

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



These MoUs are designed to define the frameworks for joint collaboration.

OMAN INKS MOUS ON GLOBAL COLLABORATION

BAKU: The National Centre for Financial Information signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Joint Financial Intelligence Unit of Hong Kong (People’s Republic of China) and the Anti-Money Laundering Council of the Republic of the Philippines. This took place on the sidelines of the Egmont Group Plenary Meeting being held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan.

These MoUs are designed to define the frameworks for joint collaboration and coordinate efforts towards the exchange of information, expertise and best practices in the fields of combating money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing.

The MoUs were signed by Colonel Juma bin Mattar al Thuhli, Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Financial Information.

— ONA

STATE COUNCIL TO DISCUSS PROJECTS, STUDIES TODAY



The session will also include a discussion of various studies with special committees.

MUSCAT: The State Council will discuss today, during its tenth session of the third regular annual sitting of the eighth term, the study submitted by the special committee on “Demographics and Their Impact on the Future of Development in the Sultanate of Oman.”

The session will also include a discussion of the study submitted by the special committee regarding “The Agricultural (Plant) Sector in the Sultanate of Oman: Challenges and Solutions.”

Furthermore, the session will include the approval of the minutes of the ninth session of the third regular sitting of the term, in addition to reviewing the Secretariat General’s report on the activities of the Council’s bodies during the past period.

— ONA

18–35 age group accounts for most road violations: ROP

GHALIYAH AL DHAKRI
MUSCAT, JULY 6

Young people aged between 18 and 35 top the statistical indicators in terms of involvement with dangerous driving behaviours, including speeding, not maintaining a safe following distance, faulty lane changes, among others.

This was stated by Brigadier Eng Ali bin Sulayem al Falahi, Director-General of Traffic at Royal Oman Police (ROP). He said that some drivers commit traffic violations such as tailgating, not maintaining a safe following distance, changing lanes improperly and dangerous overtaking. Such traffic violations pose a direct threat to public safety on the road, resulting in fatal road accidents. The Directorate-General of Traffic has intensified traffic patrols and road monitoring to tackle traffic violators.

The Director-General of Traffic said



BRIGADIER ENG ALI BIN SULAYEM AL FALAHI

Director-General of Traffic at Royal Oman Police (ROP)



Some drivers commit traffic violations such as tailgating, not maintaining a safe following distance.

that traffic statistics indicate that young motorists, particularly in the age group 18 to 35, account for the highest percentage of traffic violations and accidents. This age group is associated with certain dangerous behaviours, such as speeding, reckless driving, and improper overtaking.

Al Falahi stressed that motorists’

abidance by traffic laws is essential for regulating traffic flow between vehicles and pedestrians. This contributes to reducing traffic accidents and preventing errors by road users. He pointed out that traffic safety is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation among all segments of society. He explained that

Info Minister, Al Batinah South Governor review projects

AL RUSTAQ: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information and Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, discussed on Monday means of enhancing media work in a manner that contributes to highlighting the historical, cultural, economic and tourism components that the governorate boasts.

The discussions also covered shedding light on the developmental achievements and their impact on the lives of individuals and society across the various wilayats of the governorate.

The meeting, held at the office of



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi and Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi discuss means of enhancing media work.

the Governor of Al Batinah South, addressed boosting media efforts to present a comprehensive image of Al Batinah South Governorate. This is to be achieved by introducing the governorate’s components

and opportunities, highlighting developmental projects and initiatives, and reviewing their impacts on the lives of individuals and society, along with their role in enhancing local development,

thereby boosting societal awareness and keeping pace with the targets of comprehensive development.

The two sides emphasised the importance of providing media content that reflects the governorate’s identity, highlights the uniqueness of its wilayats and their diverse components, and sheds light on the success stories and transformations the governorate is witnessing across various fields. This aims to enhance its media presence and introduce the opportunities and potential it possesses. They exchanged views on topics of mutual interest. — ONA

Kiddy Time adds family focus to Khareef Dhofar

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 6

KIDDY TIME, known in Arabic as Waqt Al Tifl, has opened at Awqad Public Park, adding a dedicated children’s and family space to this year’s Khareef Dhofar programme. The attraction is part of the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026, which runs from June 21 to September 21 and includes 125 cultural, artistic, sporting and entertainment events across Salalah and other wilayats in Dhofar Governorate.

Kiddy Time runs from July 5 to September 5 at Awqad Public Park. The official event listing describes it as a major family and children’s zone designed around educational and entertainment areas, including themes linked to aviation, engineering, sports, talent development, the future and discipline, alongside a children’s theatre, activity areas and restaurant spaces.

The concept gives children more than a conventional play area. It offers a structured space for discovery, role play and practical learning, while giving families another organised evening destination during the monsoon season.

The opening also reflects the phased nature of this year’s Khareef programme. Some activities began with the start of the season on June 21, followed by the Health Garden at Salalah Public Park from June 25. Kiddy Time opened in early July, while other major sites, including Return of the Past in Al Saada and Ateen Square, are scheduled as part of the wider programme.

Dhofar Municipality has said this



The entrance to Kiddy Time at Awqad Public Park, one of the family-focused attractions in this year’s Khareef Dhofar programme.

year’s programme seeks to give each site a clearer identity, with activities distributed across several locations and wilayats. Major venues include Ateen Plain, Ateen Square, Al Murooj Theatre, Salalah Public Park and Awqad Public Park, in addition to companion activities at coastal and heritage locations.

For families, the addition of Kiddy Time is significant because children’s activities are being placed within the main body of the season rather than treated as a side attraction. During Khareef, large numbers of visitors arrive from within Oman and across the Gulf, many travelling as families and looking for evening destinations that are organised, accessible and suitable for children.

Official figures from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism showed that Dhofar’s 2024 Khareef season attracted 1.048 million visitors, underlining the scale of demand placed on accommodation,

transport, public spaces and visitor services during the season.

Visitors say the gradual expansion of activities has added to the appeal of the season. Rashid al Mashrafi, a visitor from northern Oman, said he has been coming to Dhofar almost every year and has seen steady improvements in the area, the organisation of events and the quality of public spaces.

“We come to Dhofar almost every year, and each time there is something new,” he said. “The developments taking place in the area are clear, the events are well organised, and the cleanliness of the sites is good. We thank Dhofar Municipality and all those working behind these activities.”

Khareef gives Dhofar a tourism advantage that is rare in the region. While much of the Arabian Peninsula experiences peak summer heat, the governorate is shaped by the monsoon season, with mist, light rain, green mountains and moderate temperatures attracting visitors to Salalah, coastal sites, wadis and mountain viewpoints. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism describes the season as usually extending from June 21 to September 21.

That natural advantage is increasingly being supported by a more structured events calendar. By combining nature, culture, family entertainment and learning-based activities, Khareef Dhofar is moving beyond a weather-driven season towards a fuller visitor experience.

The challenge for organisers is to maintain quality across a long season and multiple sites. Visitors are advised to check the official daily programme and venue announcements before travelling to event sites.

بنك Dhofar
BankDhofar



Lionel Messi,
Official Mastercard Ambassador

Visit [bankdhofar.com](#)

Limited-edition
Messi Mastercard.

Get your branded card
only in 2026



Get your card today
For more information



EA warns: Don't touch baby turtles

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JULY 6

AS THE sea turtle hatching season begins, the Environment Authority (EA) has urged the public to admire hatchlings from a distance and avoid touching or carrying them, warning that even well-intentioned human interaction can threaten their survival. For most sea turtle species, the peak hatching season falls between July and October. Through a public awareness campaign, the EA stressed that handling hatchlings causes severe stress, increases the risk of injury and germ transmission, and disrupts their instinctive journey to the sea. “Watch them from afar and let them complete their journey on their own,” the authority said. That first crawl to the ocean is a vital part of a hatchling’s life. Scientists believe it helps imprint the beach’s magnetic and environmental characteristics, enabling female

turtles to return to the same shoreline years later to lay their own eggs. According to the EA, hatchlings instinctively view every creature larger than themselves as a potential predator. Being picked up or handled causes extreme stress that can weaken their immune system. Their shells are still soft and fragile, making them vulnerable to injury even from a minor fall. Human hands can also transfer germs or harmful substances that may affect their health. The authority added that handling hatchlings can interrupt their natural orientation towards the sea and reduce the time they need to feed and bask after entering the water, affecting their early development. Visitors are encouraged to observe and photograph the hatchlings from a safe distance, but to avoid touching them and allow nature to take its course. According to the Sea Turtle Conservancy, hatchlings emerge almost exclusively at night. The



For most sea turtle species, the peak hatching season falls between July and October.

cooling of the sand after sunset signals that it is time to hatch, helping them avoid daytime heat and predators such as birds. Working together beneath the sand, the hatchlings dig upwards before bursting from the nest simultaneously in a phenomenon known as a “boil.” At the Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, green turtles nest throughout the year, with the peak hatchling viewing season running from July

to September. Guided tours are conducted at night and dawn under strict conservation guidelines. Visitors are prohibited from using flash photography and may only use the red-light torches provided by guides to avoid disorienting the turtles. Green turtle eggs typically hatch after 50 to 70 days, while the critically endangered hawksbill turtles nesting in the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve emerge after about 60 days. The situation differs on Masirah Island, where nesting beaches stretch for long distances and nesting densities vary considerably. Ghasi al Farsi, Environmental Systems Supervisor for Masirah at the Environment Authority, said: “Sea turtles are now beginning to emerge from their nesting chambers. Hatchling emergence will increase progressively, becoming especially noticeable during August, although numbers remain relatively small for now. Because Masirah’s nesting beaches are extensive and widely

dispersed, emergence rates vary significantly from one beach to another.” He noted that the island experiences its highest levels of hatchling emergence between August and October. The EA also explained that hatchlings rely on several natural cues to locate the sea, including the reflection of moonlight on the horizon, the scent of the ocean, moisture carried by sea breezes, the downward slope of the beach, and an innate instinct that guides them immediately after hatching. The use of white flashlights or mobile phone lights is strongly discouraged because hatchlings navigate using the natural brightness of the horizon over the sea. Artificial white light can confuse them, causing them to crawl inland instead of towards the water, where many eventually die. For this reason, turtle guides use specially designed red lights that do not interfere with the hatchlings’ natural orientation.



MILITARY MUSIC BAND EXCELS IN FRANCE

MUSCAT: The joint Omani military music band on Monday wound up its participation in Albertville International Military Music Festival held in the Republic of France in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the French National Navy. The Omani band thrilled the audience with dazzling musical performances and marching displays at various venues of the Albertville Festival, including the Olympic Hall. The performances reflected the Omani band’s high level of discipline and professionalism. — **ONA**

MSC, Operation Atalanta renew protocol

MUSCAT: The renewal of the coordination and cooperation protocol between the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) and the European Union’s ‘Operation Atalanta’ was signed on Monday at the centre. The renewal of the protocol was signed on behalf of the Maritime Security Centre by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman and Chairman of the Maritime Security Committee. Meanwhile, it was signed on behalf of the EU’s ‘Operation



Atalanta’ by Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva, Operation Commander of the EU NAVFOR ‘Operation Atalanta.’ The signing ceremony was attended by Commodore Abdullah bin Ali al Hajri, Head of the MSC, along with senior officers from both sides. — **ONA**

Mango Festival showcases Omani produce

AMAL AL RIYAMI
MANAH, JULY 6

THE Mango Festival held at the Municipal Park in the Wilayat of Manah concluded its two-day programme last week, organised by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, represented by Al Dakhiliyah Municipality, in collaboration with Mazoon Dairy and several Omani brands. The festival forms part of ongoing efforts to support the agricultural sector, promote locally produced goods, and strengthen agricultural tourism across the governorate.



Featuring 28 exhibition booths, the event brought together mango growers, small and medium enterprises, productive families, and Omani brands. Dedicated spaces showcased a variety of mango types as well as mango-based products, alongside wider displays of local food items and artisanal goods. The booths saw steady

visitor turnout, with many purchasing local produce and food items, reflecting growing public interest in supporting Omani products and strengthening local enterprise. Laila al Shakaili, founder of a pickles and spices business established in 2002 and one of the participants, said such events play a crucial role in promoting local products and connecting producers with consumer bases. She noted her commitment to offering natural, high-quality products, some of which use authentic Omani olive oil sourced from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
INNA LILLAHI WA INNA ILAIHI RAJI'UN

With deep sorrow, the management and all employees of EIDC Family mourn the passing of our colleague,



Hisham Harib Hamed Al Mahruqi

On behalf of all EIDC employees, we extend our deepest sympathy and condolences to his family and loved ones.

May almighty Allah grant the departed soul eternal peace and give strength to his family during this difficult time.

SPOTLIGHT

PROTECTING CHILDHOOD IN THE DIGITAL AGE

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

SOCIAL media has become deeply embedded in children’s daily lives, serving as a platform for learning, communication and entertainment. While it offers significant opportunities for development and engagement, experts warn that unregulated use also raises concerns related to mental health, digital safety and academic performance.

