

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer

ROP urges motorists to follow traffic rules, avoid speeding, stay alert and ensure vehicles are roadworthy before long journeys

SLOW DOWN

ARRIVE SAFE

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IN BRIEF
SALAMAIR FLIGHT
LANDS IN KIGALI



Kigali Airport in the Republic of Rwanda received the first direct flight of SalamAir, the budget carrier of the Sultanate of Oman. This marks the launch of the first direct air route connecting the two countries, in a move that enhances the carrier’s presence in Africa and expands its international destination network. To mark the occasion, an official reception ceremony was held upon the aircraft’s arrival at Kigali Airport. The significance of operating two weekly flights lies in creating an open line for commercial exchange between the two countries, which will allow both parties freedom of trade. **DETAILS ON P3**

FIRST EDITION OF
‘PURPLE SATURDAY’

The Ministry of Social Development will launch on July 25 the first edition of the ‘Purple Saturday’ initiative, under the theme ‘A Day with a Lasting Impact.’ Through this initiative, the ministry seeks to enhance efforts aimed at community inclusion and empowering persons with disabilities, consolidate concepts of social responsibility, and motivate various public and private sector institutions to provide more inclusive environments, thereby enabling persons with disabilities to actively participate in various aspects of life. **DETAILS ON P5**

SHAAT VIEWPOINT ATTRACTS VISITORS



Shaat Viewpoint in Dhofar Governorate has emerged as one of the increasingly popular natural attractions among tourists and visitors, offering panoramic views that showcase the unique beauty and diversity of the region’s landscape. **DETAILS ON P2**

Oman and EU sign deal to
set up mission in Muscat

REFLECTS GROWING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EU AND OMAN

THE Sultanate of Oman and the European Union (EU) on Tuesday signed an agreement for the establishment of a diplomatic mission of the European Union in Oman. The agreement was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and on behalf of the EU by Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.

This mission, alongside the Sultanate of Oman’s accredited mission to the European Union in Brussels, represents an institutional framework through which both sides will advance their shared interests, thereby contributing to the prosperity and well-being of both parties.

This significant development reflects the depth of the growing partnership between the European Union and the Sultanate of Oman and underscores their firm commitment to elevating the level of cooperation and opening new avenues across a wide range of sectors, including technology, energy, logistics, banking, minerals, infrastructure, as well as training and capacity-building, food and water security, energy security, and maritime security.

Both sides share a comprehensive strategic vision in support of



The agreement was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

multilateralism, with each playing an active role in promoting peace, security, and prosperity. In light of the current regional challenges and the need to reinforce sustainable stability, this mission will provide the European Union with a

permanent presence in the Sultanate of Oman. In parallel with Oman’s mission in Brussels, this will enhance both sides’ capacity to contribute more effectively to the development and implementation of solutions that support regional and international peace and stability.

On this occasion, Sayyid Badr expressed his hope that the European Union mission in Muscat will bring significant benefits to governments, business sectors, and citizens of both the Sultanate of Oman and the European Union, noting that the opening of this mission will help unlock the full potential of the partnership and strengthen cooperation in ways that serve the mutual interests of both sides.

For her part, the High Representative of the European Union expressed her pleasure at the signing of this agreement, and highlighted its positive impact, noting that this event represents a milestone in the course of relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the European Union.

During the ceremony, both sides reviewed the progress of their cooperation, reaffirmed their commitment to constructive engagement, and reiterated their determination to continue political dialogue and further strengthen bilateral cooperation in a manner that serves common interests and delivers mutual benefit. — ONA

Iran ups attacks in return to war with US

TEHRAN: Iran stepped up its attacks in the Middle East on Tuesday, two weeks after its war with the United States resumed, with sirens sounding in Bahrain and Jordan announcing it had intercepted two waves of missiles and drones.

In Yemen, Ansar Allah declared they would blockade Saudi Arabia’s ports, in what would throw the world’s energy markets into further chaos after Iran blockaded the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards meanwhile said they had attacked and stopped two “non-compliant oil tankers” attempting to transit Hormuz, which Tehran has blockaded to avenge the US-Israeli attack that kick-started the war on February 28. It remains unclear how the Ansar Allah would implement their blockade of Saudi ports, and oil markets eased slightly



A commuter walks past a wall mural along the street in Tehran. — AFP

despite the threat against the world’s biggest crude exporter.

“The siren has been sounded. Citizens and residents are urged to remain calm and head to the nearest safe place,” Bahrain’s interior ministry said after the military reported it had

intercepted Iranian attacks.

Jordan’s military also reported intercepting five drones, followed by three missiles, in two waves of strikes that caused no casualties or damage.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards confirmed the first

of the attacks, claiming in a statement that they had targeted a “complex in the region of Rukban”.

