columbia Pictures’ zombie sequel “28 Years Later”, which took in \$4.6 million. The Danny Boyle-directed threequel picks up — as the title suggests — more than a generation after the initial outbreak of the Rage Virus.

Rounding out the top 10 were: “M3GAN 2.0” (\$3.8 million); “Lilo & Stitch” (\$3.8 million); “Mission: Impossible — The Final Reckoning” (\$2.7 million); “Materialists” (\$1.3 million); and “Ballerina” (\$725,000). — AFP

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



LIFESTYLE

Life-sized statues depicting footballer Cristiano Ronaldo celebrating a goal is seen on display during the opening of the CR7 LIFE Museum in Hong Kong. — AFP



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood actors Rajkumar Rao (L) and Prosenjit Chatterjee attend the trailer launch of their upcoming Indian Hindi-language gangster action thriller film ‘Maalik’ in Mumbai. — AFP



MUSIC

British singer Abigail Morris of the indie rock band “The Last Dinner Party” performs on stage during the 35th edition of the ‘Eurockéennes de Belfort’ music festival in Sermamagny, France. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Iron Age Roman settlement uncovered in UK after rare sword find



ARCHAEOLOGISTS have uncovered a rare Iron Age Roman settlement following the discovery of two Roman cavalry swords near a Cotswolds village. The excavation, prompted by geophysical surveys, suggests the site may include a Roman villa. The swords, found during a metal-detecting rally two years ago by Glenn Manning, were later donated to the Corinium Museum in Cirencester. Manning described the find as “amazing”, sharing that he had a feeling, something special would be uncovered the day before. The swords, likely used by Roman cavalry from the early second to third century AD, are known as spatha and are associated with mounted soldiers. Historic England’s surveys revealed potential prehistoric and Romano-British remains, including three or four Iron Age ring ditches, a large rectangular enclosure and Roman limestone structures possibly forming a villa. Further excavations this year

uncovered settlement evidence spanning several centuries, emphasising the area’s historical significance. More archaeological work is planned and authorities may recommend the site be protected as a scheduled monument. The discovery offers insights into the transition from Iron Age to Roman Britain, particularly during the tumultuous period of Roman conquest. Ian Barnes of Historic England noted the importance of these findings for understanding settlement patterns in Gloucestershire. Peter Busby of Cotswold Archaeology praised the efforts of volunteers and professionals, noting how they transformed a ploughed field into a story of a multi-century settlement. Emma Stuart, director of the Corinium Museum, highlighted the significance of the rare weapons, enriching the story of Roman life in the Cotswolds. The swords will be on display at the museum from August 2. — dpa



Jonathan Anderson sets a new dressing agenda at Dior

A PHOTO of Christian Dior’s original salon stretched the width of the Invalides, the gold-domed palace where Napoleon is buried, offering a fish-eye view of the past to the throngs shrieking outside — and a sign of just where Dior believes it belongs in the pantheon of French power. Inside, dove-gray velvet lined the walls of a temporary event space and displayed two rare 18th-century oils by Jean Siméon Chardin on loan from the National Galleries of Scotland and the Louvre. Robert Pattinson gossiped with Josh O’Connor. Donatella Versace schmoozed with Roger Federer. A pregnant Rihanna arrived with A\$AP Rocky a mere 45 minutes after the official start time. That’s how much anticipation there was for the Dior men’s show. Filmmaker Luca Guadagnino was even trailing around to document the moment. It was Jonathan Anderson’s debut as the creative director/saviour of the house, the first designer to be put in charge of both menswear and womenswear. And under all the buzz, a giant question mark hovered: Could the former Loewe wunderkind reignite excitement not just in the brand but in fashion? Anderson made it look easy. Literally. Beginning with his take on the Bar jacket, the most famous Dior womenswear shape — the one that prompted Harper’s Bazaar editor Carmel Snow to jump out of her seat shrieking, “It’s a New Look!” in 1947. It was reimagined in a Donegal tweed with a flat back and a whiff of the hourglass at the front, as if it retained a vague memory of what it once was. With it, he paired not a shirt but a stiff white stock collar and a pair of oversize white cotton cargo shorts, each side sporting elaborate folds to create the plumped out silhouette of a goose, or a 1948 couture dress called the Delft. Go on, shake your tail feathers. If little Lord Fauntleroy had spent a year at the University of Southern California and then returned for a pickup game of basketball at