In response to these evolving challenges, a Royal directive to establish guidelines for children’s use of social media reflects the Sultanate’s proactive approach to safeguarding young users while ensuring they benefit from rapid digital transformation. The initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises building a digitally aware and future-ready generation.

The debate, experts say, is no longer about whether children should use social media, but how they should use it safely and responsibly. Technology professionals and educators note that while digital platforms open doors to learning and skill development, they also expose children to risks such

“Regulation alone is not enough. Children must be empowered with the knowledge, critical thinking and digital skills needed to navigate an increasingly connected world safely and confidently.”

ENG ANISA BINT JUMA AL MASKARI
Network specialist, certified technical trainer

ROYAL DIRECTIVE SEEKS SAFER AND MORE RESPONSIBLE SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG CHILDREN

EXPERTS ADVOCATE DIGITAL LITERACY, PARENTAL GUIDANCE AND BALANCED SCREEN TIME

MENTAL HEALTH AND CYBERSECURITY RISKS UNDERLINE NEED FOR STRONGER AWARENESS

INITIATIVE SUPPORTS OMAN VISION 2040 BY NURTURING RESPONSIBLE DIGITAL CITIZENS

technology-driven future. Government institutions continue to strengthen awareness programmes targeting parents, teachers and students, focusing on cyber safety, privacy protection and responsible online behaviour. These efforts are designed to build a culture of awareness that extends beyond schools into households and communities.

Mental health specialists caution that excessive use of social media can contribute to increased anxiety, stress and social isolation among children. They also point to the risk of reduced concentration, declining academic performance and disrupted sleep patterns linked to prolonged screen exposure.

Digital security experts, meanwhile, warn against sharing personal data online or interacting with unknown accounts. They emphasise that parental supervision and awareness remain the first line of defence against online exploitation, fraud and harmful content.

Professionals across sectors agree that outright restriction is not a practical solution. Instead, they advocate for structured and balanced use of digital platforms. This includes setting clear time limits for device usage, monitoring content exposure, encouraging offline activities and promoting family interaction.

Such regulation, they say, helps children develop healthier habits while also strengthening real-world communication skills and family bonds. Participation in sports, cultural and social activities is encouraged as an essential counterbalance to screen time.

With rapid advances in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, the concept of the ‘digital citizen’ is gaining prominence. Experts say the goal is no longer just to create technology users, but to nurture individuals who can contribute to innovation, knowledge production and problem-solving in a digital economy.

Ultimately, the Royal directive is seen as a long-term national investment in building a digitally literate generation. By combining protection with empowerment, Oman aims to prepare young people to meet future challenges while contributing to a knowledge-based society and innovation-driven economy.

as cyberbullying, misinformation, excessive screen time and privacy breaches.

Eng Anisa bint Juma al Maskari, a network specialist and certified technical trainer, said the directive reflects a forward-looking vision aimed at protecting children in digital spaces. She stressed that the next phase requires clear policies and structured frameworks that maximise benefits while reducing potential harm.

“What is important now is not only regulation, but also empowerment,” she noted, adding that children must be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate digital environments safely and confidently.

Experts highlight that Oman’s approach stands out for balancing protection with empowerment. Alongside safety measures, there is a growing emphasis on digital literacy, critical thinking and innovation, ensuring that children are prepared to participate meaningfully in a



Recall

LEXUS

ES300h, ES350, LS500, LX500d, LX600
RX350, RX500h, RX450h, RX350L, RX450hL

RECALL DATE: 07/07/2026

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	#Number of Affected Commodities
ES300h, ES350, LS500, LX500d, LX600 RX350, RX500h, RX450h, RX350L, RX450hL	2019-2023	2266

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
#Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

The subject vehicles are equipped with headlamps containing Adaptive High Beam System (AHS) LED units, which optimize the illumination area of the headlights according to the driving environment. A reflector is spun by a motor to distribute the illuminated area and magnify the intensity of the AHS LED chips. Due to residual cutting oil from the manufacturing process and high internal temperatures in the headlamp, the reflector may develop cracks over time and detach from the motor. If this occurs, a warning message will be displayed, and the AHS function and High Beams will turn off. If the High Beam is operated manually, the High Beams on both sides will turn on. In certain vehicles, due to some system differences, the High Beam located on the side of the broken AHS LED will not turn on.

Recall Action

To carry out the inspection / replacement as advised by the manufacturer.
This Campaign is set to expire on October 31, 2026



To check the serial number of the affected items, please visit the local and warning website by scanning the QR code.



سعودية رحوان SAUDI RAHWAN

Contact details: Toll free - 80073000
Working days: Sunday - Thursday
Working Time: 8:00 - 17:00 hrs



www.80073000

Consumer Protection Authority
80079009 • 80077997 خط المستهلك

الرقم: 093-03 SOP

الناشر: 2025

الصدار: 04

SHORT TAKES



Applicants will be notified of their assigned healthcare facility and the scheduled appointment for treatment.

ZAKAT TREATMENT INITIATIVE ENTERS SECOND EDITION

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Waqf Health Foundation ‘Athar,’ launched the second edition of the Zakat-Eligible Treatment Initiative within the private healthcare sector. As of today, the initiative begins accepting treatment applications from zakat-eligible individuals registered with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, with the application window remaining open until August 20.

Applications are to be submitted via the dedicated registration link on the electronic platform of the MoH’s health portal, designed to enable zakat beneficiaries to enrol in the initiative and access the therapeutic services provided through it. Alternatively, applications may be filed through the Zakat Committees operating in the wilayats under the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

All registration applications will be cross-checked against the official lists of zakat-eligible individuals maintained by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Approved applications will then be forwarded to the MoH to be matched against surgical waiting lists and diagnostic imaging backlogs.

Applicants will be notified of their assigned healthcare facility and the scheduled appointment for treatment. — ONA

FUTURE LEADERS 2026 PROGRAMME LAUNCHED



AL RUSTAQ: The activities of the ‘Future Leaders 2026’ programme, now in its fourth edition, were launched in Al Batinah South Governorate, bringing together 90 outstanding students from grades 7 to 9 across various schools.

Organised by the Career Guidance and Student Counselling Centre at the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, the week-long programme is being held at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah.

The initiative aims to foster entrepreneurial and innovative thinking among students through a series of training sessions and interactive activities designed to develop skills in idea generation, planning, teamwork, communication, and decision-making. Participants will undergo five structured modules covering problem identification, idea development, solution design, prototype building using AI applications. — ONA

Omanis embrace new holiday destinations this summer

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JULY 6

Travel agencies across Oman are witnessing strong demand for summer holidays as easing geopolitical tensions and the peak vacation season encourage more people to head overseas. While traditional favourites remain popular, a growing number of travellers are exploring emerging destinations, seeking authentic cultural experiences, nature, and greater flexibility in planning their holidays.

“A perfect destination in my eyes is one that gives me a new perspective on life, one that feels like a fresh breath of air,

allowing me to come back home as a new person,” said Dr Zahra al Marhali.

According to Isa al Harthy, a retired airline manager, tour operator and tour guide, popular destinations this season include Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Istanbul, Zanzibar, Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Kerala in India has also emerged as a favourite, with one group of Omani women recently travelling there together.

Group travel continues to gain popularity, especially among first-time or hesitant travellers.

Salem Hassan, who is currently holidaying in Bosnia and Herzegovina, said he has been captivated by the country’s

scenic landscapes and historic architecture.

“I am enjoying the scenic nature and the historic buildings that showcase the traditional architecture,” he said.

For Nasser al Kindi, Zanzibar remains the ultimate getaway.

“Zanzibar is currently my favourite destination. I fell in love with it from the very first time I visited. Its breathtaking coastline is simply extraordinary,” he said.

He highlighted Paje on Zanzibar’s east coast as a paradise for water sports enthusiasts, where the refreshing Indian Ocean breeze and occasional summer showers create an unforgettable

atmosphere.

With direct flights from Muscat, he believes Zanzibar offers the perfect short-haul escape for those looking to unwind in a tropical setting.

Fimitha Ibrahim, founder of Trips on Maps, said travel habits among Omanis have undergone a significant transformation since the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Travel is no longer viewed as an occasional luxury but has become an important part of many families’ lifestyles. During the 2026 summer, we are seeing strong demand for both traditional and emerging destinations, with travellers looking for authentic experiences,” she said.

FAO lauds beekeeping success in food security drive

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 6

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has praised Oman’s beekeeping sector as a model for strengthening food security, sustainability and rural economic development, while commending the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for its strategic leadership.

The recognition came at the conclusion of the project, ‘Strengthening the Capacities of Small and Medium Enterprises for Sustainable and Economic Beekeeping in the Sultanate of Oman,’ implemented in collaboration with the ministry and Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO).



The project was done in collaboration with the Ministry and OMIFCO.

Speaking on the sidelines of the closing ceremony, Dr Thaer Yaseen, FAO Representative in Oman, described the initiative as a model of effective collaboration between the government, the private sector and international organisations.

“This project is not merely a development initiative; it is a strategic investment in Oman’s food security and food sovereignty,”

he said. Held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture, the ceremony marked a significant milestone in Oman’s efforts to promote sustainable agriculture and strengthen national food systems.

Among the project’s key

achievements were the development of the first scientific specification for Omani honey, the launch of a dedicated digital platform, and the publication of a comprehensive Honey Guide. These initiatives are expected to enhance product quality, strengthen market competitiveness, and create new opportunities for investment and exports.

Dr Yaseen said the project has laid the foundation for a modern, innovation-driven beekeeping sector through capacity building, skills development, national quality standards and digital transformation.

“Investing in beekeeping has proven to be a strategic decision that enhances food security, supports economic diversification and strengthens the competitiveness of national products,” he said.

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 6

THE Waai Initiative, under the Nature Conservation Society of Dhofar (under formation), has urged visitors to exercise caution at beaches, coastal viewpoints and rocky cliffs during the Khareef season, as thousands of tourists and families flock to Dhofar’s natural attractions.

The initiative said the sea remains a defining feature of Khareef, but warned that monsoon winds, drizzle, high humidity and slippery coastal terrain can make beaches and cliffs hazardous.

Waai stressed that its awareness campaign is part of a year-round effort to promote environmental responsibility and public safety, with seasonal risks varying across Dhofar’s natural landscapes. During Khareef, the focus is on coastal and cliff safety, while post-season concerns include fire risks and vegetation protection.

Officials noted that rescue and monitoring teams are active during the season, but emphasised that visitor responsibility remains essential. They cautioned against swimming in unsafe or restricted areas, approaching cliff edges, climbing slippery rocks, or leaving children unattended near water bodies.

Abdullah Bahashwan of the initiative said the sea is dynamic and should not be assumed safe at all times, adding that simple actions can quickly lead to dangerous situations in changing coastal conditions.



Waai urges the public to follow warning signs and official instructions.

During Khareef, the focus is on coastal and cliff safety, while post-season concerns include fire risks and vegetation protection

He said the campaign is not intended to discourage tourism, but to ensure visitors enjoy nature safely and responsibly, stressing that awareness and compliance with safety instructions are key to preventing accidents.

The initiative also highlighted coordination with Dhofar Municipality, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, and meteorological guidance, noting that Khareef conditions such as drizzle, cloud cover and cold-water upwelling significantly affect coastal safety.

Media adviser Amer al Amri said effective awareness campaigns must explain risks clearly to influence behaviour, particularly during Khareef when photography and social media trends often encourage risky positioning near waves and cliffs.

Waai urged the public to follow warning signs and official instructions, avoid unsafe swimming areas, supervise children, and respect natural conditions, stating that the success of the Khareef season depends on both enjoyment and responsible conduct.



الشركة العمانية للاتصالات ش.م.م
Oman International Telecommunication Co., LLC

SALE OF UNUSED SURPLUS STOCK

Oman International Telecommunications Co. LLC (OHIL Telecom) invites contractors, traders & buyers for purchase of surplus warehouse stock including:

- Copper Coils/Tape , Copper Rods, Electrical cables, lugs, glands & connectors.
- Cable trays, GI Trunking & accessories.
- PVC/UPVC pipes & construction materials.
- Tools, safety equipment & industrial consumables.
- Paints, chemicals & general hardware.

☒ Available in **Unused good condition**

☒ **Bulk buyers preferred**

☒ Sale on **"As-is, Where-is"** basis

 **Location:** Misfah, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

 **Contact:**
Rajneesh B – 98046366  rajneesh@ohilecom.com

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



First responders inspect the wreckage of a car reportedly targeted by an Israeli strike in Nabatieh. — AFP

LEBANON SAYS ISRAELI STRIKE ON SOUTH KILLS 4

BEIRUT: Lebanese state media said an Israeli strike on a car in the country’s south on Monday killed four people, including three women, despite a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. Lebanon’s official National News Agency (NNA) said a school principal, her mother, a foreign female domestic worker and a male Syrian worker were killed when an Israeli drone targeted their car as they returned from inspecting their family home in Nabatieh al Fawqa.