The Iranian army had earlier said it targeted US assets in Kuwait and Bahrain, including air defence systems, radar installations and administrative buildings.

“With this radar sweep, the enemy should prepare for even more decisive and powerful waves of drone and missile attacks,” the Guards said in a statement carried by state news agency IRNA.

Following the deaths of at least three US soldiers in the past several days, the United States launched a new round of attacks against Iran on Monday which it said were “designed to further degrade Iranian military capabilities used to attack commercial shipping” in the Strait of Hormuz. **SEE ALSO P6**

Great Barrier Reef faces collapse as El Niño intensifies

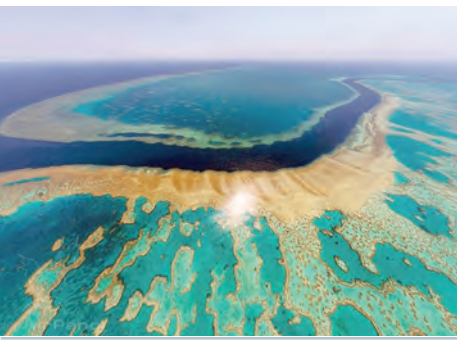
QUEENSLAND: Marine scientists have warned that Australia’s Great Barrier Reef is facing a severe and widespread bleaching event that could escalate into an “ecosystem collapse,” driven by the effects of this year’s El Niño climate phenomenon.

The Great Barrier Reef, which stretches along the Queensland coast, is the world’s largest coral reef system. It recently escaped being placed on Unesco’s List of World Heritage in Danger.

Morgan Pratchett, a marine ecologist at James Cook University in Queensland, said the intense El Niño is a major cause for concern.

This year’s event is expected to set records for intensity, with rising sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific triggering global shifts in wind patterns, atmospheric pressure and rainfall.

Hard coral cover across the reef declined substantially in 2024-2025, with above-average water



The Great Barrier Reef, which stretches along the Queensland coast, is the world’s largest coral reef system.

temperatures causing the reef’s sixth mass coral bleaching event since 2016.

BREAK RECORDS

Scientists are now concerned that the looming El Niño could cause further detrimental damage to the reef. This year’s El Niño is expected to break records for its overall strength as it warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, bringing worldwide changes in

winds, pressure and rainfall patterns.

In the Great Barrier Reef, this could mean the localised extinction of species, and potentially widespread ecosystem collapse.

“It’s a very high likelihood that we’ll see very high severity and large-scale mass bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef,” Pratchett said.

Unesco has been monitoring the reef annually since 2021, when it warned it was at risk of being placed on the List of World Heritage Sites “in danger.” — Agencies

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The two sides touched upon economic and investment cooperation opportunities. — ONA

MADAGASCAR
PRESIDENT RECEIVES
OIA CHAIRMAN

ANTANANARIVO: President Colonel Michael Randrianirina of the Republic of Madagascar received on Tuesday Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), at Iavoloha Palace in Madagascar’s capital, Antananarivo.

This meeting comes within the framework of the visit conducted by the Chairman of the OIA to explore prospects for cooperation in economic and investment fields between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides touched upon economic and investment cooperation opportunities, as well as the efforts exerted to enhance them across various sectors.

Both sides affirmed the keenness of the leaderships of the two countries to push these relations towards broader horizons in various fields, in a manner that serves mutual interests. — ONA

PERSONAL IMPORTS
WORTH OVER 300
FACE CUSTOMS DUTY



The traveller must not be a frequent flier and must be at least 18 years of age to qualify for the exemption.

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 21

The Royal Oman Police (ROP), represented by the Directorate-General of Customs, said customs duty exemption is eligible for items for personal use and gifts, provided the total value does not exceed RO 300. The exemption does not apply to goods of a commercial nature.

The Directorate also stipulated that the traveller must not be a frequent flier and must be at least 18 years of age to qualify for the exemption.

The regulations are designed to strike a balance between easing passenger movement through Oman’s ports of entry and preventing the misuse of customs exemptions for commercial purposes. Customs authorities noted that these measures support fair trade practices while safeguarding the national economy.

Passengers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the applicable customs requirements before travelling and to declare any items that exceed the exemption threshold or require special permits. Keeping purchase receipts for valuable items is also recommended to facilitate customs clearance.

The Directorate-General of Customs continues to enhance its awareness initiatives aimed at educating travellers about customs procedures and their obligations. These efforts contribute to smoother clearance processes, improved passenger experience, and more efficient operations across Oman’s airports, seaports, and land border crossings.

The customs duty exemption policy forms part of Oman’s broader commitment to modernising customs services, improving the efficiency of border management, and delivering high-quality public services while maintaining effective regulatory oversight.



