



The Observer is bringing out an online supplement on Fifa World Cup 2026, which will be published on www.omanobserver.om at 12 pm daily.



OMAN'S AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

TRIPOLI: Mohamed al Menfi, President of the Presidential Council of the State of Libya, received Dr Hilal bin Abdullah al Sinani, who presented his credentials as the non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sultanate of Oman to the sisterly State of Libya, on Saturday.

This took place during a reception held at the Council's headquarters in the capital, Tripoli. The step marks the beginning of a new phase of close diplomatic action and joint cooperation between the two brotherly countries, establishing an effective and fruitful partnership across various fields to fulfil the aspirations of the two brotherly peoples for further development and sustainable strategic cooperation. — ONA



Mohamed al Menfi, President of the Presidential Council of the State of Libya, with Dr Hilal bin Abdullah al Sinani in Tripoli on Saturday.

Oman's foreign direct investment hits ~~2~~ 31 billion

MUSCAT: The investment promotion sector in the Sultanate of Oman is seeing a quantum leap, represented in the efficiency of the integrated system for attracting capital and supporting sustainable economic diversification.

Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farooji, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, said that the volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Sultanate of Oman recorded steady growth in recent years, reaching approximately RO 31 billion.

She pointed out that the industrial sector is currently at the forefront of economic diversification efforts, with its investment contribution growing from 6 per cent to 9.5 per cent. She considered it one of the fundamental pillars for strengthening



Two projects at
Sohar Free Zone
to contribute at
least RO 1 billion
annually to the
trade balance
and export
revenues

the national economy's ability to withstand global shocks and to benefit from the Sultanate of Oman's strategic location and free trade agreements.

She said that the 'Invest in Oman' hall has achieved tangible results in addressing investment challenges and localising major strategic projects through integration and collaboration with partners in relevant government units across strategic sectors. She explained that the hall received 96 investment

applications and successfully localised 44 projects that have entered the implementation phase, including 36 new projects for the local market. These efforts also contributed to resolving the challenges faced by seven stalled strategic projects and reactivating them.

The polysilicon production project at Sohar Free Zone is a strategic project that is expected to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's position as the second largest global exporter of this vital material.

The project has attracted complementary projects within the supply chains, including the GE Solar solar panel manufacturing project in Suhar. The two projects are anticipated to contribute at least RO 1 billion annually to the trade balance and export revenues, she said. — **ONA**

SOCCER FEVER GRIPS THE WORLD



Artists perform during the opening ceremony of the 2026 World Cup football tournament in the US in Inglewood on Saturday. — AFP

Peace deal looms while Hormuz sees flare ups

THE United States and Iran signalled on Friday that an agreement to end their war was close, with a senior US administration official saying both sides had agreed on a text and that Washington expects to sign an initial deal in the coming days.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said that while changes in the deal were still possible, the tentative agreement showed his country had emerged stronger from the conflict.

"Iran is the winner of the war with the US," he said on state television.

Hours after those remarks, US forces shot down multiple Iranian one-way attack drones heading toward the Strait of Hormuz, a source familiar with the matter said. The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the drones had posed a threat to commercial traffic.

Iranian news agencies had reported that explosions were heard along the strait in Iran's Sirik port and Qeshm island, which residents and local officials attributed to shots fired by Iranian forces to warn vessels attempting to cross the waterway without permission from the Revolutionary Guards' navy.

The proposed memorandum of understanding calls for reopening the strait and lifting the US naval blockade on Iranian ports, sources on all sides of the talks said. Negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme — US President Donald Trump's stated rationale for starting the war — would take place afterward. The US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters that the deal met Trump's core objectives and put negotiations "in a very, very good place."

Accounts of the draft proposal from Western, Pakistani and Iranian sources pointed to terms that could favour Iran, drawing criticism from Trump, who dismissed the reports as inaccurate. While there were minor differences in the details, the proposals broadly offered Tehran much of what it has



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Kfar Tibnit on Saturday. — **AFP REPORT ON P7**

1. Proposed deal calls for reopening strait, US lifting blockade

2. Iran says changes still possible, nuclear talks later

3. Israel PM says it won't be party to the agreement

sought, with Trump appearing to secure little beyond the reopening of the strait, which Iran closed after the U.S. and Israel strikes in February.

“Our sword will always hang over the Strait of Hormuz,” he said. A Western source said the deal could be signed as soon as Sunday by US Vice-President JD Vance and Iran’s parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, with Geneva seen as the likeliest venue. Araqchi said the deal would be signed remotely

before it is announced.

The US administration official said Europe had been discussed as a venue for signing but no decision had been made.

Draft terms of the deal described to Reuters by multiple sources indicate the US would begin releasing billions of dollars in frozen Iranian assets and waive sanctions on its oil exports, in return for Iran opening the strait.

Iran's nuclear programme would be addressed during a 60-day period of talks. — Reuters

OMAN



The forum will focus on promising economic sectors of mutual interest.

OMANI-TUNISIAN
BUSINESS FORUM
ON JUNE 17

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) will organise the Omani-Tunisian Business Forum on June 17, Wednesday, with the participation of business owners, officials, and representatives of companies and economic institutions from both countries.

The Omani-Tunisian Business Forum is held as part of ongoing efforts to enhance economic, trade, and investment cooperation between Oman and the Republic of Tunisia. The forum aims to expand cooperation between the private sectors of both countries, providing business owners with an opportunity to explore available investment opportunities and discuss the possibility of establishing partnerships and joint ventures that contribute to developing trade and strengthening economic integration between the two sides. The forum will focus on promising economic sectors of mutual interest, including food industries, renewable energy, textiles, and agricultural promotion. It will witness bilateral meetings between representatives of companies and institutions from both sides to discuss cooperation opportunities and exchange expertise.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, said that the forum comes within the framework of the OCCI's keenness to strengthen economic cooperation with countries. — ONA

30 cybersecurity
experts graduate



Graduates from the National Cybersecurity Leadership Programme.

MUSCAT: A first cohort comprising 30 specialists graduated from the National Cybersecurity Leadership Programme on Saturday.

The graduation ceremony was held under the auspices of Mulham bin Bashir al Jarf, Vice-Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The two-year programme aims to develop and empower 100 national cybersecurity professionals to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's readiness to meet the growing cybersecurity challenges.

This initiative, which aims to prepare the next generation of national cybersecurity experts in the Sultanate of Oman, is part of the efforts of the Oman

Investment Authority (OIA) to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and contribute to building a secure, competitive, and innovation-driven digital ecosystem based on world-class national expertise. The two-year programme aims to enhance decision-making capabilities, improve organisational resilience, and raise the level of cybersecurity competence at the national level. The programme is a strategic initiative aimed to develop national cadres in this field to meet the sector's growing demands.

Cybersecurity experts will be selected from government entities and vital sectors. The programme contributes to building a national

community of skilled professionals equipped with the experience, strategic vision, and capabilities necessary to protect critical digital infrastructure and enhance national cyber resilience.

Developed in collaboration between OTC and PwC Middle East, the programme aims to accelerate digital transformation in Oman and enhance national efforts to build an innovation-driven, knowledge-based economy.

The participants will benefit from a comprehensive learning that combines executive education, crisis simulations, peer collaboration, and strategic leadership interaction. — ONA



This marks the Oman Air's third win in the category.

OMAN AIR WINS ME'S
MOST COMFORTABLE
SEATS AWARD

DUBLIN: Oman Air has secured a major international recognition at the 2026 Apex Best Awards, winning the title of 'Most Comfortable Seats in the Middle East' during a ceremony held in Dublin on the sidelines of the Future Travel Experience Europe, Middle East & Africa Ancillary Services and Retail 2026 conference.

This marks the airline's third win in the category, having previously received the same honour in 2022 and 2024, reinforcing its position as a leading carrier offering premium travel experiences in the region.

Renata Rashid, Vice-President of Brand, Guest Experience and Loyalty at Oman Air, said the award reflects strong customer satisfaction and trust, and highlights the airline's continued commitment to enhancing the travel experience.

She added that the recognition underscores Oman Air's ongoing investment in upgrading its products and services, including spacious cabin designs, modern seating, and diverse onboard offerings aimed at delivering a luxury experience for passengers.

The Apex Best Awards are based on independently verified passenger surveys assessing airline excellence across seat comfort, cabin service, food and beverages, in-flight entertainment, and connectivity. — ONA

إرث المستقبل
TREASURE THE FUTURE

مدينة السلطان هيثم
SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

EMBRACE THE GIFT OF OPPORTUNITY

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, in coordination with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, is pleased to invite specialized companies registered in the Excellent Grade and possessing the required expertise to participate in the following tender:

طرح مناقصة حزمة الأعمال رقم 24
TENDERING WORKS PACKAGE 24

إنشاء المركز الثقافي والاجتماعي في حي رقم ٩
Cultural and Community Centre in Neighbourhood 9

الشركات المستهدفة : فئة الدرجة الممتازة
Targeted Companies : Excellent Grade Category

طرح مناقصة حزمة الأعمال رقم 14
TENDERING WORKS PACKAGE 14

إنشاء مجمع المدارس الحكومية في حي الوفاء
Construction of the Public School Cluster in Hay Al wafaa

الشركات المستهدفة : فئة الدرجة الممتازة
Targeted Companies : Excellent Grade Category

مؤعد تسليم عطاءات المناقصة
BID SUBMISSION CLOSING

19-07-2026
17:30 PM

آخر موعد لشراء مستندات المناقصة
TENDER DOCUMENT PURCHASES END

24-06-2026
17:30 PM

مؤعد الحصول على مستندات المناقصة
TENDER DOCUMENT PURCHASE START DATE

10-06-2026
17:30 PM

آلية شراء المناقصة
TENDER PROCUREMENT PROCESS

يرجى زيارة الموقع:
ETENDERING.TENDERBOARD.GOV.OM

SHC's portfolio
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قم بمسح رمز QR لتحميل الملف

Shcpmo@housing.gov.om

للتواصل والاستفسار
For contact and inquiries

هيئة المشاريع والمناقصات والمحتوى المحلي
Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority

وزارة الثقافة والرياضة والشباب
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth

وزارة التعليم
Ministry of Education

وزارة الإسكان والتخطيط العمراني
Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning

اغتنم فرص الحياة

يسر وزارة الإسكان والتخطيط العمراني وبالتنسيق مع هيئة المشاريع والمناقصات والمحتوى المحلي دعوة الشركات المتخصصة والمقيمة بالدرجة الممتازة من ذوي الخبرة للمشاركة في المناقصة التالية:

مجمع المدارس الحكومية
Public School Cluster

المركز الثقافي والاجتماعي
Cultural and Community Centre

SHORTTAKES



Gulzar Hazar Nisha with her son in India.

INDIAN WOMAN RETURNS HOME AFTER 15 YEARS

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

A Tamil Nadu native of India, who was stranded in the Sultanate of Oman for 15 years without identity documents after her passport and papers were destroyed in a fire, has finally returned home, closing a long chapter marked by loss, uncertainty and resilience.

Gulzar Hazar Nisha's ordeal began when her passport was destroyed in a house fire in Suhar while she was working in Oman. Her difficulties were compounded when key documents in India were later lost in a sea storm that destroyed her family home, leaving her without any valid proof of identity.

Originally from Mayiladuthurai in Chennai, she had travelled to Oman 18 years ago for domestic work. After an initial return visit to India two years into her stay, tragedy struck on both sides, making it impossible for her to re-establish her documentation. The family even lacked copies of her original passport, which had been obtained earlier using a ration card.

Her inability to prove her nationality left her stranded for years. During this period, she was unable to return home to attend her husband's funeral following a fatal road accident or be present at her daughter's wedding. Most recently, she had been yearning to see her ailing mother.

A breakthrough came in 2026, when coordinated efforts between authorities in India and Oman helped resolve the long-standing impasse. Following interventions in Tamil Nadu, verification by the district collector, and renewed coordination with the Indian Embassy in Muscat, an emergency certificate was issued.

Community efforts also played a key role. Volunteers from Ruwi KMCC, including Rafeeq Sreekantapuram and his team, assisted in tracing and organising documentation to establish her Indian nationality.

"Once we came to know about her situation, we worked to help organise the papers needed to prove her citizenship. We received strong support from the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Labour and other authorities," said Rafeeq, expressing gratitude for the coordinated efforts.

Social worker Rashid Haroon, a member of the Tamil community based in Oman, said support networks would continue assisting her resettlement in India. "Her challenges may continue, but volunteers in Tamil Nadu are also stepping in to support her as she settles back home," he said.

OMAN MARKS WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman joins the world to mark the World Blood Donor Day, celebrated on June 14 each year, in recognition of the vital contributions of blood donors in saving lives and improving the quality of healthcare and to emphasise the importance of establishing a culture of voluntary and regular blood donation.

Dr Khalid bin Said al Habsi, Senior Consultant Haematologist and Transfusion Medicine Specialist and Head of the Blood Bank Services Department, said that the Blood Bank Services Department in Bausher recorded a significant rise in the number of blood units collected, from 28,613 units to

42,023 units between 2020 and 2025, a 47 per cent increase. This reflects a growing public awareness of the importance of blood donation.

He pointed out that a large number of donors have a history of more than 50 blood or platelet donations, with some making 300 donations. He explained that the Blood Bank Services Department is responsible for meeting the needs of various health institutions



DR KHALID BIN SAID AL HABSII



Bausher blood bank records 47% rise in donations.

in Muscat Governorate, and its services sometimes extend to other governorates. More than 4,000 units of blood are provided monthly, at a rate of approximately 140 units daily, ensuring the continuity of efficient and uninterrupted treatment services for patients.

Al Habsi noted that there

are rare blood types that require special attention to ensure their availability, and that blood type O negative, known as the universal donor, remains one of the most needed blood types for emergency situations. He added that individuals with negative blood types make up about 5 per cent of all donors.

He pointed out that blood units undergo comprehensive laboratory testing to detect bloodborne diseases such as hepatitis B and C viruses, HIV, malaria, and syphilis. He stressed that all blood banks use advanced DNA testing technology to ensure the highest level of safety for blood units. — ONA

Handicraft trainees gear up to show their prowess

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

PARTICIPANTS in the handicraft training programme in traditional Omani ship models in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate are preparing to enter the final stage of their nine-month training.

Titled 'Al Wustad', it is being implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Labour and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by the Industrial Innovation Academy.

Hosted at the Vocational College in Sur, the initiative brings together 25 young Omanis to equip national talent with professional skills in one of Oman's most significant heritage crafts.

Over the past months, they have undergone intensive training in the construction of models of several iconic Omani vessels, including the Ghanjah, Boom, Badan and Bateel.

As the programme approaches its conclusion, trainees continue to work on their final projects, applying the technical and artistic expertise acquired throughout the course.

The completed models are being produced in line with the Omani Standards and Specifications Guide approved by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and



'Al Wustad brings together 25 young Omanis to equip national talent with professional skills in one of Oman's most significant heritage crafts



DR QAIS BIN HAMAD BIN ALAWI AL SHAHAB

Investment Promotion.

Dr Qais bin Hamad bin Alawi al Shahab, General Coordinator of the Program - Project Representative of the Governorate, said that Al Wustad is being implemented for the first time in the country under the supervision of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and with support from Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO).