Israel has kept up intermittent strikes on south Lebanon, particularly in the Nabatieh area, despite the two-week-old truce, usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah sites and operatives. Both sides accuse the other of violating the ceasefire.

Lebanon’s President Joseph Aoun said on Monday that Israel’s occupation was preventing the Lebanese army’s deployment to the south. A statement from his office said he emphasised the need to pressure Israel to withdraw because “the occupation undermines the legitimacy of the (Lebanese) state and prevents the army from deploying, and the laying of foundations for achieving a just and lasting peace”. — AFP

IMPEACHMENT TRIAL OF PHILIPPINE VP DUTERTE OPENS



Philippine Senate President Sherwin Gatchalian presides during the trial at the Senate of the Philippines in Pasay, Metro Manila. — Reuters

MANILA: The impeachment trial of Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte opened on Monday with prosecutors casting the case as a test of accountability and public trust, while the defence denounced it as a politically driven bid to unseat an official elected by more than 32 million people. The results of the high-stakes proceedings could help to shape the 2028 presidential race. The trial, the first against a sitting Philippine vice-president, began with a display of the divisions that have roiled the Senate in recent months. Duterte allies and rival lawmakers clashed over procedural rules, including the election of the presiding officer, which delayed the start of proceedings.

Duterte is accused of misusing public funds, amassing unexplained wealth, bribery and corruption and threatening President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the first lady and a former House speaker. Opening the prosecution’s case, Congresswoman Gerville Luistro said the allegations were “not four separate stories” but “four chapters of the same story” - a story of “public trust betrayed” and “public office that stopped answering to the public.” — Reuters

AT LEAST 330 CHILD CASUALTIES IN SUDAN THIS YEAR, SAYS UN

KHARTOUM: The war in Sudan between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has killed or injured at least 330 children in the first six months of 2026, the United Nations’ children’s agency said on Monday. The figures include more than 200 children killed and at least 100 maimed, mostly in the Kordofan and Darfur regions. Children “are being killed and injured in their homes, on the roads, in markets, and while attempting to access essential services such as education and healthcare”,

Unicef’s Sudan chief Sheldon Yett said. Since April 2023, the war between the former allied forces has killed tens of thousands, with aid workers estimating that more than 200,000 people have been killed. At an effective stalemate, both sides have relied extensively on drone strikes, which have killed more than 1,000 people this year alone and account for 60 per cent of child casualties in the Kordofan region, according to Unicef.

The UN has raised a “red alert” that the RSF is preparing to mount a deadly

offensive on the city, threatening half a million people. It has voiced fears that there could be a repeat in El Obeid of atrocities committed during the RSF’s October 2025 assault on the city of El Fasher, which a UN inquiry found bore “the hallmarks of genocide”. “Any further deterioration could expose even more children to death, injury, displacement and other grave protection risks,” Unicef said. Across Sudan, five million children are internally displaced, according to UN figures. — AFP

Millions gather as Khamenei funeral procession begins

VAST crowds gathered for the funeral procession of Iran’s slain supreme leader Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Monday, with authorities estimating millions were on the streets in numbers that could rival those of his predecessor’s farewell nearly four decades ago. Authorities have yet to give an official turnout figure, but AFP images showed huge numbers stretching along major boulevards in the Iranian capital.



A vehicle carrying the coffins of Iran’s late supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and members of his family makes its way as people attend a funeral procession in Tehran. — Reuters

Tehran’s airspace was closed on Monday as the country stood still to remember the former leader. Mourners marched through the streets waving the flags of Iran. The ceremonies offer Iran an opportunity to project resilience after five weeks of war with the United States and Israel, although attention remains focused on Khamenei’s successor, his son Mojtaba Khamenei, who has not appeared in public since taking power. After lying in state for two days at Tehran’s Grand Mosalla religious complex, the body of Khamenei began its journey through the capital accompanied by massive crowds. Flower petals covered the coffin as it made its way along the streets.

Khomeini’s farewell killed more than 10 people and injured over 10,000. “If I am to compare this ceremony to that one, I can say they are not different at all. But the crowd this time seems more enthusiastic,” said Gholamreza Khanabaei, 58, attending the procession.

Tehran’s airspace was closed on Monday as the country stood still to remember the former leader. Mourners marched through the streets waving the flags of Iran.

Others gathered in Imam Hussein Square in eastern Tehran and hanged an effigy of US President Donald Trump, according to state

media. Former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was seen attending the procession, according to local media. In sweltering heat, trucks sprayed mourners with water to cool them, while organisers handed out Iranian flags and pictures of Ali and Mojtaba.

The procession route covers around 20 kilometres. A day earlier, thousands had filled the Grand Mosalla to pay their respects to Khamenei and four family members killed in the Israeli air strikes, which were based on US intelligence. Massive concrete walls at the complex separated the public from the coffin to prevent stampedes. — AFP



SRI LANKA PRISON CLASHES LEAVE 25 DEAD

COLOMBO: Twenty-five people were killed and about 100 injured as security officials struggled to contain two days of clashes between rival groups of inmates at a prison in Sri Lanka, authorities said on Monday, marking the deadliest such violence in years. The clashes began on Sunday between more permanent, convicted prisoners and those under temporary detention at the prison in the coastal town of Negombo, about 35 km north of the commercial capital city of Colombo, authorities said.

The prison holds about 2,400 inmates, according to data from the Department of Prisons. Two prisoners died on Sunday and 38 inmates were injured. But a second, more deadly round of clashes erupted on Monday morning, leaving 23 others, including six prison officials, dead. Police riot control squads armed with batons and police special forces were rushed to the prison to control the riot. A police bus carried the injured inmates, some of them sprawled on its floor, to hospital. — Reuters

UNDER THE DEBRIS

Deadly building collapse kills 6 in Mumbai



Six people, including five children, were killed when a building collapsed in Mumbai as monsoon rains pounded India’s financial capital, flooding roads and leading to school closures. A dilapidated residential building collapsed in the megacity’s east, trapping residents under the debris, Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde said. The deaths came as heavy rainfall paralysed parts of the city, with the India Meteorological Department recording more than 200 millimetres of rain. — AFP

SEVERE WEATHER

Hundreds evacuated as rains batter China



Typhoon Maysak brought heavy rains and severe flooding to China’s southern Guangxi region, with authorities on Monday raising flood alert levels as the system weakened into a tropical storm. Officials in Nanning, Guangxi’s capital, raised the city’s flood control emergency response to the highest level after torrential rain breached dams. Videos on Monday showed ferocious torrents of muddy water gushing through a breach in a dam on the Liulan reservoir. — AFP

COORDINATED OPERATIONS

Morocco prevents attacks by cell loyal to IS



Morocco’s counterterrorism agency said it had foiled attack plots targeting sensitive sites and public security by a cell loyal to IS affiliate in the Sahel. Ten suspects were arrested in coordinated operations in the cities of Agadir, Taroudant, Casablanca, Hajeb, Tetouan, Fqih Ben Salah and Safi, the agency said. Preliminary investigations showed that the suspects received direct instructions from the group’s Sahel branch to carry out attacks in Morocco. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



A car lies overturned after being flipped by strong winds brought by Typhoon Bavi in Guam. — AFP

PACIFIC TYPHOON CAUSES DAMAGE BUT NO CAUSALITIES

WASHINGTON: Authorities in the Northern Marianas and Guam reported extensive damage including fallen trees and downed power lines after a super typhoon with the force of a category-five hurricane hit the US Pacific territories. No casualties had been reported as of early evening, although with treacherous conditions throughout much of the day hindering clear-up operations, a full picture was yet to emerge.

Worst hit was the small island of Rota, hit by the full force of Super Typhoon Bavi with winds of up to 180 miles (290 kilometres) per hour, knocking out power, water and communications for many of its 1,500 people. A spokeswoman for the Rota Municipal Operations Center, Lou Rosario, said that there had been reports of “major damages”.

The National Weather Service had warned before that a direct hit by Bavi would make most of Rota “uninhabitable for weeks, perhaps longer”. The island of Tinian, northern parts of Guam and the southern tip of Saipan experienced winds equivalent to a category-one hurricane, NWS meteorologist Marcus Landon Aydtlett said. On Guam, journalists saw downed trees, fallen streetlamps, debris strewn over roads and at least one car flipped over by the wind. — AFP

COLOMBIA 'S PETRO PUBLIC FAREWELL



Outgoing Colombian President Gustavo Petro said he plans to give a public farewell on July 20, as he called for mass protests and the continuation of social reforms. “I invite you this July 20th to accompany the public movement, and after their parade to hear my farewell as the head of state of Colombia,” Petro said. “We will not do it on August 6th or 7th, it’s a tragic date. We will do it on July 20th in every public square in Colombia,” Petro added. Petro also called for the “general mobilisation to shout for independence and the continuation of social reforms” that same day. — AFP

UTAH PROSECUTORS SEEK TRIAL IN CHARLIE KIRK MURDER CASE

PROVO: Prosecutors were due to begin laying out their case arguing a Utah man should stand trial in last year’s killing of Charlie Kirk, the conservative activist credited with energising young voters behind Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election. During the week-long preliminary hearing, prosecutors must convince District Court Judge Tony Graf in state court in Provo that probable cause exists to believe Tyler Robinson, 23, fired the single shot that killed Kirk, 31,

on September 10, 2025. The influential conservative was appearing at Utah Valley University in Orem, 65 km south of Salt Lake City, for one of his campus debates that drew crowds and propelled him to national prominence. If the judge finds probable cause, Robinson would enter a plea at an arraignment that could take place the same day, and the case would be set for trial at a later date. He faces seven criminal charges including aggravated murder.

Prosecutors have said they would seek the death penalty for Robinson, who was studying to be an electrician and turned himself in to police the day after the shooting. Kirk’s killing, captured in graphic cellphone video that spread widely on social media, followed a series of attacks targeting US political figures in recent years and fuelled debate over political violence in a deeply polarised country. Lawyers for Robinson are likely to highlight ballistics testing. — Reuters

UK jet fighters intercept Russian plane near carrier



A British Royal Navy F-35B fighter aircraft on board HMS Prince of Wales in the Norwegian Sea. — Reuters

A RUSSIAN patrol aircraft staged “unsafe” activity near the UK’s flagship aircraft carrier as it conducted Nato air defence operations off Iceland, Britain’s defence ministry said on Monday. The Bear-F plane “repeatedly approached” the carrier group last week, passing the HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carrier “unnecessarily close” at low altitude and dropping numerous sonar devices nearby, according to the ministry.

Two UK F-35 warplanes were dispatched from the carrier to intercept and escort the patrol plane until it departed, it added. “This activity was unsafe and unprofessional,” an ministry spokesperson said of Thursday’s incident in the Norwegian Sea in the so-called High North. The allegations emerged as the ministry said Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis and Icelandic Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir had visited HMS Prince of Wales over the weekend.

The Royal Navy carrier is leading the group on a mission to defend the North Atlantic “against increasing Russian threats”, according to the ministry. The mission has seen F-35 jets conduct Nato air defence operations from a European aircraft carrier for the first time, and comes amid heightened tensions with Russia.

Military experts and European leaders say Russia has ramped up its “hybrid war” tactics in the strategic region. “We live in an increasingly dangerous and uncertain time, and it’s deployments like this, supported by allies and partners including Iceland, that improve our deterrence and defence as part of Nato,” Jarvis said in a statement.

In the statement, Gunnarsdottir added the deployment was “a clear demonstration of Nato’s enhanced presence in this strategically

Two UK F-35 warplanes were dispatched from the carrier to intercept and escort the patrol plane until it departed. The mission has seen F-35 jets conduct Nato air defence operations from a European aircraft carrier for the first time, and comes amid heightened tensions with Russia.

important region”. Jarvis only took up his post less than a month ago after predecessor John Healey quit, accusing the government of failing to commit enough money in a modernisation plan to protect Britain.

The shock resignation prompted further last-minute wrangling for extra money for the 10-year Defence Investment Plan. Outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled the plan last week, announcing the government was aiming to spend almost £300 billion over the next four years. The proposals see an extra £15 billion being pumped into defence spending up to 2030, the year by which UK intelligence has suggested Russia could attack a Nato country. But it fell far short of the reported £28 billion the MoD had requested.

Meanwhile, Russia fired missiles and drones into apartment buildings in Kyiv for the second time in a week on Monday, killing at least 14 people on the eve of a crucial Nato summit, authorities said. President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the alliance to take “strong decisions” on boosting Ukraine’s air defences following the strike, which came

just days after another Russian attack killed more than 30 people in Kyiv. The European Union also said that Ukraine needs air defence reinforcements.

