

O M A N عُمَان D A I L Y

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SUNRISE 05:29 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 04:04 AM
DHUHR 12:18 PM
ASR 03:38 PM
MAGHRIB 07:01 PM
ISHA 08:22 PM



12
CHELSEA STUN
PSG 3-0 TO WIN
CWC FINAL

INBRIEF

HM CONDOLES
PRESIDENT OF
NIGERIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the death of the former Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Bola and the people of Nigeria.

OMAN ACROSS
AGES MUSEUM
WINS AWARD



MANAH: Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, has won the 2025 International Chapter Award for Public Architecture. The award was conferred on the museum by the Australian Institute of Architects. The award was announced at the Australian Pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025 in Japan. The head of the jury said that the entries submitted this year highlighted diversity in terms of geographical, cultural and environmental challenges addressed by the winning designs. He explained that the winning designs responded to the aforementioned challenges through their high quality of materials, precision in detail and harmony with their physical entourage. — ONA

TRUMP’S 50-DAY
RUSSIA ULTIMATUM
‘A VERY LONG TIME’

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas on Monday welcomed US President Donald Trump’s tougher line on Russia, but said a 50-day ultimatum on punishing Moscow was “very long”. “It is very positive President Trump is taking a strong stance on Russia,” Kallas told journalists. “On the other hand, 50 days is a very long time if we see that they are killing innocent civilians every day.” US President Donald Trump announced new weapons for Ukraine on Monday, and threatened to hit buyers of Russian exports with sanctions unless Russia agrees a peace deal in 50 days, a major shift in policy brought on by frustration with Moscow. **SEE ALSO P7**



KHAREEF DHOFA
MEDIA CAMPAIGN
STARTS TODAY

The Ministry of Information will launch on Tuesday the media programmes accompanying the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) Season 2025 as part of a comprehensive plan to highlight the tourism, cultural, natural and heritage attractions of Dhofar Governorate during the season. **SEE P2**

MEDIATORS TOIL TO
WRAP UP GAZA TALKS

STUTTERING

Gaza ceasefire talks entered a second week on Monday, with mediators seeking to close the gap between Israel and Hamas, as more than 20 people were killed across the Palestinian territory. The indirect negotiations in Qatar appear deadlocked after both sides blamed the other for blocking a deal for the release of hostages and a 60-day ceasefire after 21 months of fighting. An official with knowledge of the talks said they were “ongoing” in Doha on Monday, saying: “Discussions are currently focused on the proposed maps for the deployment of Israeli forces within Gaza.” “Mediators are actively exploring innovative mechanisms to bridge the remaining gaps and maintain momentum in the negotiations,” the source added on condition of anonymity. Hamas accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — who wants to see the Palestinian militant group destroyed as a fighting force — of being the main obstacle. “Netanyahu is skilled at sabotaging one round of negotiations after another, and is unwilling to reach any agreement,” the group wrote on Telegram. In Gaza, the civil defence agency said at least 22 people were killed on Monday in the latest Israeli strikes



A girl eats from a dish after queueing for a meal from a charity kitchen in Gaza City on Monday. — AFP

In Gaza, the civil defence agency said at least 22 people were killed on Monday in the latest Israeli strikes in and around Gaza City and in Khan Yunis in the south

in and around Gaza City and in Khan Yunis in the south. An Israeli military statement said troops had destroyed “buildings and terrorist infrastructure” used by Hamas in Gaza City’s Shujaiya and Zeitun areas. The Al Quds Brigades — has fought alongside Hamas — released footage on Monday that it said

showed its fighters firing missiles at an Israeli army command and control centre near Shujaiya. US President Donald Trump said he was still hopeful of securing a truce deal, telling reporters on Sunday night: “We are talking and hopefully we’re going to get that straightened out over the next week.” **SEE ALSO P6**

Oman, Philippines sign visa waiver pact for diplomatic passports

MANILA: Oman and the Philippines on Tuesday signed a mutual visa waiver agreement for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports. The agreement was signed during a meeting between Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Maria Theresa Lazaro, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, in Manila. Both sides agreed to pursue efforts to sign several memoranda of understanding and agreements

that would strengthen bilateral cooperation. The two ministers also agreed to hold the second Oman-Philippines Investment Forum in Muscat next year to foster sustainable economic ties. On the political front, the two sides exchanged views on regional issues of mutual interest, including consultations on knowledge exchange, skills development, and strengthening partnerships between Asean and the GCC. Lazaro expressed profound



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and Maria Theresa Lazaro after signing the agreement in Manila on Monday

gratitude for Oman’s humanitarian efforts, which recently led to the release of several sailors from the MV Galaxy Leaders in Yemen. She also commended the wise and balanced foreign policy of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the fair treatment of Filipino workers in Oman. She welcomed the outcomes of the successful Oman-Cebu Investment Forum and expressed interest in supporting further private-sector initiatives to

leverage available investment opportunities. Sayyid Badr appreciated the remarks of the secretary, emphasising the shared values and friendship that continue to grow in service of mutual interests and common prosperity. The meeting was attended by Nasser bin Said al Manouri, Oman’s Ambassador to the Philippines; Raul Hernandez, the Philippine Ambassador to Oman, and some officials. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



TWO ARRESTED FOR ‘RENTAL SCAM’

MUSCAT: Muscat Governorate Police Command arrested two people for publishing fake advertisements on social media and marketing programmes, offering residential, commercial and entertainment buildings for rent at low prices.

The motive of their fraud was aimed at receiving bank transfers from victims as a down payment to confirm reservations. They used fake names and contact information for other people to conceal their identities and evade justice. Legal procedures are being completed against them.

In Dhofar, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism warned that several promoters and social media influencers have been recently promoting unlicensed facilities and buildings, which may lead to legal consequences.

The ministry urged all visitors coming to Dhofar Governorate to ensure that the tourist facility is licensed before making a reservation to ensure the quality of services, obtain competitive prices and guarantee the rights of the tenant.

AL SHARQIYAH NORTH RECEIVES RAIN



AL MUDHAIBI: The wilayats of Al Mudhaibi and Bidiyah in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate witnessed rainfall of varied intensity, on Monday. The villages of Samad Al Shan, Al Maamoura, Al Maysar, Al Qari, Samad Al Jadida, Lazaq, Al Khashaba, Al Shuwaie and Al Buwaitin experienced heavy to moderate rains associated with hail and downdraft wind. A number of wadis overflowed as a result of heavy rain. The villages of Al Dhahir and Al Wasil in the Wilayat of Bidiyah experienced scattered rains associated with downdraft winds, causing flooding of wadis.

— ONA

Khareef Dhofar media programmes start today

THE Ministry of Information will launch today the media programmes accompanying the Khareef Dhofar (monsoon) Season 2025 as part of a comprehensive plan to highlight the tourism, cultural, natural and heritage attractions of Dhofar Governorate during the season.

The integrated plan, running until August 31, includes producing and broadcasting visual, audio and digital programmes with interactive content and live field coverage to ensure wide outreach locally and internationally. Oman TV will begin its coverage with the programme ‘People and Khareef’, returning this year with a refreshed, more in-depth format. The daily show (2:30 pm – 4 pm) will feature diverse locations showcasing Dhofar’s landscapes and tourism activities, with participation from Omani and GCC media professionals as well as Arab journalists.

The evening programme ‘Khareef Nights’ will broadcast live from the ‘Return of the Past’ event site in Al Saada, Salalah (9 pm – 10 pm) on Oman General and Oman Cultural channels, covering heritage, cultural and artistic activities.

Oman Radio will air Khareef’s Radio Programme codenamed ‘Atheer’ daily (5 pm – 7 pm) from the ‘Return of the Past’ location, featuring studio interviews, AI-powered segments on Dhofar, and live video content shared via the ministry’s and radio’s platforms.

Youth Radio will broadcast ‘Khareef and Youth’ from Jabal Ateen studio (2 pm – 4 pm daily), focusing on artistic, cultural and



The integrated plan includes producing and broadcasting visual, audio, and digital programmes

social themes for young audiences.

Oman News Agency (ONA) has commenced its coverage with news reports, features, photos and videos across digital platforms, social media and smart apps, as well as radio/TV bulletins, highlighting tourism assets and socio-cultural interactions.

Oman newspaper continues its coverage (since June 21) through print/digital reports and social media, offering rich content on the festivities.

Moreover, the Ministry of Information’s General Directorate of Digital Media enhances engagement via interactive competitions, drone-captured scenic vignettes and multilingual visitor interviews. The ‘Ayn’ platform provides live coverage from Oman Radio and TV for all programmes and activities related to the Khareef Dhofar Season. Ayn also launched a children’s programme promoting Dhofar as a family-friendly destination through edutainment content.

Furthermore, Oman’s Information Portal, available in eight languages (Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and German), features dedicated khareef content to amplify Oman’s global digital presence. The portal is one of the Ministry of Information’s most prominent platforms.

— ONA

Takaful programme a commitment to empowerment

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 14

More than 50 well-trained volunteers from the Takaful Sohar Charity Team have conducted the sixth edition of the community-based youth programme in Suhar. The initiative, which runs for three weeks, reflects the team’s commitment to youth empowerment and sustainable community development.

This year’s programme brings together about 64 participants, engaging them in a carefully designed schedule that nurtures personal growth, entrepreneurial thinking and career exploration.

Each week of the programme focuses on a specific theme. The first week, under the title “Rakeeza”, was dedicated to personality development and confidence building. The second week, titled “Challenge of Wealth”, was introducing



This year’s programme engages the participants in a carefully designed schedule that nurtures personal growth.

youth to entrepreneurship and financial planning. The third week, titled “Majors and Future Aspirations”, focused on helping participants discover their academic and career interests.

According to Ma’an al Hinai, the programme supervisor, all volunteers underwent a series of nine specialised workshops before the programme began. These sessions covered key skills and knowledge areas, ensuring that every volunteer was fully prepared to guide and support the youth throughout the programme.

“This preparation is essential,” said Al Hinai. “We believe that investing in our volunteers is the first step to creating a meaningful and impactful experience for the participants.”

The broader goal of the programme is to reshape how youth spend their free time by providing them with interactive, skill-building experiences that

help shape their future. At the same time, the initiative reflects the team’s larger mission of delivering sustainable development projects that contribute to a more productive, generous and happy society.

Amal al Maqbali, a mother of one of the participants, commented, “This programme has a positive impact on our children where they realised that their mission is to support and lead the change in the community. In fact, the programme helps to widen their horizons and prepare them for future careers with responsible personalities.”

Through the dedication of its volunteers and its focus on real-world skills, Summer of Takaful was a good model of community-driven youth engagement and empowerment and that can be easily seen through the large participation from the community individuals.

Salalah conference urges smarter training policies for AI

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 14

The 11th Annual Human Development Conference concluded in Salalah with a unified call to upgrade national training policies and adopt smarter, innovation-led workforce strategies that respond to accelerating technological change.

Held under the theme ‘Developing Human Capital through Training and Qualification’, the two-day event convened senior officials, industry leaders, educators and experts to examine how innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) can be integrated into workforce development, in line with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

The closing recommendations

focused on two main levels: institutional transformation and individual empowerment.

At the institutional level, the conference called for the overhaul of traditional training systems. The participants urged public and private sector organisations to align continuous learning programmes with the demands of digital transformation and AI integration. They emphasised the importance of developing structured systems for training needs analysis to ensure resources are directed efficiently and outcomes are measurable. Institutions were also encouraged to implement professional development pathways across all employment tiers to raise productivity and future readiness.

At the individual level, the



The Human Development Conference called for the overhaul of traditional training systems

conference urged workers and job-seekers to take greater ownership of their development journeys. This

includes setting clear learning goals, pursuing internationally recognised certifications, and actively participating in workshops and volunteer activities — both within and beyond the workplace. These experiences were highlighted as essential for sharpening real-world skills, strengthening employability and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

The final day of the conference featured several expert-led sessions. A technical paper presented by OQ Industrial Investments outlined the company’s practical approach to identifying training gaps through systematic needs assessments. Another paper examined how organisational culture can shape the success or failure of training initiatives. A third presentation

explored the growing value of professional certifications in driving talent development and organisational competitiveness.

Two specialised workshops added further depth to the programme. One focused on real-world applications of AI in learning environments, while the other explored methods for measuring the impact and return on investment (ROI) from training activities. A high-level panel discussion, titled ‘Future Trends in Human Development: Advanced Training and Qualification’, addressed how governments, industries and academic institutions can collaborate to anticipate future skills gaps and build adaptable, innovation-driven employment ecosystems.

SHORT TAKES

SHABAB OMAN II
SETS SAIL FOR
ABERDEEN



DUNKIRK: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) vessel ‘Shabab Oman II’ departed on Monday from the port of Dunkirk, France, en route to Aberdeen, Scotland. During this leg, ‘Shabab Oman II’ will participate in the second stage of the 2025 Tall Ships Race as part of its seventh international voyage, ‘Glories of the Seas’. — ONA



TENDERS AUTHORITY
FORUM EMPOWERS
ENTREPRENEURS



The forum brought together numerous entrepreneurs from various sectors

MUSCAT: The Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority on Monday organised an expanded dialogue forum bringing together numerous entrepreneurs from various sectors. This initiative comes within the authority’s efforts to stimulate and enhance private sector participation in government projects and contracts, thereby supporting the national economy and maximising these institutions’ contributions to development.

The forum is part of a series of national initiatives aimed at activating SMEs participation in developmental projects and increasing their contribution to GDP. This reinforces economic sustainability goals and strengthens public-private partnership values.

The event reflects the authority’s commitment to direct engagement with business owners through open dialogue, discussing key proposals and challenges to improve the tendering environment. This approach aims to develop relevant policies and procedures, ensuring fair access to public tender opportunities while enhancing businesses’ growth and expansion capabilities.

During the forum, the participants reviewed key updates on available projects and tenders, with special emphasis on the growing number of ‘Riyada’ card holders registered with the authority. — ONA

Oman leads in marine
conservation, sustainability

THE Sultanate of Oman has placed paramount importance on protecting and sustaining its marine environment, diligently safeguarding it through a series of well-considered initiatives and policies. With an extensive coastline spanning approximately 3,165 kilometres, Oman is home to a rich biodiversity that includes coral reefs, seabirds, fish and endangered species such as sea turtles, whales and dolphins.

The Environment Authority is tasked with developing environmental strategies and plans to protect coastal and marine ecosystems. It conducts scientific studies and research to address environmental challenges such as pollution, overfishing and climate change, in alignment with the priorities and programmes of Oman’s Environmental Strategy and Oman Vision 2040.

Eng Ahmed bin Said al Shukaili, Director of the Marine Environment Conservation Department at the Environment Authority, stated that Oman has implemented numerous projects in this field, most notably the Artificial Coral Reefs initiative. This project aims to rehabilitate damaged coral reefs, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable fishing and protect coastal areas.

He added that Oman places great emphasis on international cooperation in marine conservation, participating in global environmental agreements and programmes such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, which focuses on preserving biodiversity and ensuring its sustainable use. This contributes to strengthening Oman’s efforts in addressing global environmental challenges related to oceans.

In line with its international commitments, Al Shukaili pointed out that Oman fulfils its obligations by submitting national reports to regional and global conventions, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Indian Ocean Sea Turtle Memorandum of Understanding. Additionally, Oman has intensified efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade while raising



ESO conducts extensive awareness, education and outreach activities targeting all segments of society

public awareness through educational campaigns and workshops to engage citizens and residents in marine conservation.

He highlighted the Environment Authority’s national efforts represented in protecting endangered marine species through environmental laws and regulations, such as the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law and the Natural Reserves and Wildlife Conservation Law. These laws safeguard beaches, marine life and sensitive ecosystems like coral reefs and mangroves, while regulating the discharge of liquid and solid waste into marine and coastal environments.

He explained that the Environment Authority has also undertaken coral reef rehabilitation projects in collaboration with national entities, including the strategic placement of decommissioned military equipment and concrete structures to create suitable habitats for coral growth and marine organism reproduction. Furthermore, it conducts an annual Marine Pollution Monitoring Project, sampling water and sediment along Oman’s coastline

- from Musandam to Dhofar - to measure pollutants such as heavy metals and hydrocarbons, providing critical data on marine pollution levels, particularly near industrial ports.

Dr Amer bin Nasser al Matani, Chairman of the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), highlighted the strong partnership and ongoing collaboration between the Society and the Environment Authority in research, studies and projects since the Society’s establishment in 2004.

In a statement to ONA, he noted that the Society is currently implementing four marine conservation projects: Whale and Dolphin Studies and Conservation, Sea Turtle Studies and Conservation, Coral Reef Studies and Conservation, and Awareness Programmes on the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve.

He added that the Society conducts extensive awareness, education and outreach activities targeting all segments of society, providing research findings to the Environment Authority for integration into environmental policies. — ONA

Salt harvest spotlights traditional techniques

TEXT & PHOTO
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

While temperatures remain high, salt extraction is currently underway in large quantities along Oman’s coastal areas, stretching from Al Batinah Plain to the Wilayat of Mahout. Production typically declines by November as temperatures drop.

Basins ranging from 20 to 40 cm deep and varying in size are spread across these coastal plains. They are filled with seawater, which undergoes natural evaporation to produce salt. The harvested salt is then dried, purified of impurities and stored in cloth or plastic bags before being distributed to



Basins ranging from 20 to 40 cm deep and varying in size are spread across coastal plains

local markets.