He explained that the programme, which commenced on September 15, 2025, and will conclude on June 25,

has been structured in two phases.

The first phase focused on theoretical instruction over a three-month period, while the second phase concentrates on practical applications under the guidance of experienced Omani specialists in traditional shipbuilding and model-making.

According to Al Alawi, the programme aims to develop professional competencies among participants and prepare a new generation of skilled artisans capable of meeting labour market demands.

Graduates are expected to pursue independent careers or establish small businesses dedicated to the production and marketing of traditional Omani ship models and related heritage products.

The initiative also represents a practical example of development programmes aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in the areas of youth empowerment, skills development, cultural preservation and the promotion of creative industries.

It further highlights the role of governorates in leveraging their unique cultural and economic assets to achieve balanced and sustainable development.

The final phase is expected to culminate in an exhibition showcasing the participants' works, representing the outcome of a comprehensive training experience.

Oman highlights disability inclusion efforts at UN conference in New York

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman has highlighted its efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities during its participation in the 19th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held at the United Nations headquarters in New York over three days.

The conference brings together States Parties, international organisations, and civil society institutions working in the field of disability rights.

This year's session coincides with the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and is held under the theme of advancing inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life.

Discussions and interactive dialogues focused on protection from violence and exploitation, strengthening care and support systems, and expanding participation in public and political life.

The Omani delegation delivered a statement reaffirming Oman's commitment to the principles of the Convention and its continued efforts to build on progress achieved over the past two decades.

The statement noted that the Basic Law of the State, issued under Royal Decree No 6/2021, reinforces the State's commitment to caring for persons with disabilities and ensuring equality and equal opportunities.

It further highlighted recent legislative progress, including the Law on the



The delegation stressed specialised services to foster educational and social inclusion.

Oman reinforced its commitment to supporting persons with disabilities, promoting equality and equal opportunities

Rights of Persons with Disabilities issued under Royal Decree No 92/2025.

The law strengthens principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and full inclusion, while enhancing

rights in inclusive education, healthcare, and other sectors. It also establishes institutional mechanisms for monitoring, coordination, and follow-up. The statement underscored provisions for economic and professional empowerment, requiring government entities and employers to allocate no less than five per cent of jobs and professions to qualified persons with disabilities, while ensuring full employment rights and necessary workplace accommodations.

It also outlined key institutional developments, including royal directives to establish a dedicated undersecretary-level sector within the Ministry of Social Development to oversee disability services and strengthen integration and

empowerment efforts.

Further, the delegation referred to directives to establish an Autism Spectrum Disorder Care and Rehabilitation Center, offering specialised services to support educational and social inclusion.

Similar centres are also being studied for expansion across the governorates in partnership with the private sector under social responsibility initiatives.

The statement also highlighted the launch of the unified digital platform 'Ta'heel,' designed to improve access to rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities and their families.

It noted that the number of government and private rehabilitation centres across Oman has reached 139. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

EXPERTS WARN AGAINST TOPPING UP FUEL TANKS IN EXTREME HEAT

OVERFILLING TANKS MAY CAUSE LEAKS AND DAMAGE

DON'T OVERFILL YOUR FUEL TANK



BALQEES AL ORAIMI

AS temperatures soar during the summer months, many motorists instinctively fill their vehicle's fuel tank to maximum capacity, believing it saves time and reduces trips to the petrol station.

However, automotive experts in Germany are warning drivers against topping off tanks during extreme heat, saying the practice can pose risks to both vehicles and the environment.

While it may seem harmless, overfilling a fuel tank on a hot day can create conditions that may lead to fuel leakage, damage to vehicle components, and in rare cases, fire hazards.

Experts explain that petrol and diesel expand when exposed to high temperatures.

Fuel stored underground at filling stations is typically kept cool,

between 5 and 10 degrees Celsius. Once transferred into a vehicle and exposed to ambient temperatures that can exceed 30 degrees Celsius, it begins to warm and expand.

The German automobile club KS notes that this thermal expansion can increase fuel volume by around two per cent. Although this may appear minimal, it becomes significant when a tank is filled to the brim, leaving no space for expansion.

The result can be fuel overflow or leakage through a vehicle's evaporative and ventilation systems. Beyond fuel wastage, such leaks may damage paintwork and protective coatings, while evaporating fuel contributes to air pollution and environmental harm.

More importantly, fuel vapours are highly flammable. In extreme heat, any leakage combined with an ignition source could increase the risk of fire.



Modern fuel systems are designed with expansion space. Filling beyond that point can place unnecessary strain on the system and may lead to seepage, especially during the hottest months.

MAHMOOD BIN AHMED AL HINAEI
Automotive technician

Automotive technician Mahmood bin Ahmed Al Hinaei, with more than 15 years of experience, says many drivers are unaware of the risks linked to overfilling.

"Some motorists continue pumping fuel after the nozzle automatically stops, believing they are getting better value or extending their driving range," he said. "In reality, modern fuel systems are designed with expansion space. Filling beyond that point can place unnecessary strain on the system and may lead to seepage, especially during the hottest months."

He added that modern vehicles are equipped with evaporative emission control systems designed to manage fuel vapours safely, but repeated overfilling can reduce their effectiveness and lead to avoidable maintenance costs.

Experts recommend treating the automatic shut-off click as the natural endpoint of refuelling. Adding more fuel after that point offers little benefit while increasing the risk of damage or leakage.

The advice is particularly relevant in regions experiencing prolonged high temperatures, where parked vehicles can become significantly hotter than the surrounding air, accelerating fuel expansion.

As summer temperatures rise globally, a simple change in refuelling habits could help motorists protect their vehicles, reduce environmental impact, and improve road safety.

SHORT TAKES



Colorectal cancer represents a significant public health challenge in Oman.

Oman urged to boost colorectal cancer prevention as cases rise

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

Health authorities have called for stronger preventive measures against colorectal cancer (CRC), citing rising cases linked to lifestyle factors and increasing prevalence across different segments of society, according to an awareness programme organised by the Ministry of Health.

The event, held at The Village and organised by the General Directorate of Khoula Hospital as part of its ongoing public health awareness efforts, underscored the importance of adopting healthier lifestyles to reduce risk. These include maintaining a balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity, sustaining a healthy weight and avoiding smoking, alongside adherence to recommended screening schedules for high-risk groups.

The campaign was inaugurated by Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salti, Assistant Director General for Medical Affairs at Khoula Hospital, who highlighted that colorectal cancer represents a significant public health challenge in Oman.

He noted that it is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among men and the second most common overall, after breast cancer, while also being the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among Omani males.

He added that national statistics indicate a steady increase in CRC incidence over the past two decades, with the disease consistently ranking among the top three most commonly reported cancers across demographic groups.

“Colorectal cancer is among the most common cancers globally, but it is also one of the most preventable through lifestyle modification and regular screening, particularly for high-risk groups,” said Dr Maryam bint Said al Hashmi, Consultant General Surgeon and Colorectal Surgeon at Khoula Hospital.

EA grants 6-month grace time for radiation licences

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

ENTITIES AND institutions engaged in radiation-related activities without the required regulatory approvals have been granted a six-month grace period to regularise their status, as part of a new initiative by the Environment Authority aimed at strengthening compliance and enhancing radiation safety standards across Oman.

Ahmed bin Khalfan al Shueili, Head of the Radiation Licensing Section at the Environment Authority, said the initiative is not intended to impose sanctions or initiate legal action against organisations currently operating unlicensed radiation sources. Instead, it offers a window for voluntary compliance, allowing entities to align their operations with national regulatory requirements.

According to Al Shueili, recent inspections and regulatory oversight have identified several radiation-related activities operating without the necessary licences or without fully meeting technical standards set under national regulations.

“The grace period has been introduced to encourage institutions to disclose such activities and submit licensing applications, thereby improving radiation safety, strengthening national licensing databases, and ensuring the safe use of radiation technologies for the protection of people and the environment,” he said.

He explained that radiation practices cover a wide range of activities involving the use, possession, import, export, transport, storage, or operation of radiation sources and nuclear materials. These are present across multiple sectors, including



Applications will undergo technical and regulatory evaluation to verify compliance with safety standards before approval.

Radiation-related uses also extend to research, education, and security sectors, in addition to other fields that rely on equipment or materials containing radioactive sources

healthcare — where radiation is used in diagnostic imaging, radiotherapy, and nuclear medicine — as well as in industrial applications such as inspection, measurement, and process-control systems.

Radiation-related uses also extend to research, education, and security sectors, in addition to other fields that rely on equipment or materials containing radioactive sources.

The authority emphasised that the grace period applies to all entities carrying out such activities without the required licences or approvals.

After the six-month period, regulatory penalties outlined under applicable legislation will be enforced, Al Shueili confirmed. He said the current phase is intended to encourage voluntary compliance and reduce violations through awareness and cooperation.

“This is a clear opportunity for entities to address outstanding licensing requirements. Our objective is to foster a culture of compliance and ensure corrective

action is taken before enforcement begins,” he said.

Organisations possessing radiation-emitting devices, radiation generators, or radioactive materials are required to submit licensing applications through the Environment Authority’s electronic licensing system. Applications will undergo technical and regulatory evaluation to verify compliance with safety standards before approval.

To facilitate compliance, the authority has also introduced dedicated communication channels to assist institutions during the grace period.

Al Shueili noted that the Environment Authority has been systematically identifying and cataloguing radiation practices across sectors through inspections, monitoring programmes, and national databases. A key objective of the initiative is to encourage entities that have not yet applied for licences — or have incomplete compliance documentation — to regularise their status.

He stressed that radiation licensing is not merely an administrative requirement but a critical safeguard ensuring adherence to internationally recognised safety standards. The process verifies radiation protection measures, staff competency, monitoring systems, emergency preparedness, and safe handling procedures.

Operating without a licence, he warned, limits regulatory oversight and may increase risks to workers, the public, and the environment.

Healthcare institutions using X-ray and other radiation-based equipment are among those covered under the initiative. Facilities operating such equipment without authorisation must obtain the necessary licence, which must be displayed prominently upon issuance.

SQU Hospital performs urinary control device implantation

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University Hospital under the University Medical City has successfully localised and performed the first artificial urinary control device implantation for men in the Sultanate of Oman.

The procedure was carried out by a fully integrated multi-speciality medical team led by Dr Intisar bint Mohammed al Hashmi, Consultant Urologist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, University Medical City.

The intervention is considered an advanced treatment option for severe urinary incontinence in men and requires a high level of surgical precision and specialised expertise. It is expected to significantly

improve patients’ quality of life by expanding access to advanced treatment options within Oman.

This milestone reflects ongoing efforts to localise and develop specialised medical services. — ONA

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

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

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

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

RAO concludes Sandhurst Stick Marching contest



LONDON: The Royal Army of Oman’s stick marching team has concluded its participation in the international military stick marching competition held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom, delivering a distinguished performance that reflected high levels of military discipline, precision, and professionalism.

The competition featured military teams from several countries around the world, providing a platform for showcasing drill excellence and fostering international military camaraderie. The Royal Army of Oman’s participation forms part of its broader training programme aimed at strengthening operational readiness and enhancing its presence in regional and international military forums, while also promoting the exchange of expertise with participating armed forces. — ONA

محافظة مسقط
Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (18/2026)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following bids:

Sr.	Bidding No.	Bidding Description	Document Fee		Deadline for Bidding Docs.	Inquires Deadline	Submission Deadline
			LO/RE	SMEs			
1	6/2026	Management and operation of the cafe located on plot number (205) square (M/1) in Al Khoudh area at Seeb	25/- OMR	10/- OMR	02/07/2026	14/07/2026	23/07/2026
2	7/2026	Design, Construction, and Management of a Multi-Storey Parking in Al Areen area at Muttrah	75/- OMR	10/- OMR	02/07/2026	14/07/2026	23/07/2026

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bids are invited to participate as per the following procedures:

1. Company registration with Muscat Municipality must be valid to obtain the bid document.

2. Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality’s Bank account as follows:

Bank Muscat

0423010702710024

3. A copy of the transaction’s receipt MUST be send to the following e-mail (**BID.QS@mm.gov.om**), provided with the company data (name and bid number, delegate name,office phone number, mobile number, email address approved by the company and commerial registration number of the company).

4. The tender document will be provided to the company via email.

5. 2:00 PM on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents.

6. Submission details will be shares later.

NOTES:

1. Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality’s website (**www.mm.gov.om**).

2. For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email (**crm@mm.gov.om**).

3. If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail (**Nashwa.h.alsinani@mm.gov.om**).

4. 10:00 AM on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.

5. Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: **www.mm.gov.om**

US-Iran deal could be finalised soon

DEAL WITH US WON'T BE SIGNED ON SUNDAY	US SAYS DOWNED MULTIPLE IRAN DRONES	LEBANON REPORTS NEW ISRAELI STRIKES IN SOUTH	IRAN FM SAYS DRAFT DEAL TO BE SIGNED 'REMOTELY'	TRUMP ACCUSES IRAN OF LYING IN DEAL VERSION
Iran's foreign ministry said Saturday that an expected memorandum with the United States to end hostilities would not be signed on Sunday, state media reported.	The US said it downed multiple Iranian drones targeting commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz early on Saturday, despite a deal to end the war was closer than ever.	Lebanon reported Israeli strikes on the country's south shortly after the Israeli army issued an evacuation warning for 20 locations including the city of Nabatieh.	Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi said that upon finalisation, a draft deal with the US would be signed "remotely", which could happen "in the coming days."	US President Donald Trump accused Iran of lying about the contents of a proposed deal to end the war, insisting Tehran would dismantle its nuclear programme.



Local residents who had fled the fighting walk through the marina after disembarking, as they return to their homes in the nearby Christian Quarter in the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanon. — NYT

THE UNITED STATES and Iran could finalise an agreement to end the Middle East war within as little as 24 hours, mediator Pakistan said on Saturday, after both sides expressed optimism about the chances of concluding a deal. The apparent momentum came in spite of new skirmishes in the Strait of Hormuz, which has been at the centre of the months-long war that has roiled the region and the global economy.

Weeks of negotiations on a long-term peace agreement following an April 8 truce have so far been fruitless, with US President Donald Trump repeatedly insisting a deal was near only for the wrangling to drag on. “We are closer to a peace deal than ever before,” Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose country has played a crucial role in peace talks, wrote on X. “With finalisation likely expected in the next 24 hours, Pakistan is preparing for the electronic signing of the peace deal immediately after, followed by technical level talks next week.”

The schedule for the signing remains to be seen, however. A Pakistani foreign ministry statement said it was planned for Sunday, while Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei on Saturday said it was yet to be determined, “although it will not be tomorrow”. He nonetheless added: “The possibility of this happening in the coming days

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We are closer to a peace deal than ever before. With finalisation likely expected in the next 24 hours, Pakistan is preparing for the electronic signing of the peace deal immediately after, followed by technical level talks next week.

SHEHBAZ SHARIF
PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER



People walk in a local market in Tehran. — AFP

cannot be ruled out.”