The morning strike punched a crater into a multi-storey apartment block in the Ukrainian capital, ripping its top floors into two. Reporters heard more than 10 explosions during a ballistic missile alert during the night, with flashes in the sky as the blasts rang out. It was the second attack in a week in which Russia deployed the hard-to-intercept ballistic missiles — triggering Zelensky’s desperate new appeal for allies to send advanced missiles for the US-made Patriot air defence systems.

He is to discuss the war with US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the Nato summit in Ankara, which begins on Tuesday. “It is critically important that the world — first and foremost the United States and our European partners — come out of the Nato Summit in Ankara with strong decisions in support of our air defence, and thus the protection of ordinary people’s lives,” he said on social media. — AFP

Europe’s new wave of raging wildfires force thousands to flee

PARIS: Wildfires across southern Europe forced thousands of people to flee their homes and prompted authorities to ban spectators from Tour de France stage that was threatened by one inferno. Hundreds of firefighters are battling blazes that have devastated more than 20,000 hectares of land — an area nearly three times the size of Manhattan — across Portugal, Spain, France, Greece and other countries. The fires are spreading as temperatures rise again — already reaching 43°C in Spain — in a continent still scarred by the aftermath of heatwaves in May and June that have been blamed for thousands of deaths.

Scientists agree that climate change driven by humans burning fossil fuels is increasing the risk

and severity of heatwaves and other extreme weather phenomena. Some 10,500 people were told to evacuate their homes near Perpignan in southwestern France as firefighters battled a blaze in the Pyrenees that has devoured more than 4,600 hectares, authorities said.

“The fire came within 300 metres of the houses. We were taken aback by how fast it spread, it was staggering — bordering on panic,” said Patrice, a 53-year-old resident of the village of Trevillach, who did not give his surname. “We started seeing smoke around 10:30 pm, then it kept coming closer and closer. Someone from the town hall knocked on our door around 1:00 am to tell us to leave,” said Charlotte Pignol. “The smell of smoke was overwhelming,”



A French Civil Security firefighter walks on a road next to a wildfire near Ille-sur-Têt, southern France. — AFP

added the 30-year-old. Authorities said third stage of the Tour de France cycle race through the Pyrenees would take place without the thousands of spectators who normally line the route. The 196-kilometre stage sees the race cross the border from

Spain into France. But only riders and their team vehicles will be allowed on the route. Regional prefect Pierre Regnault de la Mothe told reporters: “I regret having to say this, it will be, in France at least, a stage of the Tour de France without spectators.”

Three hundred French firefighters struggled to control another fire in a mountainous district of the southeastern Drome department.

In Greece, flames set off by a forest fire tore through two factories in Thessaloniki in the north of the country, forcing authorities to evacuate the surrounding area and to warn households to keep their windows closed. A fire that threatened the tourist beaches of the Costa Brava in northeastern Spain burned more than 2,200 hectares in two days and was still being fought. Rising temperatures in Spain fuelled fears of more blazes. The thermometer reached 43°C in Andalusia and Extremadura on Sunday.

In Portugal, emergency services said they had controlled a wildfire that

devastated some 13,000 hectares of forest and scrub land in a northern district. Four Portuguese regions remained on a heat alert on Monday however. Elsewhere, major fires also destroyed hundreds of hectares of forest, vineyards and scrub land on the Croatian island of Hvar and at Tale in Albania, authorities said.

Europe recorded record-breaking temperatures during a severe heatwave in June which would have been “virtually impossible” without climate change, the World Weather Attribution group of scientists said. France said there had been more than 2,000 extra deaths than usual in just one week, while Spain and Belgium each reported more than 1,000 “excess” deaths. — AFP

OPINION

Why most innovation departments fail before they start



DR MARYAM TUBEILEH

The author is an Innovation Governance Adviser & Strategist, and Founder of Oman's first boutique innovation management consultancy

A few months ago, I received two calls within weeks of each other. Two different people, two different organisations, two different sectors. But the same story. Both had just been appointed to lead their organisation’s innovation department. Both were sharp, motivated, and genuinely excited. And both had been handed the same task by their directors: develop a vision for what the department should be, what it should stand for, and how it should operate. Neither knew where to begin. I was not surprised. Because the moment I heard their situation, I understood the real problem — and it had nothing to do with their capability. Their organisations had created an innovation department, expecting it to innovate. And that is precisely where everything goes wrong. Let me explain with something familiar. When an organisation establishes a quality department, nobody expects that department to do the work better than everyone else. The quality team does not manufacture the product or deliver the service. What it does is far more important — it sets the standards, builds the framework, governs the process, and ensures quality is embedded across every function. It supervises. It audits. It holds the system accountable. The innovation department works exactly the same way. It is not there to generate ideas.

It is not there to run the creative sessions or build the prototypes — though it may oversee those who do. Its role is to govern how innovation happens across the organisation. To set the strategy. To define the process. To ensure that innovation activity is aligned with strategic goals and that value is actually realised at the end of it. Under an innovation department may sit an innovation lab — a space for rapid experimentation and prototyping. Or an innovation centre — a broader hub for collaboration, research, and ecosystem engagement. These are the execution arms. The department governs them. That distinction is fundamental and almost universally misunderstood across our region. Which is why those two directors, well-intentioned as they were, had unknowingly set their newly appointed leaders up to fail. They had hired someone to lead a governance function and then asked them to present a vision for a creative studio. The brief was wrong before the person even started. So when I spoke to both of them, my first question was not about structure or headcount or activities. It was this: what is the strategic purpose of this department — what can it deliver that no other function in your organisation already can? Both lines went quiet. That silence is not a personal failure. It is a system failure. It happens when organisations appoint innovation leaders without first

You cannot design an innovation department until your leadership has agreed on what innovation means for your organisation, what strategic problem it is meant to solve, and what governance role it will play in making that happen

answering the question themselves. And without that answer, every decision that follows — the team, the structure, the budget, the activities — is built on sand. Here is what I believe, and I hold it firmly: you cannot design an innovation department until your leadership has agreed on what innovation means for your organisation, what strategic problem it is meant to solve, and what governance role it will play in making that happen. That conversation belongs in the boardroom — before the appointment is made, and long before anyone starts drawing org charts. So if you are a leader preparing to establish an innovation function, start with three questions. What strategic problem are we unwilling to leave unsolved? What would success look like in three years — measured in impact, not activity? And what decisions will this department govern that no other function currently owns? Answer those first. Then appoint. Then build. The organisations that get this right do not have innovation departments that run events and produce reports. They have innovation functions that shape strategy, govern processes, and hold the organisation accountable for turning ideas into impact. The people leading them are not expected to be the most creative in the room. They are expected to be the most accountable.

BRITAIN ‘FAILED BY ITS LEADERSHIP FOR A LONG TIME,’ : VANCE

NICK LESTER

Britain is ‘amazing’ but has been “failed by its leadership for a long time,” US Vice-President JD Vance has said. The churn of prime ministers in recent years indicated “something is very broken about British politics and that people are really crying out for significant structural change”, according to the White House second-in-command. Speaking to The Sunday Times, Vance also acknowledged he could be ‘provocative’ in his comments but that they were made “from a perspective of love and admiration”. He said he does not know Andy Burnham, currently in line to be the UK’s seventh prime minister in 10 years with the departure of Keir Starmer, but that the US will work with whoever is leader “as successfully as we can”. The interview with Vance was published as the US celebrated the 250th anniversary of America’s independence from Britain on July 4. Vance, whose wife Usha studied at Cambridge University, told The Sunday Times: “I have a special affection for Britain. “If I’m being honest, I think, as much as I care about it for reasons of mutual interest - and American alliances - I also just care about it because Britain feels more culturally familiar to me than any country on Earth, aside from my own.” Expressing concern over the revolving door at Downing Street, Vance said: “What I see is six prime ministers in the last few years. “What that says to me is that something is very broken about British politics and that people are really crying out for significant structural change. “I hope that Andy Burnham, and if not Andy Burnham, somebody else, is able to deliver it. Because Britain is such a beautiful country, such an amazing place.” However, he said the country had “been failed by its leadership for a long time.” Of Starmer’s likely successor, whom Donald Trump has branded ‘extremely liberal’, Vance said: “I don’t know a lot about Andy Burnham. “Obviously, Britain is one of our closest and most important allies. So whoever is the prime minister, we’re going to work with them and work with them as successfully as we can.” The vice-president has previously sparked controversy by his remarks about the UK. Last month, Vance said there should be ‘righteous anger’ in response to the murder of student Henry Nowak in Southampton. — dpa

Why Oman needs AI data centres now more than ever

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence is no longer a future ambition — it has become the engine of economic growth, government innovation, industrial productivity, and digital competitiveness. As nations race to establish their AI capabilities, one reality is becoming increasingly clear: AI cannot thrive without robust digital infrastructure, and at the heart of that infrastructure are AI Data Centres. For Oman, this presents a unique strategic opportunity. Over the past decade, Oman has made remarkable progress in digital transformation. Significant investments have been made in telecommunications, submarine cable connectivity, cloud services, cybersecurity, and smart government initiatives. These achievements have created a strong digital foundation. The next logical step is to develop world-class AI Data Centres capable of supporting the country’s growing AI ecosystem. Unlike conventional data centres, AI Data Centres are purpose-built for high-performance computing. They require advanced GPU clusters, resilient power infrastructure, efficient cooling systems, ultra-low-latency connectivity, and specialised operational expertise. These facilities are becoming national strategic assets, enabling countries to develop sovereign AI capabilities while attracting international technology investment. Oman possesses several competitive advantages that position it well to become a regional AI infrastructure hub. Its strategic geographic location connects Asia, Africa, and Europe through one of



DR SALEH AL KHALDI

The writer is a telecom and digital transformation executive with vast experience in the ICT sector

Growing international partnerships, increased investor interest, and advanced digital infrastructure demonstrate that Oman is well positioned to participate in the next wave of global AI development



the world’s busiest digital corridors. The country enjoys political stability, modern telecommunications infrastructure, expanding renewable energy potential, and an investment-friendly business environment. Combined, these factors create an attractive destination for global technology companies seeking reliable AI infrastructure in the Middle East. Beyond infrastructure, AI Data Centres can generate significant economic value. They attract foreign direct investment, create high-value employment opportunities, stimulate technology transfer, encourage local innovation, and support the growth of startups and research institutions. Universities will gain access to advanced computing resources for AI research, while government entities and private enterprises will benefit from secure, locally hosted AI services that comply with national data governance requirements. Equally important is the concept of digital sovereignty. As governments and businesses increasingly rely on AI to process sensitive information, maintaining critical workloads within national or regional infrastructure becomes an essential component of

cybersecurity, resilience, and long-term digital independence. However, building successful AI Data Centres requires more than physical infrastructure. It demands close collaboration between government, regulators, investors, utilities, technology providers, academia, and international partners. A clear national strategy, supported by progressive regulatory frameworks and sustainable energy planning, will be essential for long-term success. Encouragingly, Oman is already moving in this direction. Growing international partnerships, increased investor interest, and ongoing discussions around advanced digital infrastructure demonstrate that the country is well positioned to participate in the next wave of global AI development. The question is no longer whether Oman should invest in AI infrastructure. The real question is how quickly Oman can transform its strategic advantages into a regional leadership position. The countries that build AI infrastructure today will shape tomorrow’s digital economy. Oman has both the vision and the opportunity to become one of them. The time to build AI Data Centres in Oman is now.

How memory, gaming and balance shape the mind



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

Is it enough to just have conversations and read books to keep the mind sharp? Al Wadi Al Kabir used to have a building with a structure of a pencil. Everyone called it the ‘Pencil Building.’ It was a tall pencil indeed. I am not sure when it came up — the 80s or the 90s. If you were in Oman during that period, you would recollect the building.

The digital map had not made its debut then, and that meant people described the routes with specific street numbers and names but, most importantly, the roundabouts and building names.

Gen Z may not remember the frankincense burner roundabout in Al Wadi Al Kabir, which was a busy place with traffic then. It made the transition to a traffic light.

But the funny part is that our ‘Pencil Building’ is still referred to as that, even though the lean, tall pencil is not visible anymore. It was only recently, as an ode to the landmark, that we went past the building, and to my surprise there was a smaller pencil on the wall of the building.

It is shorter, but it is there. So we can still call it the pencil building. These memories are a comfort to the mind.

The mind is a phenomenon. It can also become a bit too comfortable at times, and this is why I felt playing a few games on the mobile might keep the brain agile. But I also like winning, and just when I was beginning

to wonder if I was getting obsessed with winning, I went on a holiday and came across a couple who were blue-collar employees. The husband has not been feeling well lately, and the wife was managing the household expenses. But the usually understanding husband was beginning to have mood swings. She noticed he had begun to spend a lot of time on his mobile phone. One day, he confessed that he was stressed out because he had started to play a mobile game with money and that he had lost money. But he assured his wife that he would win the total amount. The debt grew, and one fine morning, the wife broke the phone.