The entire process of drying and collecting salt takes about

two weeks during summer, extending to around a month in winter. Consequently, summer is considered the ideal season for salt production, with peak temperatures accelerating evaporation. Sources indicate that summer salt extraction in the Wilayat of Qurayat alone can reach up to 400 tonnes per month. Other notable traditional production sites include Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Masirah and Mahout, where large quantities of high-quality salt are also produced.

Omani researcher Saleh al Farsi highlights that, historically, salt was transported on donkeys and camels to local markets and exported by sea on wooden

ships to ports in India and East Africa. Salt has always been a staple commodity of significant economic value, used extensively in fish preservation and consistently in demand from manufacturing industries, particularly petroleum and chemical sectors.

Each salt basin yields approximately 35 kg. The Duqm Salts Factory, located around 80 km from Duqm Port, is the first of its kind in Oman. It produces raw and industrial salt for companies operating in oil fields. According to sources, the factory currently meets 22 per cent of local demand and approximately 70 per cent of the oil fields’ needs for high-quality industrial salt.

Fanja Heritage House: A legacy bridging authenticity and modernity

BIDBID: In a historical corner where ancestral heritage and the echoes of the past intertwine, an ancient house stands as a witness to time, transforming into a vibrant economic project that harmonises tradition with modernity, heritage with investment.

Located in the village of Fanja in Bidbid, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Fanja Heritage House revives the spirit of a decades-old ancestral home, now repurposed as both a heritage museum and a boutique guesthouse. It attracts visitors from across Oman, offering an escape



Located in the village of Fanja in Bidbid, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Fanja Heritage House revives the spirit of a decades-old ancestral home. — ONA

from urban bustle and an ideal retreat for families and friends. This project exemplifies how cultural identity can be leveraged to serve sustainable development.

Saif bin Nasser al Rawahi, a photographer and the project’s owner, has infused this unique initiative with artistic and innovative touches. He explains that the house belonged to his family for nearly 40 years before being converted into a tourist destination two years ago.

The heritage house comprises three sections: A cafe serving

diverse Omani cuisine, surrounded by seating areas scattered throughout the property; an exploration zone where visitors wander through the house’s nooks, encountering animals and lush greenery along stairways and bridges leading to Fanja Valley’s terrace; and a guesthouse for those seeking an overnight stay immersed in heritage.

Thanks to its seamless blend of nature and Omani heritage, the site has welcomed 160,000 visitors from over 63 countries as of May 2025.

— ONA

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Increased tourism and the widespread use of private vehicles in natural areas have given rise to serious threats

GREEN SPACES AT RISK FROM OFF-ROAD DRIVING

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

SOME phenomena continue to spoil the experience of enjoying the natural beauty of Dhofar Governorate throughout the year, particularly during the khareef season. One of the most damaging is the random passage of vehicles across green plains and mountain slopes.

Protecting nature — especially vegetation — has become an urgent priority that requires collective effort.

The benefits of preserving these green landscapes are universal, especially during khareef, when Dhofar transforms into one of the most verdant and captivating regions in the Arabian Peninsula. Adorned with a lush green blanket, the governorate draws thousands of visitors from within Oman and abroad.

Dhofar Governorate alone is home to 900 species, representing 64 per cent of Oman's total flora.

These plants flourish in areas blessed by seasonal rains, making the governorate especially attractive during khareef season.

In response, the Dhofar Municipality has launched a project to protect these vital green spaces from uncontrolled vehicle traffic. This initiative underscores the Municipality's commitment to preserving one of the governorate's most important natural assets — its vegetation cover that spans mountains, plains and popular tourist spots.

However, increased tourism and the widespread use of private vehicles in natural areas have given rise to serious threats. Irregular vehicle movements crush plants, damage root systems and disturb the soil structure, reducing its capacity to retain water and air-essential elements for plant growth. Over time, this leads to gradual vegetation loss, eventually transforming once-green areas into barren lands.

The Nature Conservation Society, operating under the Environment Authority, has stepped up efforts to address this issue through an 'Awareness Initiative.'

KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

Cooperation with authorities such as the Environment Authority, Dhofar Municipality, and Royal Oman Police to close dirt roads before khareef season begins.

Educational outreach to residents and visitors on the importance of protecting green spaces. This involves distributing brochures, conducting biodiversity lectures and sharing multilingual awareness messages on social media.

Combating invasive species like Parthenium hysterophorus and mesquite trees (Prosopis juliflora), which threaten native vegetation and biodiversity.

Pest control efforts targeting harmful insects such as stem borers and termites that damage trees including baobab, wild figs (Ficus sycomorus), wild olives (Olea europaea) and frankincense (Boswellia sacra).

Pruning and maintenance of perennial trees in cooperation with relevant agencies.

The Society has also praised efforts to prohibit vehicle entry into green spaces and establish designated parking areas along roadsides.

Vegetation is the backbone of ecological systems, stabilising soil against erosion, enriching it, purifying the air, absorbing carbon dioxide, and producing oxygen. It also plays a key role in moderating temperatures, promoting rainfall through transpiration and shielding the Earth's surface from excessive heat.

Despite active measures by the Municipality, Environment Authority, police and conservation groups, the phenomenon of vehicle-induced damage persists — sometimes due to ignorance, lack of enforcement, or deliberate violations.

As khareef season returns, community involvement is crucial. Highlighting these issues is not meant to generalise or blame all visitors, but to encourage a deeper sense of responsibility and shared stewardship for Dhofar's green treasures.

SHORT TAKES



The competition focuses on developing youth capabilities across diverse fields

694 PARTICIPATE IN CULTURAL CREATIVITY COMPETITION

SALALAH: The 10th edition of the Clubs’ Cultural Creativity Competition for Dhofar Governorate began on Monday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. The two-day event aims to energise institutional work within clubs, uncover and nurture talents, and instil values of citizenship among young people.

Dr Hamid bin Ali al Mashikhi, Director of the Department of Culture at the General Directorate of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate, noted that the competition focuses on developing youth capabilities across diverse fields. Events include individual debates, sports commentary, innovation and entrepreneurship, all designed to enhance skills and empower participants.

He highlighted that club-level participation has been strong, with 694 male and female participants actively engaged in all areas. The second phase of the competition will feature inter-club interactions to qualify teams for the third phase.

The 10th edition features a wide range of categories, including literature (classical and popular poetry), cultural debates, visual arts (plastic arts and photography), performing arts (music and chanting), technology and innovation (entrepreneurship and electronic games) and sports commentary. — ONA

RAO MUSIC BAND TAKES PART IN SCOTLAND CONTEST



The RAO Music Band plays in Scotland

MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) Music Band is participating in the World Music Competition taking place in Scotland, United Kingdom, from July 19 to August 16, 2025. The participation of military music bands in international competitions aims to refine the skills of their members and enhance their artistic capabilities and potential. — ONA

Al Jabal Al Sharqi rises as an eco-tourism hotspot

AL HAMRA: Al Jabal Al Sharqi (The Eastern Mountain) is undergoing a remarkable transformation, positioning it as a major contributor to domestic tourism and local community empowerment. Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, affirmed that developing Al Jabal Al Sharqi has been a top priority. The governorate, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is focused on creating an integrated tourism environment that meets visitors’ expectations while upholding sustainable environmental standards. This includes improving service efficiency, regulating visitor flow and ensuring safe, balanced access. Speaking to ONA, he highlighted the ‘Al Jabal Al Sharqi Oasis’ project as one of the most significant initiatives in the governorate.



SHAIKH HILAL BIN SAID AL HAJRI Governor of Al Dakhiliyah

The project tender was floated in April, and bids are currently under review. Covering 10,000 square metres, the development will include prayer halls for men and women, a 300-square-metre investment restaurant, an outdoor theatre, 13 shaded seating areas, pedestrian walkways, open spaces and essential service amenities — all designed to make the site appealing year-round. He emphasised that this project embodies Oman Vision 2040 through quality initiatives that leverage each wilayat’s unique

PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT CYBERSECURITY PROJECTS LAUNCHED

MUSCAT: A programme to support cybersecurity projects was launched on Monday by the National Centre for Cyber Security at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The programme is being implemented in cooperation with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Muscat, in partnership with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development — with support from Eshraqa Foundation for Community



Development. The programme, which runs until July 24, is being held at Hadatha Centre for Cybersecurity Industry at UTAS. It is envisaged to serve entrepreneurs and owners

of start-ups operating in the field of cybersecurity, from Muscat Governorate. It seeks to enable the stakeholders to develop their innovative ideas and convert them into viable commercial projects in local, regional or global markets. The programme includes a training package covering operational planning skills, financial management, the development of visual identity and digital marketing, team management and the selection of employees. — ONA

Dhofar launches campaign to plant 4 million tree seeds

QASIM AL MAASHANI SALALAH, JULY 14

A major environmental campaign has been launched in Dhofar Governorate to scatter and plant four million seeds of native trees, reinforcing national efforts to restore vegetation, combat desertification and preserve biodiversity.

The initiative — led by the Environment Authority (EA) in collaboration with Dhofar Municipality, OQ, OQ Bioplastics (OQBi) and the ‘Wa’i’ Awareness Initiative — targets mountainous areas across the wilayats of Salalah, Mirbat, Taqah, Rakhyouut and Dhalkout. The campaign will run through July 24.

Now in its fifth consecutive year, the campaign is aligned with Oman’s National Initiative to plant 10 million trees, a flagship programme supporting Oman Vision 2040. Eng Zahran bin Ahmed al Abdulsalam, Director-General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate, highlighted the strategic timing of the campaign ahead of the khareef (monsoon) season. “The heavy rains and persistent fog during khareef create ideal conditions for seed germination and early root

The initiative is being led by the EA in collaboration with Dhofar Municipality, and concludes on July 24



The campaign is aligned with the National Initiative to plant 10 million trees

development,” he said. “Planting before the season begins significantly improves the survival rate and allows seedlings to establish resilient root systems.” He added that these well-rooted native plants also stabilise the soil, prevent erosion caused by rainfall and wind, and contribute to soil fertility — an essential factor in reversing desertification and sustaining local ecosystems. The campaign focuses on native tree species known for their resilience and ecological value in Oman, including Sidr (Ziziphus spina-christi), Sagout, Kelit, Warar,

Sabar (cactus varieties) and wild fig. These trees are traditionally valued for their environmental, medicinal and pastoral benefits. In 2024, a similar campaign successfully scattered more than four million seeds in areas including Sadah, Mirbat and the Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve. That phase featured species such as Frankincense (Boswellia sacra), Samar, Ghaf (Prosopis cineraria) and Arabian Comb (Maerua crassifolia). Seeds were meticulously collected during natural flowering periods, then treated and prepared in specialised facilities to ensure high germination rates.

The campaign has mobilised wide participation from government bodies, private sector partners and local communities, underscoring a growing collective commitment to ecological stewardship. Amid growing environmental challenges and climate pressures, Oman’s model of large-scale native tree planting offers a replicable blueprint for arid regions. The Environment Authority plans to expand the initiative in future cycles, with a focus on community involvement, scientific monitoring and integrated reforestation practices to maximise long-term environmental benefits.

Workshop discusses adaptation to climate change

MUSCAT: An international workshop titled ‘Adapting to Climate Change’ on Monday discussed ways to enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s capabilities to address the repercussions of climate change. The three-day workshop, held in Muscat, aims to draft a National Adaptation Plan. It will focus on the ‘adaptation component’ quoted in the third report codenamed ‘Nationally Determined Contributions’ or (NDC3). It will also discuss relevant national policies and plans. The NDCs outline how each country intends to cut



The workshop will focus on ‘adaptation component’ in the report codenamed NDC3

down greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change as part of its commitment to contribute to the

global effort to limit warming. The workshop, which reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s commitments cited in Paris

Climate Agreement, is organised by the Environment Authority in cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and attended by representatives of government departments and international organisations. The workshop seeks to boost the Sultanate of Oman’s ability to adapt to climate change in a systematic manner, ensuring the protection of communities and vital economic sectors, while at the same time supporting the process of sustainable development amid rapid climate change scenarios. — ONA



Al Jabal Al Sharqi is being developed as an integrated tourism environment that meets visitors’ expectations

geographical and environmental features. At the same time, it supports entrepreneurs and SMEs, which are crucial to service delivery and economic opportunities for citizens. He stated that Al Jabal Al Sharqi is a year-

round destination, especially attractive to camping and adventure enthusiasts, and requires robust infrastructure to meet this demand. The development approach centres on involving local communities in implementation and fostering an environment that encourages youth-led initiatives and entrepreneurship in tourism. Shaikh Sulaiman bin Said al Azri, Wali of Al Hamra, said that the ‘Al Hamra Tourism 2025’ event will begin on August 1 in Al Jabal Al Sharqi and run until August 30. The event offers a rich programme of activities for all age groups, blending entertainment, adventure and culture. Activities will include sunrise-viewing trips, a dedicated camping zone with equipped tents and service facilities, mountain horse rides, hiking trails, 4x4 tours to high-altitude peaks, trail running and cycling. — ONA

WORLD

ARMED VIOLENCE



Syrian army and security forces deploy in Sweida in southern Syria. — AFP

SYRIA DEPLOYS FORCES AFTER DOZENS KILLED IN CLASHES

DAMASCUS: Syria deployed security forces on Monday in the southern province of Sweida after at least 50 people were killed in clashes between Bedouin tribes and Druze fighters, a monitor said. The outbreak of sectarian violence underscores the challenges facing the administration of interim leader Ahmad al Sharaa in a country reeling from 14 years of war. At least 89 people were killed in the southern Syrian province of Sweida as clashes between Sunni Bedouin tribes and Druze fighters raged for a second day on Monday, a monitor said.

The latest fighting, which began on Sunday, continued sporadically into Monday in several villages, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor and the Suwayda 24 news outlet. The clashes reportedly erupted when a Druze vegetable vendor was seized by armed Bedouins on the main highway linking Sweida to Damascus. The incident triggered a series of retaliatory abductions by both sides. Suwayda 24 said those abducted were released on Sunday night.

The highway between Damascus and Sweida remained closed, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on a network of sources on the ground. The defence ministry put the toll at 30 dead and around 100 wounded. Dozens more have been wounded amid armed clashes and mortar fire in Sweida city and nearby villages.

Syria’s defence and interior ministries announced the deployment of military units to the affected areas, the establishment of safe corridors for civilians, and a commitment to “end the clashes quickly and decisively”. “The lack of state, military and security institutions is a major reason for the ongoing tensions in Sweida,” Interior Minister Anas Khattab said on X. “The only solution is to reactivate these institutions to ensure civil peace,” he added.

The latest unrest follows deadly violence in April and May, when clashes between Druze fighters and security forces in Druze-populated areas near Damascus and Sweida killed more than 100 people. Local leaders and religious figures brokered agreements at the time to de-escalate the tensions, putting Druze fighters in charge of local security in Sweida since May, though armed Bedouins remain present in several areas. On Sunday, Sweida governor Mustapha al-Bakur urged his constituents to “exercise self-restraint”, while Druze community leaders urged authorities to step in. In response to the violence, the education ministry announced the postponement of Monday’s scheduled secondary school exams in the province. Since the overthrow of longtime Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad, concerns have been raised over the rights and safety of minorities under the new authorities, who have also struggled to re-establish security more broadly. — AFP

‘NO SPECIFIC DATE’ FOR US NUCLEAR TALKS, SAYS IRAN

TEHRAN: Iran said on Monday it had “no specific date” for a meeting with the United States on Tehran’s nuclear programme, following a war with Israel that had derailed negotiations. “For now, no specific date, time or location has been determined regarding this matter,” said foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei of plans for a meeting between Iran’s top diplomat Abbas Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff. Araghchi

and Witkoff met starting in April, without concluding a deal after five rounds of talks that were the highest-level contact between their two countries since Washington in 2018 abandoned a landmark nuclear agreement. The negotiations were halted as Israel launched surprise strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities on June 13, starting a 12-day war which the United States later joined. “We have been serious in diplomacy and the negotiation process, we entered

with good faith, but as everyone witnessed, before the sixth round the Zionist regime, in coordination with the United States, committed military aggression against Iran”, said Baqaei. Israel’s offensive last month, which it said was aimed at thwarting a nuclear threat from the Islamic republic, killed nuclear scientists and top-ranking military officers as well as hitting military, nuclear and other sites and residential areas. — AFP

Gaza truce talks limp on but US hopes for deal

STUTTERING

Gaza ceasefire talks between Israel and Palestinian Hamas entered a second week on Monday, with US President Donald Trump still hopeful of a breakthrough and as more than 20 people were killed on the ground. The indirect negotiations in the Qatari capital, Doha, appeared deadlocked at the weekend after both sides blamed the other for blocking a deal for a 60-day ceasefire and the release of hostages.

In Gaza, the Palestinian territory’s civil defence agency said at least 22 people were killed in the latest Israeli strikes on Monday in and around Gaza City, and Khan Yunis in the south. One strike on a tent in Khan Yunis killed the parents and three brothers of a young Gazan boy, who only survived as he was outside getting water, the boy’s uncle said. Belal al Adlouni called for revenge for “every drop of blood” saying it “will not be forgotten and will not die with the passage of time, nor with displacement or with death”.

Reporters in southern Israel meanwhile saw large plumes of smoke in northern Gaza, where the military said fighter jets had pounded Hamas targets over the weekend. Trump, who met Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington last week, is keen to secure a truce in the 21-month war, which was sparked by Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. “Gaza — we are talking and hopefully we’re going to get that straightened out over the next week,” he told reporters late on Sunday, echoing similarly optimistic comments he made on July 4.