Versailles, this is how he might dress. It was not a capital N New Look. It wasn’t that radical, or shocking. But it was an awfully charming newish one. And it was situated smack in the middle of the tension between formality and informality, menswear and womenswear, commerce and creativity (Anderson’s own work at Loewe and Uniqlo and what he inherited at Dior), which seems to define this particular moment. No one is all one thing or another. Neither are their clothes. Neither are the totems of wealth. What Anderson proposed was a clear and convincing argument that contradictions can gracefully coexist. Most of all, he put forward the belief that fashion and wearability are not irreconcilable ideas — that you either have to look bizarre or look boring. For every highfalutin garment there was an equal and opposite this-old-thing, usually worn together. Velvet frock coats were paired with faded jeans in Japanese

denim. Olive green puffer coats and down vests were cut with trapeze backs. The exact pattern of another classic Dior dress, the Caprice, with its elaborately swathed peplum skirt, was applied to a pair of loose khakis, giving one leg the fillip of a drape. An 18th-century frock coat was exactly reproduced — in moleskin. There were shamrocks on tennis shoes and high-tops with driving shoe soles; cable knits under elaborate waist coats. There was a lot of neck action. Book totes borrowed, again, from the women’s line, with actual book titles on them from Baudelaire and Françoise Sagan. Anderson had clearly done his homework. Easter eggs to early Dior were everywhere. Even the labels inside the clothes were in the designer’s preferred silk faille. He was never going to toss everything out the window and start again. He couldn’t. Dior is a multibillion-dollar business, after all and some of his predecessors (Raf Simons, Hedi Slimane, John Galliano) were his idols. Once upon a time, a designer might have had the arrogance to wipe the slate clean, but this is a new age. The industry is in crisis and the creative tectonic plates are shifting. It is why Anderson invited seemingly every other designer in Paris to join him at the show. It is also why he picked the Chardin oils and why he seeded his Instagram with Warhol Polaroids of Lee Radziwill and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Chardin, he said in a preview, “kind of loosened up the still life”; Warhol made pop culture high art. Both crystallised an inflection point in culture. Anderson clearly wants his Dior to do the same. His show invitation came borne on a china plate with three china eggs on top, as if a reminder that the menswear was just the beginning (and maybe to acknowledge that some shells may get broken along the way). Fair enough. The result may not knock you sideways, but it’s likely to make you sit up and buy. Not to mention whetting the appetite for his first womenswear collection, come September. — NYT

FEATURES



HOW A MECHANICAL ENGINEER TURNED HER CULTURAL ROOTS INTO WEARABLE STORIES OF FAITH

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI

IN OMAN, jewellery isn't just about adornment; it runs deep in the fabric of the nation's history and culture. For centuries, Omani craftsmen have created beautiful pieces that tell stories of family, faith and tradition. These aren't simply decorative objects — they are tokens of identity, markers of life's milestones and links to a heritage that spans generations. Among those carrying this legacy forward today is Zeina al Hinai, a talented jeweller whose work honours her roots and the rich history of Oman's