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had likewise said on Friday that the deal could be signed “in the coming days”, while a senior US official had put their confidence in finally reaching an agreement at “80 to 85 per cent”. However, the warring parties have released conflicting information about the contents of the deal, as each seeks to show it emerged from the war with the upper hand.

HORMUZ DRONES

Among other things, Tehran has insisted on its right to enrich uranium and maintain control over the Strait of Hormuz, both of which appear to be sharply at odds with Washington's longstanding red lines. The strait is a key maritime trade route carrying oil and gas from the Gulf to markets worldwide,

and Tehran has blockaded the waterway since the outbreak of the war. It has insisted vessels obtain permission from its armed forces before transiting, and has established a new body to oversee and collect tolls in the strait.

The US has responded with its own blockade of Iranian ports in an attempt to choke off the country's energy exports. Earlier on Saturday, the United States said it downed multiple Iranian drones over the strait. The US military's Central Command posted on X that Iran had “launched multiple one-way attack drones in an attempt to strike commercial ships transiting the Strait”. It added that “US forces have downed all of them in recent hours”.

DIVERGING TERMS

Trump on Friday denied that the peace deal favoured Tehran after Iranian media outlets published a purported breakdown that clashed with Washington's description. The reports, Trump said in a social media post, “have NOTHING to do with the terms that were agreed to, in writing”.

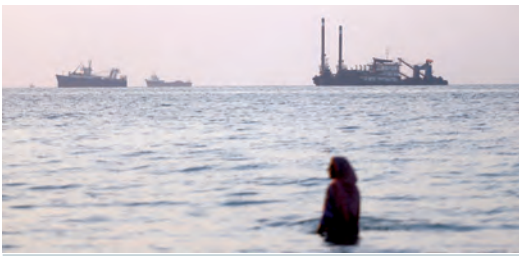
Araghchi provided some details on the deal in an interview with state television, saying it called for the lifting of the US naval blockade and unspecified changes to the administration of the Strait of Hormuz. He also said the only way to deal with Iran's enriched uranium “is to dilute it inside Iran”.

Trump, who has justified the war as necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, had previously said the US would take control of the uranium. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel — which launched the war in tandem with the US in February — said Trump had promised him any agreement would include the removal of Tehran's enriched nuclear material. Iran has long insisted its nuclear programme is peaceful.

In the streets of Tehran, there was scepticism the latest agreement would cross the finish line. “I don't think there is any deal soon,” said Saeed Sadeghi, 49. “I don't trust their word.” Another man in the city of Tonekabon named Ali, who only gave one name, said deal or no deal, Iranians would suffer. “Neither outcome is in the people's interest. If they reach an agreement and no longer have to worry about the international community, they'll oppress people a thousand times harder,” he said of the Iranian authorities.

There were views among Iran's major media, with the reformist newspaper Etemad on Saturday welcoming the progress as a way to break “chronic geopolitical and economic deadlock”. But ultra-conservative newspaper Kayhan said Iran's leverage in negotiations lay in its control of Hormuz and that deterrent must be maintained. “No sane person would bring their greatest strength to the negotiating table,” it said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran. — Reuters

India FM calls Rubio over Gulf ship attacks

NEW DELHI: Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has called US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in protest after American strikes on three largely Indian-crewed merchant vessels killed three Indians, upping the diplomatic ante. The call came after New Delhi summoned a senior US diplomat in the Indian capital for a second time in two days over the incident. “Spoke to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio this evening,” Jaishankar said early on Saturday in a post on X. “I reiterated India's strong protest at the attacks by the US Navy in the Gulf that killed three Indian mariners. Such lethal actions against commercial shipping are not justified.”

Three Indian sailors were killed in a US strike on the Palau-flagged MT Settebello. That followed a June 8 strike on the MT Marivex, another Palau-flagged tanker. Authorities airlifted 24 Indian sailors off the stricken vessel. On Thursday, a Guinea-Bissau-flagged tanker was hit in a US strike. US Deputy Chief of Mission Jason Meeks was summoned twice in New Delhi to hear India's protest, Jaishankar's ministry said.

The US State Department did not immediately comment on the call between Jaishankar and Rubio, but had earlier said it was in “direct contact” with the Indian government on the issue. India is one of the largest contributors of sailors on merchant shipping worldwide, with more than 320,000 active seafarers in 2025, according to the country's shipping ministry.

That ministry warned on Thursday all Indian sailors “serving onboard Indian and foreign-flagged vessels transiting through conflict-affected waters to exercise the highest degree of caution”. India's navy also said that it had carried out a “high-risk operation” to extract an unexploded missile warhead from the crude oil tanker MT Olympic Life. The Marshall Islands-flagged tanker was struck on May 26, but safely limped to India's southern port of Kochi. India's navy said that the “projectile had penetrated the vessel's hull, traversed multiple structural compartments and was lodged inside a fuel tank”. — AFP

US flight carrying Iranians lands in C African Republic

BANGUI: A US deportation flight landed in the Central African Republic, lawyers and activists said, carrying nationals from Iran, Afghanistan, Türkiye and Georgia as part of the latest “third-country” deportation under US President Donald Trump. Deportations of people — including those with legal protections — to countries where they have no links have become a staple of Trump's expanded crackdown on immigration.

The US State Department advisory for the impoverished, violence-racked CAR reads: “Do not travel to Central African Republic for any reason.”

Trump has described Iran, with whom Washington is currently at war, as a “terrorist regime” but is nonetheless deporting nationals who have fled the country, including at least two Iranian women slated for the flight, their lawyer said.

The Iranians had been granted “withholding of removal” — a status that carries weaker rights than asylum but has been considered a “win” in immigration court under previous administrations. “We fear they will ultimately be forced to return to the countries they originally fled,” as has repeatedly happened with other deportees sent across Africa, their attorney, Emily Trostle, said.

The flight took off from Alexandria, Louisiana, on Thursday evening It then made a scheduled stopover in Ghana on Friday afternoon and landed in Central African capital Bangui around 2100 GMT. — AFP

Civil society groups in France urge two-state solution

PARIS: Israeli and Palestinian civil society groups delivered an appeal in France to urge the international community not to abandon a two-state solution, as Paris seeks to keep the issue alive amid the Middle East war. The meeting brought together foreign ministers and senior officials from dozens of countries alongside civil society groups. It marks one year since the UN-backed New York Declaration, which set out a road map towards Palestinian statehood and prompted around a dozen countries, including France, Britain and Canada, to recognise a Palestinian state.

“We could find every reason in the world to give up. But you are here! Your testimonies alone are grounds for hope and action,” France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told 250



Palestinians walk past the rubble of residential buildings destroyed during the war, at the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

civil society representatives from both sides. “France refuses to let the side of war prevail over the side of peace.” The gathering ended with an eight-point “Call for Action” urging a permanent ceasefire, a halt to settlements, Gaza reconstruction, governance reforms and stronger international backing for civil society. It will be delivered to the G7 leaders who meet in the French Alps from Monday.

“The region continues to fracture. Gaza is devastated, Israel remains under threat. Settler terrorism, settlement expansion, and de facto annexation and threats to the Palestinian Authority continue to undermine the viability of a future Palestinian state,” according to the action plan. “Israelis and Palestinians alike remain trapped in fear,

insecurity, and trauma. We return because, as the G7 convenes in Evian, this conflict risks once again being set aside. The window for a solution remains open, but it is narrowing.”

The conference comes amid escalating violence by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and underscores anger in many Western countries toward Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, which has expanded settlements. Diplomats say that expansion is aimed at undermining prospects for a Palestinian state.

A key concern is Israel's plan to build a settlement east of Jerusalem, known as the E1 project, which would bisect the West Bank and cut it off from East Jerusalem, fragmenting the territory Palestinians seek for an independent state. — Reuters

Lebanon reports new Israeli strikes

BEIRUT: Lebanon reported Israeli strikes on the country's south on Saturday as the Israeli army issued evacuation warnings for more than 20 locations, including the city of Nabatieh, ahead of raids there. The state-run National News Agency (NNA) said Israeli air strikes hit several areas covered by the warning, including the villages of Rihan and Sujud, located not far from Nabatieh, and other areas not mentioned in the evacuation notice. It said an Israeli strike killed a local official in Rihan, located in the southern region of Jezzine.

A correspondent in Nabatieh said the city was almost deserted, and also reported artillery shelling there and in nearby areas overnight and on Saturday. A day earlier, the NNA reported explosions and artillery shelling near the Ali Taher hills overlooking the city. The Israeli army warned residents in 24 locations, both in and around Nabatieh and nearer to the coast, to “evacuate your homes immediately and move to the north of the Zahrani River”, around 45 kilometres from the southern border with Israel.

Last month, it declared all areas south of the river “combat zones”, and has been heavily striking the area. Israel's military also said its air force on Saturday “intercepted a suspicious aerial target that crossed from Lebanon into Israeli territory”. Hezbollah, which has kept up attacks on Israeli troops who have invaded southern Lebanon, said its fighters launched drone attacks on Israeli military vehicles in the south.

Israel and Hezbollah have been at war since early March, when the group drew Lebanon into the Middle East conflict with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes. Iran insists that Lebanon must be part of any agreement to end the wider Middle East war, and a senior US official said on Friday that a peace deal with Iran “includes Lebanon”. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah has respected a ceasefire



Smoke billows from southern Lebanon following an Israeli strike, as seen from Nabatieh, Lebanon. — Reuters

The NNA reported explosions and artillery shelling near the Ali Taher hills overlooking the city. The Israeli army warned residents in 24 locations, both in and around Nabatieh and nearer to the coast, to “evacuate your homes immediately and move to the north of the Zahrani River.

announced in April, and a conditional truce deal announced this month after a fourth round of direct Lebanese-Israeli negotiations in Washington has also failed to halt the fighting.

Hezbollah said on Friday that its fighters had confronted Israeli forces advancing towards a southern Lebanese town, as Israel pressed on with its strikes in Lebanon. In a statement, Hezbollah said its fighters first targeted Israeli troops advancing towards Majdal Zoun, around five kilometres from the western side of the border, on Thursday evening “with repeated rocket barrages, forcing them to retreat”. It then said it engaged with an advancing force there on Friday, “engaging them with light and medium weapons and rockets”.

Lebanon says Israel's air strikes and ground invasion have killed more than 3,700 people. Hezbollah has rejected the direct talks and the conditional agreement, which requires it to cease attacks but makes no mention of Israel

doing so or withdrawing troops from Lebanon. Lebanon's leaders have instead accused Tehran of treating the country as a “bargaining chip”.

Hezbollah lawmaker Ali Fayyad on Saturday urged Lebanon to take advantage of any deal to end the Iran war that includes the country. “We want the Lebanese state to negotiate for itself, and nobody is suggesting forfeiting this role,” Fayyad said, “however, the state must abandon the policy of being crushed in the face of the Israelis and submission to the Americans.”

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said in a statement on X on Saturday that Lebanon faces “a fateful test”. “Either its people unite around a sovereign state that monopolises weapons, upholds the law and protects citizens irrespective of their affiliation or position, or it remains hostage to the logic of militias,” the statement said. Further Israel-Lebanon talks are scheduled for later this month. — AFP

Funeral for former Supreme Leader to begin on July 4

DUBAI: The funeral for Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will begin in Tehran on July 4 and conclude with his burial in his hometown, the northeastern holy city of Mashhad, on July 9, state media reported on Saturday. Khamenei was killed on the first day of Israeli and US air strikes against Iran on February 28. The 86-year-old cleric had been at the helm of the Islamic Republic for 36 years.

The funeral arrangements will include ceremonies on July 7 in



A woman walks past a banner with a picture of the late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on a street in Tehran, Iran. — Reuters

the holy city of Qom, south of Tehran, media said.

Khamenei remained a strong critic of the United States throughout his rule, while successive US administrations tried unsuccessfully to resolve a dispute with Iran over its nuclear programme. The air strike that killed him pulverised his central Tehran compound.

His 56-year-old son Mojtaba, who also lost his wife in the air strike and was himself injured, succeeded his father as Supreme Leader. — Reuters

OPINION

The man who feared losing his passport



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

AMAN in his mid-sixties came to my clinic complaining about a recurring dream that had been troubling him for months. Every night, he found himself stranded in an airport after losing his passport and identity card. He described a mixture of emotions: loneliness, helplessness and a heavy feeling in his chest. He would wake up in a state of panic, his heart racing, unable to return to sleep. His question was simple: “How can I avoid having this dream?” Many people believe that dreams contain hidden messages that can be decoded like a secret language. While psychology does not support most popular dream dictionaries, research suggests that our dreams often reflect our emotional concerns, unresolved conflicts and fears. In other words, dreams may not predict the future, but they frequently tell us something about the present. The airport in this man's dream is particularly interesting. Airports are transitional places that represent movement from one stage of life to another. For a man in his sixties, such transitions may include retirement, declining physical health, children leaving home, bereavement, or the

realisation that time is becoming increasingly precious. Losing a passport in that setting may symbolise a deeper fear — not merely of missing a flight, but of losing one's sense of identity, purpose, or direction. Psychologists have long recognised the importance of identity in maintaining psychological well-being. Studies have shown that a strong sense of purpose is associated with better mental health, lower rates of depression, and even reduced mortality among older adults. When individuals face major life changes, questions such as “Who am I now?” and “What role do I still play?” often emerge, sometimes outside of conscious awareness. Research also suggests that between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of dreams contain elements linked to recent concerns and emotional experiences. Furthermore, stressful life events are associated with more frequent anxiety dreams and nightmares. The brain does not switch off during sleep; rather, it continues processing emotions and memories. Some neuroscientists describe dreaming as a form of overnight emotional housekeeping. When I explored the dream further with

Research also suggests that between 60pc and 80pc of dreams contain elements linked to recent concerns and emotional experiences

my patient, it became apparent that he had recently retired after more than three decades in the same profession. For much of his adult life, his occupation had been a central part of his identity. Without realising it, he had been struggling with the transition from being someone defined by his work to someone searching for a new sense of meaning. The solution, therefore, was not simply to stop the dream. It was to understand what the dream might be reflecting. We discussed ways of rebuilding purpose through volunteering, mentoring younger people, strengthening social connections and pursuing neglected interests. As his daytime anxieties diminished, the dream gradually became less frequent. Perhaps the lesson is that recurring dreams are not always problems to be eliminated. Sometimes they are invitations to reflect. When the mind repeatedly presents us with the same unsettling image, it may be asking a question we have been avoiding while awake. In this patient's case, the real fear was not losing a passport. It was losing a sense of who he was. And like many journeys in life, the first step was not finding the document — it was rediscovering the person carrying it.