A Palestinian source with knowledge of the talks said on Saturday that Hamas rejected Israeli proposals to keep troops in over 40 per cent of Gaza and plans to move Palestinians into an enclave on the border with Egypt. In response, a senior Israeli political official



Children queue with pots to receive meals from a charity kitchen in Gaza City. — AFP

accused Hamas of inflexibility and trying to deliberately scupper the talks by “clinging to positions that prevent the mediators from advancing an agreement”.

Israel’s Foreign Minister Gideon Saar and the Palestinian minister of state for foreign affairs Varsen Aghabekian Shahin headed to Brussels on Monday for talks between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours. But the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority denied media reports that any meeting between the two was on the agenda.

In Israel, Netanyahu has said he would be ready to enter talks for a more lasting ceasefire when a deal for a temporary truce is agreed and only when Hamas lays down its weapons. But he is under pressure to quickly wrap up the war, with military casualties

mounting and with public frustration both at the continued captivity of the hostages and a perceived lack of progress in the conflict.

Politically, his fragile governing coalition is holding, for now, but Netanyahu is seen as beholden to a minority of far-right ministers in prolonging an increasingly unpopular conflict. He also faces a backlash over the feasibility and ethics of a plan to build a so-called “humanitarian city” from scratch in southern Gaza to house displaced Palestinians if and when a ceasefire takes hold.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees has described the proposed facility as a “concentration camp” and Israel’s own security establishment is reported to be unhappy at the plan. — AFP



111 MONSOON-RELATED DEATHS IN PAKISTAN

ISLAMABAD: Monsoon rains in Pakistan have been linked to more than 110 deaths including dozens of children since they arrived in late June, according to government figures released on Monday. Data from the national disaster agency between June 26 and July 14 showed that electrocution was the leading cause of fatalities, followed by flash floods. In its latest report, the disaster agency said 111 people including 53 children have been killed, with the highest number of deaths in the most populous province of Punjab.

Meanwhile, the national meteorological service has issued a warning for further heavy rainfall in the northern and eastern regions of the country, with the potential for urban flooding, landslides, and infrastructure damage due to strong winds. — AFP

INTENSE SEISMIC ACTIVITY

Magnitude 6.7 quake hits offshore Indonesia



A magnitude 6.7 earthquake struck on Monday off eastern Indonesia, the US Geological Survey said, but a monitor said there was no tsunami threat. The quake struck at 12:49 pm Western Indonesia time and its epicentre was at a depth of 66 kilometres around 177 kilometres west of the city of Tual in the eastern Maluku province. The vast archipelago nation experiences frequent earthquakes due to its position on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”. — AFP

FREQUENT ATTACKS

Forces shoot down drone near Iraq airport



A drone packed with explosives was shot down on Monday near Erbil airport, which hosts US troops from the international coalition in Iraq’s autonomous Kurdistan region, Kurdish security forces said. “At 02:20 an explosive-laden drone was downed near Erbil International Airport, without causing casualties or damage,” said the counter-terrorism services of the Kurdistan region. — AFP

ALLEGED VIOLATIONS

Suspended Thai PM hit by ethics probe



Thailand’s anti-graft body will investigate suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra for alleged ethnics violations over a leaked phone call with Cambodia’s influential former leader Hun Sen, an official and local media said on Monday. The investigation will be another blow to the beleaguered government of 38-year-old Paetongtarn, Thailand’s youngest premier, who the Constitutional Court suspended from duty earlier this month over the same issue. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Flags fly outside the European Commission headquarters in Brussels. — Reuters

GREEK GOVT CALLS FOR EU FARM SCANDAL PROBE

ATHENS: The Greek government on Monday called for a special parliamentary committee to probe a European Union farm subsidies scandal, reportedly involving tens of millions of euros, that has seen at least two ministers put under EU investigation. Government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said the ruling conservative party would request an investigation into the 27-year operation of the Greek authority for the payment of common agricultural policy aid (OPEKEPE). “Our proposal concerns the period from the establishment of OPEKEPE in 1998 until today in order to investigate the dysfunctions, identify the problems and ensure complete transparency,” Marinakis told reporters.

An investigation by EU prosecutors has shown widespread abuse of funds at OPEKEPE, which according to the government annually disburses 2.5 billion euros to nearly 650,000 farmers. Reports said prosecutors suspect tens of millions of euros have been siphoned off. The investigation period is mostly under the current government, which came to power in July 2019. But the government argues that the fraud has lasted decades. In nearly 30 years, the Greek state has paid more than 2.7 billion euros in fines, Marinakis said. — AFP

AUSTRALIA FIRES FIRST HIMARS ROCKET



ROCKHAMPTON: Australia’s army fired a truck-mounted long range rocket system that has become a priority for US allies in the Indo-Pacific for the first time on Monday, alongside US and Singapore forces firing the same system in joint war games. Armoured trucks with HIMARS — High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems that can reach 400 km (250 miles) — are in high demand in the Ukraine conflict and are also being acquired by US allies in the Indo-Pacific, including Australia, which is reshaping its forces to respond to China’s military build-up. — Reuters

RESCUED GERMAN BACKPACKER DETAILS AUSTRALIA BUSH ORDEAL

SYDNEY: A German backpacker who survived 11 nights in the Australian bush described on Monday how she got lost and confused after crashing her car. Carolina Wilga, 26, was found on a scarcely used track in Western Australia late last week miles from her vehicle after going missing in remote bushland, and police said she was lucky to have survived. They found her abandoned van stuck in dense bushland north of the town of Beacon, with plastic orange traction

boards placed beneath the rear wheels.

“Some people might wonder why I even left my car, even though I had water, food and clothing there,” Wilga said on Monday in a statement issued through Western Australia Police. “The answer is: I lost control of the car and rolled down a slope. “In the crash, I hit my head significantly. As a result of the accident, I left my car in a state of confusion and got lost.”

Wilga thanked those who had

helped to track her down. “The thought of all the people who believed in me, searched for me, and kept hoping for me gave me the strength to carry on during my darkest moments,” she said. “For this, I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart.” Hungry, thirsty and covered in insect bites, Wilga was airlifted to a Perth hospital for treatment after she was found on Friday. The backpacker had lost hope of being rescued, police said. — AFP

Trump to send Patriot missiles to Ukraine



US President Donald Trump with Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte in Washington, DC, on Monday. — AFP

US President Donald Trump announced new weapons for Ukraine on Monday, and threatened to hit buyers of Russian exports with sanctions unless Russia agrees a peace deal in 50 days, a major shift in policy brought on by disappointment with Moscow.

Sitting side-by-side with Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte in the Oval Office, Trump told reporters that he was disappointed in Russian President Vladimir Putin. Billions of dollars in weapons would be distributed to Ukraine, he said.

“We’re going to make top-of-the-line weapons, and they’ll be sent to Nato,” Trump said, adding that Washington’s Nato allies would pay for the weapons.

The weapons would include Patriot air defence missiles which Ukraine has urgently sought to defend its cities from Russian air strikes.

“It’s a full complement with the batteries,” Trump said when asked whether he would send Patriot missiles specifically.

“We’re going to have some come very soon, within days... a couple of the countries that have Patriots are going to swap over and will replace the Patriots with the ones they have

DONALD TRUMP
US President

“We’re going to have some come very soon, within days... a couple of the countries that have Patriots are going to swap over and will replace the Patriots with the ones they have.”

“We’re going to be doing secondary tariffs. If we don’t have a deal in 50 days, it’s very simple, and they’ll be at 100 per cent,” Trump said.

Trump’s moves underline his growing disenchantment with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the lack of progress in US-led efforts to secure a ceasefire in Russia’s more than three-year-old war in Ukraine.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has been seeking air defence systems to fend off Russian airstrikes, said he had discussed “the path to peace and what we can practically do together to bring it closer” at talks with Trump’s special envoy on Ukraine, Keith Kellogg.

“This includes strengthening Ukraine’s air defence, joint production and procurement of defence weapons in collaboration with Europe,” Zelensky wrote on X

after their talks in Kyiv.

A White House official said Trump was referring to 100 per cent tariffs on Russian exports as well as so-called secondary sanctions, which target third countries that buy a country’s exports.

Such secondary sanctions are widely seen as likely to have a far more severe impact on Russia’s economy than measures that have been imposed previously, which have allowed Russia to continue selling oil to buyers such as China and India, earning hundreds of billions of dollars.

Kellogg’s visit — more than three years into the Kremlin’s attack — comes as Russian forces killed three civilians in eastern Ukraine and launched dozens of long-range drones at targets across the country.

The envoy arrived in Kyiv just one day after US President Donald Trump announced new Patriot air defence systems supplies to Ukraine, in a U-turn that has underscored concerns in Kyiv over the consistency of American support. — Agencies

G20’s watchdog lays out climate plan, presses pause amid divisions

LONDON: The G20’s financial stability watchdog delivered a new plan on how to tackle climate risks on Monday, but paused further policy work amid a retreat by the United States that has tested efforts to advance a united financial policy on climate-related risks. The US has withdrawn from multiple groups dedicated to exploring how flooding and wildfires and big climate-related policy shifts could impact financial stability.

In its medium-term plan, the G20’s Financial Stability Board pledged to step up coordination and data

sharing on climate-related financial risk. However, it said while progress had been made to integrate climate risks into financial systems, some of its members, who include central bank governors and ministers, were keen to pause further climate work. “While many members feel there is a need for more work, some members feel that the work completed to date is sufficient,” the FSB said in an update to its 2021 climate roadmap delivered to G20 finance ministers meeting in South Africa. “Going forward, the FSB will ... make determinations about what projects,



A man walks at the Cape Town International Convention Centre during G20 Finance Ministers meeting. — Reuters file photo

if any, it will undertake.”

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent would not attend the G20 meeting, Reuters reported last week. The United States is due to head the G20 group, which it helped found in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, next year. The FSB said it would continue to consider climate-related topics each year and would focus on its role as a coordinator of international work on climate risks.

The watchdog said it did not have plans to do any more significant policy work on integrating climate-related financial risks into its

supervisory and regulatory work. Work on this topic is ongoing at many of its member institutions, it said. The Brussels-based think tank Finance Watch said a lack of reference to concrete regulatory measures needed to address climate risks was a sharp retreat from the G20’s original ambition and a moment of multilateral backsliding. “It confirms what we’ve been hearing since the G20 Plenary in Madrid (in June): the FSB is backing down under pressure, especially from the US,” it said in a statement.

— Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s national strategy to combat drug abuse



THE Sultanate of Oman is facing a growing challenge: the prevalence of drug abuse across various segments of society. Recent data from the Public Prosecution revealed a concerning surge in drug-related cases between 2023 and 2024. This trend necessitates a multifaceted approach involving heightened awareness, robust prevention strategies and accessible treatment options.

International criminal networks exploit social media to lure young people into addiction and then into trafficking or other crimes.

The most common drugs include hashish, shabu, heroin and painkillers, all of which have devastating health, social and economic impacts.

The Sultanate of Oman has paid great attention by defining the national strategy to combat narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances from 2023 to 2028. It has developed the policies, programmes and organisational activities that should be worked on in the next phase to confront the challenges of combating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

This is in addition to enhancing the capabilities of young people to confront the scourge, developing and strengthening human capabilities in prevention and awareness for a safe society free of drugs, and

developing specialised programmes aimed at treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Increased awareness is paramount. The Public Prosecution has called for greater family monitoring to protect children from falling into addiction.

Schools and universities are also key targets for educational campaigns, as highlighted by the recent nationwide campaign. These campaigns should emphasise the dangers of drug use and provide young people with the knowledge and skills to resist peer pressure and make informed choices.

Early intervention is critical, as addiction is a disease requiring comprehensive treatment. The government’s investment in expanding rehabilitation facilities, such as Al Masarra Hospital, is a positive development.

However, combating drug abuse requires a collective effort. Families, educators, civil society organisations and young people must actively participate in the act.

Community awareness initiatives are needed to demonstrate the importance of grassroots engagement. Furthermore, international cooperation is essential to disrupt drug trafficking networks. Sharing information, conducting joint operations and harmonising legislation are crucial to dismantling these criminal organisations.

While prevention and treatment are vital, addressing the underlying causes of drug

The government’s commitment to the National Strategy offers a path towards breaking the chains of addiction and building a brighter future for all Omanis

abuse is equally important. Factors such as family problems, bad relationships and socioeconomic challenges can contribute to substance use.

Hence, providing support for families, promoting mental health services and creating economic opportunities can help mitigate these risk factors.

The government’s commitment to the National Strategy, coupled with the active participation of all stakeholders, offers a path towards breaking the chains of addiction and building a brighter future for all Omanis.

Drug abuse presents a significant and multifaceted challenge to Omani society, demanding urgent and comprehensive action. The fight against drug abuse requires a concerted effort from the government, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, families and communities.

By implementing comprehensive prevention programmes, expanding access to treatment and rehabilitation, strengthening law enforcement and addressing the root causes of drug abuse, Oman can break the cycle of addiction and create a healthier and more prosperous society.

The focus should be on a scientific, evidence-based approach that prioritises prevention and treatment, while also treating people who use drugs with respect and empathy.

NZ AIMS TO DOUBLE FOREIGN INTL EDUCATION MARKET

LUCY CRAYMER

New Zealand plans to double its international education market by 2034 by offering incentives that include relaxing rules around foreign students working part-time while studying, the government said on Monday.

Education Minister Erica Stanford said in a statement that with international student enrolments steadily increasing since 2023, the government wants to “supercharge that growth track” to reach NZ\$7.2 billion (\$4.32 billion) by 2034.

The announcement comes as wildly popular international student destinations Australia and the United States look to reduce foreign students, with universities in competing markets vying to capitalise on those restrictions.

“In the short term, Education New Zealand will focus its promotional efforts on markets with the highest potential for growth,” Stanford added.

New Zealand’s international education market is currently worth NZ\$3.6 billion to the economy and the government.

The government wants to see international student enrolments grow from 83,700 in 2024 to 105,000 in 2027 and 119,000 by 2034 and double its value to the economy.

To encourage more foreign students to come to New Zealand, the government plans to increase the part-time work hours for eligible international students from 20 to 25, as well as extending eligibility for work rights to all tertiary students in approved exchange or study abroad programmes.

US President Donald Trump’s administration has curbed visas for foreign students, especially those from China. In May, the White House revoked Harvard University’s ability to enrol foreign students, a move later blocked by a federal judge.

Australia’s government capped the enrolment number of new international students to 270,000 for 2025, in an effort to rein in record migration that has contributed to a spike in home rental prices.

For New Zealand, which has struggled with soft growth, the move is the latest in a spate of measures to improve an ailing economy, following changes to visa settings to encourage digital nomads and attract foreign investment.

— Reuters

Turning the tide into the right direction for oceans

THERE’S a saying you often hear in coastal communities: “When the ocean is sick, the land will soon follow.” It might sound like just another old proverb, but in 2025, it has started to feel more real than ever.

The ocean covers more than 70 per cent of the Earth’s surface. It gives us over half the oxygen we breathe and helps keep our climate in balance by soaking up heat and carbon dioxide. It is home to millions of species. And for more than three billion people, it is a source of food, jobs and income. But despite everything the ocean does for us, we are still harming it.

From overfishing and pollution to oil spills and climate change, the pressure keeps piling up. One of the worst practices is bottom trawling, dragging huge nets across the seafloor, which destroys marine life and releases carbon that had been safely stored in the seabed. Coral reefs are also in serious trouble. These underwater ecosystems protect our coastlines and support about a quarter of all marine species. But many are dying fast. All over the world, coastal communities are seeing the signs: fewer fish, bleached corals and beaches covered in plastic.

In June 2025, world leaders, scientists and environmentalists met in Nice, France, for the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3). Co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, the event was more than just another big meeting; it was a strong reminder that we need to move faster to save our oceans.

One big outcome was the Nice



One of the worst practices is bottom trawling, dragging huge nets across the seafloor, which destroys marine life and releases carbon that had been safely stored in the seabed.



DR KHALFAN BIN HAMED AL HARRASI

The writer is an academic and researcher

Ocean Action Plan, where countries made voluntary promises to better protect the ocean. India said it would ratify the High Seas Treaty. France called for tougher action, including a carbon tax on international shipping and more funding for sustainable “blue” industries. Around that same week, people around the world marked World Ocean Day on June 8, with the theme “Sustainable Fishing Means More.” The next day, Coral Triangle Day was celebrated in Southeast Asia, focusing on the need to protect one of the world’s richest marine areas.

It might all sound far away, but it’s not. Oman, for example, has one of the longest coastlines in the region, and the sea has always been a big part of who we are. Our history, our trade, our food; it’s all tied to the ocean.

But that connection means we also have a duty to protect it. There is a lot we can do. We can tighten the rules on coastal pollution and over-development. We can support

more responsible fishing and invest in aquaculture. We can create more marine reserves where nature has space to recover.

Oman has already added ocean education to school curriculum, helping young people understand the ocean’s true value, not just as a fun place to visit but as something that keeps us alive. Oman is also active in global talks on marine protection and plastic waste.

Saving the ocean isn’t just about saving fish or coral. It’s about protecting our climate, our food, our jobs and our future. Everything is connected to the sea. The good news?

More people are paying attention. Governments are talking. Campaigns are gaining momentum. But talk isn’t enough. We need real actions that are bold, consistent and guided by science. Admiring the sea during a sunset walk is nice, but it’s not enough. We have to stand up for it. Because our lives depend on it. The tide is turning, so let’s make sure it turns in the right direction.