AVIATION WINGS ON PILOT OFFICERS

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, pinned aviation wings on Tuesday at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on a number of graduating pilots of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), after they successfully completed an integrated training programme in various aviation specialties.

HH Sayyid Shihab also presented His Majesty the Sultan’s Aviation Cup to Flying Officer Mohammed bin Said al Kharousi for achieving first place overall in the aviation course.

The pinning ceremony was attended by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, and Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman. — ONA

Shaath Viewpoint in Salalah
attracts more visitors

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
SALALAH, JULY 21

SHAATH VIEWPOINT in Dhofar Governorate has emerged as one of the increasingly popular natural attractions among tourists and visitors, offering panoramic views that showcase the unique beauty and diversity of the region’s landscape.

The viewpoint provides visitors with a remarkable visual experience, where mountains, plains and the distant coastline come together to create a stunning natural panorama.

The location has gained popularity among families, photographers and nature enthusiasts who visit the site to capture memorable moments and enjoy the refreshing atmosphere.

The growing popularity of Shaath Viewpoint has also been supported by the increasing presence of visitors sharing photographs and videos of the location on social media. Mohammed al Zahrani said that his visit to Shaath Viewpoint was a memorable experience due to the beauty of the surroundings and the peaceful atmosphere.

“The view from this location is truly impressive, combining the beauty of the mountains with the vast landscape stretching towards the horizon. It is a place that deserves to be included in every visitor’s itinerary when exploring



Salalah.”

Nourah al Hashimi praised the organisation of the site and the experience it offers to families and tourists.

“Shaath Viewpoint provides a unique opportunity to enjoy nature in a calm and beautiful environment. The entry arrangements are well organised, and the fees are reasonable considering the experience offered to visitors,” she said.

To regulate visitor access, entry fees have been introduced with consideration for different categories of visitors. The admission fee for adults is RO 3 per person, while children below the age of 15 years are charged RO 1. Children below the age of six can enter the viewpoint free of charge.

Tourism experts believe that developing natural attractions such as Shaath Viewpoint plays an important role in expanding tourism options in Dhofar while preserving the environmental character of these locations.

They emphasise the importance of maintaining cleanliness and promoting responsible tourism practices to ensure the sustainability of natural sites for future generations.

The increasing visitor turnout at Shaath Viewpoint reflects the growing demand for nature-based tourism experiences in Dhofar, a governorate known for its diverse attractions, including mountains, beaches, springs and heritage sites.

CDAA strengthens its presence for Khareef Dhofar

SAUD AL ANSARI
SALALAH, JULY 21

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has stepped up its operational readiness for the Khareef Dhofar by implementing a comprehensive field response plan aimed at ensuring the safety of residents and the growing number of visitors flocking to the governorate during the annual monsoon.

The plan includes the deployment of strategically located emergency response points along the main route leading to Dhofar, from Hamra Al Duru to Salalah, in addition to enhanced coverage along the coastal road. The measures are designed to reduce emergency response times and ensure rapid intervention in



The plan includes the deployment of strategically located emergency response points along the main route leading to Dhofar, from Hamra Al Duru to Salalah, in addition to enhanced coverage along the coastal road.

“The plan includes the deployment of strategically located emergency response points along the main route leading to Dhofar, from Hamra Al Duru to Salalah, in addition to enhanced coverage along the coastal road,” Lt Yousef bin Salim al Mashykhi, Officer at Awqad CDAA

the event of accidents or incidents.

The Authority has also reinforced its civil defence centres across the governorate with additional personnel and specialised firefighting, rescue and ambulance vehicles. Advanced response units have been established at key locations, including Wadi Harit and Shaabat Saeed, to provide faster access to areas experiencing high

visitor traffic during the khareef season.

As part of its operational strategy, the CDAA has deployed mobile patrols to major tourist attractions and other high-footfall areas. These teams are staffed by specialists trained in water rescue and first aid, enabling them to respond immediately to emergencies in natural and recreational sites.

Preventive measures have also been intensified through an extensive inspection programme carried out by the Public Protection and Safety Department. The inspections cover hotels, resorts, tourist facilities and entertainment venues to verify compliance with fire safety regulations and preventive requirements, helping to ensure a safe environment for visitors throughout the season.

Lieutenant Yousef bin Salim al Mashykhi, Officer at Awqad CDAA, said the Authority’s preparedness reflects a comprehensive plan developed to accommodate the sharp increase in visitor numbers during the khareef season.

He noted that while Dhofar’s unique landscapes and cool climate attract thousands of tourists each year, the season also presents natural hazards that require heightened public awareness. These include rough sea conditions, with waves occasionally reaching four to five metres, strong rip currents, slippery cliffs and waterfall basins that can become particularly dangerous during periods of rainfall and persistent drizzle.