So mobile phone games that were meant for the brain have become antisocial elements.

A friend of mine said the current trend is that one continues to play so well until they reach a top score and is able to sell the account to whoever comes up with the highest bid. What began as entertainment for the brain is actually beginning to bring in monetary benefit. But it is beginning to have consequences for the mind.

Now came another friend, who said his teenage son, who was into video games, is enjoying the benefits of his skills by implementing them in the college projects.

Recent American Psychological Association (APA) research indicates that video games provide immersive cognitive, social, and emotional experiences. Studies

Action games specifically are tied to faster reaction times and heightened visual processing speeds, functioning as training engines for the brain

highlight benefits, including brain health benefits of video games like enhanced problem-solving, stress relief, and improved spatial skills, provided play is balanced with other lifestyle habits.

Research published by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) demonstrates that children who play video games regularly can show superior neurocognitive performance in areas like memory and attention.

Action games specifically are tied to faster reaction times and heightened visual processing speeds, functioning as training engines for the brain.

Meanwhile, a Boston University study found that immersive gaming serves as an effective medium for stress management and emotional regulation— “By letting players tackle escalating challenges and overcome failure in a controlled environment, games build resilience and offer a mood boost.”

To top it all, I came across two other friends on the same day of the discussion engrossed in a game of chess.

They asked, Do you play? I replied no and said I like carroms.

“Ah,” one of the friends shrugged and said it doesn’t use a brain.

I disagreed in support of the carrom board game and said it has strategy.

And I remembered how the elders in the family used to get concerned if the games lingered on.

Everything is about finding the balance.

REVIVAL HOPES GROW FOR LONG-CLOSED SEMINARY OFF ISTANBUL

FULYA OZERKAN

Hopes are growing that a long-closed Greek Orthodox seminary on an island off Istanbul could reopen soon, with formulas for its new status under discussion, Bishop Aravissu Kassianos Nikolar said.

Located on Heybeliada, one of the Princes’ Islands, the Halki seminary opened in the mid-19th century and was the main theological school for the Eastern Orthodox Church until it was closed under a Turkish law in 1971.

Despite decades of pressure on Ankara to reopen it - led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, leader of the world’s 260 million Orthodox Christians and a graduate of the seminary - the school has remained closed.

But the seminary made headlines in September when US President Donald Trump raised the issue with Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, raising hopes the deadlock could soon be broken.

“At this stage, we are making quite good progress overall. Things are positive at the moment, 100 per cent positive,” the bishop said in a rare interview just days before Trump was to fly in on his first official visit to attend the July 7-8 Nato summit.

Perched on a hill, the historic seminary was shrouded in scaffolding, the sprawling complex undergoing extensive renovation ahead of its eventual reopening. As well as the seminary, the site incorporates a monastery and a high school, although it too has long sat empty.

Inside, a team saw the renovation work in full swing ahead of what the patriarch had said would be a September deadline for it to be completed.

What brought about its closure was a 1971 court ruling that all private educational institutions must come under state control - a decision rejected by the patriarchate as it wanted to preserve the seminary’s independence. But after years of closure, the patriarchate has agreed to accept a formula that would let the seminary reopen, operating under Turkish oversight.

Renewed interest in the site was sparked in 2024 when Türkiye’s Education Minister Yusuf Tekin visited and spoke of the importance of preserving the building’s original character in any renovation.

He also conveyed a message from Erdogan that a solution had to be found to reopen the institution.

“That kicked off negotiations with Ankara,” Nikolar said, with plans for its reopening gaining real momentum after last September’s White House talks. The initial proposal was to reopen the seminary as a university operating under Türkiye’s Higher Education Board (YOK).

That later evolved into the idea of establishing an institute offering post-graduate theological training over a two-year period that would be affiliated with a Turkish university, and a quota of 60-70 students.

The latest talks in Ankara last month were attended by Erdogan and Patriarch Bartholomew, said Nikolar, who was also present. — AFP

Don’t get misled about AI, stop freaking out



ZEYNEP TUFEKCI

The author is a professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University

Generative AI, as it currently exists, cannot easily replace humans because it cannot manifest human intelligence

responds to your earnest query with wild hallucinations — it’s not an aberration. It’s the technology working the way it was designed.

And that’s why I’m not listening to the dark predictions of an imminent AI jobspocalypse. Large language models can do many things with astounding proficiency, but they can’t do the vast majority of human jobs without skidding into disaster here and there. No upgrades or new model rollouts are going to change that.

The exceptions to that rule are jobs that occupy formal or verifiable domains. Coding is one such job. It relies on a structured, formal language that can be tested in real time. That’s why we’re seeing such an impact in the coding jobs market. The same goes for any other kind of work in which output is either verifiably right or wrong, functional or not functional, and can be definitively checked through an automated process.

An overwhelming number of jobs, however, don’t work like that — not surgeon jobs and not customer service jobs and not fourth-grade teacher jobs. Those need the specialised technology of good old-fashioned human intelligence.

Before the current version of AI flooded into our lives, almost all our public conversations about what it would look like — in science fiction, in philosophy, in policy debates — assumed that it would be symbolic: a rule-based system made possible by a detailed road map of our precise design. Plenty of people tried to build something like that, but those efforts hit a wall. Our current models are connectionist systems, made possible by vast amounts of data and computing power. They generate answers based not on truth or reasoning, but on probable connections among the data they have been fed. Hence the name: generative AI.

We can’t fully control generative models. All we can do is train them up and then try to nudge them in the right direction. Even then, we can never be sure if our nudges will work the way we want them to, because we

don’t entirely understand how these models work. They are black boxes.

One way we try to nudge them is reinforcement through feedback. Large teams of humans are assembled to monitor all the model’s outputs and respond with a thumbs-up or thumbs-down. So, answering a user’s query with helpful, straightforward information? Thumbs-up. Thumbs-down. And so on. The problem is that over time, this training also steers the models into becoming pliant sycophants and people pleasers. “That’s a great point, Zeynep.” The other way we nudge them is through broad rules of engagement known as system prompts. “Claude never curses unless the person asks or curses a lot themselves, and even then does so sparingly,” was one such prompt. But the true meaning of language is as open to interpretation for AI models as it is for humans. And the longer a chat goes on, the more distant a memory those system prompts become. Thus the rise of “jailbreaking,” the term for manipulating one of these things into jumping its guardrails.

Anthropic recently released new models, called Fable and Mythos, warning that they were so powerful that they would be dangerous if not for their safeguards. Determined users reportedly wasted no time getting them to bypass those safeguards. Citing this breach, the US government barred foreigners (even foreign employees of the company) from using these models. In its defence, Anthropic argued that there are no such things as insurmountable guardrails. Which is exactly the point.

As the evidence mounts that terrible answers and jailbreaks are an inevitable part of the technology, the industry’s focus has lately shifted to building digital cages, essentially more deterministic, symbolic harnesses to contain the generative AI engine and check its results. Tools like this could, in theory, make most human jobs work more like coding or other fields with clear, provable outcomes.

— The New York Times



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



NEYMAR SAYS
CAREER WITH
BRAZIL ‘OVER’
AFTER LOSS
TO NORWAY

NEYMAR IS BRAZIL'S TOP INTERNATIONAL SCORER WITH 80 GOALS, SURPASSING PELE'S RECORD.

HE DEBUTED IN AUGUST 2010 AGAINST THE USA, SCORING HIS FIRST GOAL IN THAT SAME MATCH.

HE CAPTAINED BRAZIL TO THEIR FIRST-EVER OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL AT THE RIO 2016 GAMES, SCORING THE DECISIVE PENALTY.

HE HAS SCORED IN FOUR DIFFERENT WORLD CUPS 2014, 2018, 2022 AND 2026, A RARE ACHIEVEMENT.

HIS PRIMARY SENIOR TITLE WITH THE NATIONAL TEAM IS THE 2013 CONFEDERATIONS CUP, WHERE HE WAS NAMED THE TOURNAMENT'S BEST PLAYER.

NEYMAR'S legendary career for Brazil is over, the forward said following the 2-1 loss to Norway in the round of 16 game on Sunday. The 34-year-old was emotional in an interview with TV Globo as he was in tears at the conclusion of the match in East Rutherford, N J, where he scored Brazil's lone goal on a penalty kick in stoppage time. "I tried, I tried. Now it's over. I started here, I finished here," Neymar said. He had made his first international appearance for Brazil in a friendly against the United States on April 10, 2010, at MetLife Stadium, the same venue as on Sunday, and scored in his debut. Neymar, if he indeed retires from suiting up for Brazil, finishes as the country's all-time leading scorer with 80 goals. The legendary Pele, who recorded 77, was the only Brazilian in four World Cups before Neymar matched him on Sunday. Cafu had 142 appearances for Brazil, with Neymar's 130 second on the all-time list. Neymar's previous goal for Brazil came in 2023, the last time he played for the national team. Injuries have played a major part as he tore his ACL in 2023 and missed Brazil's first two group-stage games at the 2026 World Cup because of a right calf injury. He entered as a substitute and played 15 minutes against Scotland on June 24 and came on the field in the 67th minute for the match on Sunday against Norway. — Reuters

Brazil's forward Neymar reacts after losing the 2026 World Cup round of 16 football match between Brazil and Norway. — AFP



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



Mexico's Edson Alvarez and Brian Gutierrez look dejected after the match as Mexico are eliminated from the World Cup. — Reuters



AGUIRRE BIDS
FAREWELL WITH
PRIDE, BACKS
MARQUEZ TO LEAD
MEXICO FORWARD

JAVIER Aguirre backed Rafa Marquez to lead Mexico into the future after the co-hosts' World Cup run ended with a 3-2 defeat by England on Sunday, bringing the curtain down on Aguirre's third spell in charge.

Aguirre, who had already made clear he would leave his role after the tournament, said former Mexico captain Marquez was ready to continue the work done with a squad that restored belief during the country's deepest World Cup run in 40 years.

England booked their place in the quarter-finals after surviving a late Mexico push at the Azteca Stadium, where the home side fell short despite a spirited fightback.

"I would have liked to say goodbye to my people with a victory. That hurts," Aguirre told reporters. "We tried."

Jude Bellingham's quick-fire double put England in control before Julian Quinones pulled one back for Mexico. Harry Kane added a second-half penalty after England had been reduced to 10 men, and Raul Jimenez's late spot-kick was not enough to prevent Mexico's exit.

"The players need to leave with their heads held high," Aguirre said. "Today it could not be. We failed to capitalise, but I want to thank them all."

The match, delayed by one hour because of adverse weather around the Azteca, was played in front of a passionate home crowd that Aguirre has often described as Mexico's "12th player".

The fans roared Mexico on in the closing stages, chanting "yes we can" as the co-hosts pushed for an equaliser, but England held firm to advance to a quarter-final against Norway in Miami on Saturday.

Aguirre said he was leaving with pride despite the pain of elimination, pointing to the unity of the squad and the renewed connection with supporters.

"I leave with a lot of pride," he said. "These players made me very happy. We recovered the sense of belonging and the identity of this team."

Marquez, who captained Mexico at five World Cups and worked alongside Aguirre during the tournament, is expected to take the project forward after the veteran coach's departure.

"I wish him the best," Aguirre said. "He is more than capable, and he will do better than me." — Reuters



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



Mohamed Salah.



Lionel Messi.

BATTLE HARDENED
ARGENTINA, EGYPT SET
FOR LAST-16 CLASH

ARGENTINA and Egypt head into their World Cup last-16 clash on Tuesday in Atlanta with little time to recover after both survived gruelling physical tests in their first knockout matches. Reigning champions Argentina needed extra time to edge World Cup debutants Cape Verde 3-2 on Friday, while Egypt endured 120 minutes before defeating Australia 4-2 in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw. The quick turnaround has raised concerns for both teams, but particularly for Argentina, whose previously flawless campaign showed signs of vulnerability for the first time. After cruising through the group stage, Lionel Scaloni's side struggled to impose themselves against Cape Verde, prompting debate over whether the performance was an isolated stumble or evidence of weaknesses that opponents can exploit. "What worries me now is that there are only four days to rest, travel, many players were suffering from cramps, and now you play Egypt, who are also a very physically strong team. I think they have a little more quality at the front than Cape Verde," former striker

Sergio Aguero said on ESPN Argentina. Lionel Messi admitted after the Cape Verde match that he was tired and lamented Argentina's inability to press their opponents high up the pitch. Egypt are likely to draw encouragement from the way Cape Verde troubled the South Americans. The North Africans relied heavily on their defensive organisation and looked to Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush to launch counter-attacks against Australia, an approach they could employ again against the holders. For Egypt, a fully fit Salah could be crucial after the forward entered the Australia match with a hamstring concern and at times appeared reluctant to sprint at full speed during a draining 120-minute contest. Argentina, meanwhile, have publicly maintained their cautious tone. "It will be a very difficult match," midfielder Leandro Paredes said. "We are at the elite level of football and all national teams are very good and physical." The winner of the match in Atlanta will face Switzerland or Colombia in Kansas City on July 11. — Reuters

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,581.558

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$63.84
BRENT \$71.96
LIGHT \$68.58



United Solar closes \$1.6 bn funding

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 6

UNITED Solar Polysilicon has completed a \$1.6 billion capital raising for its polysilicon manufacturing project in Sohar after securing the financial close of a \$50 million equity investment from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank Group.