UK FACES HARD CHOICES OVER MILITARY SPENDING

ANNA MALPAS & HELEN ROWE

The resignations of two UK defence ministers have thrown British military resources into the spotlight, after they slammed upcoming spending plans for falling short and lacking innovation. Prime Minister Keir Starmer named his new Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis, a former officer in the Parachute Regiment. Here's what we know about the UK government's long-awaited - but yet to be published - Defence Investment Plan (DIP) for spending over the next decade and the military's strained resources. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) budget reportedly faces a £28-billion shortfall between now and 2030. In his stinging resignation letter, Defence Secretary John Healey accused Prime Minister Keir Starmer and the finance ministry of failing to commit the resources needed to “defend the country at this time of rising threats”. Despite the need to bolster military readiness in the next two years, Healey said extra support for defence was “backloaded” to arrive towards the end of the decade-long timeline. This means the “growth path to reach spending targets is likely following a ‘hockey-stick’ trajectory with much of the uplifts falling in the final years of a deadline,” Fenella McGerty of the International Institute for Strategic Studies said. Starmer has vowed to raise defence spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP (economic output) from next year, increasing to three per cent if Labour wins the next general election, expected in 2029, before reaching 3.5 per cent in 2035. This would only cover operations “very much focused on the mainland and the near vicinity of the UK,” said Jamie Gaskarth of Chatham House think tank. Nick Reynolds, an expert in land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute, said the UK needed to “make serious choices in what it can do and what it can't”. The army and navy both need to refurbish, he said, which will require a “significant increase in the defence budget”, even before modernisation. When the Middle East war began in February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, it took the Royal Navy weeks to deploy one ship to reassure allies. This is due to “a long-term trend... to have less and less kit that's more and more sophisticated”, said Gaskarth. “It actually means in a crisis you can no longer rely on the idea that you will have assets in place in different regions around the world.” — AFP

Diplomacy will win only when war loses

UNPROVOKED

military aggression is wrong, crude and uncivilised. It belongs to the past, and those who continue to use violence to pursue their aims will ultimately be buried in that past. I remain pessimistic that military conflicts can be resolved through words alone. Numerous broken UN resolutions have demonstrated this. Lasting settlements will only be achieved when aggressive behaviour no longer produces political or economic rewards for those who pursue it. War must be economically and strategically damaging for the aggressor by increasing the costs and reducing the likelihood of success. As long as violence delivers benefits at home and influence on the world stage, aggressors will not choose peace simply because others urge them to. Diplomacy becomes credible only when violence stops looking like the best route to territory, control, prestige, or leverage. Some leaders and their supporters weigh gains against costs in a way they will not change unless they are forced to. Central to peace is the removal of incentives. If violence continues to appear profitable, then it will be used again and again. This is the hard logic behind deterrence: the aggressor must believe it cannot achieve its goals quickly and that it will face real, serious and sustained economic and military resistance. It must also face consequences that do not fade after each diplomatic phase. If the aggressor believes it can damage others and then step back without lasting, painful costs, negotiations will not alter its underlying incentives. Until these conditions hold, threats and attacks will continue, especially in the Middle East, where Israel has yet to learn that violence



Diplomacy becomes credible only when violence stops looking like the best route to territory, control, prestige, or leverage



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

If the war economy enriches parts of the elite and self-interested lobbyists and protects the political position of powerful actors, then conflict remains an instrument of governance rather than a temporary aberration

doesn't pay. GCC countries have much to gain by becoming allies and by not allowing third-party actors to create divisions. Oman's respected role as an honest broker is well known, but mediation alone cannot overcome incentives that keep war rewarding. If the war economy enriches parts of the elite and self-interested lobbyists and protects the political position of powerful actors, then conflict remains an instrument of governance rather than a temporary aberration. Some aggressors also have business interests directly tied to war, such as security networks and arms or procurement-related companies. Where those businesses continue to earn from conflict, they will push for continuation and escalation. Peace, therefore, depends on cutting the financial links between conflict and elite enrichment by enforcing stricter weapons procurement standards, exposing corruption and punishing illegal money transactions that keep violence funded. Without weakening the structures that sustain war as a business

model, talks can be used by the aggressor as tactical pauses to allow it to regroup. Escalation can be driven by powerful lobbyists that leaders do not fully restrain, and there must be stronger control of security forces by civilians with powers independent of the executive. Clear and enforceable rules on the use of force are necessary, along with genuine accountability. Leaders who choose war over diplomacy, except in self-defence, should be more easily removed from office. Because aggression can bring quick political returns by rallying supporters, silencing critics and uniting factions around an external enemy, diplomacy must be backed by results and seen as the best route to a strong economy and stable governance. Improving conditions at home will then become the more rewarding path for those in power. Less powerful states require protection because deterrence fails when aggressors perceive low risk and limited consequences. Alliances, security guarantees and collective defence arrangements reduce the chance that force will succeed cheaply and quickly. When aggressors are forced to realise that attacks will trigger organised resistance rather than local collapse, violence becomes less attractive as a strategy. Peace talks in this region, often with Oman playing the role of intermediary, have sometimes faltered not because of Oman's lack of trying, but because they lacked trust, verification and enforceable commitments. Negotiations must be backed by credible economic and military costs for those who renege on agreements. Without realistic enforcement to punish those who act in bad faith, talks may only provide a brief, temporary lull in hostilities.

Genghis Khan: History’s thug, or future’s visionary?



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is author of ‘The Road to Jerusalem’

GENGHIS THE Great Khan, is identified by theoretical mathematician Raghavendra Prasad as one whose DNA is present in almost 1% of the world’s male population, a statistic that demonstrates his influence on all of history.

Most of us know him as a brutal ruler, characterised by his three-tents method of raising a siege. He would pitch a white tent outside his foe’s city, implying that if they surrendered while that tent stood, nobody would perish if they yielded to him. Then, a red tent the next day indicated all their men would be put to the sword, but their women and children would live. A black tent, though, was a promise of no survivors. His message and method were brutal, yet effective.

More than a warrior, he established the ‘Yassa Code of Law,’ a set of rules under which his society was to grow, this being one way in which he was able to draw his conquered nations and his own people together, making the most of diversity, and the qualities of all, remarkably tolerant of other religions and cultures, in creating a model of unification for others to imitate. Few, though, have proven as successful.

He wanted all his achievements chronicled, was in awe of those who could read and

write, and advocated his people’s Uighur language, raising his people from the darkness of illiteracy. In fact, he would ensure that astronomers, scholars, engineers, mathematicians, mapmakers, and even artists, among the defeated, were raised to prominence within his society. His ‘Pax Mongolica,’ or Mongol Peace, saw Asian and European learning thrive, advancing early science, technology, and navigation. He also revived the Silk Road, certain of the benefits to the civilisation of trade and commerce, and explored the possibility of common currencies and even paper money.

Meritocracy saw even those of low birth in his armies have opportunities to rise to leadership. In fact, Subutai became his most trusted general, despite being the son of a blacksmith, while Jebe was an enemy who had killed the Khan’s own horse in battle. Genghis also created social responsibility that ensured widows and orphans of his army were protected and supported for life if their husbands were to perish in service.

He abhorred toxic masculinity and was certainly inspired by women like his wife Borte, his most trusted adviser and strategist. Genghis Khan detested slavery, believing in fair reward for work and responsibility. Though many perished at his hands, he believed he was saving them from further

Genghis also pioneered ‘diplomatic’ passports to identify his ‘representatives of rule’ to protect them, as few would be foolish enough to violate his protection.

indignity. In truth, it was pragmatism, so that he did not have to feed or guard those of no value among the vanquished.

His ‘Yam’ waypoints were established at a hard-riden day’s distance from each other all over Europe and Asia, wherever his army conquered, and were the model for the later ‘Pony Express,’ of the American ‘Wild West.’ Each waypoint would have fresh riders, horses, and hot food, and riders, having ridden up to 200 miles in a day, would hand over their communication to a new, fresh horse and rider who would ensure the pace was maintained. These riders would carry golden tablets, identifying them as extremely important, and these were to become the forerunners of the passports we all use in travel between nations today. Genghis also pioneered ‘diplomatic’ passports to identify his ‘representatives of rule’ to protect them, as few would be foolish enough to violate his protection.

Brutal? Yes, his three tents and the deaths he forced across his rule could never be seen otherwise.

However, he recognised that laws, diversity, education, compassion, merit, and trade were as important as the sword. Maligned? Maybe, but also wise, and visionary. Whether his unique, and equally rare, wisdom is enough to save him from being thought a thug... Who knows?

WORLD’S FIRST GIG ECONOMY TREATY ADOPTED AT THE ILO

AGNÈS PEDRERO

The first-ever international agreement on safeguarding digital platform workers in the gig economy was adopted on Friday at the UN’s International Labour Organization.

The Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention is aimed at extending labour protections to hundreds of millions of people worldwide who work through digital platforms, in areas like food delivery and car services.

The convention applies to “all digital labour platforms” and “all digital platform workers... whether they are in the formal or informal economy”, according to the text adopted by ILO members.

Until now, labour practices have struggled to keep pace with the dramatic shifts in the way people work. The World Bank estimated in 2023 that there were up to 435 million online gig workers around the globe who had largely fallen outside regular labour protections.

Companies behind the apps control the gig work via algorithms that assign tasks, set pay, evaluate performance and even fire workers.

Despite largely controlling the tasks and pay, the platforms typically classify the workers as independent contractors rather than employees.

This allows them in many cases to ignore things like minimum wage requirements, workplace safety and access to social security.

“The ILO now has the first convention that focuses on the impact of digitalisation in the world of work,” said the UN labour agency’s chief Gilbert Houngbo.

“This convention seeks to bring about tangible improvements in the lives of millions of workers around the world,” Brazil’s representative said at the adoption. In Brazil, “around two million workers will see their opportunities, dignity and autonomy strengthened by this convention”, she added. Other countries, such as India, Bangladesh and the United States, felt that the convention should be applied flexibly, depending on national contexts. “We continue to urge extreme caution with respect to prescriptive binding regulations in fast-evolving areas of the economy,” said the US representative Lorenzo Riboni.

Independent contractors control their own work and “lean into an entrepreneurial spirit that makes America great”, he said.

The International Trade Union Confederation said the convention would help ensure that millions of platform workers can enjoy the rights, protections and dignity that all workers merit.

“This convention represents a major step forward,” the ITUC’s political director Jeroen Beirnaert said.

He underlined, however, that the convention allows countries “to provide for certain limited exclusions from its scope”.

Therefore, “there is a risk that certain categories of workers will be excluded”, he said, but countries that choose to apply such exclusions would have to justify them. — AFP

Belfast riots show lingering scars of decades of unrest

DAYS OF anti-immigration violence in Belfast have shown how three decades of unrest in Northern Ireland, known as the Troubles, still shape the contours of daily life, residents and academics said.

“We still have a legacy of conflict, of sectarian conflict here,” Queen’s University Belfast professor Joanne Hughes said.

She was remembering the violence that tore apart largely Catholic, pro-Irish republicans and Protestant, pro-UK unionists for three decades until the Good Friday peace agreement of 1998.

“We still have high levels of community division. We still have segregation, particularly in the most deprived areas,” said Hughes, who researches the role of education in divided societies.

After a graphic video of a Belfast man being brutally stabbed, allegedly by a Sudanese man, circulated at the start of this week, riots broke out in primarily unionist, working-class neighbourhoods late on Tuesday.

The violence largely unfolded in “interface areas”, where Protestants are still divided from Catholic neighbourhoods by fences and signage. Agitators, many masked young men, torched cars and houses, targeting some minority ethnic homes.

In the aftermath, some locals and pro-Irish politicians pointed fingers at loyalist paramilitaries which still exert influence, especially over boys and young men, in predominantly Protestant areas.

There was still “influence here from paramilitary organisations on the union side”, said Sean Og O Murchu, a Belfast-based author and republican activist.

“They’re sort of the hangover from the Troubles.” The Belfast Telegraph was told by a loyalist source that while they were not “orchestrating or encouraging” the violence, they were deliberately “standing back and refusing to get involved to stop it”.

For many, poor access to housing, healthcare and education has been blamed on immigrants, experts said.

Government figures published last month showed that the number of people aged 16 to 24 out of work, not



AKSHATA KAPOOR

The writer covers UK politics, climate change, immigration for AFP



People walk past the remains of a burnt-out car outside boarded-up houses off the Newtownards Road, in east Belfast, Northern Ireland, after two consecutive nights of violence following the June 8 stabbing of Stephen Ogilvie, that triggered the unrest. — AFP

in education or training in Northern Ireland, had risen to 11.6 per cent, up 1.9 per cent from the previous quarter.

“The perception is that these migrants are taking their houses,” but this “isn’t true”, said Dominic Bryan, a political anthropology professor at Queen’s University, creating a new layer of division in the already segregated society.

Northern Ireland is the UK province with the smallest proportion of people from a minority ethnic background — just over three per cent — according to research published last year.

Yet in Belfast, where the Catholic population has surpassed the Protestants since the Troubles ended, unionists “see their identity and their culture shrinking”, noted O Murchu.

At the same time, the likes of far-right activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, also known as Tommy Robinson, “are saying your culture is shrinking, but it’s because of this brown man that lives next door to you”.

According to Bryan, recent events “mark a shift in some unionist and Protestant areas, away from the outgroup being Catholics... towards people with a different colour skin”.

That shift has been proudly claimed by some protesters, with AI-generated images of the Irish tricolour flag and British Union Jack knotted together circulating on social media, and even sported at protests.

“If you know anything about the

history of this place, that seems extraordinary,” said Bryan.

On Wednesday night, in Glengormley, a northern Belfast suburb which saw clashes between police and rioters, friends John and Brendan expressed their support for uniting against immigration.

“I’m excited that in this moment Catholics and Protestants have realised that actually we’re in this together,” said John, a 52-year-old Protestant, who asked not to give his last name.

“There’s now a united Ireland, but it’s united because the ordinary people have realised that, actually, we have been played like puppets.” Brendan, who described himself as a “strong Catholic”, said he supported the rioters who had gathered but was against violence.

“Nothing was going to unite people more than crimes (or) inhumane acts,” he said. “The Troubles is over, we don’t want that back ... hopefully we can put a stop to this” and end the violence on the streets, added the 50-year-old plumber.

But Bryan pointed out that the idea of an anti-immigrant “united Ireland” sentiment was a fringe opinion, and far-right voices on social media had “embraced this idea that the white people in Ireland are somehow rising up”. “I think amongst the population generally, that would be seen as ridiculous,” said Bryan. — AFP



ONLY A WIN WILL DO AGAINST CURACAO AS GERMANY KICK OFF CAMPAIGN

GERMANY WILL look to start their World Cup campaign with a big win over Curacao, with the four-time champions out to repair their damaged international reputation following first-round exits in the previous two editions.

The Germans, who won the 2014 edition, have set their sights on a fifth world title even though they do not see themselves as among the favourites this year.

They could not have hoped for easier first opponents than minnows Curacao, the smallest nation to qualify for the World Cup. Ecuador and Ivory Coast complete Group E.

Julian Nagelsmann's Germany are on a nine-match winning run, including a 4-0 victory over Finland in their last friendly at home on May 31 and a 2-1 win over World Cup co-hosts the United States six days ago.

Curacao are rank outsiders, with most of their players plying their trade in the Netherlands or in lower European leagues.

But veteran coach Dick Advocaat, who at 78 will become the oldest coach in World Cup history, relishes facing Germany in their tournament start.

"Germany are of course clear favourites in the group," Advocaat said. "They are still a big footballing country. Starting off against Germany is fantastic. We will find out immediately where we stand."

Advocaat knows there is a massive gap in quality, which Germany, with world-class players like Kai Havertz, Florian Wirtz and Manuel Neuer, want to take advantage of to get their tournament off to a winning start.