SHORT TAKES



The event was attended by Hamoud bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Hussain bin Saif al Harthy and Dan Munyuza.

KIGALI AIRPORT RECEIVES FIRST DIRECT SALAMAIR FLIGHT

MUSCAT: Kigali Airport in the Republic of Rwanda received on Tuesday the first direct flight of SalamAir, the budget carrier of the Sultanate of Oman.

This marks the launch of the first direct air route connecting the two countries, in a move that enhances the carrier's presence in Africa and expands its international destination network. To mark the occasion, an official reception ceremony was held upon the aircraft's arrival at Kigali Airport. The event was attended by Hamoud bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Honorary Consul of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman; Hussain bin Saif al Harthy, Honorary Consul of Oman to Rwanda; and Dan Munyuza, Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman.

Adrian Hamilton-Manns, Chief Executive Officer of SalamAir, said, "The launch of our flights to Kigali represents a new and significant milestone in SalamAir's growth journey, as we continue to expand our network toward promising markets that support tourism and business, and enhance international air connectivity." Said bin Abdullah al Rashdi, Director-General of Corporate Support at SalamAir, mentioned that the inaugural flight took five hours amidst a high turnout from visiting Omani travellers.

SalamAir will operate two weekly flights on the new route, providing travellers with a convenient and economical option to travel between Muscat and Kigali. — ONA

GLORIOUS PAST IN WILAYAT OF IZKI



A window overlooking a tower that stands aloft, attesting to the glorious past in the old neighbourhood of Siddi in the Wilayat of Izki. - Photo by Yousef bin Said al Mantheri

MUSCAT: The Youth Center has launched a new package of in-person and virtual summer programmes aimed at developing youth skills and fostering their capabilities and talents in line with their interests and aspirations. The package includes a cybersecurity programme focusing on developing participants' knowledge in information security, raising awareness of cyber threats, and enhancing skills in protecting data and digital systems through practical applications and security incident simulations, keeping pace with the rapid growth in the cybersecurity sector and labour market needs. Additionally, it features a Chinese language course that offers participants the opportunity to acquire

language fundamentals and basic communication skills, alongside getting acquainted with Chinese culture, thereby contributing to expanding their educational and professional horizons and opening new opportunities in study and international cooperation.

The offering also encompasses IELTS test training to develop listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, as well as familiarising participants with the test structure and success strategies through practical exercises and mock tests to enhance their chances of achieving competitive scores. It further includes a career readiness programme focusing on preparing youth for the job market by developing professional



The package is aimed at developing youth skills and fostering their capabilities and talents in line with their interests and aspirations.

communication skills, CV drafting, passing job interviews, and fostering teamwork skills, emotional intelligence, career path planning, and dealing with digital job market

requirements. Additionally, a planning and time management programme aims to boost participants' productivity through developing personal planning skills, organising priorities, stress management and building practical habits that help achieve work-life balance, positively impacting performance and achievement.

In line with youth needs, the Center is conducting a digital personal branding that seeks to empower young people to develop a professional digital presence reflecting their skills and professional identity, focusing on content creation, digital reputation management, and leveraging digital platforms to advance professional and entrepreneurial opportunities,

in addition to an AI-powered social media account management programme.

The Center also offers a basics of agriculture programme for individuals with Down syndrome, which is a practical programme aimed at introducing participants to the basics of modern agriculture through interactive activities that contribute to developing life and motor skills, and enhancing self-confidence and teamwork. Coinciding with the summer programmes, the Center is also conducting during this period the 3rd edition of the EV-Pro Electric Vehicle Experience Camp in cooperation with Shell Oman Marketing Company to empower Omani youth. — ONA

SQU STUDENTS WIN AI AWARD IN HONG KONG



MAYSOON AMBUSAIDI

finals of the Second International AI in Education Competition 2026 (AIREA), held in Hong Kong. The award-winning team comprised Noof al



NOOF AL SHAMLI

Shamli, Bara'ah al Aufi, and Maysoon Ambusaidi, under the supervision of Dr Iman al Hassani. The award recognises the team's innovative approach to addressing



BARA'AH AL AUF

challenges in education through AI. Their project, Ilmify, leverages AI to personalise learning experiences, generate smart summaries, and provide tools that help



DR IMAN AL HASSANI

students optimise their academic performance. The achievement reflects the interdisciplinary collaboration between students from the college's

departments, demonstrating their creativity, technical expertise, and commitment to developing innovative solutions with practical educational applications. It also underscores SQU's continued emphasis on fostering excellence in research, innovation, and emerging technologies.