The investment marks the final tranche of funding for the Middle East's largest polysilicon manufacturing facility and reinforces Oman's ambitions to become a global hub for clean energy manufacturing under Oman Vision 2040.

The company said IFC has now arranged and mobilised more than 30 per cent of the total project financing, underscoring international confidence in United Solar's governance, environmental and social standards, traceability and long-term commercial viability.

United Solar's 100,000-tonne-per-year polysilicon plant, located in SOHAR Port and Freezone, began operations in January 2026 and is



IFC has now arranged and mobilised more than 30 per cent of the total project financing.

expected to reach full production capacity by the end of the year.

The facility produces high-purity polysilicon, the key raw material used in the manufacture of solar photovoltaic (PV) cells and modules.

The company said the investment also strengthens its position as a Foreign Entity of Concern (FEOC)-compliant

supplier, providing fully traceable polysilicon to leading global solar manufacturers.

The designation is particularly significant for customers in the United States and other advanced markets, where sourcing requirements for clean energy supply chains have become increasingly stringent.

United Solar said its production

base in Oman, combined with the Oman Investment Authority's (OIA) position as its largest shareholder through Future Fund Oman, offers manufacturers access to a diversified and transparent supply chain that supports eligibility for clean energy incentives.

"The closing of IFC's investment completes our approximately \$1.6 billion capital raise and is a powerful endorsement of United Solar's standards, governance and long-term commercial strength," said Binyam Giorgis, Group Chief Financial Officer of United Solar Holding.

"With the backing of the World Bank Group, and on the foundation laid by the Oman Investment Authority, we are delivering world-class, fully traceable polysilicon that tier-one manufacturers need — and doing so as an FEOC-compliant producer they can rely on as they build resilient, diversified supply chains," he added.

The IFC said its investment reflects confidence in the project's contribution to sustainable industrial development and economic diversification in Oman.

"This equity investment completes our landmark

support for the Middle East's largest and only operational polysilicon manufacturing facility," said Ulyana Dovbush, IFC Regional Industry Manager for Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Services in the Middle East, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, this investment will help create thousands of jobs, attract foreign direct investment, accelerate economic diversification, and strengthen the role of the private sector in driving sustainable growth beyond oil," she said.

At full capacity, the Sohar facility is expected to produce enough polysilicon annually to support the manufacture of around 40 gigawatts of solar modules, sufficient to generate electricity for up to 12 million homes worldwide. The project is also expected to avoid an estimated 8.8 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

United Solar Holding said the project will create nearly 3,000 direct and indirect jobs while strengthening Oman's position in the global renewable energy supply chain and supporting the country's long-term industrial diversification strategy.

National critical minerals strategy vital for Oman: Report

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 6

Oman should adopt a comprehensive national strategy for critical minerals to safeguard its energy transition ambitions - a move that could create around 4,000 skilled jobs, and unlock between \$8 billion and \$12 billion in cumulative economic value over the next decade, according to a new policy paper published by the Majan Council.

The study by the Muscat-based think-tank argues that while Oman has made significant progress in renewable energy and green hydrogen development, the success of its long-term energy transition will depend as much on securing supplies of critical minerals as on deploying clean energy technologies.

Titled 'The Mineral Reality of the Energy Transition: Why Oman Needs a Strategic Shift', the report warns that the Sultanate of Oman's ambitious plans for solar, wind and green hydrogen projects will require growing volumes of industrial materials and strategically important minerals, many of which are sourced through highly concentrated global supply chains vulnerable to geopolitical shocks and price volatility.

"The success of Oman's energy transition will depend not only on deploying clean technologies, but on building the material and industrial systems that



The success of Oman's energy transition hinges on developing the material and industrial foundations needed to sustain them: Report

sustain them," the paper states.

The report contends that Oman faces a strategic choice. Continuing to rely primarily on imported technologies would expose the country to supply-chain risks while limiting domestic economic benefits.

Conversely, developing local capabilities in mineral processing, advanced manufacturing and circular industrial systems could significantly enhance economic resilience while supporting the country's clean energy ambitions.

The authors estimate that an integrated strategy linking energy planning with mineral development, industrial policy and workforce development could generate jobs and economic value through expanded mineral processing, manufacturing and resource recovery industries.

According to the study, Oman possesses several competitive advantages that position it to become a regional hub for critical minerals and green industrial development.

These include direct access to the Arabian Sea outside the Strait of Hormuz; an extensive mineral concession area of around 131,500 square kilometres — of which only about 35 per cent has been allocated to operators — well-established industrial hubs at Sohar, Al Duqm and Salalah; ambitious renewable energy and green hydrogen programmes; and a Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

The report argues that these assets provide the foundation for developing domestic mineral processing industries, manufacturing components for clean energy technologies, and integrating industrial clusters around the country's major energy hubs.

Among its recommendations is the development of a dedicated national critical minerals strategy that integrates mineral resource planning with renewable energy deployment, industrial policy and investment promotion.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Site Visit	Grade	Tender Price (ر.ع.م)
NESC/2026/016-2	Design and Execute the external parking area of Nama Electricity Supply Company - Muscat	12/07/2026	21/07/2026	13/06/2026	Specialist	26.250

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



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/71235/7
records@supply.nama.om | www.supply.nama.om



BUSINESS FEATURE

Situated at an elevation of roughly

1,130

metres above sea level, it will interact with the lower Wadi Dayqah reservoir to create a gross hydraulic head of approximately 940 metres.

The Jabal Abyad system is designed to deliver 2 GW of installed capacity and around

17.9 GWh

of energy storage, enabling continuous electricity generation for up to nine hours at full output.

With a total storage capacity of approximately

100

million cubic metres, it provides a robust and strategically valuable foundation for pumped storage operations.

70%

of total project expenditure would remain within Oman

OMAN'S MEGA
PUMPED HYDRO
BET: INVESTING
IN A 100-YEAR
ENERGY ASSET

CONRAD PRABHU

A new upper reservoir planned atop Jabal Abyad is emerging as the defining engineering feature of Oman's landmark 2-GW Pumped Hydro Energy Storage (PHES) project, a development poised to become the largest energy storage facility in the Middle East and one of the region's most strategically significant renewable energy infrastructure investments.

Led by a consortium comprising EDF Power Solutions, ONEIC — Takhzeen and Green Universe Enterprise, the project harnesses one of the Arabian Peninsula's rarest geological advantages: a dramatic elevation differential between the existing Wadi Dayqah Dam reservoir and the adjacent Jabal Abyad plateau.

This natural configuration provides the foundation for a large-scale pumped storage system capable of transforming Oman's renewable energy integration capacity.

According to project details presented by EDF, the new upper reservoir will form part of a closed-loop pumped storage system with an active water volume of approximately 8 million cubic metres (8 hm³).

Situated at an elevation of roughly 1,130 metres above sea level, it will interact with the lower Wadi Dayqah reservoir to create a gross

hydraulic head of approximately 940 metres, placing the scheme among the highest-head pumped storage projects globally.

This elevation difference is central to the project's technical and economic rationale. In pumped hydro systems, hydraulic head determines how much energy can be stored and retrieved per unit of water.

The higher the head, the greater the energy yield, allowing large-scale electricity storage with comparatively modest water volumes.

As a result, despite its relatively compact active storage volume, the Jabal Abyad system is designed to deliver 2 GW of installed capacity and around 17.9 GWh of energy storage, enabling continuous electricity generation for up to nine hours at full output.

The operating principle is based on shifting excess renewable energy from daytime to nighttime use.

During periods of excess solar photovoltaic production — typically midday — electricity will be used to pump water from the Wadi Dayqah reservoir through underground tunnels up to the upper reservoir on Jabal Abyad.

When demand peaks in the evening or renewable generation declines, the stored water will be released back downhill through reversible pump-turbines, generating electricity almost instantaneously.



Image for illustration purpose only. Generated by AI

STRATEGIC USE OF EXISTING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

According to Dr Yves-Laurent Beck, Senior Business Developer — Hydropower Projects at EDF Power Solutions Middle East, a key distinguishing feature of the project is its reliance on existing national infrastructure.

The lower reservoir is formed by the Wadi Dayqah Dam, one of Oman's most important water assets, originally constructed for flood protection and groundwater recharge.

With a total storage capacity of approximately 100 million cubic metres, it provides a robust and strategically valuable foundation for pumped storage operations.

By utilising an existing reservoir rather than constructing a new lower basin, the project significantly reduces civil engineering requirements, environmental disturbance and capital expenditure, he said.

Speaking during a recent webinar titled “EDF’s Unique Experience in Pumped Storage Hydropower Development in the Middle East”, Dr Beck said a major engineering hallmark of the Jabal Abyad project is the decision to house the generating station within a large underground cavern excavated into the mountain mass.

This cavern will accommodate multiple reversible pump-turbines, transformers and associated electromechanical systems. This underground configuration delivers multiple advantages.

It reduces the project's surface footprint, enhances environmental integration and provides operational protection from Oman's harsh climatic conditions. It also leverages the region's geological stability, a critical requirement for large-scale underground hydropower infrastructure.

A central point in his analysis was the importance of hydraulic head.

The approximately 1,000-metre elevation differential between the two reservoirs enables exceptionally high energy density. This means that relatively small volumes of water can generate large amounts of electricity, significantly improving project efficiency and reducing spatial requirements.

He explained that this allows the project to achieve large-scale energy storage with only 8 million cubic metres of active water volume, underscoring the efficiency benefits of high-head systems.

Dr Beck also highlighted the use of variable-speed pump-turbines, a relatively recent technological advancement in pumped hydro systems. Unlike conventional fixed-speed machines, variable-speed units allow for a wider operating range and improved responsiveness to grid fluctuations.

This capability is particularly important in systems with high shares of solar energy, enabling smoother integration of intermittent generation and improving grid stability. The technology also enhances operational flexibility, allowing the plant to respond rapidly to changes in electricity demand.

LONG-TERM NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET

Beyond its technical attributes, Dr Beck described the Jabal Abyad project as a long-term strategic asset for Oman, with an operational lifespan potentially reaching 100 years. Pumped storage facilities typically require relatively low maintenance once constructed and offer lower lifetime operating costs compared to gas-fired peaking plants.

He further estimated that around 70% of total project expenditure would remain within Oman, reflecting the civil engineering-intensive nature of pumped storage projects.

This includes dam works, tunnelling, underground construction and associated infrastructure, generating significant in-country value, employment and local contractor participation.

Once completed, the Jabal Abyad PHES project is expected to become the largest pumped hydro facility in the Middle East, playing a pivotal role in enabling Oman's transition toward a more flexible and low-carbon electricity system, he added.

SHORTTAKES

GLOBAL INVESTORS EXPRESS STRONG CONFIDENCE IN GULF ECONOMY: SURVEY

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 6

Global investor confidence in the Gulf remains robust despite ongoing regional tensions, with more than eight in ten investors expressing confidence in the region's economic outlook and a majority expecting the GCC to play a significant role in fostering regional peace, according to a new multinational survey by Consulum and HarrisX.



JAMES DAVIES
Chief Executive
Officer of Consulum

The survey, which polled 2,043 investors across the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and China, found that international investors continue to view the Gulf as a resilient and attractive investment destination.

According to the findings, 82 per cent of respondents expressed confidence in the Gulf's future economic prospects. Confidence was strongest among investors in China (91 per cent), followed by the United States and the United Kingdom (84 per cent each), Germany (80 per cent) and France (71 per cent).

Nearly seven in ten investors (69 per cent) also rated the Gulf as either a good or excellent place to invest or conduct business.

"The international investment community sees the Gulf's economic story as one of sustained momentum", said James Davies, Chief Executive Officer of Consulum. "Investors are not reacting to a geopolitical moment – they are making a long-term judgement on the strength and resilience of what the GCC has built".

The survey also indicates growing recognition of the Gulf's expanding role in the global economy. Seventy per cent of respondents believe the GCC's economic importance will continue to increase over the next five years. Among them, 32 per cent believe Gulf countries should participate directly in negotiations, while 39 per cent favour the GCC acting as facilitators behind the scenes.

Dritan Nesho, CEO, HarrisX, said investors broadly support a negotiated agreement that incorporates regional perspectives and helps ensure safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. He noted that most investors remain optimistic that diplomatic efforts will ultimately succeed.