jewellery craftsmanship. Omani jewellery has long been distinguished by its intricate designs, skilled craftsmanship and meaningful symbolism. From delicate filigree work to bold, statement pieces, it reflects a culture that values beauty, community and spirituality. Many of Oman's traditional styles have roots in the diverse influences that shaped the region — Arab, African, Persian and Indian. Each piece tells a story of cultural exchange and ingenuity, a testament to the skilled hands of Omani artisans passed down through the ages. Zeina grew up surrounded by this vibrant jewellery heritage. Her family often wore pieces that carried significance — gifts bestowed during weddings, religious occasions, or rites of passage. She learned early on that gold in Oman wasn't just material wealth — it was a vessel for stories, history and emotion. For Zeina, jewellery was a way of holding onto memories, celebrating life's most important moments and expressing her identity. But it was her own journey that sparked a new conversation about what jewellery could represent today. Zeina, trained as a mechanical engineer, discovered she also had a passion for design. Merging her technical knowledge with her cultural background, she began exploring ways to create jewellery that was rooted in her heritage but also spoke to contemporary life. One of Zeina's most meaningful projects started when her son, Badr, was born. She wanted to mark that significant moment with a piece of jewellery that went beyond mere ornamentation. She didn't want something generic — she sought a symbol that captured the depth and beauty of new life, a connection that could be cherished for generations. That desire led her to revisit the core principles of Omani craftsmanship, infusing her work with spiritual and cultural symbolism. Zeina turned to the Quran, seeking inspiration within its verses and stories. She started pondering how jewellery could serve as a physical reminder of faith and love, of family bonds and gratitude. The idea took shape: what if each piece could carry names, meanings and references from the Quran, making every piece deeply personal and spiritually resonant? It would be a way to wear faith and heritage close to the heart. Drawing inspiration from traditional Omani rings — known locally as *tahyis*— Zeina wanted her jewellery to be something more than static adornment. In Oman, a *tahyis* is often worn on the index finger and the act of twisting the ring around the finger is a familiar, intimate gesture. She thought: what if a piece of jewellery could move with you, holding your story in motion? The name “Hiyyas”, which became Zeinab's brand, is inspired by a traditional Omani type of ring, typically worn on the index finger. Each piece of Hiyyas is more than an accessory — it's a personal archive. The

process begins with choosing a name or meaning that holds significance for the wearer, then locating all the places where that word appears in the Quran. This isn't mass-produced jewellery; every ring is a handcrafted journey. Her design process was meticulous. Zeina used her engineering skills to model her ideas digitally, mapping where specific words or names from the Quran would appear on each piece. These details might be raised from the surface or embedded as tiny gemstones — subtle symbols that only the wearer would recognise. Once the digital model was complete, the design was turned into a wax model, then cast in gold. Each final piece was individually handcrafted, making every ring unique. This approach challenged the notion of jewellery as mass-market product. In Oman and neighbouring regions, gold has long symbolised celebration — weddings, births, bequests of love. But Zeina's creations aimed to shift that perspective. Gold became a vessel for meaning, a connection to faith and personal stories. She wanted her jewellery to do more than decorate; she wanted it to embody depth, to serve as a tangible link to one's history, beliefs and identity. Creating these pieces wasn't without its hurdles. Translating abstract concepts into physical objects that still felt authentic was a complex task. It involved patience, precision and respect for traditional craftsmanship while embracing new ideas. Zeina's work is a reminder that the journey from idea to wearable art is one of dedication — combining technical skill with deep cultural appreciation. The reception has been encouraging. More and more customers in Oman and beyond have shown interest in jewellery that resonates on a spiritual level, that isn't just about aesthetics but about connection. Zeina comments that while Oman has a proud history with gold, modern tastes are evolving. People are seeking jewellery that reflects who they are and what they believe, not just what they look like. Looking ahead, Zeina's work continues to evolve. Recently, she crafted a collection inspired by Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, one of Oman's most beautiful mountain ranges. She designed over a hundred earrings shaped like pomegranate seeds — each one unique and imbued with symbolism drawn from the lush, abundant nature of the region. These tiny designs celebrate life, fertility and growth — echoing the land's richness and its importance in Omani culture. Every piece is a testament to the local environment and the traditional stories passed down for generations. For Zeina, her work is more than creating beautiful jewellery; it's about reconnecting her community with their roots and inspiring pride in their heritage. She sees her designs as a continuation of the centuries-old craftsmanship that Oman has cultivated, adapting those timeless techniques into modern forms that still carry the spirit and soul of the traditional arts.