Oman, Tanzania historic relations to scale further

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 21

THE BILATERAL relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania are one of the oldest and most enduring partnerships between the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa and are all set to explore newer heights in various areas.

This is buoyed by Tanzania's strategic location, together with Oman's position as a gateway to the Gulf, which can provide an opportunity to build one of the strongest economic partnerships between East Africa and the Middle East.

The strong bonds built on centuries of maritime trade, shared history, cultural exchange and family ties that continue to unite the peoples today remain a living testament to this shared heritage, and Oman remains the only country outside Africa with a vibrant Swahili-speaking community, she said.

Speaking to the Observer on the celebrations to commemorate the World Kiswahili Language Day, attended by representatives of both government and private establishments at the Diplomatic Club on Tuesday, Maulida Bwanakheri, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman, said that her focus as Ambassador is to ensure that the bilateral relationship is equally defined by the future and that Kiswahili, with its rich Arabic influence, can facilitate the people-to-people relations.

"My vision to enhance the bilateral relations is guided by the 3Rs—Review, Revive and Revitalise our mutual cooperation. We are reviewing existing frameworks to ensure they remain relevant, reviving areas of cooperation that have not reached their full potential, and revitalising our partnership through practical initiatives that create jobs, attract investment and expand opportunities for our people," Maulida said.

She opined that the mutual cooperation is expanding beyond historical and cultural



The celebrations to commemorate the World Kiswahili Language Day were attended by representatives of both government and private establishments at the Diplomatic Club on Tuesday.

ties into strategic sectors such as trade and investment, logistics, tourism, renewable energy, digital transformation, agriculture, labour mobility and youth development.

"We are also working towards concluding the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), strengthening the Joint Permanent Commission and establishing targeted business matchmaking platforms that directly connect Tanzanian and Omani investors."

People-to-people relations are the heart of Tanzania-Oman relations. Long before formal diplomacy, the two peoples were connected through commerce, language, culture and family ties across the Indian Ocean. Today, nearly 23,000 Tanzanians live and work in Oman, while many Omani families proudly trace their ancestry to Tanzania, particularly Zanzibar.

"These communities are not simply a diaspora, they are living bridges between

our two countries. One of my key priorities is ensuring that these relationships continue to flourish in a modern context. We are working closely with the Omani authorities to conclude a structured Labour and Employment Agreement that will enhance recruitment processes, strengthen workers' protection and promote employment opportunities for Tanzanians in Oman," Maulida Bwanakheri, who oversees relations and facilitates trade and investment ties between Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Oman, said.

She further said that efforts are on to establishing a formal Tanzania Diaspora Association in Oman, introducing stronger support mechanisms for Tanzanians living here, promoting diaspora investment and financial inclusion, and creating a Tanzania-Oman Friendship Platform to deepen cultural, educational and economic engagement.

Youth Center launches package of summer programmes

SPOTLIGHT

ROP urges motorists to follow traffic rules, avoid speeding, stay alert and ensure vehicles are roadworthy before long journeys



With the Khareef season drawing large numbers of visitors to Dhofar, authorities have stressed extra caution on mountain roads, in foggy conditions and during heavy traffic movement

SLOW DOWN

ARRIVE SAFE

KABEER YOUSUF

TWO fatal road accidents on routes linking Dhofar with other parts of Oman have raised fresh concerns over road safety, prompting the Royal Oman Police (ROP) to urge motorists to exercise greater caution, especially during long journeys and the busy Khareef season.

A teacher and her three children lost their lives in a tragic crash in the Nimr area while returning from Dhofar after their vehicle collided with a tractor-trailer and overturned.

The incident left students, colleagues and residents of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali mourning the loss of the family. The teacher, who worked at Douhat Al Ilm School, belonged to the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands. A fifth passenger injured in the accident was airlifted to Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah for treatment.

Hours later, another accident on the same route claimed the life of a woman, while her husband and a friend sustained serious injuries and were admitted to Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah. The accident occurred while they were returning from Haima.

The incidents have sparked concerns among motorists travelling long distances to Dhofar, particularly as thousands of visitors head to the governorate during the Khareef season.

While investigations are ongoing to determine the causes of the crashes, the ROP has stressed the importance of responsible driving. Motorists have been urged to follow traffic regulations, maintain safe speeds, avoid mobile phone use while driving, and ensure they are well rested before undertaking long journeys.

Before travelling, motorists are advised to check tyres, brakes, oil levels and windshield wipers, maintain clear visibility by ensuring washer fluid is available, and carry emergency supplies such as water, warm clothing and basic essentials.

Drivers heading towards remote areas are also advised to refuel before leaving towns, as service stations may be limited along some routes.