"We aren't among the absolute top favourites-there are three or four others," said Germany national team director Rudi

Voeller, a 1990 World Cup winner with Germany. "But we know how important an opening win is."

"We are here and want to be a team that is difficult to beat. We want to top our group and then assert ourselves in the knockout stage."

Any result other than victory could prove tricky in the group while also instantly piling pressure on the Germans, with fans back home desperate to see their team return to winning ways after their last two early exits.

"The two wins from our last two friendlies give us a good feeling and we want to maintain that here," Voeller said.

"There is no guarantee if you win the first game that that is the way the tournament will go for you. We have to go through the group as the top team, there is no discussion about that. That is our goal."

— Reuters



Curacao's players take part in a training session. — AFP



Germany's Angelo Stiller with teammates during training. — Reuters



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



OMAN DAILY
Observer

USA | CANADA | MEXICO

SHORTTAKES



Los Angeles Stadium in Inglewood. — AFP

WORLD CUP VENUES
SCRUB BRANDING,
GET NEW NAMES

WASHINGTON: Fans tuning in for the first 2026 World Cup game on US soil Friday night might be a bit confused: why had they never heard of Los Angeles Stadium before?

The home of the city's NFL teams, the Rams and the Chargers, is normally called SoFi Stadium. But world football's governing body FIFA has a so-called "clean stadium" policy, banning World Cup venues from displaying branding of companies that are not official FIFA sponsors.

Companies like digital personal financial firm SoFi, insurer MetLife and energy giant NRG — which each signed nine-figure deals to secure stadium naming rights — have seen the venues they sponsor renamed Los Angeles Stadium, New York New Jersey Stadium and Houston Stadium for the world's most-watched sporting event.

"They're not happy, they paid a lot of money to have visibility in those stadiums but it's one of these things that they probably could not prevent in this situation," Rick Burton, emeritus professor at Syracuse Universe's Falk College of Sport, said.

With all the World Cup games hosted in existing venues — unlike previous editions like Qatar where stadiums were purpose-built for the event — the temporary renamings have been a more prominent issue this time around, he said.

The only 2026 World Cup venue not affected by the rule is Vancouver's BC Place.

"Stadium official names for the FIFA World Cup 2026 have been matched with Host City names and may differ from the common designation used locally," FIFA said on its tournament website.

Not all venues have been able to comply with regulations. Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium was unable to figure out a way to cover up a giant logo of the luxury carmaker on the building's roof, made up of eight giant panels that rotate to close like the aperture in a camera lens.

Unable to mask the logo without damaging the roof, FIFA allowed the stadium to leave it as is, US media have reported.

"FIFA is working closely with stadium authorities and host cities to implement (brand protection) requirements in a manner consistent with previous editions of the tournament, while taking into account the unique infrastructure and operational considerations at each venue," it told The Athletic.

In Seattle, telecommunications company Lumen did its best to turn the situation on its head, filming a tongue-in-cheek video from the stadium it sponsors, normally the home of the NFL's Seahawks and MLS' Sounders.

"As international fans fly in from across the world to our city, our stadium, my job is to ensure our brand is nowhere," Chief Strategy and Marketing Officer Ryan Asdourian said in the clip.

Wearing a hardhat and neon safety vest, the executive is shown combing the stadium for Lumen branding, with the result being that its logo is prominently displayed — in the video, at least.

With the Olympics having a similar "clean" policy for its venues, SoFi Stadium will have to scrub its sponsor's branding again in two years — when it will host, among other events, the opening ceremony of the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Games.

— AFP



A football belonging to a fan floats in the water during half time as they watch the match at the waterfront in Seattle. — Reuters

Ban against Ivory Coast fans draws DBF concern

GERMAN FOOTBALL Federation (DFB) president Bernd Neuendorf has expressed concern over reports that Ivory Coast fans won't be allowed to enter the United States for the World Cup.

"If that were the case, I would find it fund a mentally problematic to simply turn people away en masse. That would be a course of action that, in my view, would be incomprehensible," he said during a visit to the German House of Soccer in New York. Germany start the tournament against Curaçao and face Ivory Coast on June 20. Neuendorf emphasized that he has only read about the matter and therefore was speaking about the situation hypothetically. According to media reports, Ivory Coast fans have cancelled



DFB President Bernd Neuendorf makes a speech during training. — Reuters

their trip to the US due to mass visa rejections.

Ivory Coast and other three countries competing at the World Cup - Iran, Senegal and Haiti - are in US President Donald Trump's list with bans and greater restrictions on visas.

The travel restrictions have been a major topic on the sidelines of the tournament. The case that caused the biggest stir so far has been of Somali referee Omar Artan, who was denied entry to the US due to alleged ties to a terrorist organization. Asked about how the DFB is handling such political issues, Neuendorf said that one can assume they're "taking care of these matters." But it's better to talk to people behind the scenes rather than in public. "That's what I do and that's what we're trying to do in this case as well," he said.

Ghana protests after player Partey is denied visa

ACCRA: Ghana said Saturday it has formally lodged a protest over Canada's refusal to issue a visa for the World Cup to player Thomas Partey, who is facing trial in Britain on rape charges. In a statement posted on social media by the Foreign Minister Sam Okudzeto Ablakwa, Ghana called Canada's decision "high-handed and extremely unfair", calling Partey, "a key member of Ghana's senior national team".

"Ghana has dispatched an official note of protest" to Canada, said the statement adding that the "note also requested that Canada reviews its unfortunate decision".

The Villarreal midfielder, who previously played for Arsenal, has pleaded not guilty to seven charges of rape and one count of sexual assault relating to allegations by four different women between 2020 and 2022.



FILE PHOTO: Ghana national team and Villarreal midfielder Thomas Partey. — Reuters

A trial has been set for next year, allowing the 32-year-old to represent Ghana at the World Cup, but he will not be involved in Wednesday's match in Toronto.

"While respecting Canada's sovereign right to enforce its immigration laws, Ghana considers that

reliance on unproven charges in the absence of a judicial determination raises fundamental questions of fairness and proportionality," said the statement.

FIFA has confirmed that Partey would not be able to travel from Ghana's team base camp in Boston, to Canada

for their opening match against Panama on June 17.

The 32-year-old will be eligible to play in Ghana's subsequent Group L games against England and Croatia, both taking place in the United States. But the African team may return to Canada if they reach the knockout

stages.

Ghana vowed to explore all diplomatic and legal "remedies" under Canadian and international law to ensure full a "fair consideration" of the case, as it urged Ottawa to "rescind its decision in the interest of fairness and cardinal principals of common law".

Canadian immigration said they were not able to provide details on individual cases, adding that the safety of Canadian citizens was its priority.

Canada's immigration service said its officials apply rules "consistently and without exception, regardless of nationality, profile, or role in the tournament".

US authorities said they were aware of the pending court case but said, "he has not been convicted of a crime and was admitted to the United States after being issued a visa". — AFP



OMANI STARS PICK UP FAVOURITES



ABDULRAHMAN
AL MUSHEFRI



KHALID AL HAJRI



MOHAMMED
ISMAIL



MOHSIN
AL GHASSANI

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

AS THE FIFA World Cup 2026 matches are underway, football enthusiasts across the globe have already begun debating potential champions, standout players and the matches they eagerly await. In Oman, several current and former national team stars shared their thoughts on the teams they will support, their tournament favourites and the technical lessons on how Oman's football can learn from the world's biggest sporting spectacle.

TOP PERFORMANCE

Former Oman national team player Mohammed Ismail admitted that his first football love remains Italy although the Azzurri failed to secure qualification for the upcoming tournament. "My favourite team has always been Italy, but since they did not qualify, I will support Spain," he said. "Spain are playing modern football as they have excellent players and Rodri is my favourite player. He is one of the main reasons I support the team. Spain are achieving results and consistently delivering top performances." He added

Mohammed believes that France,



We can benefit from studying the strategies, plans and pathways of countries that qualified for the World Cup for the first time. Oman team were very close to the World Cup dream many times and now we need to work on the areas which will assist us in meeting this target.

**MOHSIN
AL GHASSANI**

Spain, Argentina and Portugal are among the leading contenders for the title, although he warned against overlooking traditional football giants. "Germany, England and Brazil can always be among the top teams if they managed to reach finals. However, France and Spain appear to have the strongest chances based on their current level," he explained.

The former international player prefers to watch matches from home rather than in public venues. "I always enjoy analysing matches from a technical perspective. Watching from home allows me to focus and form my own opinions without distractions," he said.

Mohammed emphasised that navigating the knockout rounds will be the true test of any title contender. "The real excitement of the World Cup starts in the knockout stages. Experience becomes crucial and this is where the best-prepared teams reveal their quality."

Reflecting on Oman's ambitions, he expressed optimism that the national team can eventually reach football's biggest stage. "We have come close on several occasions. We must study how other nations built successful projects and qualified for the World Cup. I am optimistic that Oman can achieve this dream in the future." He ended

PORTUGAL AND RONALDO

Oman's current striker Mohsin al Ghassani will be backing Portugal during the tournament, largely because of his admiration for legendary forward Cristiano Ronaldo. "Portugal will be my team," Al Ghassani said. "Ronaldo remains a major reason why I support them and I believe he will deliver his outmost technical efforts in order to achieve the desired target."

When asked about the strongest contenders for the trophy, Al Ghassani highlighted France and Brazil, while stressing that teamwork will be the decisive factor. "The biggest difference in World Cup tournaments comes from collective play. Teams succeed when they work as a group rather than relying on individuals. The teams with more stars will get better chances to go further away in the globe tournament."

Al Ghassani also believes Oman can learn valuable lessons from nations making their World Cup debut. "We can benefit from studying the strategies, plans and pathways of countries that qualified for the World Cup for the first time. Oman team were very close to the World Cup dream many times and now we need to work on the areas which will assist us in meeting this target," he noted.

The national team forward enjoys watching matches alongside friends and revealed that he is particularly excited about the quarter-final stage, where the tournament often produces its most dramatic encounters.

WORLD CHAMPIONS ARGENTINA

Meanwhile, Oman attacker Abdulrahman al Mushaifri has chosen to support defending world champions Argentina. "Argentina is my favourite team because of Lionel Messi. I see they can defend their title in this edition of the World Cup," he said.

Al Mushaifri views Spain as the leading candidate to lift the trophy and believes the greatest lesson for Omani football is understanding the determination required to reach the World Cup.

"The passion to qualify and the commitment needed to get there are lessons we must embrace in the coming years," he explained.

He prefers watching matches from home and is especially looking forward to seeing the Arab nations compete on football's grandest stage.

LOYAL TO BRAZIL

Former Oman international player, Khalid al Hajri, remains loyal to Brazil as a team he has supported since childhood. "My favourite player has always been Ronaldo," he said.

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES

OMAN STRENGTHENS
FREELANCE
ECOSYSTEM THROUGH
DIGITAL PLATFORMS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13



Digital platforms make freelance work a vital contributor to the modern economy.

With the accelerating digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman, digital platforms have emerged as a key tool for empowering freelancers to expand their businesses and access new opportunities. This has made freelance work a vital contributor to the modern economy and a supporter of

economic diversification efforts.

The proceedings of the “Reality of Freelance Work in the Sultanate of Oman” symposium, organised recently by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), represented by its Labour Market Committee, emphasised the importance of anticipating the transformations taking place in the labour market and maximising the benefits of the opportunities offered by modern work models in supporting economic growth and empowering national talent.

Saleh bin Juma al Balushi, OCCI’s Assistant Director General for Board Affairs, explained that freelance work represents one of the promising economic pillars that contribute to enhancing the flexibility of the labour market, empowering national talent and supporting economic diversification efforts.

He pointed out that the rapid growth of modern work models necessitates providing a supportive and stimulating environment for freelancers, keeping pace with global changes and enhancing the sector’s contribution to the national economy.

Nasser bin Juma al Harthy, Senior Media and Corporate Communications Specialist at OCCI, commented: “Freelancing platforms have an increasing role in supporting the digital economy and providing flexible work opportunities for national talent, in light of the rapid transformations the global labour market is witnessing and the growing reliance on digital and specialised skills”.

Al Harthy added that freelancing platforms have become a key component of operational business models in the global market. These platforms also serve freelancers by reducing costs, increasing productivity and accelerating task completion. Al Harthy mentioned the importance of a comprehensive national platform for freelance work platforms.

This platform would serve as a mechanism for any institution or contracting between service providers and beneficiaries, ensuring that the contract is legal and compliant with Omani laws.

Oman boosts oil output, steadily lowers emission

OMAN is advancing a broad set of initiatives aimed at raising oil and gas production efficiency while expanding the use of renewable energy and cutting carbon emissions across the sector. The Ministry of Energy and Minerals said its efforts are aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the national target to achieve net-zero by 2050.

The strategy combines policy development, investment incentives, new technologies and stronger regulation to support a gradual transition towards a lower-carbon energy system.

Dr Saleh bin Ali al Anbouri, Director-General of Oil and Gas Exploration and Production at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said the ministry is encouraging the use of advanced technologies to improve oil recovery and reduce the environmental impact of production operations.

He cited Petroleum Development Oman’s pilot project in the Zulaimah field, which uses carbon dioxide in enhanced oil recovery operations, as an example of how economic growth and environmental sustainability can be integrated.

The project supports the extraction of oil trapped in tight rock formations while advancing carbon capture, utilisation and storage technologies.

The ministry is also supporting renewable energy projects linked to oil and gas operations.

The Wind 1 and Wind 2 projects, with a combined capacity of up to 200 megawatts, have reached around 42 per cent completion and are expected to begin operations in Block 6 in the fourth quarter of this year. Once operational, they are projected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 740,000 tonnes annually.

A 100-megawatt solar photovoltaic project in the northern part of Block 6 has reached 51 per cent completion and is expected to start operations in the second quarter of 2026, reducing emissions by more than 220,000 tonnes annually.

Al Anbouri said the ministry



Efforts are aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the national target to achieve net-zero by 2050.



The ministry is encouraging the use of advanced technologies to improve oil recovery and reduce the environmental impact of production operations.

DR SALEH BIN ALI
AL ANBOURI
Director-General of Oil and Gas Exploration and Production

is also promoting sustainable water management in production operations.

The Nimr Wetland project, which uses reed beds to naturally treat produced water, has a treatment capacity of 175,000 cubic metres per day and contributes to reducing emissions by 113,000 tonnes annually. It has also developed into a natural habitat for more than 140 species of birds and animals.

The Rima Water Treatment Plant, which started operations in 2022, uses biological processes to treat about 40,000 cubic metres of water per day, saving up to 10 megawatts of energy and reducing emissions by 48,000 tonnes annually.

Other key projects include the 100-megawatt Amin Solar Photovoltaic Power Plant, which has cut emissions by more than 1.1 million tonnes since it began operations in 2020 and the Miraah Solar Steam Generation Project, which supports enhanced oil recovery through clean energy.

The ministry said PDO has raised its target to generate 30 per cent of the energy used in its operations from renewable sources by 2026.

Under Oman’s net-zero strategy, the country aims to reduce total

emissions by 33 per cent by 2035 compared with the 2024 baseline.