Places of worship, rituals, and security in the Arab world



BADR AL ABRI

The writer is author of The Jurisprudence of Extremism

It is truly unfortunate that entering a place of worship can make one feel uneasy or unsafe due to heightened security checks. These measures have become common in recent decades, especially following attacks on churches, mosques and Hussainiyas. One recent example is the bombing of Saint Elias Church on the outskirts of Damascus. In Kuwait, the Ministry of Interior decided to relocate Ashura rituals to school premises instead of traditional Hussainiyas, citing security concerns. Similar examples can be found elsewhere across the region.

For centuries, Arab societies have coexisted horizontally across their diverse components. It has long been a familiar sight to see mosques and churches side by side in Egypt, Iraq, the Levant and Sudan. Christians of various denominations lived among Muslims, sharing in their joys and sorrows, business ventures and daily lives. Muslims were accustomed to the sound of church bells and took part in Christian celebrations. Likewise, Christians lived with the sound of the call to prayer and joined their Muslim neighbours in festivities. Even today, the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — among the most sacred Christian sites in the world — remain in the custody of two Muslim families. Despite their numerical majority, Muslims have never sought to damage or desecrate it. On the contrary, they have contributed to its

preservation and upkeep.

While in Djerba, Tunisia, I visited Shaikh Mahfoudh Dahman in his workshop dedicated to bookbinding and restoration. Among his collection was a Hebrew manuscript. When I asked about it, he explained: “We have Jews in Djerba who need copies of their religious texts for prayers and supplications. They come to us for transcription and binding. This particular manuscript is a copy of the Psalms of David. Half of it is written in Arabic using Hebrew script, and the other half is in Hebrew. It’s about 150 years old. The Jewish community here numbers around 1,500 people, comprising roughly 150 to 200 families. Each group freely practises its faith and rituals.” Mariwan Naqshbandi, Director of Interfaith Relations at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in Iraqi Kurdistan, shared a powerful story: “During IS assault on the Yazidi town of Sinjar, a Muslim soldier from Kurdistan was selected by lottery to perform Haj. He had already paid \$4,000 for the pilgrimage. But four days before his departure, IS attacked Sinjar. He gave up his Haj and went to defend the Yazidis. He died in the battle.” This reflects the natural human solidarity that emerges from long-standing coexistence.

The Holy Quran states: “Were it not that Allah repels some people by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues

Every Arab country should be spacious enough to accommodate its diverse religious expressions, dealing with citizens on the basis of shared humanity.

and mosques — wherein Allah’s name is often mentioned — would surely have been destroyed” (Al Hajj: 40). According to Father Hanna Iskandar, a Maronite priest, the term “biya” in this verse refers to churches with dome-shaped ceilings, the word being derived from Syriac, meaning “egg”, referring to the rounded architecture.

Abu Bakr al Siddiq is also reported to have said during military campaigns: “Do not betray, do not steal, do not mutilate the dead, do not kill children or those in monasteries.” Today, unfortunately, we occasionally witness attacks on churches, mosques, Hussainiyas, and other places of worship. These acts raise troubling questions: Are they part of a political scheme to incite sectarian unrest? Or do they stem from ideological extremism that justifies such violence? Or are they a result of inflammatory rhetoric that fuels division and undermines peaceful coexistence? We need serious reflection — not just to protect sacred sites but to guarantee individual freedoms. Every Arab country should be spacious enough to accommodate its diverse religious expressions, dealing with citizens on the basis of shared humanity. Only then can true security and belonging emerge from within, not merely from state authorities, and withstand political or security upheaval.

Translated by Badr al Dahfri. The original version of this article was published in the print edition of the Oman Arabic on July 9

EMERGENCY VACCINES SLASH DEATHS BY 60%: STUDY

GENEVA: Emergency vaccination during outbreaks of diseases like cholera, Ebola and measles have over the past quarter-century reduced deaths from such illnesses by nearly 60 per cent, according to a new study.

A similar number of infections are also believed to have been prevented, while billions of euros have been generated in estimated economic benefit.

The Gavi vaccine alliance, which backed the study, said it collaborated with researchers at Burnet Institute in Australia to provide the world’s first look at the historical impact of emergency immunisation efforts on public health and global health security. “For the first time, we are able to comprehensively quantify the benefit, in human and economic terms, of deploying vaccines against outbreaks of some of the deadliest infectious diseases,” Gavi chief Sania Nishtar said in a statement. “This study demonstrates clearly the power of vaccines as a cost-effective countermeasure to the increasing risk the world faces from outbreaks.” The study, published this week in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Global Health, examined 210 outbreaks of five infectious diseases — cholera, Ebola, measles, meningitis and yellow fever — in 49 lower-income countries between 2000 and 2023. Vaccine roll-outs in these settings had a dramatic impact, with the study showing they reduced both the number of infections and deaths by almost 60 per cent across the five diseases.

For some of the diseases the effect was far more dramatic. Vaccination was shown to decrease deaths during yellow fever outbreaks by a full 99 per cent, and 76 per cent for Ebola. At the same time, emergency vaccination significantly reduced the threat of outbreaks expanding. It also estimated that the immunisation efforts carried out during the 210 outbreaks generated nearly \$32 billion in economic benefits just from averting deaths and years of life lost to disability. That amount was however likely to be a significant underestimate of overall savings, it said, pointing out that it did not take into account outbreak response costs or the social and macro-economic impacts of disruptions created by large outbreaks.

The massive Ebola outbreak that hit West Africa in 2014, before the existence of approved vaccines, for instance saw cases pop up worldwide and is estimated to have cost the West African countries alone more than \$53 billion. The study comes after the World Health Organization warned in April that outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, meningitis and yellow fever are on the rise globally amid misinformation and cuts to international aid. Gavi, which helps vaccinate more than half of the world’s children against infectious diseases, is itself currently trying to secure a fresh round of funding in the face of the global aid cuts and after Washington announced it would stop backing the group. — AFP

Britain and Europe are changing together

MANY state visits are empty, symbolic acts that have little to no policy content or lasting significance. But every now and then, such a visit changes the shape of international relations. Could French President Emmanuel Macron’s recently concluded trip to London be one of them? Macron’s three-day trip, the first state visit to the United Kingdom by a European Union head of state since Brexit in 2020, had plenty of pomp and pageantry. But it also focused on policy and politics, which reflects a profound shift in the UK’s circumstances since leaving the EU.

During the upheaval of the Brexit psychodrama, there was little interest in constructive exchange, and the UK’s relationship with Europe remained defined by its lurching departure from the bloc. But nearly a decade on, Donald Trump is back in the White House and has launched a trade war on the world. Russian President Vladimir Putin has shredded the European security order. And Chinese President Xi Jinping has resorted to threats of economic coercion – a striking reversal from the “golden era” of UK-China relations proclaimed in 2015.

Even more dramatic, perhaps, are the changes in the EU. The big policy initiatives launched during Macron’s UK visit reflect the forces that are turning the bloc on its head.

First, the EU is moving from a peace project to a war union. For most of its existence, the EU sought peace through economic integration. But Putin’s war of Ukraine in 2022 reoriented the bloc towards security – a goal that has taken on greater urgency since Trump cast doubt on the United States’ commitment to collective security on the continent.

There is broad support for this new orientation. According to a recent opinion poll conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations, many Europeans favour increased defence spending, conscription and the development of a European or national nuclear



MARK LEONARD

The nuclear pact recently signed by Macron and Starmer reflects how an emerging post-liberal Europe is taking the form of a defence community. Britain can help shape the continent’s new security order, so long as it banishes the Brexit mindset.



Britain’s Prime Minister Keir Starmer (L) and France’s President Emmanuel Macron in London. — AFP

deterrent.

Against this backdrop, Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer took a bold first step towards establishing an independent nuclear deterrent with the Northwood Declaration, in which they agreed that “there is no extreme threat to Europe that would not prompt a response by our two nations.” A second major change is the development of “securonomics.”

The EU economy is under pressure from Trump’s tariffs and China’s export restrictions on magnets and critical minerals. EU policymakers now talk of de-risking, diversifying and deepening the single market, rather than pursuing free-trade agreements.

Starmer’s approach to Europe is a marked improvement from that of former Conservative prime ministers Boris Johnson (who compared the EU to Napoleon and Hitler) and Liz Truss (who questioned whether Macron was a friend or a foe). Starmer has proved himself, particularly with his deft diplomacy on Ukraine, to be a reliable partner and stakeholder, regaining the trust of EU institutions and member states. One senior German policymaker told me how impressed he was by the UK filling

the leadership vacuum created by Trump’s disregard for Ukraine.

In other words, the UK is widely seen in Europe as being “part of the team” again. The EU-UK summit in May provided a clear framework for deepening the relationship, not least through a Security and Defence Partnership that paves the way for British participation in European defence programmes.

The changing international environment offers Starmer a clear opportunity to redraw Europe’s political map, which would establish him as one of Britain’s most consequential leaders. But to do so, Starmer must convince British voters that today’s Europe is a different creature from the one they imagine: a defence community that is more focused on safeguarding the continent than on transcending the nation-state. And he must explain how the UK can help build this new European security order, so long as it banishes the Brexit mindset.

As a post-liberal Europe emerges, Britain must stop clinging to the past and seize the chance to shape the continent’s future in a way that advances its interests. That requires acknowledging that both the EU and the UK have entered a new era.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Aisha al Saidi

OMANI UMPIRE TO OFFICIATE AT FISU GAMES

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 14

Oman’s pioneering table tennis umpire, Aisha al Saidi, continues to raise the Sultanate of Oman’s flag high on the international sports events. The distinguished blue badge umpire will officiate at the FISU World University Games 2025 which is set to begin on Wednesday and will run until July 27 in Germany. The table tennis competitions will take place in Essen city at Messe Essen Halle 1 including seven key events: men’s and women’s singles, men’s and women’s doubles, mixed doubles, and men’s and women’s team events.

Aisha, who hails from Saham, made history in March 2022 when she earned her blue badge umpire status at the WTT Youth Contender in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. She was among only three Omanis to achieve this elite status beside Mohammed al Alawi and Ibrahim al Jassasi. Since then, she has officiated at several international World Table Tennis (WTT) events, gaining the desired experience for her professionalism and precision.

Most recently, Aisha was among the selected officials at the ITTF World Table Tennis Championships which concluded in Doha in last May as she oversaw a series of high-profile matches, including some in the final rounds. She participated in the 2024 World Championship in Bosan, South Korea, where she further solidifying her international umpiring credentials. Commenting on her upcoming assignment, Aisha said it is a great honor to be selected to officiate at another global event. “I look forward to representing Oman at the FISU Games and contributing to the success of the tournament. This is another milestone in my umpiring journey, and I am eager to continue developing and officiating at the highest levels.” She ended

Aisha began her career in 2016 and she was consistent presence in domestic, regional and international table tennis tournaments. Her progression through the ranks reflects not only her personal dedication but also the growing impact of Omani officials in international sports.

Oman Cricket to host EAP tournament in October

OMAN will take centre stage this October as it plays host to the Asia-East Asia Pacific (EAP) Final 2025, a major qualifier in the road to the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026, at the Oman Cricket Academy (OCA) twin-grounds in Al Amerat.

The high-stakes tournament from October 8-17 will bring together nine top Associate nations from Asia and the EAP region, all competing for three crucial spots at the global tournament to be held in India and Sri Lanka in 2026.

The ICC’s decision at its 2024 AGM to merge the Asia and East Asia-Pacific qualification pathways has elevated the competitiveness of this event.

“The ICC has done a phenomenal job during the 2024 AGM by integrating the Asia and East Asia-Pacific regions into one competitive qualifier,” said Alkesh Joshi, Oman Cricket Treasurer..

“This gives both regions an equitable platform — three spots for nine determined teams — to prove their mettle and qualify for the global showpiece in 2026.” The tournament will take place in two stages: a Group Stage from October 8 to 10, followed by a Super Six Stage from October 12 to 17.

The format is straightforward — teams are split into three groups of three, and the top two teams from each group will advance to the Super Six stage.

At the end of the Super Six, the top three teams will earn their place in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026, which will feature 20 teams. Oman enters the tournament with high hopes, not just as the host but also as a serious contender.

“This is a great opportunity for Oman to showcase our depth in the shorter format,” Joshi emphasised. “We are the only associate nation from Asia to have participated in three ICC T20 World Cups in the past decade, and our boys are hungry to make it a fourth.” Recent performances have buoyed Oman’s confidence, including their win in the Bowl Cup at the Hong Kong Super Sixes 2024 where they defeated several internationally recognised teams.

“The team has been training intensively, and playing at home gives us an added advantage. Familiar conditions, passionate supporters, and strong board



Oman Cricket Academy in Al Amerat



As a board, we are fully committed to providing our players with world-class preparation platforms. We also want this tournament to be a celebration for fans.

ALKESH JOSHI
Oman Cricket Treasurer

backing all combine to boost our confidence,” Joshi said.

Warm-up matches will be played between October 3 and 6 across venues in Muscat, helping teams acclimatise and prepare. Fixtures include Oman facing Kuwait and Nepal, while other participating teams like UAE, PNG, Japan, and Samoa will also get valuable match practice.

Beyond the cricketing action, Oman Cricket is making concerted efforts to make the event inclusive and celebratory. “As a board, we are fully committed to providing our players with world-class preparation platforms. We also want this tournament to be a celebration for fans,” said Joshi.

“That’s why entry to all matches at Al Amerat will be free. We invite the community to turn out in numbers and cheer for the team.” Joshi also expressed gratitude to local authorities. He said, “We sincerely thank the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) for their unwavering support in Oman’s cricketing journey. Hosting major

ICC events elevates Oman’s status in the global sporting arena. This tournament is a celebration of associate cricket. Hosting it in Oman proves we are not just participants but contributors to the growth of global cricket, Joshi said.”

WARM-UP MATCHES: October 3–6: Oman vs Kuwait, UAE vs PNG, Japan vs Samoa (Oct 3); Malaysia vs Samoa, Oman vs Nepal (Oct 4); UAE vs Japan, Kuwait vs Qatar (Oct 5); Nepal vs Qatar, Malaysia vs PNG (Oct 6).

GROUP STAGE FIXTURES: October 8–10: Oman vs Samoa, UAE vs Qatar, Nepal vs Kuwait (Oct 8); Malaysia vs Qatar, Kuwait vs Japan, PNG vs Samoa (Oct 9); UAE vs Malaysia, Nepal vs Japan, Oman vs PNG (Oct 10).

SUPER SIX STAGE: October 12–17: Top two teams from each group play four cross-group matches; top three teams qualify for ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 Group pairings: Group 1: UAE, Malaysia, Qatar; Group 2: Nepal, Kuwait, Japan; Group 3: Oman, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa.

England blank Wales 6-1 to qualify into Euro quarters

ST. GALLEN, Switzerland: Reigning champions England thrashed neighbours Wales 6-1 to reach the Women’s Euro 2025 quarterfinals on Sunday, securing second spot in Group D and cruising into the knockouts, where they will face Sweden, on a high note. Georgia Stanway, Ella Toone, Lauren Hemp, Alessia Russo, Beth Mead and Aggie Beever-Jones were all on target for England, who finished runners-up to France after their 5-2 victory over the Netherlands.

Sarina Wiegman’s team will next face a Sweden side, who won all three of their games to top

Group C, in the quarterfinals on Thursday.

“It is going to be a difficult game. We watched (Sweden) the other night and they were really good. We need to be on our best game,” Toone said. “But we’re feeling confident, I think they should be scared.”

The second-place finish, however, could be a bonus as provided they get past the Swedes, England would potentially avoid world champions Spain in the semifinals.

Stanway struck from the penalty spot in the 13th minute after a foul in the box, calmly sweeping



England’s forward #20 Jessica Park jumps for the ball. — AFP

her shot into the far-left corner past the outstretched hands of goalkeeper Olivia Clark to open the floodgates.

Toone found the back of the net with a scrappy goal eight minutes later. England capitalised on a sloppy clearance by Rhiannon Roberts, with the ball falling to Russo who nudged it into the path of Toone who fired home at the second attempt. Hemp nodded a third inside 30 minutes after a clever pass from Lauren James to Toone near the byline. Toone found Hemp at the far post with a deep cross for an easy header.

Russo bagged her first goal of the tournament just before halftime when Toone made another dart to byline before cutting the ball back for Russo,

who took one touch to control it before firing home and Mead cut inside a defender before slotting England’s fifth in the 72nd minute.

Hannah Cain pulled one back to the delight of the Wales fans, who celebrated by singing their national anthem, in the 76th minute, but England’s Beever-Jones replied in the 89th with her first goal in a major tournament, heading home Mead’s cross.

“We scored six goals and a big part of the game we dominated, a very good game,” Wiegman said. “Playing well is the most important, who scores is not that important.” — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



William Mouw

MOUW WINS FIRST PGA TOUR TITLE IN KENTUCKY

WASHINGTON: William Mouw fired a nine-under par 61 to surge to a one-shot victory in the ISCO Championship in Kentucky on Sunday, capturing his first US PGA Tour title in his 20th start.

Mouw started the final round seven shots off the pace, but eight birdies in the first 13 holes at Hurstbourne Country Club in Louisville saw him power to the top of the leaderboard.

He walked off the 18th with a 10-under par total of 270 but had to wait two hours to see if his three-shot lead would hold up.