World absorbs historic Iran war oil supply loss

THE world has absorbed with surprising ease the loss of over a billion barrels of oil supply since the Iran war began, but, with long-term peace elusive and buffer reserves now drained, it still faces the looming risk of future price spikes.

Tehran's throttling of the Strait of Hormuz in response to the US and Israeli attacks launched on February 28 fed fears of a catastrophic global energy crunch.

The ensuing four-month conflict did, indeed, create the biggest energy disruption in history, according to the International Energy Agency. At its worst, the headline supply loss was 14 million barrels per day.

But worries that Asia and Europe would run out of gasoline, diesel or jet fuel never materialised. And after peaking around \$126 per barrel in April – still some \$20 below the 2008 record – benchmark Brent oil prices are now lower than they were when the conflict began.

"This suggests traders viewed the disruption as serious but manageable, reflecting confidence in today's more resilient energy and economic systems", said John Baffes, senior economist at the World Bank.

Since the oil crisis of the 1970s, World Bank data shows that oil intensity – a measure of the role oil plays in economic activity – has fallen by more than half in most advanced economies and roughly 20% in emerging and developing countries.

Beyond that structural shift, however, three specific factors have been responsible for forestalling the worst-case



A 3D-printed oil pump jack and oil barrels are placed on dollar banknotes in this illustration picture. — Reuters

scenario during the Gulf crisis. Saudi Arabia and the UAE found alternative routes to export. Asia, led by China, curtailed buying. And countries around the world likely pulled around 1 billion barrels of oil from their reserves, including via an IEA-led record stocks release.

CHINA ADJUSTMENTS EASE GLOBAL PRESSURE
When the war broke out China had nearly 1.4 billion barrels of oil stored, according to the US Energy Information Administration. That was more than the 1.2 billion barrels held by all of the 32 members of the IEA combined, including the United

States' 413 million barrels. China's rapid electric vehicle adoption in recent years along with flexibility in oil and petrochemicals output also helped, said Ilia Bouchouev, of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. "They are managing the market a lot better than (the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) used to", said Bouchouev, a former head of derivatives trading at Koch Global Partners. The adjustments by China, the world's biggest oil importer, helped ease global demand pressure. And the IEA's scheme to release 400 million barrels of reserves provided further breathing room at a time when

US President Donald Trump was repeatedly stating an end to the war was imminent. "Traders always took the view this can't go on much longer", said Neil Atkinson, a former IEA official. Washington's narrative management, that more supply was coming, also made hedge funds reluctant to hold long positions that bet on prices rising, Societe Generale analysts noted. With the signing last month of a preliminary agreement to end the war, there has been a rapid swing back towards business as usual. "The market seems to have decided that this peace deal is for real", Atkinson said. — Reuters

Oil falls after Opec+ agrees to raise output targets

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Monday after Opec+ agreed to further increase its output targets from August while exports from key producers via the Strait of Hormuz are recovering, potentially adding to global supplies.

Brent crude futures fell 41 cents, or 0.57%, to \$71.96 a barrel at 09:42 GMT after settling 0.45% higher on Friday. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$68.58 a barrel, down 37 cents, or 0.54%. There was no settlement for WTI on Friday as US markets were closed ahead of the Independence Day holiday on Saturday.

Both contracts were little changed last week after mostly falling over the past few weeks, as investors kept a close eye on talks between the US and Iran over the fate of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz while



An Iraqi worker operates valves in Nihran Bin Omar field north of Basra, Iraq. — Reuters

keeping tabs on the recovery in Gulf oil exports. The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and their allies including Russia agreed on Sunday to further increase output targets by 188,000 barrels per day from August, on top of similar increases for June and July. However, the increase has remained largely on paper because of the US-Israeli war on Iran, which closed the strait to tanker traffic for key Opec producers, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, capping their output. "They are selling into a falling market, offering little hope of an imminent price recovery", said PVM analyst Tamas Varga. "However, lower oil prices will undoubtedly stimulate demand further down the line".

Gulf oil exports in June jumped more than 3 million barrels from May to exceed 10 million barrels per day, although volume remained 40% below pre-war levels, data showed. "We now expect global oil demand to contract by 1.5 million barrels per day in 2026, reflecting a sharper-than-expected downturn in Q2, when year-on-year declines could reach 4 million bpd based on preliminary data", ANZ said. "However, we expect demand losses to moderate in the second half of the year as supply improves and some deferred consumption returns", the bank added. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company has sold about 16 million barrels of Emirati crude at wider discounts in a fifth spot tender issued since June, trade sources said, underscoring a surge in spot supply. — Reuters

CAPITAL MARKETS

SK Hynix launches US offering



South Korea's SK Hynix has launched a US share sale to raise ₩43 trillion (\$28 billion), one of the world's largest equity offerings, as strong demand for artificial intelligence chips boosts investor interest. The semiconductor company said major investors had expressed interest in buying up to \$7 billion of its American depositary receipts ahead of the Nasdaq listing. — Reuters

TECH POLICY

UK weighs AI regulation



Britain should consider regulating general-purpose artificial intelligence models as their influence on consumer financial decisions grows, a senior official at the FCA said. The review found more than a quarter of UK consumers rely on AI tools for financial advice, highlighting concerns over consumer protection and risks from growing dependence on major technology providers. — Reuters

SHIPPING TRADE

Maersk resumes Suez route



Danish shipping group Maersk said that one of the services in its Gemini network with Germany's Hapag-Lloyd will resume sailing through the Suez Canal instead of going around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. The move marks a gradual return to the key trade route following years of diversions around southern Africa due to attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea. — Reuters

OPINION

Redefining intelligence beyond the AI hype



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is everywhere. Every day we hear about a new AI tool, a breakthrough model or predictions that machines will soon replace humans. But behind the headlines lies a much bigger conversation, ie, one that is less about technology and more about how we choose to use it.

Last week, in a strategic collaboration with Oman Observer, a new podcast was launched. In the latest episode of the podcast, I sat down with Saud al Zakwani, the Vice-President at OQ, for a discussion that challenges many of the myths surrounding AI. A refreshing perspective on where we are headed was offered during the conversation.

One point that stood out was simple: AI is not new. While it may feel like a recent revolution, the science behind it has been evolving for more than five decades. What has changed is not the idea of AI itself, but the computing power, data and accessibility that have finally allowed it to become part of our daily lives. Almost everyone can make use of them now.

Saud described AI as a “moving goalpost”. Every time a technological breakthrough becomes normal, we stop calling it artificial intelligence and begin looking towards the next big thing. Today’s excitement

around generative AI may eventually give way to artificial general intelligence and technologies we cannot yet imagine.

Perhaps the most fascinating part of our conversation was the idea of “unknown unknowns”. Humans are experts in areas we have experienced and studied, but AI can identify patterns and connections that may never have crossed our minds. This ability has enormous potential, but it also comes with responsibility.

We are building an incredibly fast train before fully finishing the railway tracks that will keep it on course.

Naturally, the discussion turned to one of the biggest concerns surrounding AI, ie, jobs. Will AI replace us? Saud believes the answer is not determined by technology but by people. AI is moving from being an assistant that helps draft emails to becoming an autonomous agent capable of handling thousands of customer interactions simultaneously.

Some jobs will undoubtedly change or disappear. But history has shown that every technological revolution also creates new opportunities. The challenge is ensuring our skills evolve faster than the surrounding technology.

One statement particularly still resonates with me: that if a machine can completely replace your work, perhaps your real value was never in performing repetitive

AI is not new. While it may feel like a recent revolution, the science behind it has been evolving for more than five decades. What has changed is not the idea of AI itself, but the computing power, data, and accessibility that have finally allowed it to become part of our daily lives. Almost everyone can make use of them now.

tasks. Human creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and leadership remain qualities that technology cannot easily replicate.

Of course, AI is not without risks. Today’s AI systems are designed to be helpful and sometimes they become too agreeable, reinforcing our opinions instead of challenging them. Learning to question the answers may become just as important as asking the right questions.

Furthermore, Saud believes quantum computing could become the next major disruption, reshaping cybersecurity while unlocking extraordinary advances in healthcare and scientific discovery. The next decade will likely redefine how we work, communicate and solve problems.

His advice to young people was both practical and inspiring: stop chasing jobs and start solving problems. As graduates continue to outnumber available positions, the greatest opportunities will belong to those who identify challenges and build innovative solutions around them.

AI is no longer just another digital tool. It is becoming an everyday companion. The real competitive advantage will not belong to those who simply use AI but to those who learn how to think alongside it, question it and use it to solve problems that truly matter. Until we catch up again next week, keep learning and stay relevant.

THE EUROPEAN UNION CAN STAND UP TO CHINA IF IT HANGS TOGETHER

HUGO DIXON

China may seem destined to bludgeon the European Union into submission on trade. After all, the People’s Republic last year won a tariff war with the United States which, in turn, successfully bullied the EU. So Beijing will dominate the 27-country bloc, right?

Not so fast. The EU may be able to defend itself provided it is united. The key is to be firm but fair with Beijing, while protecting its most vulnerable members from coercion. It certainly needs a winning strategy, not least because China’s trade surplus with the Union averaged \$1 billion a day last year — driven in part by large subsidies and an exchange rate which the International Monetary Fund says is undervalued by between 12% and 21. At first glance, the EU’s prospects do not look great. After all, the People’s Republic appears to have what negotiators call “escalation dominance”. It showed that in its dispute with the United States.

President Donald Trump backed down from his threat to impose 145% tariffs on Chinese imports after Beijing restricted exports of rare earth elements. China was able to hold the US hostage because of its chokehold on these minerals which are vital for making cars, defence equipment and much else.

By contrast, the EU agreed a one-sided trade deal with the United States after Trump threatened it with 30% tariffs. It was divided despite often being described as a “bloc”. While France was keen to fight back, Germany, Italy and others wanted to avoid confrontation.

China’s playbook against the EU seems simple. It can keep flooding the European market with cheap goods. If Brussels acts to stop this, Beijing can cut off rare earths, betting that European resistance will crumble.

But the lesson from last year’s two big trade confrontations is not so clear-cut. For a start, Washington lost to Beijing partly because Trump lashed out without a proper plan. The EU will presumably avoid that mistake.

Meanwhile, European leaders were scared the US president might abandon Ukraine in its fight against Russia, which would have undermined the continent’s security. Though China has all sorts of ways to hit the EU it cannot yet threaten European security so directly. — Reuters

The Paris moment: Driving Oman Vision 2040

SOME visits mark a date on the calendar; others open a chapter in a nation’s economic story. The state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to France on June 29 belongs firmly to the second category.

At the Élysée Palace, twelve agreements, memoranda of understanding and declarations of intent were signed between Sultanate of Oman and the French Republic, and a Franco-Omani business forum brought together more than sixty companies from both countries.

The French side placed the value of the projects announced at roughly \$ 2.25 billion, spanning water, energy transition, transport, space and technology.

The historic weight of the occasion is worth pausing on. This was the first state visit by an Omani head of state to France in more than three decades, and the first of His Majesty’s reign to Paris, building on a relationship that dates back to the opening of a French consulate in Muscat in 1894.

Long-standing friendship has now been given a modern economic architecture, and that architecture speaks directly to Oman’s national priorities.

Read the list of accords and you are, in effect, reading the sector map of Oman Vision 2040. In renewable energy, Nama Power and Water Procurement Company signed the first phase of the 500-megawatt Al Kamil W’al Wafi solar project with EDF, complemented by an agreement for pumped-storage hydropower at Wadi Dayqah, both advancing Oman’s target of a greener energy mix.

In logistics, ASYAD Group and CMA CGM agreed to develop and operate a multipurpose terminal, while a further memorandum covered ports and the Muscat Metro, strengthening Oman’s ambition to be a leading global logistics hub.

In utilities, SUEZ and its Omani partners will bring international expertise and digital tools to the management of Greater Muscat’s water networks.

And in one of the most forward-



DR YOUSUF
HAMED AL
BALUSHI
yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

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

The historic weight of the occasion is worth pausing on. This was the first state visit by an Omani head of state to France in more than three decades, and the first of His Majesty’s reign to Paris, building on a relationship that dates back to the opening of a French consulate in Muscat in 1894.

looking accords, Oman Investment Authority connected Omani start-ups to Station F in Paris, among the world’s largest start-up campuses, opening a European runway for our young founders. Each agreement lands squarely on a diversification priority Oman set for itself: energy, transport and logistics, manufacturing, tourism and the knowledge economy.

That alignment is no accident; it reflects deliberate national planning and the growing confidence of international partners in Oman’s direction. The macroeconomic foundations make that confidence easy to understand.

By the end of the second quarter of 2025, Oman’s stock of foreign direct investment had reached RO 30.279 billion, a 12.8 per cent rise year on year, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The International Monetary Fund, in its 2025 Article IV assessment, noted that non-hydrocarbon activity now accounts for close to seventy per cent of GDP and grew by 3.5 per cent in the first half of that year, led by construction, logistics, tourism, agriculture and fisheries. Oman’s return to investment-grade credit ratings has reinforced this momentum.