The oil and gas sector is targeting a reduction of up to 48 per cent by 2035, including 10 per cent as a committed target and 38 per cent conditional on financing, technology and international support.

Oman is also pursuing zero routine gas flaring by recovering and reusing associated gas instead of burning it. Operating companies have already achieved a 50 per cent reduction in routine flaring at several sites through gas recovery infrastructure and reuse in power generation and production facilities.

The adoption of Oman’s carbon market regulatory framework is expected to further support emissions reduction projects by enabling the trading, sale and purchase of carbon credits.

The ministry said this will improve transparency, attract investment and help companies benefit from global carbon markets.

Together, these initiatives show how Oman is seeking to balance continued development of its oil and gas sector with the expansion of cleaner energy solutions and lower-emission technologies.

— ONA

OPAZ strengthens focus on specialised industries

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) is intensifying efforts to position Oman’s economic zones, free zones and industrial cities as leading destinations for specialised industries, with a focus on strengthening industrial value chains, attracting investment and supporting sustainable economic growth.

According to Amna bint Nasser al Sharji, Director of Investment Promotion at OPAZ, the authority is pursuing a strategy that assigns a distinct economic and industrial identity to each zone based on its competitive advantages and available resources.

The approach aims to attract both domestic and foreign investment, boost industrial output and create long-term employment opportunities for Omani talent.



OPAZ pursues a strategy that assigns a distinct economic and industrial identity to each zone.

Al Sharji said the Salalah Free Zone and Raysut Industrial City are focusing on attracting investments in pharmaceutical, medical and food security-related industries. Their proximity to the Port of Salalah provides strategic access to global shipping routes,

facilitating both the import of raw materials and the export of finished products.

In the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, OPAZ is advancing investments linked to the green economy, including green hydrogen, green ammonia,

renewable energy, petrochemicals and heavy industries. Efforts are also under way to complete industrial supply chains and strengthen Duqm’s position as a regional hub for sustainable manufacturing.

The authority is additionally developing fisheries and food-processing industries in Duqm through an integrated cold-chain cluster designed to enhance storage, distribution and value-added processing capabilities for temperature-sensitive products.

In northern Oman, the SOHAR Port and Freezone is prioritising polysilicon production and solar energy-related industries, while

Suhar Industrial City is focusing on downstream plastics and aluminium manufacturing, leveraging its established industrial base and advanced infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Khazaen Economic City is emerging as a centre for pharmaceutical security and food-processing industries. Major infrastructure projects, including the central fruit and vegetable market, are expected to strengthen food security and create new investment opportunities in value-added processing activities.

Al Sharji said OPAZ continues to prioritise sectors of growing global significance, including medical and pharmaceutical manufacturing, renewable energy, green minerals, food and fisheries industries and petrochemicals.

These industries are expected to play a key role in supporting the transition towards a green economy, strengthening food and health security, expanding exports and increasing the industrial sector’s contribution to the national economy. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The increase was led by a 21 per cent surge in residential land prices.

OMAN REAL ESTATE PRICES JUMP 15.9% IN FIRST QUARTER

MUSCAT: Oman’s real estate market recorded strong growth in the first quarter of 2026, with the Real Estate Price Index rising 15.9 per cent year-on-year, driven largely by sharp increases in residential and commercial land values. Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the residential property price index climbed 17.6 per cent compared with the same period last year. The increase was led by a 21 per cent surge in residential land prices, alongside a 9 per cent rise in villa prices and a 4.4 per cent increase in apartment prices. Prices of other residential housing categories, however, edged down by 1.1 per cent. The commercial property segment also posted robust growth, with its index rising 10.5 per cent. The increase was mainly supported by a 16.5 per cent rise in industrial land prices and an 11 per cent increase in commercial land values. In contrast, retail shop prices declined by 1.8 per cent during the period.

CREDIT OMAN-BACKED DOMESTIC SALES TOP 180M

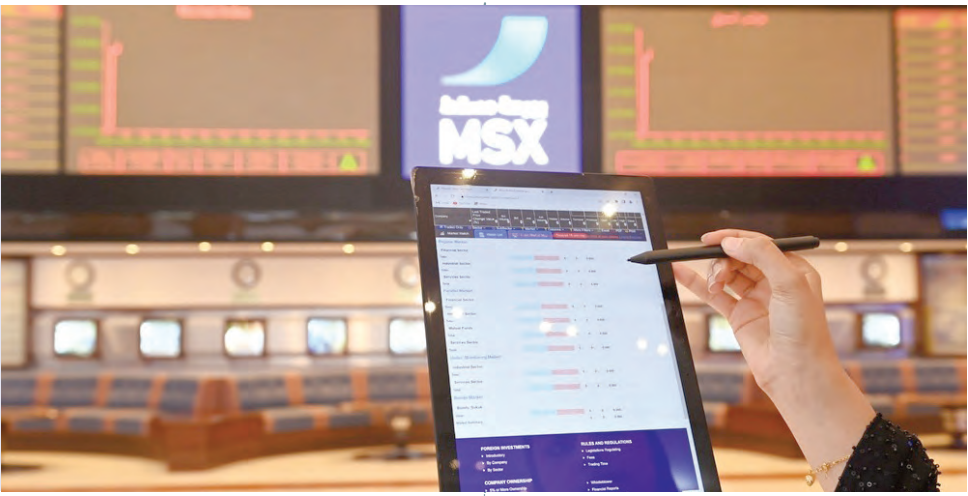


Muscat accounted for the largest share of insured domestic sales at RO 120 million.

MUSCAT: The value of insured domestic sales supported by Credit Oman exceeded RO 180 million by the end of 2025, highlighting the organisation’s growing role in safeguarding business transactions and supporting private sector growth across the Sultanate of Oman. According to data released by Credit Oman, Muscat Governorate accounted for the largest share of insured domestic sales at RO 120 million. Credit limits granted in the governorate reached RO 53.64 million, representing around 58 per cent of the total value of insured sales. Al Batinah North ranked second, with insured domestic sales amounting to RO 18.87 million and approved credit limits totalling RO 10.7 million, equivalent to 11 per cent of overall insured sales.

Financial stocks lift Muscat Stock Exchange for third week

MUSCAT: The financial sector continued to underpin trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), with the sector index extending its gains for a third consecutive week as investors increased positions in banking, insurance and investment stocks. The financial sector index rose by 98 points last week, building on gains of nearly 300 points recorded over the previous two weeks. The index closed at 13,034 points, supported by advances in shares of Bank International, Oman Arab Bank, ahlilbank, Bank Nizwa, Al Sharqiyah Investment Holding, Ominvest, Al Madina Takaful and United Finance. Despite the strength in financial stocks, the broader market ended lower. The benchmark MSX index shed 23 points to close at 7,634



The financial sector index rose by 98 points last week, building on gains of nearly 300 points recorded over the previous two weeks.

points, while the industrial index declined 83 points and the services index lost 37 points. The Sharia Index slipped by one point to finish the week at 611 points. Market capitalisation fell by

Own the BYD Song Plus DM-i this summer

THIS summer, the BYD Song Plus DM-i stands out as an exceptional choice for automotive enthusiasts looking to experience the brand’s “Drive Your Dream. Charged With Innovation” campaign. Running until July 10, 2026, this seasonal initiative invites drivers across the Sultanate of Oman to step into the future of mobility, pairing the innovative plug-in hybrid SUV with a comprehensive suite of premium ownership benefits and rewards. Customers who choose the BYD Song Plus DM-i during the campaign period will benefit from significant ownership advantages. The programme delivers free one-year insurance through Liva Insurance, complimentary three-year roadside assistance and a free EV charger. To ensure complete peace of mind, a dedicated plug-in hybrid (PHEV) service package covering one year or 15,000 km is also included. Adding further excitement to the summer purchase is an assured Scratch & Win gift, offering buyers a guaranteed chance to win premium rewards ranging from Apple Watches and Apple AirPods to exclusive 3M window tinting. The BYD Song Plus DM-i perfectly balances advanced power with exceptional efficiency. Delivering a combined range of 765 km and a robust 319 HP, the plug-in hybrid SUV boasts an ultra-low fuel consumption of just 4.5 litres per 100 km. Equipped with a reliable 1.5L engine and an intelligent all-wheel-drive (AWD) system, the



The BYD Song Plus DM-i perfectly balances advanced power with exceptional efficiency.

vehicle accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in a swift 5.9 seconds. Its modern exterior styling is complemented by an advanced suite of safety technologies, including Lane Keep Assist, Lane Departure Alert and Emergency Lane Keep Assist, ensuring a secure and stress-free driving experience. Inside, the cabin features a premium floating cockpit designed for maximum comfort and connectivity. The high-tech interior is highlighted by a 15.6-inch rotating multimedia screen, a 12.3-inch driver display, a head-up display and a 360° camera for seamless parking. Additional

functional features include a panoramic sunroof, a 9-speaker Dirac audio system, wireless smartphone charging, and dual-zone air conditioning. Enthusiasts are invited to visit BYD showrooms throughout Oman to experience the innovative Song Plus DM-i firsthand and discover how this campaign can elevate their summer journeys. In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business LLC. For more details, to check stock availability, or to schedule a test drive, please call 72225925. You can also visit [www.bydoman.com](#), YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

Voltamp initiative draws 84 firms

MUSCAT: Voltamp Energy’s “Watanha” initiative has attracted 84 companies from Oman, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, India and China to compete for investment opportunities linked to the localisation of strategic energy-sector industries. The strong response reflects growing investor confidence in Oman’s industrial sector and the country’s ability to attract local manufacturing projects in high-value energy components. The companies are competing for opportunities covering 10 strategic products and components targeted by the initiative. Each opportunity attracted more than 15 qualified firms, underlining the momentum behind the programme and the rising interest in energy-related industrial localisation. Voltamp organised an extensive workshop under the initiative, bringing together government entities, investment institutions, industrial development bodies, small and medium enterprises, technology partners and investors. The event focused on increasing local added value and strengthening the localisation of strategic



The strong response reflects growing investor confidence in Oman’s industrial sector.

industries that support Oman’s energy sector. Several entities, including Oman Investment Authority, the Distribution Code Review Panel, Hydrom, Oman Electricity Transmission Company, Nama Group and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada), presented their views on future energy demand, regulatory requirements, accreditation processes, investment incentives and long-term industrial opportunities in Oman. The event also featured a panel discussion

with representatives from the Authority for Public Services Regulation, Invest Oman, Madayn and Riyadh, along with Voltamp leaders. The session provided a platform for direct dialogue with investors and manufacturers, addressing industry questions and clarifying the procedures required to participate in the localisation process. The initiative has helped bring together regulators, investors, energy companies and manufacturers under one platform, creating stronger institutional alignment and supporting faster regulatory procedures. It also aims to reduce implementation barriers and create a more enabling environment for local manufacturers and SMEs. Voltamp said the wide participation demonstrates rising private-sector confidence in the initiative and growing interest in expanding local manufacturing within Oman’s energy industry. The “Watanha” initiative supports Oman’s broader ambition to build a competitive regional hub for advanced energy manufacturing, industrial innovation and sustainable supply chains. — ONA

RO 86 million to RO 36.66 billion as declining stocks outnumbered gainers. A total of 55 securities ended lower, compared with 21 gainers, while 14 stocks remained unchanged. Trading activity, however, strengthened significantly. Total trading value rose 9.3 per cent to RO 191.4 million from around RO 175 million in the previous week, while the number of executed transactions jumped 65 per cent to approximately 41,700 deals. Investors focused on major stocks including OQ Base Industries, OQ Gas Networks, Bank International, Asyad Shipping and Bank Muscat. Bank Muscat topped the list of most actively traded shares by value at RO 46 million, accounting for 24 per cent of total turnover. It was followed by Bank

International at RO 33.7 million, OQ Base Industries at RO 32.5 million, OQ Exploration and Production at RO 18.1 million and OQ Gas Networks at RO 17.5 million. Among the week’s best performers, Oman Arab Bank advanced 6.7 per cent to 238 baisas, while Al Maha Ceramics gained 4.7 per cent to 263 baisas. Al Sharqiyah Investment rose 3.9 per cent, ahlilbank added 3 per cent and OQ Exploration and Production increased 2.8 per cent to close at 470 baisas. On the downside, Salalah Port Services led the decliners, falling nearly 19 per cent to 462 baisas. Salalah Mills dropped 16.5 per cent to 560 baisas, while Al Hassan Engineering, currently under liquidation, lost 12.5 per cent to close at 7 baisas. — ONA

SHORTTAKES



The Orion Solar project will involve an investment of approximately RO 220 million.

CHINESE FIRMS
BACK OMAN’S SOLAR,
CYBER AMBITIONS

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

Chinese investors unveiled ambitious plans to establish a major solar manufacturing complex and a regional cybersecurity hub in Oman, underscoring growing international confidence in the Sultanate of Oman’s industrial, digital and clean-energy ambitions under Oman Vision 2040.

The announcements were made during the Future Fund Oman (FFO) investment showcase on Tuesday, where officials from Orion Solar and XCyber outlined projects that are expected to strengthen Oman’s position in renewable energy manufacturing and digital resilience while creating high-value employment opportunities.

Speaking at the event, Mark Jiang Pengjing, Deputy General Manager of Orion Solar, said the company had chosen Oman as the location for one of its most significant overseas investments because of the country’s clear vision, commitment to sustainability and favourable investment environment.

“In a world full of opportunities, we have chosen Oman because we firmly believe it will be one of the greatest success stories of the next decade”, Pengjing said.

The Orion Solar project, one of the largest industrial investments announced by the Fund, involves the establishment of an integrated solar cell and module manufacturing facility in SOHAR Port and Freezone.

According to project details presented during the event, the venture will involve an investment of approximately RO 220 million and produce 6 gigawatts of solar cells and 3 gigawatts of solar panels annually.

SEZAD plans major
coastal tourism expansion

THE Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) is moving ahead with a major coastal tourism master plan aimed at turning Al Duqm into an integrated tourism and investment destination on the Arabian Sea.

The plan seeks to develop a 16-kilometre waterfront supported by hotels, resorts, tourist accommodation, public spaces, walking trails, eco-tourism facilities and sustainable infrastructure.

It builds on Al Duqm’s natural assets, including sandy beaches, coastal landscapes and distinctive rock formations, as well as its proximity to the Port of Duqm and Duqm Airport.

The master plan includes a world-class marina, recreational and cultural facilities, sports and wellness areas, an equestrian club and a golf course.

These components are designed to diversify the tourism offering and attract both visitors and investors.

By 2030, the project aims to deliver seven hotels and resorts with 687 hotel rooms and 870 residential units, while attracting more than 200,000 tourists annually. By 2040, capacity is expected to rise to 14 hotels with around 1,990 rooms, 3,770 residential units and 697 holiday homes, with projected annual tourist arrivals reaching about 740,000.

The development will also include activity and entertainment centres, shopping areas, integrated residential and tourism districts, a waterfront promenade and new residential



The plan seeks to develop a 16-kilometre waterfront.

communities.

Engineer Abdullah bin Salim al Hakmani, Director of the Technical Affairs Department and Project Manager for the master and detailed plan for the coastal tourism area in SEZAD, said the project forms part of the zone’s Five-Year Plan 2026–2030.