“I did all I can out there and played really good golf and left it all out there,” Mouw said. “I guess I broke the course record, too, which is cool.”

Paul Peterson, the 37-year-old tour rookie who led by one after completion of the weather-disrupted third round on Sunday morning, made it an anxious wait.

Peterson bounced back from two early bogeys with three birdies on the back nine. He pulled within one stroke with a 31-foot birdie at 16 but could get no closer.

“It’s tough to come up short,” Peterson said. “But I played some good golf this week. I’m proud of what I did.”

Having started the round so far back, Mouw said he wasn’t thinking too much about his position until a fan informed at the 12th that he was in the lead.

“Knowing you’re in the lead on 12 and having seven holes to play and playing very, very good golf coming in is definitely the best round I played,” said Mouw, who added his final birdie at the 17th.

Mouw’s previous best finish was a tie for sixth at the Puerto Rico Open in March.

The Californian had gained dubious fame in January when he posted an octuple bogey 13 during the second round of the American Express, earning kudos for his ability to laugh at the disaster. On Sunday, his first win had him fighting back tears. “I worked very hard for this,” Mouw said. — AFP



England’s Jamie Smith and Ollie Pope celebrate after Shoaib Bashir takes the last wicket of India’s Mohammed Siraj to win the Third Test between India and England at the Lord’s Cricket Ground, London. — Reuters

England win dramatic Lord’s Test by 22 runs

ENGLAND beat India by 22 runs on a final day of simmering tension and high drama in the third test at Lord’s on Monday to move 2-1 up in the series.

Shoaib Bashir bowled Mohammed Siraj for four to seal victory, India’s number 11 playing a defensive stroke before the ball trickled down the face of his bat and rolled on to the stumps as he watched on in disbelief.

As the England players celebrated wildly, Ravindra Jadeja trudged off the field after making a valiant unbeaten 61 to take India to the brink of an extraordinary win.

The hosts had looked on course for a far more comfortable victory when they reduced India to 112-8 at lunch, but Jadeja and Jasprit Bumrah battled for nearly two hours to inch their team towards a target of 193.

Jadeja was given out lbw to Chris Woakes by the umpire but the decision was

overturned on review and the left-hander heaved the next delivery over mid-wicket for six, prompting loud cheers from the Indian fans.

England finally made the breakthrough when Bumrah, on five, skied an attempted pull off Ben Stokes and was caught by substitute fielder Sam Cook.

The majority of the crowd erupted with a mixture of joy and relief but Jadeja continued to frustrate England, reaching his 50, off 150 balls, by edging Stokes over the slips for four.

Siraj survived 30 deliveries for his four runs as Jadeja farmed the bowling and took a succession of singles off the fourth ball of the over to dominate the strike.

Siraj suffered a painful blow to his shoulder after being struck by a Jofra Archer delivery and shortly afterwards his resistance was finally broken.

ENGLAND’S MORNING
England had claimed four wickets in the

morning to take charge of the match after India resumed on 58-4.

Rishabh Pant played an extraordinary one-handed straight drive for four off Archer to move to nine, but the fast bowler responded two balls later with an excellent delivery which uprooted his off stump.

Stokes snared KL Rahul lbw for 39, the England captain dropping to his knees and imploring the umpire to give him out.

He refused to do so but England called for a review and the decision was overturned to huge cheers from the crowd.

Washington Sundar was next to fall for a duck, Archer leaping to his right to take a superb one-handed catch off his own bowling.

Jadeja and Nitish Kumar Reddy frustrated England with solid defence in a partnership of 30 until Woakes found the edge of Reddy’s bat just before lunch to give the hosts a huge lift as they left the field to warm applause from a packed crowd.

The series is level at 1-1. — Reuters

Sinner downs Alcaraz to win first Wimbledon title

LONDON: Jannik Sinner downed defending champion Carlos Alcaraz 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 on Sunday to win his first Wimbledon title, gaining sweet revenge for his painful defeat in the French Open final.

The world number one is the first Italian to win at the All England Club and now has four Grand Slams to his name at the age of 23.

Sinner stayed ice cool after losing the first set, with the momentum quickly shifting, and he was not broken once in the final three sets.

He squandered three championship points in the final at Roland Garros last month but this time made no mistake as he served out for victory.

Sinner said he was “living his dream”, prompting an eruption of cheers from the Centre Court crowd.

“An amazing tournament, thank you for the player you are,” he said to world number two Alcaraz. “It is so difficult to play against you. “I am going to keep hold of this (trophy), you have two already!” The tennis world has been captivated by the emergence of the new rivalry between the players to follow the storied “Big Three” era of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

Sinner and two-time defending

Sinner said he was “living his dream”, prompting an eruption of cheers from the Centre Court crowd. “An amazing tournament, thank you for the player you are,” he said to world number two Alcaraz



Italy’s Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters

Wimbledon champion Alcaraz have now shared the past seven Grand Slam titles between them, with the Italian winning four of those.

Defeat in Paris last month was a bitter blow for Sinner, who led by two

sets and had a clutch of championship points.

Prior to Sunday’s victory, he had lost five consecutive times against Alcaraz, including the final of the Italian Open in the first tournament he played after

returning from a three-month doping ban. Both players were solid on serve until the fifth game, when Alcaraz sprayed a forehand long to hand Sinner the first break of the match.

But the Spaniard levelled at 4-4 to the delight of the Centre Court crowd, which included Prince William and his wife Catherine, Princess of Wales.

Sinner double-faulted to hand Alcaraz a second set point.

The Italian laced a searing forehand down the line but Alcaraz produced a magical backhand winner, pointing his finger to his ear as the crowd rose to their feet.

Sinner, still wearing a protective white sleeve after his nasty fall in his fourth-round match against Grigor Dimitrov, broke in the first game of the second set and led 3-1 after play was briefly halted by a flying cork.

Sinner shook his racquet after winning the first point as he served for the set and was rewarded with cheers before levelling the match with a whipped forehand.

The third set was a tense affair that went with serve until the ninth game when Sinner broke as Alcaraz slipped over on the baseline and he went 2-1 up. — AFP

SPORTS



Chelsea’s Reece James lifts the trophy as he celebrates with teammates after winning the Fifa Club World Cup as US President Donald Trump looks on. — Reuters

COLE PALMER scored two goals and made another as Chelsea stunned Paris Saint-Germain in the final of the Club World Cup on Sunday, beating the European champions 3-0 before lifting the trophy alongside US President Donald Trump. PSG were the favourites after coming to the United States fresh from winning the Champions League and having destroyed Real Madrid 4-0 in the semifinals.

But having been three goals ahead early on in the semis, this time the roles were reversed as PSG found themselves 3-0 down by the break.

Palmer opened the scoring midway through the first half and struck again to make it two on the half-hour mark, before taking advantage of passive defending to set up Joao Pedro for the third on 43 minutes.

A bad day for PSG was summed up when Joao Neves was shown red following a VAR review four minutes from the end for pulling Marc Cucurella by the hair off the ball.

“Being Club World Cup champion is something for us to be proud of. We are very happy, especially against a team in PSG who I consider the best in the world with one of the best managers in the world,” said Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca, before hailing match-winner Palmer.

“These are the games where we expect Cole to appear because it is a big game, a big moment, and once again he showed how good he is.”

Before Chelsea got to lift the trophy, tensions spilled over at full-time with players facing off on the pitch and Paris coach Luis Enrique raising his arm to the neck of Joao Pedro.

“There was a lot of pushing and shoving. It was a situation that obviously should have been avoided, but my intention was clearly just to try to separate the players,” said Luis Enrique.

The scoreline was one few could have predicted as Chelsea capped what has been a long but memorable season — they are the first ever winners of the 32-team Club World Cup having also won the UEFA Conference League and finished fourth in the Premier League. They will also take away around \$125 million in prize money,

CHELSEA STUN PSG 3-0 TO WIN CWC FINAL

A bad day for PSG was summed up when Joao Neves was shown red following a VAR review four minutes from the end for pulling Marc Cucurella by the hair off the ball.



Chelsea’s Spanish goalkeeper Robert Sanchez (L) holds the golden glove trophy and Chelsea’s English midfielder Cole Palmer (R) holds the golden ball trophy. — AFP



Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca lifts the trophy as he celebrates with Chelsea players. — Reuters

meaning the prospect of a drastically curtailed summer break before returning for next season will surely feel worth it.

For PSG, meanwhile, the financial rewards are similar but there will be genuine disappointment at falling short of adding this title to their Champions League triumph and French league and cup double.

Nevertheless, conquering Europe was always the main aim this season for Luis Enrique’s team, who now have exactly a month to digest this and take a holiday before returning to action in the UEFA Super Cup against Tottenham Hotspur.

TRUMP IN ATTENDANCE

There was a real sense of occasion at the MetLife Stadium, with the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline and with Trump in attendance along with First Lady Melania Trump in a crowd of 81,118.

For the second time in six weeks PSG found themselves involved in a final that quickly turned into a one-sided affair.

The club claimed a historic 5-0 win over Inter Milan in the Champions League final, but here they were ripped apart by Chelsea.

The opening goal came in the 22nd minute as Malo Gusto got the better of Nuno Mendes down the right before seeing his shot blocked by Lucas Beraldo. The ball came back to Gusto and he teed up Palmer to finish into the bottom-left corner. Palmer has been the face of Chelsea on billboards in the United States during the tournament and he lived up to his star status by scoring again on the half-hour.

Released on the right with PSG left-back Mendes out of position, Palmer advanced towards the box before stroking a low shot into the same corner. Joao Pedro played a part in the build-up to that goal and the Brazilian, signed during the tournament from Brighton, then got his name on the scoresheet to make it 3-0.

Scorer of both goals against Fluminense in the semifinals, he clipped a shot past Gianluigi Donnarumma after being supplied by Palmer. — AFP



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PASSING THROUGH



Passenger traffic at Muscat International Airport fell by 3.5 per cent.

PASSENGER TRAFFIC AT SALALAH AIRPORT RISES 6.5 PER CENT

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers passing through the Sultanate of Oman's airports by the end of May 2025 reached approximately 5,790,010, representing a 3 per cent decline compared to the same period in 2024, which recorded 5,968,622 passengers.

According to preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, passenger traffic at Muscat International Airport fell by 3.5 per cent to 5,207,005 passengers, down from 5,393,373 during the corresponding period last year.

Additionally, the total number of flights at the airport dropped by 7.5 per cent, registering 37,307 flights compared to 40,322 flights in the same period of 2024.

In contrast, Salalah Airport saw notable growth in passenger traffic, with a 6.7 per cent increase by the end of May 2025. The number of passengers rose to 557,298, up from 522,224 during the same period last year. However, the number of flights at Salalah Airport experienced a marginal decline of 0.3 per cent, totalling 3,717 flights compared to 3,730 flights in 2024.

Sohar Airport witnessed a sharp drop in activity, with passenger numbers plummeting by 98.8 per cent to just 336 passengers, down from 27,350 recorded in the same period last year. The number of flights also fell significantly by 63.7 per cent, from 226 flights to 82.

Duqm Airport also reported a slight decrease in operations. The number of flights declined by 1.5 per cent, registering 256 flights compared to 260 last year. — ONA

Oman and Türkiye sign strategic energy pact

THE Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye have taken a significant step towards strengthening bilateral ties with the signing of a wide-ranging Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the energy sector.

The agreement, formalised in Muscat, aims to bolster technical collaboration, enhance investment flows and support both nations' transition to sustainable energy systems.

The MoU was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on behalf of the Omani government and Alparslan Bayraktar, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, on behalf of the Republic of Türkiye.

The agreement covers several strategic areas of cooperation, including oil and gas exploration, trade in liquefied natural gas (LNG), renewable energy development, energy efficiency and alternative fuels.

Key provisions also focus on advancing joint projects in green hydrogen production and carbon capture technologies — critical elements in the global push towards decarbonisation.

Under the MoU, both parties have committed to sharing technical expertise and policy experience, developing regulatory frameworks to enhance energy efficiency and exploring innovative technologies and financing mechanisms for clean energy infrastructure.

The agreement also encourages the organisation of technical seminars and joint events, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange.

Minister Al Aufi described the agreement as a testament to the deep-rooted strategic partnership between Oman and Türkiye.

He emphasised that this cooperation would contribute to Oman's national goals of energy diversification and carbon neutrality while solidifying the Sultanate



The MoU was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals and Alparslan Bayraktar, Türkiye's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

of Oman's role as a regional energy hub.

"This memorandum represents a key milestone in Oman's road map to energy transformation. It will pave the way for impactful partnerships, especially in renewable energy, carbon capture and green hydrogen — areas that are central to our long-term energy strategy", said Al Aufi.

He also reaffirmed Oman's commitment to fostering international cooperation that supports sustainable development, facilitates investment and promotes the transfer of knowledge and innovative solutions.

Echoing these sentiments, Minister Bayraktar noted that the MoU will enhance bilateral cooperation across multiple facets of the energy sector. He highlighted Türkiye's interest in Oman's extensive oil and gas resources and pointed to opportunities for joint exploration projects. He also stressed the

potential for collaboration in electricity generation from renewable sources, power transmission and market liberalisation.

Bayraktar further recalled the long-term agreement signed in 2022 to supply Omani LNG to Türkiye, expressing his desire to expand volumes and deepen cooperation in this domain. "We see Oman as a reliable partner in energy supply and we aim to elevate our relationship to a more strategic level", he stated.

Both ministers agreed that the MoU opens promising new horizons for economic integration, energy security and sustainability. It also reflects the broader diplomatic will of the two nations to work closely on pressing global issues such as climate change and energy transition.

This agreement is expected to not only enhance trade volumes in the energy sector but also act as a catalyst for innovation and investment across both economies. — ONA

Duqm-2 launch aborted due to technical glitch

HIBBA AL KINDI
AL DUQM, JULY 14

ETLAQ Spaceport's highly anticipated experimental rocket launch mission "Duqm-2" was aborted due to a technical issue on Sunday.

According to the company, the team behind the launch vehicle, Stellar Kinetics "encountered an issue with a COTS valve actuator used for various systems on the Kea-1 vehicle". Consequently, the launch has been postponed until "a replacement solution is developed", it stated.

In a statement, His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Founder & CEO of National Aerospace Services Company (NASCOM) & Etlaq Spaceport, shared the following: "Today's stand-down of the launch reflects the diligence and precision required in aerospace operations. We commend the teams, both local and international, for their disciplined decision-making in prioritising safety and system



Duqm-2 at the launchpad at Etlaq Spaceport

integrity".

According to the CEO, despite the failure to launch, the mission achieved several operational milestones. "We achieved many objectives of the Duqm-2 mission, including planning the mission, navigating regulatory processes, designing ground infrastructure and building an integration

hangar".

He added: "Etlaq Spaceport continues to rapidly acquire knowledge to prove itself as a capable, reliable host and this effort further strengthens our role in building sustainable, skill-based partnerships in the global launch ecosystem".

A spokesperson for Stellar

Kinetics, stated: "It has been an exciting few months working closely with the Etlaq and NASCOM teams preparing for this mission. We proved out the majority of our objectives, demonstrating how fast we can move through this complex programme with our regional partners. The National Space Programme and Civil Aviation Authority provided support throughout, allowing agility and responsiveness in the regulatory environment that is immensely valuable for a fast-paced programme like the Duqm-2 mission".

The Duqm-2 mission is slated to carry two education-focused research payloads. The first is developed by the UK based Joint Universities Programme for In-Orbit Training, Education and Research (JUPITER), brought together students and researchers from the University of Surrey, the University of Portsmouth and the University of Southampton.

The Jupiter payload included the

Jovian-O 6U CubeSat, a prototype deployment system and DAVE, (Dual Aperture for Viewing Earth), which is equipped with two small cameras — one to capture images and videos of Earth and the other is a space-facing camera to monitor space debris.

The second payload was developed by SIGHT Space, a Taiwanese student-led initiative from National Central University. Their PocketQube II satellite was designed to record real-time structural stress and environmental data (temperature, pressure, acceleration) during suborbital flight.

Duqm-2 is part of a series of experimental launch initiative — the Genesis Programme — that aims to cultivate Oman's launch culture before the port's operation in 2027.

The mission was scheduled as the second launch of the year, following the postponement of mission UNITY-1 earlier this year due to unfavourable weather conditions and technical issues.

ADVERTORIALS

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Savills has been selected as the partner of choice for leasing, resale, property management, valuation and advisory services at Al Mouj Muscat.

Al Mouj Muscat and Savills sign pact to strengthen community experience

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s premier lifestyle destination, has announced the signing of a partnership agreement with Savills, a globally renowned real estate advisory firm.

Through this partnership, Savills has been selected as the partner of choice for leasing, resale, property management, valuation and advisory services at Al Mouj Muscat.

Building on Al Mouj Muscat’s commitment to innovation and customer excellence, Savills has established its first dedicated in-community office in Oman, strategically located at Al Mouj Walk, Al Mouj Muscat’s vibrant lifestyle district.

Already operational, the office brings its services closer to residents and investors, enabling them to manage their property needs without leaving the community.

Commenting on this partnership, Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “We continuously strive to enhance the living experience for our community, by bringing world-class real estate services directly to our residents and investors, we reinforce our commitment to convenience, quality and unparalleled customer satisfaction.

This is yet another example of how Al Mouj Muscat remains a preferred destination for living and investment in Oman”.

Ihsan Kharouf, Head of Savills Oman office, shared: “Al Mouj Muscat has successfully delivered and continues to deliver a world-class community that not only stands out locally, but is also recognised as one of the region’s leading developments in terms of quality, design and management.