Visitors travelling through Dhofar's mountain roads should drive carefully, especially during fog, rain and reduced visibility. Motorists are advised to maintain safe distances, avoid sudden lane changes and unnecessary overtaking, and use appropriate lanes to allow smooth movement of heavy vehicles.

Drivers should reduce speed on wet roads, as tyre grip decreases during rainy conditions. If visibility becomes extremely poor, motorists should safely pull over, use hazard lights and wait until conditions improve.

ROP has advised drivers to use dipped headlights during fog and rainfall, avoid using fog lights in rain due to glare from wet surfaces, and keep air conditioning systems running to prevent windows from fogging.

Hazard lights should only be used when vehicles are stopped or during emergencies, as their use while driving can confuse other motorists.

With visitors often stopping to capture Dhofar's scenic landscapes, motorists are reminded to park safely away from traffic before filming or taking photographs. Vehicles should not obstruct roads, block heavy trucks or be parked on green pastures.

Families travelling with children are also advised to ensure young passengers remain safe inside vehicles and avoid placing hands outside moving cars. Visitors are further encouraged to avoid preparing food using fire or charcoal at tourist locations to protect public safety and the environment.

As Dhofar welcomes visitors during the Khareef season, authorities have reiterated that careful driving, patience and awareness are key to ensuring everyone reaches their destination safely.



Recall

TOYOTA & LEXUS

Toyota:HIGHLANDER, BZ4X, CAMRY, CROWN, LANDCRUISER, PRADO, MIRAI
Lexus: ES300h, ES350, LC500, LS500h, LS500, LX500d, LX600, LX700h, NX350h, NX350, RX350, RX500h, UX300h.

RECALL DATE: 22/07/2026

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	Number of Affected Commodities#
Toyota: Highlander, bZ4X, Camry, Crown, Landcruiser, Prado, Mirai Lexus: ES300h, ES350, LC500, LS500h, LS500, LX500d, LX600, LX700h, NX350h, NX350, RX350, RX500h, UX300h.	2021-2025	5743

Recall consequence

The subject vehicles are equipped with a Parking Assist ECU, which is a component of the Panoramic View Monitor (PVM) system that displays the rearview image. The software in this ECU may cause (1) the rearview image to freeze briefly during the backing event if reverse is selected within a specific time after ignition is turned on; or (2) the rearview image not to display on the next ignition on if the ignition is turned on and off within a specific time, which may increase the risk of a crash with a person during a backing event.

Recall Action

To reprogram the involved Parking Assist ECU.



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



شركة باهوان
SAUD BAHWAN

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



Consumer Protection Authority
80079909 • 80077997
خط المستهلك

الرمز: 093-03

التاريخ : 25 أيلول 2025

الصدار : 04

الرمز: 093-03

SHORT TAKES



Activities are designed to hone the skills of students and make use of their summer vacation.

4,600 students attend Scouts & Guides programmes

MUSCAT: About 4,600 students are taking part in summer activities and programmes organised by the Directorate-General of Scouts and Guides with the aim of grooming a generation of young people capable of contributing to the development of the country.

The programmes, being organised across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, cover all kinds of cultural, social, scouting, guiding and sports activities designed to hone the skills of students and make use of their 2026 summer vacation. — **ONA**

UTAS delegation takes part in summer programme in Russia



Yahya bin Khalifa al Mughairi, Saif bin Mohammed al Jahdhami and Al Hawari bin Rashid al Rashdi represented UTAS.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 21

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) has concluded its participation in the International Summer Programme hosted in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation, from July 4 to 19. The programme brought together students from universities across the world in an enriching academic and cultural environment aimed at promoting international collaboration, intercultural dialogue, and the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Representing UTAS and the Sultanate of Oman were three students from the University's Ibra Branch: Yahya bin Khalifa al Mughairi, Saif bin Mohammed al Jahdhami, and Al Hawari bin Rashid al Rashdi. Throughout the programme, they engaged with fellow students from leading higher education institutions worldwide, strengthening academic ties and fostering meaningful cross-cultural connections.

The two-week programme featured a comprehensive agenda of specialised lectures, interactive workshops, panel discussions, educational visits and cultural exchange activities. Participants explored current developments across a range of academic disciplines while gaining valuable insights into different educational systems and cultural perspectives. The experience enhanced their academic knowledge and strengthened their ability to collaborate and communicate effectively in diverse international settings.

In addition to the academic programme, the students exchanged ideas and experiences with peers from various countries, building lasting academic and personal relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. These interactions contributed significantly to the development of their intercultural communication, teamwork, leadership, and creative thinking skills, while enriching their academic and professional growth.