He said the plan aims to strengthen Al Duqm’s appeal for tourism investments and partnerships by making better use of its natural and tourism assets and creating a comprehensive urban framework for future development.



ENGINEER
ABDULLAH
BIN SALIM AL
HAKMANI
Director of the
Technical Affairs
Department and
Project Manager

Al Hakmani said the coastal area enjoys a strategic location overlooking the Arabian Sea and features unique landscapes and geological formations that support its tourism potential.

He added that work is under way on a 14-kilometre dual coastal tourism road, which will connect different urban sectors within the master plan, improve access to most land plots and link the area with the fishing port and city centre.

The area already includes several existing and planned tourism projects covering

around two square kilometres, equivalent to about 6.5 per cent of the total development area.

Committed tourism investments in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm reached approximately RO 853 million by the end of 2025, covering both existing and planned projects.

Al Hakmani said Al Duqm currently provides about 2,000 hotel rooms across different categories, strengthening its ability to accommodate future growth in tourism activity.

The project reflects SEZAD’s wider strategy to combine sustainable tourism, quality of life and economic diversification, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and national efforts to expand investment in promising non-oil sectors.

Nexant tapped for OMIFCO expansion pre-feasibility study

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

US-based technology and energy consulting firm Nexant has been commissioned by the Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO) to undertake a pre-feasibility study assessing the technical and economic viability of expanding the capacity of its ammonia–urea production complex in the eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman.

The announcement was disclosed in OMIFCO’s newly published prospectus ahead of its Initial Public Offering (IPO), which will involve the divestment of a 25% equity stake to institutional and retail investors via the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

OMIFCO currently operates a two-train ammonia–urea complex in Sur, with an ammonia production capacity of 3,500 tonnes per day (equivalent to an annual nameplate



The proposed expansion will contribute to the doubling of the current ammonia and urea production capacity of OMIFCO at an estimated cost of \$2.9 billion.

capacity of around 1.15 million tonnes) and a urea production capacity of 5,060 tonnes per day

(approximately 1.65 million tonnes per year).

The Nexant study examines a base case involving the construction of a third production train based on a conventional ammonia–urea configuration, designed to leverage the company’s existing infrastructure, utilities and logistics to achieve both capital and operating efficiencies.

The proposed expansion is expected to utilise proven technologies and benefit from integration with existing operations, including shared utilities, storage and export infrastructure, thereby reducing incremental capital requirements and execution complexity.

According to the pre-feasibility findings, the base case contemplates the addition of 3,500 tonnes per day of ammonia capacity and 6,212 tonnes per day of urea capacity, representing a material uplift over

current output. The capital cost of this development is estimated at around \$2.9 billion, subject to a ±50% accuracy range.

The Nexant study also underscores the strategic rationale for expansion, citing OMIFCO’s strong operational track record, its ability to consistently operate above nameplate capacity and its established access to key export markets — particularly India, which continues to show structurally strong demand for urea imports.

By 2050, based on Nexant’s estimates of India’s net urea import requirements and assuming two world-scale urea trains with a combined capacity of approximately 2,050 ktpa, as well as 60% of OMIFCO’s annual output being exported to India, the company could account for roughly 6% of India’s total urea import demand.

Even so, OMIFCO is expected to remain a relatively small contributor

within the broader Indian import market, reflecting the depth of underlying demand and supporting long-term absorption of additional supply.

“The development of a third train would be contingent on the availability of long-term natural gas feedstock. In this regard, the company has submitted a request to IGC (state-owned gas shipper Integrated Gas Company) for allocation of gas to support the proposed expansion and is currently awaiting confirmation.

Subject to securing the required feedstock and satisfactory technology licensing, project management and construction arrangements, the project would be expected to materially increase production capacity and strengthen the company’s position as a reliable supplier of nitrogen fertilisers to global markets”, OMIFCO noted in its prospectus.

ENERGY SANCTIONS

UK sets fuel ban deadline



Britain said a full ban on diesel and jet fuel produced from Russian oil will take effect by January 2027 as it phases out a licence allowing such imports.

The government said the licence, introduced to address supply concerns linked to the Iran conflict, will be reviewed every two weeks. Officials stressed that existing sanctions remain in force while tighter restrictions are gradually implemented. — Reuters

TECH TENSIONS

China opposes US blacklist



China has criticised a US decision to add several major Chinese companies to a Pentagon list of firms alleged to support the country’s military. The list includes multinational companies like Alibaba, Baidu, BYD and NIO.

The Chinese government said it strongly opposes the move and urged Washington to withdraw the measures and improve bilateral relations of the two countries. — Reuters

MARKET DEBUT

SpaceX tops \$2 trillion value



Shares of SpaceX surged 19 per cent in their Nasdaq debut, lifting the company’s valuation above \$2 trillion and making it one of the largest listed firms in the United States.

The strong market debut followed a record \$75 billion initial public offering. The rally also propelled founder Elon Musk to become the world’s first trillionaire, according to market estimates. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s innovation landscape: Predictions for the future



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

INNOVATION is an indicator of economic growth and diversification in the Sultanate of Oman. The Oman Vision 2040 has placed innovation, entrepreneurship, digital evolution and research and development (R&D) on the priority list of long term economic strategies.

In the last few years, Oman has been focused on developing the infrastructure to support creativity, technology and sustainable economic development.

Oman Vision 2040 is a strong indicator of the government’s commitment to innovation. Oman’s competitive economy and the growth of the knowledge and technology-based economy, are equally dependent on human capital.

In this regard, Oman Vision 2040 is well-aligned, as it emphasises the Oman economy; the value of innovation is in its ability to improve productivity and competitiveness and provide new economic ventures in the sectors of energy, logistics, manufacturing, tourism, agriculture and information technology.

Numerous initiatives have been launched by the government to nurture innovation. Scientific Research Authority (SRA) and similar ministries are at the forefront of research promotion and the development of technology and the collaboration of different

sectors. Oman seeks practical and innovative research to overcome the challenges it is facing through funding, grants and partnerships.

There has been significant development in the sector dealing with startups and new ventures. Support for budding ventures comes from innovation hubs, incubators and accelerators such as the Oman Technology Fund, Innovation Park Muscat and university-based entrepreneurship centres.

These support systems provide mentorship, funding and networking, helping new businesses bring their new and inventive ideas to the market.

As a result, more startups from Oman are starting new businesses in the domains of fintech, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, e-commerce and a multitude of digital services.

The rapid digital transformation is serving as additional motivation for new ideas. The government has improved digital infrastructure via its smart government initiatives, which has triggered a faster pace in adopting new technologies by both government and private sectors.

Business operations within the sectors now employ various new technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, data analytics, cybersecurity and automation.

This rapid expansion of digital services has created numerous avenues for Oman

Oman Vision 2040 is a strong indicator of the government’s commitment to innovation. Oman’s competitive economy and the growth of the knowledge and technology-based economy, are equally dependent on human capital.

to provide services to support its vision of becoming the leading regional digital economy.

The energy sector has the most new ideas and innovation. Many of the projects being undertaken by Petroleum Development Oman are advanced technologies and renewable energy projects, showing their commitment to developing sustainability.

An increased interest in green hydrogen, solar energy and clean technologies is Oman’s new ideas around sustainability. They now have the opportunity to lead the new global energy systems.

Additionally, local content development initiatives have inspired innovation by motivating Omani firms to innovate capabilities, offerings and services.

These Initiatives bolster the skills of local firms and suppliers and enhance labour and technology capabilities.

This develops competitiveness and enables firms to participate in sophisticated value chains. This approach catalyses innovation in the private sector and develops economic resilience.

Challenges continue to exist, despite these accomplishments. Compared to major economies which emphasise innovation, R&D expenditure is low. This gap can be resolved by better cooperation among the stakeholders to help translate research from the laboratory to the market.

Why HyImpulse matters for Oman’s space ambitions

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The recent Letter of Intent signed between Germany’s HyImpulse Technologies and Etlaq Spaceport may appear, at first glance, to be another agreement in Oman’s growing space sector. Yet its significance extends well beyond the prospect of future rocket launches from Al Duqm.

For Oman, attracting an international launch provider is not simply about hosting launches. It is about building confidence in a new industry that has the potential to create high-value jobs, attract foreign investment and position the Sultanate of Oman as a strategic player in the global space economy.

HyImpulse’s interest in operating from Oman reflects a broader trend taking place across the international space sector. As demand for satellite launches grows, launch companies are increasingly seeking access to multiple spaceports around the world.

Rather than relying on a single location, operators are looking for flexibility, access to different orbital trajectories and the ability to serve customers in emerging markets. This is where Oman’s geography becomes a strategic advantage.

Located near the equator and positioned between Europe, Asia and Africa, Oman offers launch providers access to a wide range of orbital

inclinations. Combined with the logistics infrastructure available in Al Duqm, including its port, airport and industrial zones, the country is increasingly being viewed as more than a launch site. It is emerging as a potential hub for space-related activity. The HyImpulse agreement is also significant because it demonstrates growing international recognition of the progress made by Etlaq Spaceport. Since successfully establishing its launch capabilities at Duqm, the spaceport has steadily expanded its network of international partners while strengthening the regulatory and operational framework required to support commercial launches.

Such partnerships can generate benefits that extend beyond the space sector itself. Launch operations require engineering expertise, advanced manufacturing capabilities, logistics support, environmental monitoring, telecommunications and specialised training. Over time, these activities can stimulate the development of local supply chains and create opportunities for Omani companies to participate in a growing global industry. For young Omanis, the growth of the space sector could also create new career pathways in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The question Oman has been asking for 40 years

A newspaper archive can sometimes tell us more about the future than the past.

Recently, I came across a report published more than four decades ago discussing Omanisation in the banking sector. The debate at the time centred on whether banks could raise the share of Omani employees from around 45 per cent to 60 per cent.

At first glance, it looked like a story from another era. It was not. What struck me was not the percentage being discussed. It was the nature of the discussion itself.

The report spoke about skills shortages. It questioned whether educational institutions were producing graduates with the capabilities employers required. It called for stronger training programmes and greater cooperation between the private sector and educational institutions.

Forty years later, we are still having the same conversation. The difference is that banking is no longer the issue.

Today, the discussion revolves around artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, digital finance, semiconductors and other industries that are expected to shape the next phase of global economic growth.

The sectors have changed. The question has not. Can the education system produce the skills the economy needs? This may well be the most important economic question facing Oman as it advances towards Oman Vision 2040.

Economic diversification is often measured through investment announcements, industrial projects and growth indicators. These are important measures of progress.

They demonstrate momentum and help attract international confidence.

Yet every successful economic transformation ultimately depends on something more fundamental.

People. No investment strategy can succeed if the skills required to sustain it do not exist locally. No technology transfer programme can achieve its full value if local talent is unable to absorb and



Snapshot of an archived Arabic-language newspaper clipping.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer

An archive newspaper report from the 1980s reveals that Oman was already debating skills, training and labour market readiness. Four decades later, the challenge remains central to the Sultanate of Oman’s economic future.

expand upon that knowledge. And no country can build a competitive knowledge economy without first building a competitive knowledge workforce. This is precisely why the banking sector’s experience remains relevant today.

The sector did not become one of Oman’s most successful examples of workforce localisation through regulation alone.

It required decades of investment in education, training and professional development.

It required cooperation between government, employers and educational institutions. Above all, it required a recognition that developing local talent was not simply a labour policy objective. It was an economic necessity.

That lesson deserves renewed attention. Oman is entering a period in which human capital may become more important than physical capital.

Artificial intelligence is transforming industries at a speed few anticipated. Automation is redefining the workplace. New professions are emerging faster than many education systems can adapt.

Competitive advantage increasingly depends on knowledge, innovation and specialised expertise.

In such an environment, the greatest risk is not unemployment. It is irrelevance. A country may

attract substantial investment yet capture only a fraction of its long-term value if the necessary skills remain imported rather than developed domestically.

Conversely, countries that invest successfully in human capital often create economic opportunities that far exceed the value of their natural resources.

This is why the next chapter of Oman’s economic story will depend not only on the industries it attracts but also on the capabilities it develops.

The countries that thrive in the coming decades will not necessarily be those with the largest populations or the deepest financial resources. They will be those that can convert knowledge into skills, skills into innovation and innovation into prosperity.

The old newspaper report reminded me of something important. Forty years ago, Oman was debating how to prepare its citizens for the banking sector.

Today, it is debating how to prepare them for the industries of the future.

Different sectors. Different technologies. The same question. And perhaps the same answer.

The future will belong not to the countries that build the most projects, but to the countries that build the people capable of leading them.

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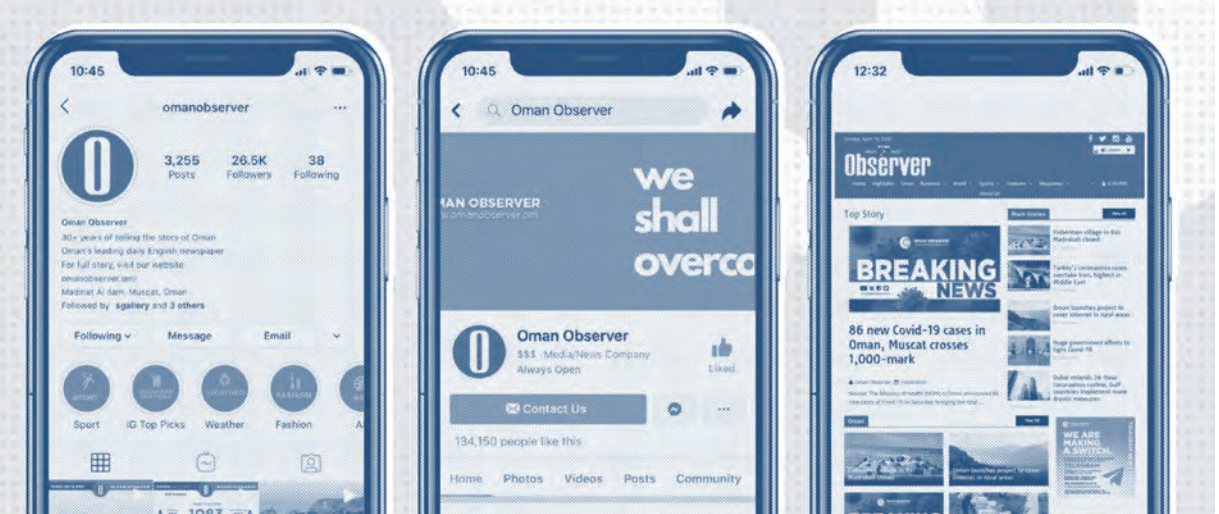
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ART/LIFE

IN THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE

ECHOES OF WHAT REMAINS



AWARDSWEEP

‘LIBERATION’ AND ‘SCHMIGADOON!’ TOP TONY AWARDS



Bess Wohl’s play *Liberation*, a portrait of second-wave feminism and the musical *Schmigadoon!* were among the top winners at the 79th Tony Awards, the highest honours in American theatre, held on Sunday at Radio City Music Hall in New York.