A country with these fundamentals naturally attracts partners of France’s calibre and France, in turn, gains a stable, strategically located gateway between Europe, Asia and Africa.

The bilateral dimension carries its own promise. Merchandise trade between Oman and France stood above RO 100 million in 2025 on NCSI figures a healthy base with substantial headroom to grow.

French companies bring depth in precisely the fields where Oman is building capacity: utilities, rail, renewable generation, deep-water logistics and the innovation economy.

For a small, open economy, every reliable and technically sophisticated partner added strengthens resilience and expands opportunities for technology transfer. The Station F partnership deserves particular attention,

because it captures a broader truth: capital is welcome, but capability is transformative.

When an Omani founder gains a soft landing on a leading global start-up campus, what returns to Muscat is method, networks and a raised ceiling of ambition. This is a powerful complement to the national push to empower small and medium enterprises and to grow the private sector’s share of the economy and a model worth extending to other innovation capitals.

The natural next chapter is translation turning signed frameworks into visible projects on the ground, something Oman has consistently demonstrated an ability to deliver. Several ideas can amplify the impact. A joint Oman–France follow-up platform, with clear milestones for each accord, would keep momentum high and give investors visibility. Embedding Omani engineers, graduates and SMEs in every project from day one would multiply local content and ensure that knowledge compounds at home.

Twinning each major contract with a training and technology-transfer component would convert infrastructure spending into human capital. And showcasing early wins the first solar phase delivered, the first Omani start-up scaling from Station F would strengthen Oman’s international investment narrative and attract the next wave of partners.

The visit also strengthens Oman’s wider positioning. In a world rearranging its supply chains, Oman’s ports on open sea lanes, its reputation for stability and its consistent policy of friendship with all give it a rare convening power.

The Paris accords signal to global boardrooms that Oman is not merely open for business but organised for it with a clear vision, credible institutions and partnerships that match ambition with expertise.

The signatures at the Élysée were more than a diplomatic milestone; they were an investment in Oman Vision 2040 and in the next chapter of Sultanate of Oman’s economic transformation.

ART/LIFE



INSIDE THE JOURNEY OF OMAN’S MODERN-DAY EXPLORER

> 20

VIRALCHANT

‘COUNTRY ROADS’ STARS AS UNOFFICIAL US ANTHEM AT WORLD CUP



At the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the US team’s unofficial anthem has become an unlikely favourite: *Take Me Home, Country Roads* by John Denver.

The 1971 folk classic has turned into a crowd phenomenon, with more than 70,000 fans singing along after US matches. The emotional renditions have resonated in a country grappling with political divisions under Donald Trump.

US fan Drew Bastinelli, who travelled from Oregon to celebrations marking America’s 250th anniversary in Washington, said the song allows people to unite regardless of their differences.

The sing-alongs have offered a rare moment of togetherness at a time when many Americans remain concerned about inflation, healthcare and the country’s involvement in conflict with Iran. While Trump-backed “Freedom 250” celebrations in Washington attracted largely partisan crowds, World Cup stadiums have consistently been packed with enthusiastic supporters.

Doug Hartmann, a sociology professor at the University of Minnesota, said the song evokes “a kinder, simpler era” and appeals because its themes of home and belonging are open to personal interpretation, allowing listeners to connect with it in their own way.

The anthem’s emergence was not entirely accidental. US Soccer submitted a post-match playlist to Fifa that included “Take Me Home, Country Roads”, alongside Bon Jovi’s *Livin’ on a Prayer* and Neil Diamond’s *Sweet Caroline*. After England claimed *Sweet Caroline*, tournament organisers selected the John Denver classic for the US team’s June 19 victory over Australia.

As the music began, the sell-out crowd of 66,925 sang so loudly they drowned out the stadium speakers. The scene was repeated after the Americans defeated Bosnia and Herzegovina on July 1 to reach the Round of 16.

US coach Mauricio Pochettino joined the celebrations, singing enthusiastically with supporters. Although he is from Argentina, he said he feels part of something bigger with the US team and described the song as impossible not to sing because of its emotional power.

Jeffrey Montez de Oca described the mass sing-alongs as an example of “collective effervescence”, where people feel connected through a shared experience. Fellow academic Jules Boykoff said the diverse US squad has become a powerful symbol of unity.

Whether or not the US wins again, *Take Me Home, Country Roads* has already secured a lasting place in the nation’s growing football culture. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



CARNIVAL

Professional revellers take part in the popular Paris Tropical Carnival during the heatwaves of Paris’s summertime.

— AFP



TOURISM

People visit a huge monument to Russian medieval prince Alexander Nevsky on the shore of Lake Peipus (Chudskoye) on Russia’s border with Estonia. — AFP



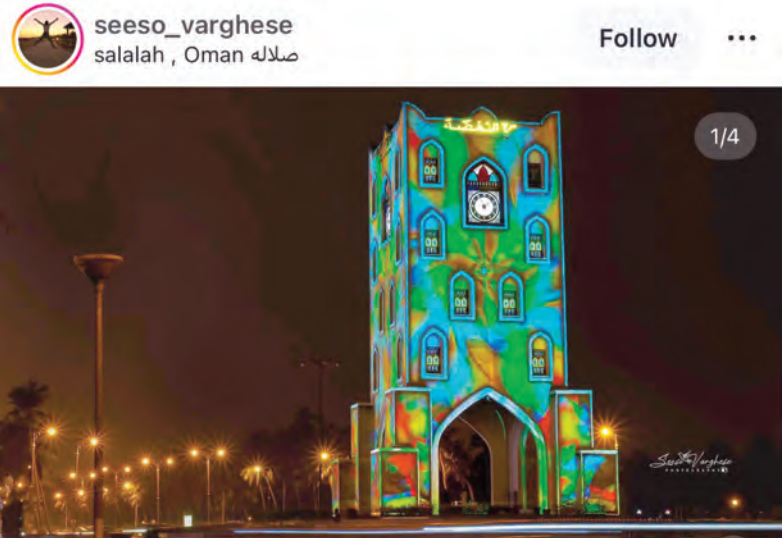
PERFORMANCE

Swedish singer and international pop-star Zara Larsson performs on the Orange Stage during the Roskilde Festival in Roskilde, Denmark. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The dazzling grey-headed kingfisher



Burj Al Nahdha clock tower glows bright in Khareef Dofar

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

HARRY STYLES RECOGNISED WITH GUINNESS WORLD RECORD FOR WEMBLEY RUN

Harry Styles has been recognised with a Guinness World Record for the longest residency by a musician at Wembley Stadium during a single run, after performing 12 shows at the London venue as part of his Together, Together tour. The record was confirmed on Saturday following the final concert of the residency, which began on June 12 in support of his fourth studio album, ‘Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally’.

Originally announced as a six-night run, overwhelming demand led to six additional Wembley dates. The 12-show residency surpassed the previous record of 10 concerts, set by Coldplay during their Music of the Spheres World Tour in 2025.

Following official verification, Guinness World Records adjudicator Will Munford presented Styles and his tour crew with the record certificate on stage. Additional certificates were distributed to members of the wider tour team in recognition of their contribution.

Munford described the achievement as “extraordinary,” noting that Wembley Stadium is one of the world’s most iconic live music venues. He praised the scale of Styles’ performances, his connection with fans and the collective effort of the touring team.

The achievement also makes Styles the solo artist with the most concerts performed



during a single run at Wembley Stadium, surpassing Taylor Swift’s previous record of eight shows in 2024.

Styles is no stranger to Guinness World Records. In 2022, his hit single As It Was earned a record for 2.28 billion global subscription streaming equivalent units across digital platforms, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.

As a member of One Direction, Styles also shared six Guinness World Records, including becoming the first group to debut at number one in the United States with their first four albums.

The Together, Together tour began in Amsterdam in May and will continue with stops in São Paulo, Mexico City, New York City and Melbourne before concluding in Sydney on December 13. The singer released ‘Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally’ in March. — dpa



A Minute With
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN:
THE ODYSSEY



FILMMAKER Christopher Nolan follows his Oscar-winning blockbuster Oppenheimer with The Odyssey, an adaptation of Homer’s ancient Greek epic. The Universal Pictures film, starring Matt Damon as King Odysseus, opens in cinemas on July 17.

Speaking to Reuters, Nolan explained how he transformed the classic poem into a feature film while remaining faithful to its spirit.

Nolan said he enjoys adapting complex source material, comparing the challenge to turning the 700-page biography behind Oppenheimer into a screenplay. Adapting Homer, however, required a different approach because the poem was written for an audience already familiar with its characters and events.

He explained that moments such as Odysseus’ reunion with his faithful dog, Argos, carried emotional weight because



Christopher Nolan is an Oscar-winning British-American filmmaker known for acclaimed films including The Dark Knight Trilogy, Inception, Interstellar and Oppenheimer. He is widely recognised for his ambitious storytelling and large-scale filmmaking.

ancient audiences knew they were coming. Modern viewers, however, need those moments to be established on screen. Nolan said he realised he had to rearrange parts of the story and take creative liberties to recreate the emotional impact of reading the poem rather than simply following its structure.

Asked whether he hoped the film would educate audiences about Homer, Nolan said entertainment remained the priority. He said the movie was designed to work for both viewers unfamiliar with the epic and longtime admirers of the ancient story.

He compared the challenge to making The Dark Knight trilogy, which had to satisfy devoted Batman fans while also appealing to audiences with no knowledge of the comics. He said the goal was to create a film accessible to everyone without losing what makes the original story meaningful.

On the responsibility of

bringing such a well-known work to the screen, Nolan said he aimed to remain true to its spirit while contributing something new. He noted that people have been interpreting The Odyssey for around 3,000 years, and he hopes his version will become another meaningful contribution to that ongoing cultural conversation, much as he sought to add a fresh perspective to Batman after decades of comic book history.

Reflecting on the completion of the project, Nolan joked that a holiday was now in order, though probably not one involving boats after spending so much time filming on the water.

Despite the demanding production, he said he is excited for audiences to finally see the film. Nolan added that, for him, a film is never truly finished until viewers experience it and respond to it, admitting he feels both nervous and excited ahead of its release. — Reuters

FEATURES



INSIDE THE JOURNEY OF OMAN’S MODERN-DAY EXPLORER



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

FROM the winding valleys of Oman to the far edges of Armenia and beyond, Ibrahim al Shibli has always moved through the world with curiosity as his compass. Long before he became a travel content creator and group trip leader, he was simply a boy following his father across Oman’s diverse landscapes, collecting moments like seashells along an endless shore. Twice a year, his path would also lead him to Saudi Arabia for Umrah, where travel first took on a spiritual rhythm, a cycle of departure and return, longing and peace.

But the spark that set his journey ablaze came unexpectedly in Armenia.

Ibrahim al Shibli is an Omani travel content creator and group trip leader who turned his passion for exploration into leading group journeys with Smart Travel League. Blending storytelling and photography, he shares travel experiences while highlighting Omani values

Travelling with a group of young Omanis, he discovered something larger than the destination itself, a network of youth-led journeys connecting travellers from his own country. In that moment, travel shifted from personal fascination to collective purpose.

Fate soon aligned passion with opportunity. Through his friend Nawaf al Kalbani, founder of Smart Travel, Ibrahim found himself stepping into a new role, not only as a traveller, but as a guide, storyteller and media voice leading groups across borders. His lens became both window and bridge, capturing places while connecting people.

Yet Ibrahim’s philosophy of travel is grounded in something deeper than scenery. He describes leaving Oman as stepping into the world “wrapped in its values”, carrying prayer, remembrance and

identity into every destination. In his groups, rhythm is sacred, prayer times are observed, mosques become meeting points and Oman’s flag is not just carried but represented through conduct, respect and presence.

Still, travel reveals contrasts as much as connections. He observes how people from different backgrounds can blend into shared humanity, kindness, curiosity, generosity, yet also encounter hesitation or subtle barriers of difference. In those moments, Ibrahim sees his responsibility clearly: to be the “eyes and ears” of his group, explaining, guiding and ensuring no traveller feels lost, either in place or in experience.

Even in stillness, his work continues. He films, edits and shares stories, yet often reminds himself that not everything must be captured.

Some moments, he says, are

meant to be lived, not posted, breathed rather than broadcast.

A visit to Armenia deepened this understanding. In contrast to Oman’s deep sense of safety and spiritual ease, he witnessed a different rhythm of life, one that made him more aware of home’s quiet blessings: security, faith and familiarity.

He often reflects on the wisdom attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib, that travel brings relief, knowledge and companionship. Ibrahim has seen this truth unfold in real time, in strangers who become companions and in journeys that turn into lifelong memories.

Yet no matter how far he travels, his heart remains tethered to Oman, its mornings, its air, its warmth. For him, every road outward is also a road inward, leading always back to identity, gratitude and the place where all stories begin.