The UTAS delegation reflected the high standards and capabilities of Omani students through their active participation and positive engagement throughout the programme. They proudly showcased Oman's rich cultural identity and values while highlighting the significant progress achieved by Oman in higher education and the quality of its academic institutions in fostering innovation, excellence, and global engagement.

Omani researcher defends doctoral thesis at UiTM Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: Omani researcher Ali bin Said al Kalbani successfully defended his doctoral dissertation in commercial law at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia.

The dissertation, entitled “The Legal Framework for Protecting Investors’ Rights and Respecting Consumers’ Purchasing Power in Public-Private Partnership Agreements in the Sultanate of Oman: A Comparative Study with the United Kingdom and the People’s Republic of China,” examined the Sufficiency of the legal and institutional framework governing public-private



Ali al Kalbani successfully defended his doctoral dissertation in commercial law.

partnership (PPP) agreements in the Sultanate of Oman. The study evaluated its effectiveness in safeguarding investors’ rights, protecting consumer purchasing power, strengthening the investment

climate, and supporting sustainable development objectives.

Employing a comparative analytical legal methodology, the research was complemented by a field study involving interviews

with specialists from government institutions, academia, and the private sector. It compared Oman’s PPP framework with those of the UK and China, both recognised as leading international models in the regulation and implementation of public-private partnerships.

The study offers recommendations aimed at enhancing Oman’s legislative and institutional framework for public-private partnerships, contributing to improved investment confidence, consumer protection, and the achievement of national development priorities.

Purple Saturday initiative to empower the disabled

THE Ministry of Social Development will launch the first edition of the Purple Saturday initiative on July 25, under the theme ‘A Day with a Lasting Impact.’

Through this initiative, the ministry seeks to enhance efforts aimed at community inclusion and empowering persons with disabilities, consolidate concepts of social responsibility, and motivate various public and private sector institutions to provide more inclusive environments, thereby enabling persons with disabilities to actively participate in various aspects of life.

The initiative, which is organised on the last Saturday of July each year, is considered one of the GCC initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and enhancing their integration opportunities in society by encouraging commercial, service and tourism institutions to provide qualitative services and initiatives that cater to their needs and offer them a smoother and more comfortable experience.

The initiative, which was launched for the first time in 2021, comes as an affirmation of the unified GCC vision in supporting and empowering persons with disabilities, enhancing their quality of life, and consolidating principles of justice and equal opportunity.

The initiative aligns with the



Through this initiative which begins on July 25, the ministry seeks to enhance efforts aimed at empowering persons with disabilities.

The initiative, which was launched for the first time in 2021, comes as an affirmation of the unified GCC vision in supporting and empowering persons with disabilities, enhancing their quality of life, and consolidating principles of justice and equal opportunity

directions of Oman Vision 2040 toward building an inclusive society that guarantees equal opportunities for all its members and promotes the rights of persons with disabilities.

This is achieved by supporting national initiatives aimed at improving service quality, developing inclusive environments, and consolidating the values of respect and equality, in line with sustainable development targets and enhancing quality of life.

Anadan bin Mustafa al Farsi, acting Director-General of the Directorate-General of Communication and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, emphasised that through this initiative, the Ministry

of Social Development seeks to raise community awareness of the importance of providing inclusive and friendly environments for persons with disabilities, encourage institutions to adopt practices supporting accessibility, and highlight the role of the private sector as a key partner in achieving sustainable social development, thereby enhancing social responsibility and instilling a culture of inclusiveness across various sectors.

He added that the initiative constitutes a platform to enhance cooperation among government entities, private sector institutions, and civil society organisations, contributing to unifying efforts aimed at empowering persons with disabilities, expanding the scope of services and initiatives provided to them, and promoting their full and active participation in economic and social life.

He explained that the colour purple, adopted by the initiative as its identity, carries global significance associated with persons with disabilities, symbolising respect, dignity, appreciation, and solidarity. It reflects the initiative’s message of spreading a culture of community inclusion, raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, and urging various segments of society to contribute to providing an environment that is more inclusive and responsive to their needs. — **ONA**

ABM graduates shine with 100% achievement

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 21

Ahmad Bin Majid (ABM) International School announced the outstanding achievements of its Grade Twelve General Education Diploma (GED) students for the academic year 2025-2026.

The school attained a remarkable school average of nearly 90 per cent, and the highest individual score is 99 per cent. With the institution’s commitment to quality education and the students’ dedication to reaching the highest standards of performance, the campus is jubilant.