The ceremony reflected the broader political and cultural climate in the United States under President Donald Trump, with host Pink voicing support for marginalised groups in America.

Liberation, which examines identity and the role of women in 1970s society, was named Best Play after previously winning a Pulitzer Prize in May. Its writer, Bess Wohl, became only the fourth woman to receive the honour, marking a significant milestone in the category.

The award for Best Musical went to *Schmigadoon!*, a satirical homage to classic Broadway productions and an adaptation of the television series of the same name. The show was praised for its playful reinterpretation of musical theatre conventions.

In the acting categories, John Lithgow won Best Actor for his portrayal of author Roald Dahl in *Giant*. Lithgow described the production as “extraordinarily important right now”, noting its engagement with difficult themes. The play by British writer Mark Rosenblatt explores a controversial period in Dahl’s life.

Several other productions also received major recognition. *Ragtime*, which depicts social and economic tensions affecting non-white communities in early 20th-century America, received four awards, including Best Revival of a Musical.

Cats: The Jellicle Ball, a reimagining of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical set within New York’s ballroom culture, won three awards. Among the winners was costume designer Queen Jean.

Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* revival was the most awarded production of the night, winning six prizes including Best Revival of a Play and Best Supporting Actress for Laurie Metcalf.

The Broadway League reported continued strong industry performance, with 14.6 million tickets sold during the 2025–2026 season and \$1.9 billion in gross revenue, underscoring theatre’s ongoing popularity with New York audiences.

QUICK FEATURES



WORLD PREMIERE

Hugh Jackman and Jodie Comer attend the World Premiere Screening of *The Death of Robin Hood* in New York City, US. — Reuters



MUSEUM

This aerial view shows the museum “Papalote Museo del Nino” in Mexico City one day before the opening of the 2026 Fifa World Cup football tournament. — AFP



GASTRONOMY

A cook prepares to serve tripe, cow intestines dish, inside a traditional food restaurant in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Common Kestrel



Beachfront in Oman looks over pristine waters

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LATEST ‘SCARY MOVIE’ AIMS TO CANCEL ‘CANCEL CULTURE’, CREATORS SAY

The creators of the sixth installment in the Scary Movie franchise say the film aims to counter what they view as today’s “censorious” culture through exaggerated horror parody and off-color humor. The Wayans family, who launched the politically incorrect spoof nearly three decades ago, return to US cinemas this Friday, describing the timing as especially relevant.

Shawn Wayans told AFP at the Los Angeles premiere that the film speaks directly to current cultural tensions. “I think that it’s an important movie right now for the culture, so that we can handle cancel culture in a whole another way,” he said, adding that comedy remains essential. “Just because cancel culture exists, it doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t have laughter anymore... it’s healing, it’s medicine.”

His sister, Kim Wayans, echoed the sentiment, arguing that society should be more willing to laugh at sensitive topics. “Tonight we’re going to cancel cancel culture — that’s what this movie is going to do,” she said.

Director Michael Tiddes described balancing the film’s layered approach as a key challenge, combining satire of modern horror films with the Wayans family’s signature comedic style and a coherent narrative structure. “You had to find a balance between the movies we were spoofing... and



also our own story,” he said. The film reunites Shawn, Marlon, Kim, and Damon Wayans, alongside returning cast members including Anna Faris, Regina Hall, Jon Abrahams, and Cheri Oteri, reviving characters such as Doofy from the original Scream parody.

Staying true to its roots, the new installment satirises recent horror titles including The Substance, Sinners, Smile, Weapons, Longlegs, Terrifier, and the series Wednesday.

The project marks a full family return to the franchise, with multiple Wayans siblings contributing to the script and younger relatives, including Gregg Wayans, also joining the production team.

Gregg Wayans, 37, said the series remains timeless because of its broad, boundary-pushing humor. “People want to laugh... they’re just waiting for filmmakers like my family to stop abiding by all the rules,” he said, calling the revival “the first step” in bringing back “rule-breakers” to comedy. — AFP

Swift surprises with performance at ‘Toy Story 5’ premiere



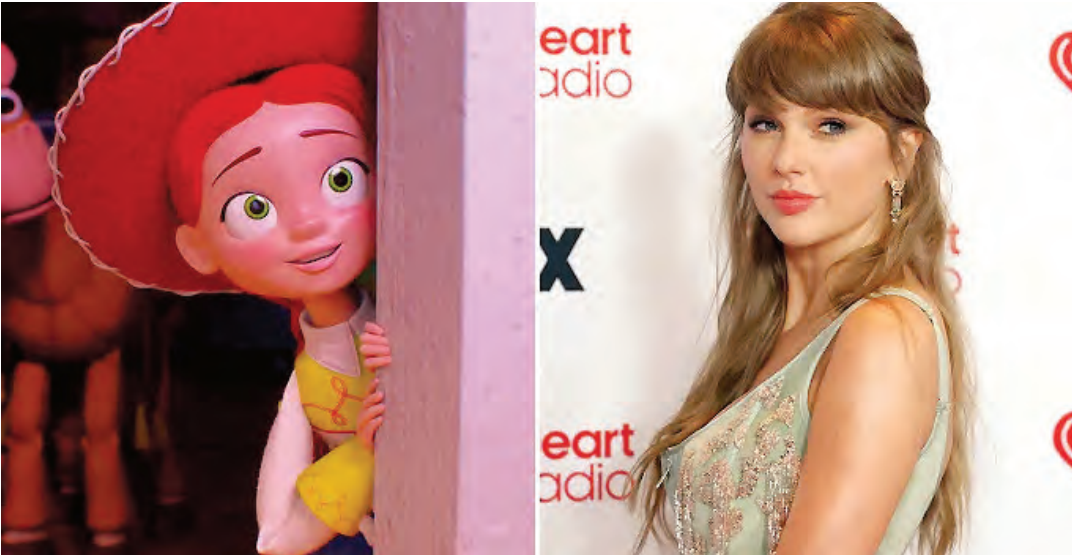
superstar Taylor Swift made a surprise appearance in Hollywood on Tuesday at the premiere of the animated film Toy Story 5, delighting fans and industry guests at the Dolby Theatre.

Swift took the stage in a full-length gown and sat at a piano, where she performed “I Knew It, I Knew You,” a song she wrote specifically for the latest installment in the long-running Pixar franchise. She told the audience she had been a lifelong admirer of the series and expressed gratitude for being invited to contribute musically.

“It means the world to me to be a small part of these films,” Swift said, reflecting on her connection to the beloved animation saga that began in 1995.

The evening’s biggest surprise came when Swift introduced an unexpected guest: legendary composer Randy Newman, known for creating the iconic scores and songs across the Toy Story films. The crowd responded enthusiastically as the two performed a duet of “You’ve Got a Friend in Me,” Newman’s classic from the original Toy Story, blending Swift’s contemporary style with the nostalgic sound that defined the franchise’s early success.

Earlier in the night, Swift joined members of the Toy Story voice cast on the red carpet, posing for photographs alongside Tom Hanks, Joan Cusack, and other returning actors who have long been associated with the animated series. The event brought together music and



Taylor Swift made a surprise appearance at the Toy Story 5 Hollywood premiere, performing a new song she wrote for the film and later joining composer Randy Newman for a duet of “You’ve Got a Friend in Me”.

film stars in celebration of the franchise’s latest chapter.

Toy Story 5, produced by Pixar Animation Studios under Walt Disney, continues the story of the beloved animated characters that have spanned generations since the original film’s release nearly three decades ago. The franchise has become one of Pixar’s most successful and culturally influential series, known for its emotional storytelling and memorable soundtrack contributions from Randy Newman.

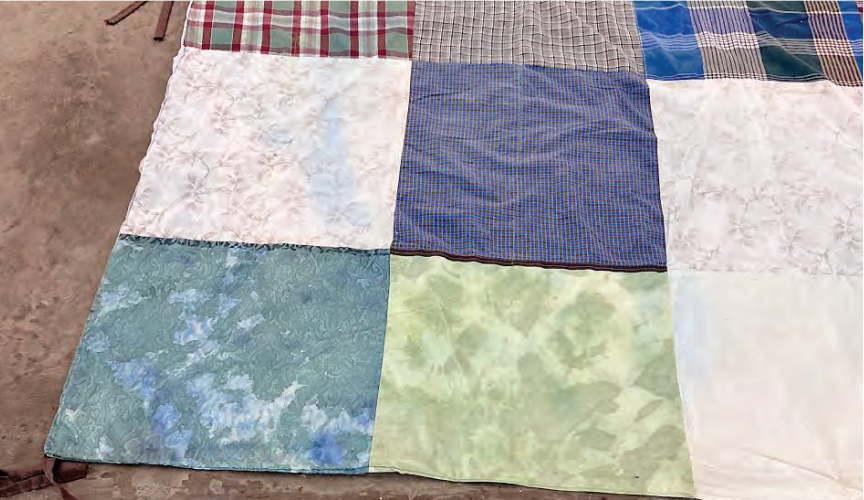
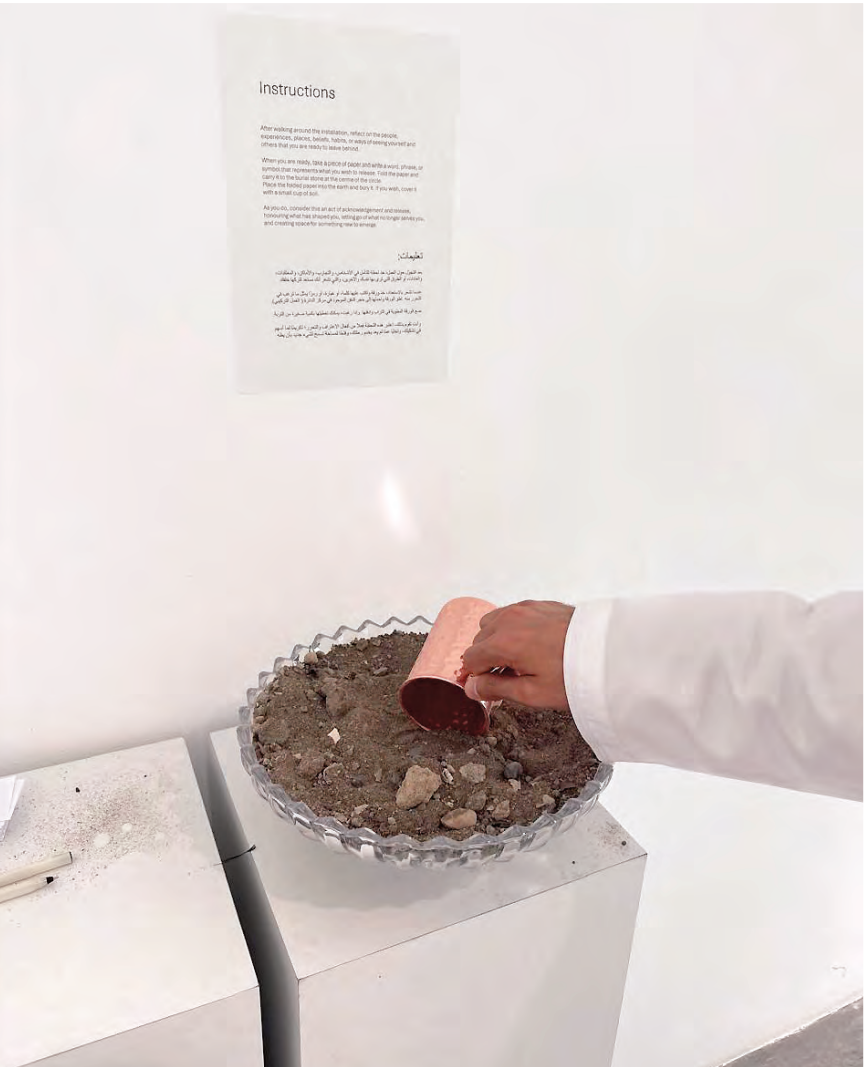
The new film is set

for theatrical release on June 19, with anticipation building among audiences eager to see how the story continues. Swift’s involvement has added an extra layer of excitement, particularly among younger fans who connect with her music as well as the enduring appeal of the Toy Story universe.

Her unexpected performance and collaboration with Newman marked one of the standout moments of the premiere, blending nostalgia with contemporary pop culture in a celebration of the franchise’s legacy. — Reuters

FEATURES

IN THE
PRESENCE
OF ABSENCE:
ECHOES OF WHAT
REMAINS



At Stal Gallery, *In the Presence of Absence* unfolded as a meditation on memory and loss, where what was missing became tangible through fabric, sound, images, and ritual, turning absence into something quietly present.

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

At first glance, the gallery was still. Yet beneath its quiet surface, something lingered, fragile, unseen and persistent. In the *Presence of Absence*, curated by Ruqaiya Mazar at Stal Gallery, ran from May 24 to June 10, 2026 and unfolded as a spatial meditation on memory, loss and the invisible traces left behind by what was no longer present. Bringing together works by James Wagstaff, Khadija al Maamari, Bashair al Balushi, Ali Wagar & Nouf al Jabri and many more brilliant minds, the exhibition resisted fixed meaning. Instead, it opened a threshold where remembering and forgetting overlapped, where absence was not emptiness but a form of presence that continued to resonate.

The exhibition invited visitors not only to observe, but to enter physically and emotionally. One immersive installation spread woven fabric across the floor, encouraging visitors to remove their shoes and walk across its surface. Movement became reflection and touch became a way of reading memory. Elsewhere, video works played through headphones created intimate, isolated listening experiences. Voices emerged softly in the ear, turning the gallery into a space of private encounter within a shared environment. At the centre of the exhibition was a participatory burial-ground installation. Visitors were invited to write down something they wished to release. Using a copper cup, they buried their words beneath soil, transforming personal memory into

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a collective ritual of letting go. What was hidden became part of the work itself. In Patina, Ali Wagar constructed a layered archive of mixed textiles, ink, paint and video. The work reflected on nostalgia for earlier versions of the self, gathering personal artefacts and emotional residues. These fragments became carriers of memory, holding traces of people, places and past emotional states. The piece extended an ongoing exploration begun in 2024, where material became a vessel for what time could not fully erase. Bashair al Balushi presented *Takhali (Places)*, a photographic archive of abandoned spaces and discarded belongings. Her lens lingered on what had been left behind, questioning the stories embedded in emptied rooms and forgotten objects. The work reflected on migration, attachment and the fragile relationships between people and the things they left behind. Nouf al Jabri's *Temporary House* transformed construction debris into a shelter-like structure. Inspired by childhood play spaces built from leftover materials, the installation reimagined ruins as spaces of imagination. Here, shelter became temporary and memory was built from fragments rather than permanence.

In *What Wasn't Said*, Khadija al Maamari turned to the unspoken histories of women whose experiences were never recorded in language. Through video and cyanotype prints, she explored memory as a bodily residue, something that persisted even when it could not be fully spoken. The work asked whether silence erased experience or preserved it in another form. Across the exhibition, absence was never simply lack. It became texture, ritual and form. Through fabric visitors walked on, soil they buried words in and images that refused closure, In the *Presence of Absence* transformed memory into something active and shared. In this space, what was gone did not disappear. It lingered, quietly, insistently, waiting to be felt again.