Savills is proud to be associated with it and is committed to building on the exceptional standards established to date. We are also excited to now be delivering our services directly from within the development, further enhancing the experience for all our clients.

This collaboration uniquely positions Al Mouj Muscat at the forefront of progressive community development, integrating Savills’ globally recognised expertise with deep local understanding to provide homeowners and investors unmatched convenience and tailored support.

Residents and investors are invited to visit the new Savills office at The Al Mouj Walk to explore comprehensive agency, property management and advisory solutions tailored specifically for the Al Mouj community.

BANKDHOFAR UNVEILS CAMPAIGN FOR A BRANDING UPLIFT

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second largest bank by branch network size in Oman, has unveiled a campaign for a branding uplift under the slogan “Innovation inspired by you”, this is not just a slogan, but a way of working. We innovate today from your world to create a financial future closer to you.

More than just a change in look and feel, the brand uplift reflects BankDhofar’s evolution into a forward-thinking financial partner, deeply attuned to the aspirations



of its customers — individuals, entrepreneurs and institutions alike.

At the heart of this transformation lies a simple but

powerful insight: true innovation begins with understanding people.

The campaign emphasises BankDhofar’s commitment to listening, learning and adapting to the ever-changing needs of its customers.

By putting people at the centre, the bank aims to design products and services that are not only innovative but also meaningful, intuitive and transformative — helping customers achieve their financial goals at every stage of life.

Own Lincoln Corsair now with exclusive benefits

LUXURY

enthusiasts can now purchase the impressive

Lincoln Corsair and enjoy exclusive benefits such as 5 years / 100,000 km service (whichever is earlier), 5 years / 100,000 km manufacturer’s warranty, free registration, free 3M paint protection film and free accessory package. (Conditions apply. Visit the Lincoln showroom in Al Wattayah for details.) The offer ends on July 23, 2025.

Commanding yet composed, the two-row Lincoln Corsair is where sophisticated design meets exhilarating performance. True to Lincoln’s quiet flight philosophy, the Corsair blends dynamic capability with luxurious refinement that is perfect for those who expect more from every drive.

At its core, a turbocharged four-cylinder engine, including a responsive 2.0-litre variant that delivers an impressive



Lincoln Corsair is where sophisticated design meets exhilarating performance.

250 horsepower and 380 Nm of torque, ensures the Corsair moves with purpose.

Paired with an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission featuring SelectShift technology, every gear change feels smooth, precise and powerful.

Confidence flows with Lincoln’s Co-Pilot360 driver-assist suite, transforming

every journey into a seamless, stress-free experience. Whether it is navigating city streets or cruising highways, the Corsair adapts effortlessly to your needs.

The Corsair’s beauty lies in the details. Step inside with Lincoln’s signature illuminated entry and you are welcomed into a sanctuary of calm.

Dynamic LED lighting and premium ambient lighting enhance its elegant presence, while the interior’s horizontal layout promotes a sense of tranquillity and space. Crafted with hand-selected materials, every surface feels as good as it looks.

Add a 10-speaker Lincoln premium audio system, dual-zone climate control and intelligent access and the Corsair’s cabin becomes a personalised haven of luxury.

Technology takes centre stage with SYNC 4, offering enhanced voice recognition, a vibrant 13.3-inch touchscreen and intuitive navigation that keeps you in control.

The upgraded Lincoln Co-Pilot360 2.1 Vision suite adds a new layer of confidence with blind-spot detection, lane-keeping assist, a 360-degree camera and intelligent adaptive cruise control.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co LLC.

NATIONAL FINANCE CONTINUES TO UPHOLD COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS

MUSCAT: Demonstrating a steadfast commitment to customer-centricity and service excellence, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, continues to uphold the values introduced through its brand evolution — anchored in the promise of being a ‘Partner for Growth’.

More than a visual transformation, the refreshed identity marked a defining moment in the company’s journey, signalling a strategic shift from being solely a provider of finance solutions to becoming a force for positive impact within the community and a pillar of meaningful growth.

Since its brand evolution, National Finance has consistently upheld the principles of growth, innovation, customer-centricity and partnership.

By staying true to the qualities that define its service — fast, easy and flexible services —



The refreshed identity marked a defining moment in the company’s journey.

the company has continuously enhanced the customer experience, broadened its reach and strengthened its role within the community, with

a particular focus on empowering youth and supporting Oman’s thriving SME sector.

Commenting on the transformation, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, stated: “Our transformation was far more than a rebranding exercise; it marked a pivotal shift in the way we operate, aligning our business with a renewed sense of purpose and a forward-looking vision.

Today, we take pride in seeing these values integrated across every aspect of our organisation, from a more diversified product portfolio to a dynamic employee culture and meaningful community engagement.

By embracing a modern identity, we not only elevated the look and feel of our brand, but also enhanced the overall customer experience, demonstrating a deep understanding of the evolving needs of our clientele”.

Sohar International, Oman Balloons to elevate Oman’s tourism landscape

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its strategic commitment to national development and sustainable tourism, Sohar International has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Balloons, becoming the exclusive banking sponsor of the Sultanate of Oman’s first national hot air balloon initiative.

This partnership underscores the bank’s unwavering focus on going beyond banking — supporting innovative ventures that align with Oman Vision 2040 and contribute to in-country value creation.

The signing ceremony was held at Sohar International’s headquarter in Al Khuwair, with the MoU signed by Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government & Private Banking Officer at Sohar International and Salim bin Sultan al Abri, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Balloons.

The project is set to launch in October in the Wilayat of Bidiyah in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, offering a pioneering aerial



The MoU was signed by Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government & Private Banking Officer at Sohar International and Salim bin Sultan al Abri, CEO of Oman Balloons.

tourism experience that showcases Oman’s natural beauty and cultural richness.

Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi,

Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: “At Sohar International, we are proud to be the exclusive financial partner of the Oman Balloons project — an initiative that not only positions Oman as a regional leader in aerial tourism but also reflects our broader vision of enabling innovative and high-impact national projects.

This partnership is a testament to our commitment to supporting economic diversification, empowering Omani talent and fostering public-private collaboration, all in alignment with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040”.

Commenting on the partnership, Salim bin Sultan al Abri, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Balloons, stated: “We are proud to partner with Sohar International — one of the first institutions to believe in the vision of ‘Oman Balloons’ and support it from the outset. This exclusive sponsorship marks a key milestone in the project, providing not only

financial support but also strategic value that will accelerate our progress”. The experience will feature a dedicated reception and briefing lounge, a cultural exhibition of traditional Omani handicrafts and souvenirs, and a ceremonial end-of-tour certificate and photo opportunity for participants.

This national initiative is developed in collaboration with Basha Balloon, Europe’s second-largest balloon operator and a trusted name in aerial safety. In a first-of-its-kind milestone, Sohar International will operate its own dedicated hot air balloon — branded with the bank’s identity — making it the first commercial brand to fly across the Sultanate of Oman’s skies.

The initiative is also aligned with the bank’s social responsibility agenda, creating new employment opportunities, empowering local SMEs and channelling a share of the operational revenue towards environmental preservation.

BUSINESS

NEWAGENDA



The event will spotlight innovative strategies to extend infrastructure lifespan, improve safety and reduce operational risks.

Key forum to spotlight corrosion and materials innovation

NAJAH AL RIYAMI
MUSCAT, JULY 14

THE AMPP Oman Chapter, in collaboration with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the Oman Society for Engineering (OSE), is proud to announce the return of the Oman Corrosion & Materials Innovation Summit, taking place September 15–17, 2025, at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, Muscat.

Now in its third edition, the summit is set to welcome over 1,000 professionals from around the world to explore the latest advancements in corrosion prevention, materials science and asset integrity. With the global cost of corrosion estimated at over \$2.5 trillion annually, the event will spotlight innovative strategies to extend infrastructure lifespan, improve safety and reduce operational risks.

“It was one of the most professionally run and well-attended events we’ve participated in”, said Arin Shahmoradian, Technical Manager at SPI Coatings, reflecting on the 2024 summit.

The 2025 edition will feature keynote addresses, panel discussions, technical presentations and live demonstrations across sectors including oil & gas, utilities, marine and infrastructure. Topics include AI-driven integrity management, corrosion under insulation (CUI), smart coatings and advanced NDT technologies.

Alongside the three-day programme addressing Corrosion & Materials, the conference agenda includes a focused track devoted to “AI in Corrosion Prevention”. This cutting-edge theme will explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping corrosion and integrity management strategies, enabling smarter decision-making, cost efficiency and real-time insights across industrial operations.

The AI track will be structured around five major themes. First, AI for Corrosion Monitoring in Oil & Gas, which explores how AI enables real-time monitoring of pipelines and storage tanks, with a focus on detecting internal corrosion using machine learning and advanced data analytics.

Second, Materials Design & Optimisation, highlighting how AI is accelerating the development of corrosion-resistant materials and optimising alloy compositions and protective coatings through predictive modelling.

Third, AI-Driven Predictive Maintenance, where participants will learn how integrating AI with IoT sensors helps predict corrosion in critical systems, minimise unplanned downtime and reduce maintenance costs through proactive intervention.

Fourth, AI in Corrosion Inhibition will demonstrate how AI is being used to optimise the selection and dosage of corrosion inhibitors, including predictive models that assess inhibitor effectiveness across various environments.

And fifth, AI in Integrity, which focuses on how AI enhances integrity assessment processes — supporting lifecycle asset management, automating risk profiling and helping asset owners make better-informed decisions.

This year’s summit takes on added urgency as Oman expands investments in energy, infrastructure and industrial development.

SIMILAR WARNING

EU, South Korea seek US trade deals



The European Union and South Korea said on Monday they were working on trade deals with US President Donald Trump that would soften the blow from looming tariffs as Washington threatens to impose hefty duties from August 1.

Trump stepped up his trade war, saying he would impose a 30% tariff on most imports from the EU and Mexico from next month, adding to similar warnings for other countries. — Reuters

OMAN’S DOMESTIC LIQUIDITY RISES BY RO 1.8 BILLION

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 14

PETROLEUM Development Oman (PDO), the largest producer of oil and gas in the Sultanate of Oman, generated approximately \$22.5 billion in revenue for the government in 2024, up from around \$22 billion a year earlier. Fuelling this uptick was a significant increase in crude oil production, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals noted in its newly published 2024 Annual Report.

“In 2024, PDO recorded its highest oil production in 20 years, exceeding its target and reinforcing its role as a key contributor to the nation’s energy supply”, the Ministry stated in the report.

“Gas output remained stable, in line with customer demand, while the company continued to serve as the country’s swing producer for gas — requiring it to operate in a highly dynamic mode.

The combined daily production of oil, condensate and non-associated gas remained strong throughout the year”.

It further added: “In a fast-changing energy landscape, the company stayed the course by significantly boosting its contribution to the nation’s

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman witnessed a substantial increase in domestic liquidity by the end of April 2025, according to the latest data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The figures showed that domestic liquidity reached RO 25.369 billion, marking a 7.5 per cent rise compared to RO 23.589 billion recorded in the same period of 2024. However, the total issued currency in circulation fell by 7.7 per cent, standing at RO 1.540 billion

compared to RO 1.669 billion a year earlier.

At the same time, the narrow money supply experienced robust growth of 12 per cent, reaching RO 6.977 billion, up from RO 6.231 billion recorded at the end of April 2020.

Private sector deposits at commercial banks and Islamic banking windows increased by 7.1 per cent, totalling RO 21.516 billion, compared to RO 20.866 billion in April 2024.

Additionally, total loans and financing extended by commercial banks and Islamic windows rose by 9 per cent to RO 33.590 billion, up from RO 30.810 billion in the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the average interest rate on all loans decreased slightly to 5.555 per cent from 5.604 per cent.

Oman’s net foreign assets also grew by 3.2 per cent to RO 6.987 billion, compared to RO 6.773 billion by the end of April 2024. — ONA

PDO’s contribution climbs to \$22.5 bn in 2024



PDO is focused on sustaining the momentum of its 2024 performance.

revenue — amounting to approximately \$22.5 billion”.

While corresponding production figures for 2024 were not immediately disclosed, PDO’s crude oil production averaged 657,599 barrels per day (bpd) in 2023. Condensate output averaged 97,426 bpd, while gas production stood at 58.26 million m³/day, reflecting lower customer demand.

According to the report, PDO is focused on sustaining the momentum of its 2024 production performance.

“The Exploration Directorate also delivered another strong year, with several important oil and gas discoveries made across various geological formations in both the northern and southern parts of the concession”, it

stated.

Enhancing cost competitiveness has been identified as a strategic priority, with a strong commitment to optimising Unit Operating Cost (UOC), PDO noted.

To this end, a range of initiatives has been implemented across the company to reduce operating expenditure (Opex) while maintaining a sharp focus on safety and value creation.

“In 2024, PDO’s UOC was \$7.4/bbl, reflecting ongoing efforts in cost control, enhanced collaboration, an improved operating model and streamlined processes.

Additionally, the company has prioritised deferment reduction and improving facility

availability, aiming to reduce total deferments to below 5% by 2030. Total capital and operating expenditure amounted to \$7.264 billion”, the report added.

On the technology front, PDO achieved a number of significant milestones in 2024, launching 18 transformative initiatives aimed at unlocking new growth opportunities and addressing critical operational challenges.

These initiatives targeted areas such as produced water and energy management, artificial lifting, enhanced oil recovery (EOR), well construction and production measurement.

Of these, 13 technologies were successfully deployed, providing practical solutions in water and energy management, artificial lifting and well construction. In addition, 15 technology trials were completed, demonstrating strong value potential and paving the way for broader deployment and operational efficiency gains.

Further advancing innovation, five joint academia-industry research projects were awarded to Omani universities, targeting priority areas aligned with PDO’s long-term goals and Oman’s economic diversification agenda. These projects focus on energy efficiency, water management, EOR, bioenergy, materials and corrosion science; and renewable energy.

OFM ALLOCATES OVER RO 6 MILLION FOR WHEAT PROCUREMENT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 14

OMAN Flour Mills Company (OFM) has invested more than RO 6 million in the procurement of locally grown wheat between 2021 and 2024.

The initiative, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, has benefitted over 150 Omani farmers.

This investment supports the company’s broader strategy to promote in-country value and strengthen the national food security system by building supply chains

based on domestic agricultural production.

As part of these efforts, OFM has unveiled a new product, ‘Flour 1’, the first flour made entirely from Omani wheat. The launch underscores the company’s commitment to supporting local agriculture and developing value-added food industries.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of Oman Flour Mills, said that the launch of Flour 1 is the result of strategic partnerships with local farmers and reflects the company’s focus on self-sufficiency and sustainability

in the food sector. He added that OFM continues to implement plans aimed at expanding both locally and regionally, through high-quality food products that rely on Omani resources.

The company also reaffirmed its dedication to innovation and food security in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as its ambition to expand its presence in domestic and international markets.

OFM is confident that its strong commitment to sustainability and operational efficiency will drive long-term value creation and growth.

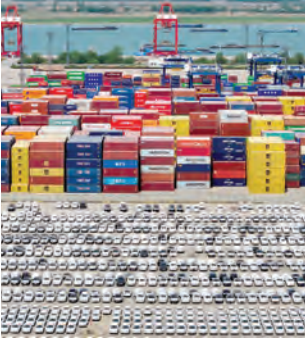
Halima bint Mubarak al

Kalbaniyah, responsible for marketing the company’s Al-Bur flour, described Flour 1 as a comprehensive strategic marketing experience aimed at reconnecting consumers with local products.

“This project tells a story of pride and authenticity”, she said, noting that the company had studied consumer behaviour and rising interest in locally made goods. This research informed a new brand identity built around the message “From our land... to your table”, with a slogan that reflects the company’s values: “Goodness grows in our farms”.

DURABLE DEAL

Exporters rush to beat big tariff deadline



China’s exports regained momentum in June as firms rushed out orders to capitalise on a fragile tariff truce between Beijing and Washington ahead of a looming deadline next month, with shipments to Southeast Asian transit hubs particularly strong.

Businesses on both sides of the Pacific are waiting to see whether the world’s two largest economies can agree on a more durable deal. — Reuters

CRUDE FUTURES

Oil prices rise to 3-week high



Oil prices rose on Monday and reached their highest level in three weeks, as investors eyed further US sanctions on Russia that may affect global supplies, while higher oil imports by China also offered support.

Brent crude futures rose 58 cents, or 0.8%, to \$71.28 a barrel by 09:00 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures climbed 59 cents, 0.9%, to \$69.42. — Reuters

OPINION

Initial actions that help organisations stay afloat



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman.

LAST week, my article revolved around the common strategy, steps or approaches that many organisations usually follow in order to save themselves from sinking.

The typical steps include appointing a new CEO, reshuffling the senior executive leadership team, cutting costs from every corner and finally pushing the sales team with and for aggressive revenue targets.

While these moves are intended to restore confidence and improve the financial performance as a result, they often only produce short-term optimism and consequently fail to address deeper issues (the main problems per se).

New leaders normally surround themselves with loyalists (or friends, family and past colleagues) rather than capable challengers. Cost-cutting measures can harm innovation and morale; and finally, aggressive sales tactics often ignore root causes like outdated products or customer dissatisfaction, to name a few.

Without a strategic and evidence-based plan, these reactive measures rarely produce fruitful results. True transformation requires more than just surface-level change.

My article this week focuses on some of the initial actions that can be followed in order to recover and stay afloat (based on research from renowned institutions that experienced the same). Irrespective of whether it's a new or an existing leader and/or senior leadership

team in place, listening deeply, widely and carefully is the number one action that needs to be done.

Taking time to understand the problems is crucial before doing anything else. Listening to employees on the ground, frontline staff, long-time customers, old clients and even past employees will surely help find out the problem being faced. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case and as a result, problems will remain one way or another.

Secondly, the leader and their senior executive team need to ensure trust is rebuilt internally.

This can be in ensuring they are visible and approachable (by repetitive communicating and keeping an open door policy), acknowledging what's shared (be it in the form of comments and feedback), consistently sharing a clear vision, mission, strategy and related road map (of where they are going, how and when); and finally keeping employees and various stakeholders engaged throughout the journey.

Trust doesn't come from promises. It comes from transparency and consistency.

It is important for the leadership team to carefully identify employees internally who still believe, still perform and still care for the success of the organisation.

Loyal employees are valuable for the organisation. What they only need is someone to listen to them and give them a room to lead and grow. Some of these employees may not have the loudest voice,

Irrespective of whether it's a new or an existing leader and/or senior leadership team in place, listening deeply, widely and carefully is the number one action that needs to be done. Taking time to understand the problems is crucial before doing anything else.

but they carry the culture.

They are the internal champions who will drive the recovery from within. Do not ignore but empower them. Treating all the employees the same is a mistake that needs to be avoided.

Action speaks louder. The new team in place needs to take decisive action immediately upon joining, listening and empowering the right team and employees in place, for this will send a message that things are happening.

Urgency is important, but random, reactive decisions only create more confusion. Leaders need to continue communicating regularly and tracking progress transparently and should not be afraid to take action for changes when necessary. Leaders with clear, transparent and fair action are respected dearly.

In conclusion, loud announcements and mass layoffs may result in a short-term win. However, truth be told, these moves are unsustainable in the long term. Clarity, humility and trust, followed by a focused execution, is what would not only save but also sustain the growth of the organisation in question.

People need to understand that fixing a business starts by understanding the people, the purpose and the pain points. Thoughtful but not flashy turnaround is the name of the game and only those who know and play the game win. Until we catch up again next week, be positive and stay alert.

UNILEVER INDIA BOSS'S FIRST JOB IS A DEEP CLEAN

SHRITAMA BOSE

INDIAN consumers are shaking a global giant awake. Last Thursday, Unilever named Priya Nair CEO of its local unit to replace Rohit Jawa, who will leave at the end of July after completing less than half of his term.

The \$150 billion maker of Dove soap is struggling to grow in its second-largest market. The new chief's biggest task is refreshing the unit's stale business.

The management rejig, which fuelled a 5% surge in Hindustan Unilever's shares on Friday, follows a change of guard at the London-headquartered group and years of weak performance at the Indian unit. Over the past two years, HUL's sales grew just 2%, far behind Nestle which managed 9%.

This bleak performance is captured in the Mumbai-listed shares. HUL trades at 52 times the unit's expected earnings for 2025, lagging Nestle India, which trades at 68 times.

There are multiple reasons for this yawning gap. To start, the owner of the Lakme beauty brand is failing to keep up with homegrown challengers like \$7 billion Nykaa and \$1 billion Honasa Consumer's Mamaearth, which offer more differentiated beauty products to the well-heeled and upwardly mobile Indian consumers. At the lower end of the market, private labels are finding favour with shoppers on a budget.

HUL reacted to the trend with a new strategy involving a \$311 million acquisition of skincare brand Minimalist in January, among other things, but it needs to do more.

It could consider adding Temasek-backed fast-growing packaged snacks maker Haldiram's to complement its portfolio. Introducing global brands like Ben & Jerry's ice cream or Maille condiments would offer an easy refresh of its India shelves too.

A shifting market structure has pulled the rug from under the vaunted distribution model of the Brooke Bond tea maker.

Urban Indians are increasingly ordering everything from milk to lipstick through apps like Blinkit, backed by \$28 billion food delivery champion Eternal, which offers 10-minute deliveries and a superior product selection. HUL is yet to update its supply chains to keep up with the speedy replenishment this channel demands.

This is a problem given this end of the grocery market is growing 70% annually, per Bernstein.

Nair currently presides over Unilever's beauty business and is an old India hand. That sets her up nicely to tackle the aforementioned issues. And if she manages to revitalise the business, it will also help the larger Unilever group, which owns 62% of the Indian unit.

But given how far Unilever's Indian business is lagging, the cleanup will take time. — Reuters

Moody's upgrade marks a new era for Oman

MOODY'S recent upgrade of the Sultanate of Oman's credit rating from Ba1 to Baa3, with a stable outlook, marks a major turning point in our economic journey. It is more than just a rating change — it is a clear sign that Oman has gained the trust of international markets.

It reflects the progress we have made in strengthening our economy, managing our finances carefully and laying the groundwork for long-term growth.

This milestone sends a powerful signal to global markets: Oman is now an investment-grade economy and an emerging hub of low-risk, high-potential opportunity.

This means lower risk for investors, more confidence in our future and better access to international financing for both the government and the private sector.

At the global level, it puts Oman in a stronger position to attract foreign capital, build strategic partnerships and support private sector growth. Locally, it opens up new opportunities for businesses to grow, create jobs and invest with greater confidence.

The upgrade didn't happen by chance. It is the result of several years of hard work and wise decision-making. One of the most important factors behind this success is the government's clear strategy to reduce public debt.

In 2021, Oman's debt stood at around 65% of GDP. By the end of 2024, it had dropped to 35.5%. This is a remarkable achievement and reflects serious efforts to manage our resources wisely and reduce financial risk.

Alongside debt reduction, the government has shown strong commitment to controlling spending. Government expenditure as a share of GDP has dropped significantly — down to less than 29% in 2024, compared to an average of over 41% in the years between 2016 and 2020.

At the same time, the cost of



The rating upgrade also supports Oman's long-term vision to build a diversified economy.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI

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The writer is founder and CEO — Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor.

interest payments on debt has also come down, freeing up more funds for investment in development, infrastructure and public services.

What makes this achievement even more important is that it comes at a time when oil prices are not as high as they once were.

The government has been able to manage its finances carefully, even as oil prices remain moderate.

Oman's fiscal breakeven oil price — the price needed to balance the budget — has dropped from \$84 per barrel to under \$70. This means that our budget is now more resilient to fluctuations in the global energy market.

All of these efforts have created a stronger, more stable economic environment. But the real value of this upgrade lies in what it makes possible. It opens the door to new opportunities — especially for investors and businesses.

With an investment-grade rating, Oman will now be able to access international finance at lower interest rates.

This helps the government, of course, but it also benefits banks and businesses. Banks will be able to borrow funds at better rates from international markets and pass those benefits on to local companies through more affordable loans.

This is especially important for small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of our economy. Improved access to capital empowers SMEs to scale

operations, generate employment and reinforce Oman's economic base.

For foreign investors, this is a clear signal that Oman is a safe and promising destination for long-term investment. Sectors like logistics, tourism, clean energy, technology and manufacturing all stand to benefit from this renewed confidence.

The rating upgrade also supports Oman's long-term vision to build a diversified economy. While oil and gas will continue to play an important role, the government has already taken steps to reduce our reliance on hydrocarbons.

A key example includes major investments in green hydrogen, green steel and renewable energy industries — sectors that will define the global economy of the future. Oman is also expanding its liquefied natural gas production, aiming to increase capacity by 30% by the year 2030.

These efforts not only reduce risk, but also create exciting opportunities for both local entrepreneurs and international partners.

The business environment in Oman is becoming more attractive, more reliable and more supportive of innovation and growth. We are creating the right conditions for investors to thrive — and for the private sector to play a leading role in national development.

However, while this upgrade is a moment to celebrate, it also comes with responsibility. Oman must continue on the path of reform, diversification and prudent fiscal management. Global challenges remain, especially with shifting energy markets and environmental pressures.

But the progress we've made gives us the strength and flexibility to adapt and succeed. Now is the time to double down on these efforts — encouraging innovation, empowering the private sector and building strong partnerships with global investors.

We must also make sure the world knows what Oman has achieved.

BUSINESS

Initiative to equip students with future skills

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 14

SOHAR Port and Freezone has officially launched the third edition of its flagship summer initiative, Maseer, a transformative programme dedicated to equipping Omani youth in grades 5 to 11, with future-ready skills through immersive, learning experiences.

In collaboration with Kidsity, a national leader in youth education, this year's programme will engage learners from the wilayats of Suhar and Liwa throughout July and August 2025.

Building on previous successes, Maseer offers seven dynamic workshops covering key emerging fields including,

artificial intelligence and cloud data, cybersecurity, 3D CAD design, smart cities development, Arduino programming, renewable energy and English language learning.

These expertly led sessions provide participants with hands-on, practical knowledge that aligns seamlessly with Oman Vision 2040 and SOHAR Port's strategic role as a gateway to global innovation.

This year also introduces Maseer Future City, an immersive metaverse experience that allows students to explore a futuristic digital environment inspired by smart cities.

Through AI-powered learning, gamified challenges and interactive zones, the platform equips participants with future-



This year also introduces Maseer Future City, an immersive metaverse experience that allows students to explore a futuristic digital environment inspired by smart cities.

ready skills in a fun, accessible and engaging way — further supporting Oman Vision 2040's focus on digital transformation.

“Maseer reflects our belief that investing in young people is one of the most powerful ways to support national development,” said Mohamed al Shizawi, Acting CEO, SOHAR Port and Freezone.

“The programme exemplifies our commitment to advancing social welfare and socio-economic growth by fostering a culture of innovation and knowledge-sharing.

“By providing access to advanced knowledge and practical learning, we are helping students build the skills, confidence and mindset needed to thrive in competitive global industries.”

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SIT. WANTED

SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

INDIAN male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

EXPERIENCED accountant with expertise in accounting, administration and documentation. Proficient in Tally and MS Office. Contact: + 968 72806772

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Up to finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

INDIAN Male, 4 years of experience in web development in a product based company. Looking for a suitable position as software developer. Contact: + 968-99226403 suhail23599@gmail.com

INDIAN male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager. Contact: 00968 78099493

OMAN Experienced sales executive, valid D/L, 6 +years in FMCG, telecom, Trading, Leading teams and expanding market reach. contact: 94510339

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582. Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

INDIAN male, MBA (Marketing), 10+ years experience (5 years in Oman) in Supply Chain Management & Logistics. Valid driving license. Seeking job in SCM/Logistics. Contact: 96923008

SENIOR engineer 20+yrs exp in Elec. & Mech. projects in design, supervision & execution. Available with NOC, OSE membership & D/L. 99148940, jobluk.om@gmail.com

INDIAN male (MBA, Marketing) with 5 years Oman experience in sales consruction chemicals (Projects). Valid Oman D/L seeks job in sales. Contact: 96906235

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

WAREHOUSE for rent in Misfah. Contact: 79939666, 99888390

FLAT for rent 3BKH 18 Nov Street, Ghubrah. Contact: 92470065, 92408308

STORES for rent 18 Nov St, Ghubrah, 200m, 300m,400m suitable for all commercial use. Contact: 92470065/92408308

URGENT HIRING

Project Manager
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate
• 15 years of experience in the same role.
• Experience in pipe laying, road and infrastructure projects.
• PMP will be an added advantage.

Project Manager
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate
• Minimum of 15 year experience in marine, infrastructure and buildings and construction work.
• Out of 15 years, 8 years shall be in the managerial level

Planning Engineer
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate (4 years program)
• 8 years of experience in the same role.
• Experience in planning of pipe laying, road and infrastructure projects.
• Building experience will be an added advantage.
• Construction preparation of monthly progress reports, Interim Bar Chart Progress Report & statement of resources required to makeup shortfall in the progress meeting. The candidate should be proficient in the use of Primavera Software. (Planning engineer would be stationed at the site)
• PMP will be an added advantage

Civil Engineer
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate (4 years program)
• 10 years of experience in the same role.
• Experience in pipe laying, road and infrastructure projects.

MEP Engineer
Requirements: Engineer Graduate (4 years program)
• With minimum of 5 years experience in the field.

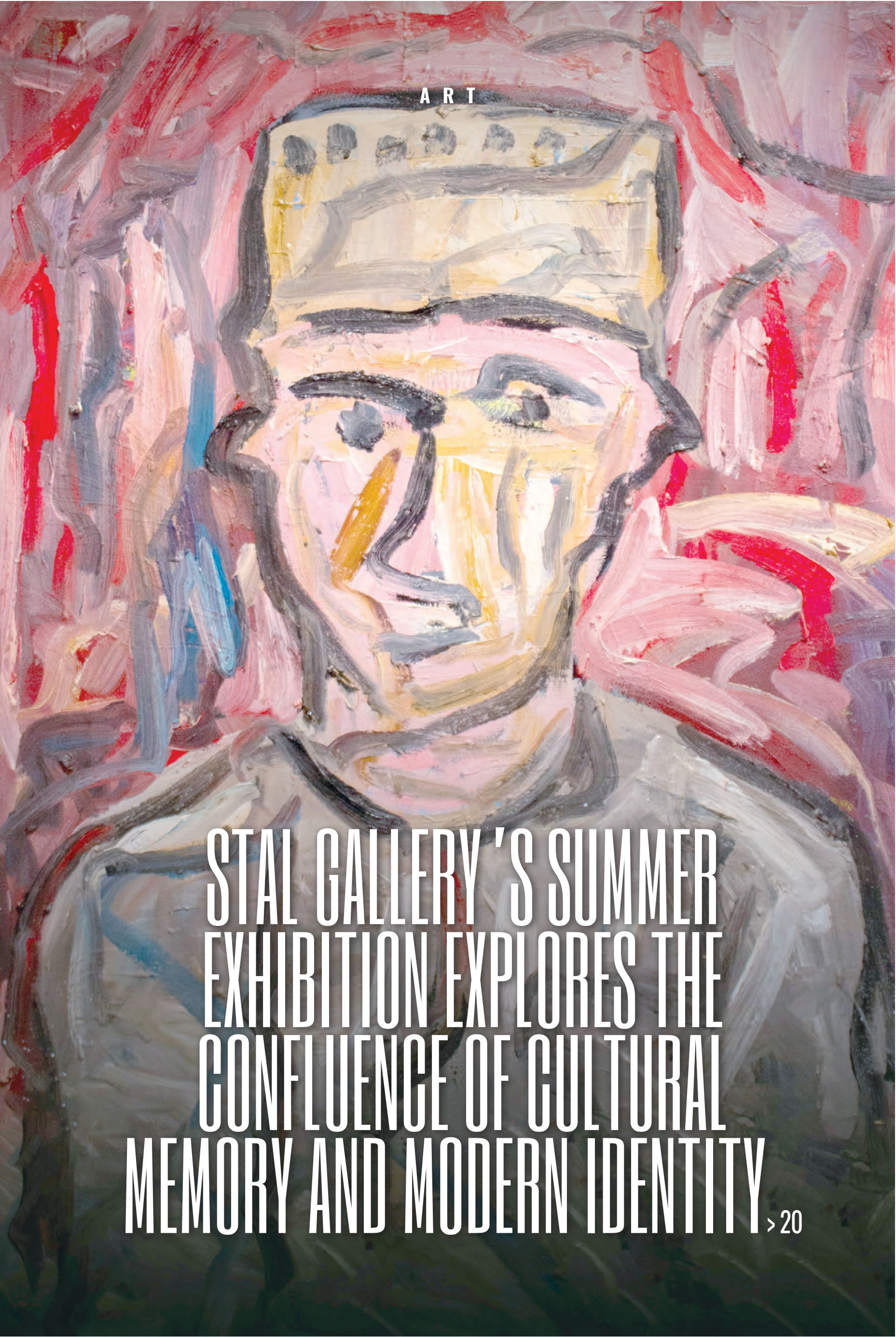
Material & QA/QC Engineer
Requirements: Civil Engineer Graduate (4 years program)
• Experienced in projects of more than 5 million OMR value (at least one) should be conversant with specifications requirement of various materials and experience of control of laboratory and interpretation of test results.

QA/QC Inspector
Requirements: Diploma in Civil Engineering
• 5 years relevant experience in the field.

Land Surveyor
Requirements: Diploma Graduate
• Experience in water supply projects.

Send your CV to: muscatproject4@gmail.com

ART/LIFE



STAL GALLERY'S SUMMER EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE CONFLUENCE OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND MODERN IDENTITY > 20

WINGS OF HISTORY

France's military pigeons race in memory of brave predecessors



Pigeons fly over a French army's military dovecote at Mont-Valerien in Suresne, near Paris. — AFP

MONT VALÉRIEN: These days, French military pigeon number 193-529 is no longer needed to carry tiny messages during war-time communication blackouts.

But the racing bird serves as a reminder of the brave service of its predecessors in World Wars I and II; and the 1870 siege of Paris.

Inside Europe's last military pigeon loft, Sergeant Sylvain cradled 193-529, an alert feathered athlete with an iridescent green neck.

"He's a carrier pigeon, like the ones who served in World Wars I and II", said Sylvain, withholding his surname for security purposes.

"But today he races", added the member of the armed forces, whose grandfather was also a pigeon fancier.

In Mont Valerien outside Paris, Sylvain flits between dovecotes, tending to some 200 pigeons — cleaning their shelters and making sure they have enough to eat.

These days, they only use their navigating skills when they are released during competitions, military ceremonies, or demonstrations for visitors, he said.

Humans have been using homing pigeons since Antiquity, but the French military started using them as a communication tool during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 after the Prussians besieged Paris.

In October that year, the interior minister boarded a hot-air balloon to flee the French capital.

Around a month later, the French military had elaborated a messenger pigeon plan to communicate with people still in the city, according to a French government account.

Patriotic Parisians donated more than 300 pigeons to the war effort, which were loaded into the wicker baskets of hot-air balloons and transported southwards to the city of Tours.

Upon arrival they were fitted with small tubes containing 3 to 4 cm (1 to 1.5 inch) of microfilm on which minute messages had been inscribed, called "pigeongrams".

They were then released as close to the capital as possible so they could carry them back inside. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



HERITAGE

An actress performs during a theatrical performance retracing the history of civilisations that occupied the archaeological site of Chellah: Phoenicia, Mauritania, Carthage, Rome and the Islamic Amazigh Marinid dynasty; in Morocco's capital Rabat. — AFP



FILM

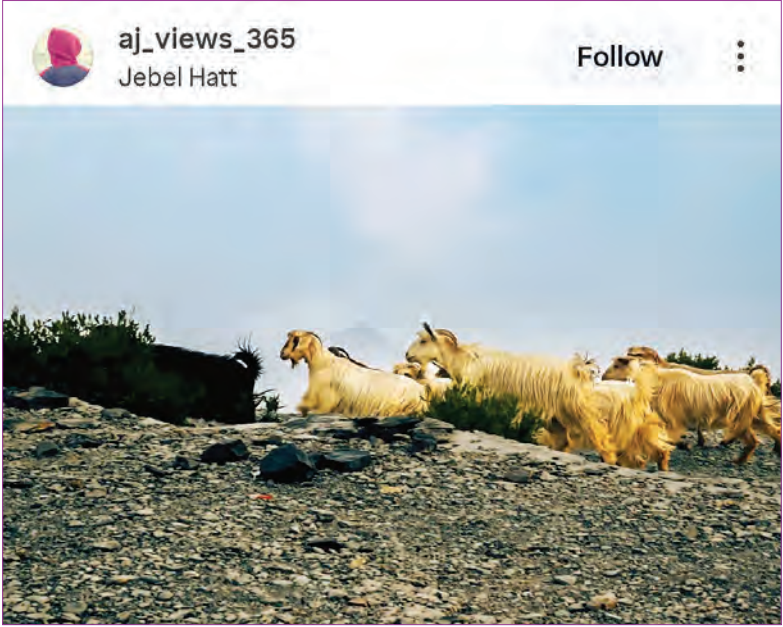
Bollywood actor Ravi Kishan attends the trailer launch of upcoming Hindi-language film 'Son of Sardaar 2' in Mumbai. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

A dancer performs on stage during the closing ceremony of the 59th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (KVIFF) in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Guardians of the Mountain



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Ed Sheeran showcases debut collection of Jackson Pollock-esque art



BRITISH POP star Ed Sheeran has expanded his creative pursuits, trading his microphone for paintbrushes. Later this week, his artwork will go on display at a London gallery, with part of the proceeds supporting music education through the Ed Sheeran Foundation. The collection, titled “Cosmic Carpark Paintings”, features vibrant, Jackson Pollock-inspired abstract pieces, including paintings and prints available for purchase. The works will be exhibited at Heni Gallery in central London from Friday until August 1. Sheeran, 34, known for hits like “Shape of You” and “Perfect”, announced the show on social media, sharing that he worked on these paintings last year during breaks between performances. He posted a video of his process,

showing him splashing bright colours onto canvases with a playful, Pollock-esque style. In his Instagram post, Sheeran explained, “I love painting, mainly for fun and giving to friends, but I was encouraged by Damien Hirst and Heni to showcase them”. He added that his art-making, which he describes as “just splashing colours”, gives him joy, although he doesn’t consider himself a professional artist. Sheeran’s journey into painting began in 2019 after his Divide tour and one of his earlier works served as the cover art for his 2020 single “Afterglow”. His collection draws inspiration from celestial patterns and was painted in a forgotten London carpark, reflecting his ongoing love of creative expression. — AFP



‘Severance’ vs ‘The Pitt’ — it’s Emmy nominations time

DARK sci-fi office drama “Severance”, gritty hospital series “The Pitt” and buzzy teen murder saga “Adolescence” are expected to pile up nominations for this year’s Emmys when the contenders for television’s Oscars are revealed on Tuesday. Nominees will be announced in a live-streamed ceremony starting at 8:30 am (15:30 GMT), after which final-round voting begins for the 77th Emmy Awards, set for September 14. Here are five things to look out for:

INNIE/OUTIE VS ER After last year’s record-breaking 18 Emmys for Japan-set historical epic “Shogun”, this year’s competition looks to be more nuanced. Apple TV+’s “Severance”, in which employees of biotech company Lumon have their memories surgically separated between their “innie” work lives and their “outie” personal lives, looks to be atop most predictions. “It’s a really great show that is going to get... a ton of nominations”, Deadline awards expert Pete Hammond said. “It’ll be stronger than it was” in its first season, added Hammond, who sees star Adam Scott as a sure bet for a best drama actor nod.

“The Pitt” — HBO Max’s take on the travails of a Pittsburgh emergency room team during one 15-hour shift, covered effectively in real time — has won over critics and audiences alike. It stars “ER” veteran Noah Wyle. “It’s ER on steroids!” Hammond quipped. But Wyle’s chances to win for best actor are crimped by Scott and a shortlist of other performers including Oscar winner Gary Oldman in Apple’s dysfunctional spy drama “Slow Horses” or Pedro Pascal in HBO’s apocalyptic video game adaptation “The Last of Us”. In the supporting acting categories, the many stars of “The White Lotus” are expected to earn nominations.

COMEDY CRAPSHOOT In the comedy categories, perennial favourites “Hacks” and “The Bear” are expected to do battle once again. HBO Max’s “Hacks” — starring Jean Smart as a stand-up comedian



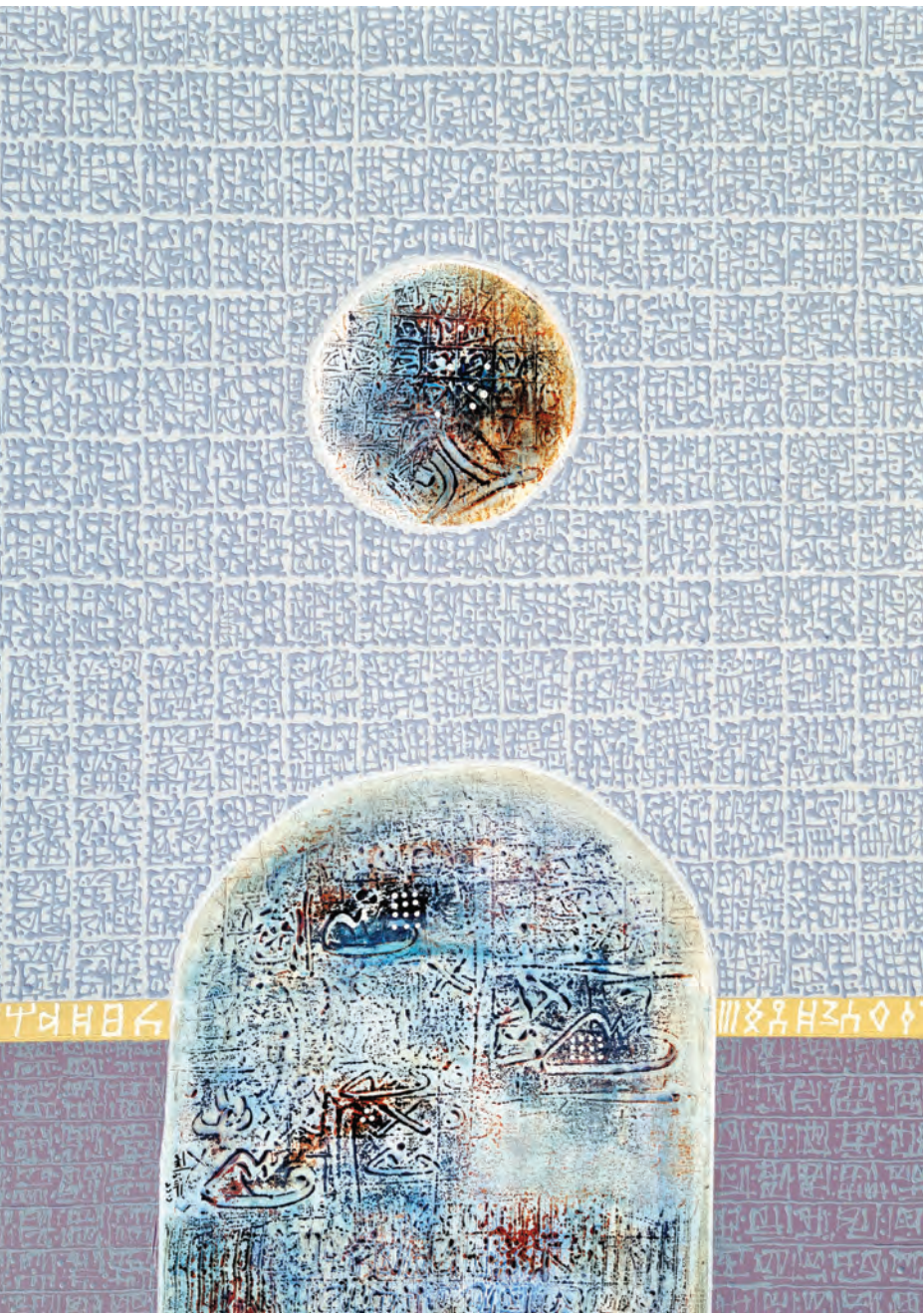
who locks horns with her dysfunctional millennial assistant — won for best comedy and best actress in September last year. “The Bear”, a dark satire set in the Chicago restaurant world, took the top prize at the previous ceremony (held in January 2024 due to Hollywood strikes) and star Jeremy Allen White has two trophies for best actor. “That may be what Academy members will be looking at when they’re actually voting for the season that wasn’t well reviewed”, he said. The comedy juggernauts are also facing a newcomer — Apple’s “The Studio”, a satire that eviscerates the film industry starring Seth Rogen, who also wrote and produced the show. There is nothing Hollywood loves more than a show about...

Hollywood. **IS ‘ADOLESCENCE’ UNBEATABLE?** In the limited series categories, Netflix’s “Adolescence” — which follows the case of a 13-year-old British boy accused of murdering a female classmate — is the wide favourite. “It’s close to a sure thing in terms of getting nominations across the board”, Hammond said, adding: “I don’t see what’s going to come up and beat it in the limited series category”. Breakout young star Owen Cooper is widely expected to earn a nomination for limited series supporting actor and series creator Stephen Graham is a shoo-in for best actor. The four-part series was lauded for its production values, with each episode shot in one take. Another Netflix contender in these categories is “Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story”, a true-crime saga about a pair of California brothers in prison for killing their parents, after what they say was years of sexual and physical abuse. Alfonso Cuarón’s “Disclaimer”, starring Cate Blanchett and Kevin Kline; and “The Penguin”, with Colin Farrell as the comic book villain, are expected to win acting nominations.

BIG DAY FOR APPLE TV+? In recent years, streaming services have led the charge for Emmy nominations, with traditional networks relegated to a handful of nods. With “Severance”, “The Studio”, “Disclaimer” and “Slow Horses”, Apple TV+ could have its best year yet. “Normally we see HBO and Netflix leading the thing”, Hammond said, but he predicted: “Apple is going to have the best year they’ve ever had in terms of nominations”.

FROM NOMINATIONS TO GALA Harvey Guillen (“What We Do in the Shadows”) and Brenda Song (“Running Point”) will unveil the nominations on Tuesday. Voting members of the US-based Television Academy will then have a month to catch up on their viewing before final-round voting begins in mid-August. The September 14 gala will be hosted by comedian Nate Bargatze. — AFP

FEATURES



STAL GALLERY'S SUMMER EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE CONFLUENCE OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND MODERN IDENTITY

BY NAJAH AL RIYAMI

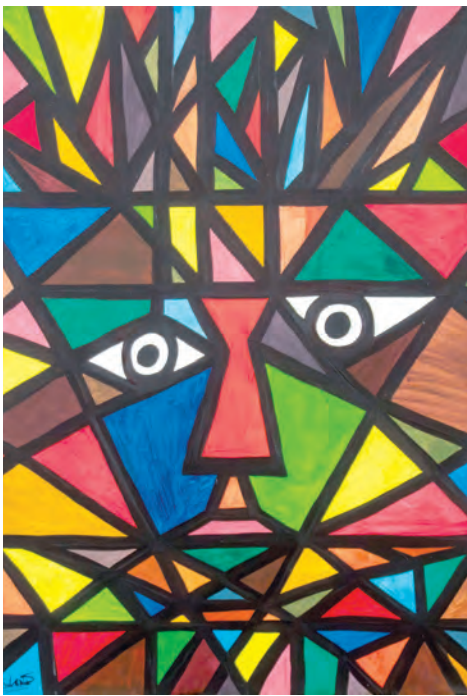
STAL GALLERY & Studio has officially opened its annual summer exhibition, Summer 2025: The Contemporary Perspective, inviting the public into a vibrant conversation about Oman's evolving artistic identity. The exhibition, which runs until 31 August at the gallery's space in Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, showcases works by seven Omani artists — each exploring the complex intersections of memory, place and personal expression.

The exhibition draws from a wide palette of mediums and artistic approaches. From abstract painting and mixed-media installations to textile-based pieces and narrative collages, the works reflect a deeply personal yet collectively resonant engagement with the past and present.

The exhibition explores a cultural moment where Oman's past and present are in constant dialogue. Each artist brings a distinct emotional frequency, shaped by their materials and their relationship to identity, memory and landscape. Together, their voices build a mosaic that speaks not only to the soul of the region but to the universal impulse to preserve and reinterpret who we are.

Among the featured artists is HH Sayyidah Afra bint Talal al Said, whose work is being exhibited at Stal Gallery for the first time. Her debut marks a significant moment, not only in her personal artistic journey but within the larger context of contemporary art in Oman.

In Shades of Oman, she introduces a series of mixed-media



paintings that blend traditional Omani fabrics with the natural motif of palm frond shadows — a familiar sight across the Omani landscape. The layered textures, subtle colour palettes and fabric integrations offer a meditative experience for the viewer. Drawing from her deep connection to nature and the textures of local life, her works move between the physical and the emotional, between what is seen and what is remembered.

HH Sayyidah Afra bint Talal al Said's use of materials is intentional and symbolic. The textiles speak to cultural heritage, while the soft interplay of shadow and colour creates a contemplative atmosphere. Her technique offers a quiet, almost spiritual rhythm. Sayyidah Afra paints not only what she observes, but what she holds within — memories, landscapes and emotions filtered through texture and tone.

Also featured is Anwar Sonya, a pioneering figure in Oman's contemporary art scene. Known for his bold, expressionist style, Sonya revisits the traditional bullfighting rituals of the Wilayat of Al Musannah in the Al Batinah South Governorate, translating the raw energy and cultural symbolism of these events into powerful, colour-saturated canvases. His work serves as a visual archive, capturing a tradition that is both visceral and deeply rooted in Omani heritage.

Idris al Hooti contributes a quietly nostalgic series titled Muttrah Memories, portraying the subtle textures of Muscat's historic district — palm trees silhouetted against fading buildings, quiet streets imbued with memory. His brushstrokes carry a sense of longing, inviting viewers to reflect on spaces that are disappearing or transforming with time.

In contrast, Omani artist Hassan Meer — a pivotal figure in the country's contemporary art scene, with exhibitions both locally and internationally — presents a series of deeply personal impasto paintings that explore themes of identity and metaphysics. Works such as Father and Son; and Omani Women Gathering use thick, expressive strokes to convey themes of family, collective memory and spiritual continuity. Meer's art often delves into the unseen — the emotions

and cultural threads that bind generations together.

Suha Salim, an emerging voice in the Omani art scene, introduces a new cubist-inspired series titled Distraction. Her fragmented compositions explore the mental and emotional fragmentation of modern life. Through sharp angles, layered geometries and disjointed forms, her work examines interiority — what lies beneath the surface of daily experience.

Hussain Obaid, long regarded for his contributions to Oman's contemporary plastic art movement, returns with compositions rooted in ancient Omani visual symbols.

His work layers history with abstraction, inviting viewers to decode motifs drawn from tribal patterns, maritime heritage and desert iconography. His pieces act as bridges — linking the ancestral past with the visual language of today.

Completing the exhibition is the late Moosa Omar, whose final series Hearts of Departed reflects his lifelong engagement with the environment and spirituality. Using jute — a humble material common in Omani crafts — he forms textured, circular compositions that evoke both the physical terrain and the metaphysical. His work is a quiet tribute to memory and loss, grounded in earth tones and tactile presence.

Together, the seven artists offer not only a survey of Omani contemporary practice but a shared meditation on themes of identity, place, and transformation. Through their distinct voices, the exhibition captures a moment in time — one that holds space for tradition while embracing innovation.

The Contemporary Perspective is more than an art show — it's a living archive of how Oman's artists are responding to the world around them. It's about how they remember, how they reinterpret and how they imagine what's next.

The exhibition is open to the public and free of charge until 31 August 2025, at Stal Gallery & Studio, Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos, Muscat.

Visitors are encouraged to experience the full breadth of the works on display — and to engage with the stories embedded in every piece.