“Their accomplishments, alongside many others, contributed to the remarkable performance of the Class of 2026, where 91 per cent of students excelled with top marks and nearly one-third earned A+ distinction in the 95-100 per cent range, underscoring the cohort’s exceptional academic strength



Accomplishments contributed to the remarkable performance of the Class of 2026, where 91 per cent of students excelled with top marks.

and dedication,” said school officials. The top achiever, Al Hawra bint Khalid al Ghammari, secured an outstanding 99 per cent, followed closely by Abrar bint Nasser al Kamyani and Omar bin Mohammed al Maskari, who shared second place with an impressive 98.88 per cent.

Among the other A+ achievers, Al Zahra bint Khalid al Ghammari earned an impressive 98.50 per cent, followed by Leena bint Waleed al Yaqoubi with 98.25 per cent.

On the boys’ side, Yazan bin

Loay al Riyami achieved 97.60 per cent, while Nasser bin Ahmed al Azri and Basmalah bint Nasser al Qassabi both secured 97.38 per cent, further highlighting the remarkable academic accomplishments of this cohort.

Among the top ten achievers were Maytha bint Auf al Bulushi, who attained 97.13 per cent, and Retal bint Nasser al Saeedi, with 96.88 per cent.

“These results are a testament to the hard work of our students, the dedication of our teachers, and the unwavering

support of parents. With 91 per cent of students achieving grades A-B, ABM continues to set benchmarks in academic excellence and holistic education,” said Mustafa Elsaeeed, acting principal, ABM.

Remarking on the results, Najim bin Mohammed al Timami, Chairman of the Board of Directors, congratulated the ABM team on the remarkable success of the Class of 2026 GED (Grade 12 Diploma) students, highlighting the 90 per cent school average and the highest individual score of 99 per cent as a testament to their dedication.

“Achieving the highest national scores in the Grade 12 General Education Diploma (GED) examinations is a proud achievement for Ahmad Bin Majid International School, which we value and have consistently upheld over the past several years. It reflects dedication of our students and teachers,” noted Waheeda Abdulaziz Said, Board Member.

Kuwait said that it had summoned Iran's ambassador over a strike that targeted a Kuwaiti tanker and wounded several people

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for restraint from all warring sides during a meeting with Iran's interior minister

Bahrain sounded sirens as the country's military had said it intercepted the latest of a spate of Iranian attacks on the kingdom

The US State Department issued an alert urging citizens around the world to "exercise increased caution" because of the war

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had attacked and stopped two "non-compliant oil tankers" attempting to transit Hormuz

The Jordanian military announced that air defence systems intercepted and shot down three Iranian missiles targeting the kingdom

WAR EXPANDS ACROSS THE REGION

TANKERS HIT AS HORMUZ REPORTS HEIGHTENED TENSIONS

US FORCES bombed Iran's south and west after President Donald Trump said Tehran would pay dearly for the deaths of American soldiers, while Iran targeted US sites in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan on Tuesday and a tanker was hit in the Strait of Hormuz. Yemen's Ansar Allah announced a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia on Monday, opening a potential new front in the war and raising the threat to global energy supplies and trade beyond the Gulf.

Shipping companies loading or discharging cargo at Saudi ports could be targeted "in any location" by Ansar Allah, according to an email sent to companies on Monday. Oil prices gained nearly 2% on the escalating cycle of attacks that has all but wrecked an interim peace agreement signed last month. But signs that Tehran and Washington want to resume diplomacy helped to limit price rises.

US Central Command said it had hit Iranian military command centres, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and air defence systems in its latest round of strikes. Explosions were heard around the city of Shiraz in southern Iran, state media said. Konarak and Chabahar on the southern coast, the city of Khorramabad and a civilian site outside the city of Abadan, both in the west, all came under attack, media reports said. Later, the IRNA news agency quoted an official in Khorramabad as saying no enemy attack had taken place there.

Fifty civilians have been killed and 500 wounded in the recent US strikes on Iran, a health ministry official said. As hostilities spread across the region, the US State Department issued a new "worldwide caution" for Americans due to "heightened tensions in the Middle East".

Iran launched renewed attacks



A satellite image shows smoke rising from Subiya Power and Water Desalination Plant, in Subiya, Kuwait. — Reuters

across the Gulf, where recent strikes on desalination facilities have raised concerns about water shortages. Attacks on Kuwaiti power generation and water desalination plants on Monday caused several generation units to be taken out of service as a precautionary measure and repairs were underway, authorities said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they targeted infrastructure in Bahrain belonging to US tech company Amazon in response to what they described as a US strike on the construction site of Iran's planned Darkhovin nuclear power plant. Iranian state media reported that Iranian

Iran launched renewed attacks across the Gulf, where recent strikes on desalination facilities have raised concerns about water shortages. Attacks on Kuwaiti power generation and water desalination plants caused several generation units to be taken out of service

forces also targeted accommodation facilities of US military personnel at Bahrain's Shaikh Isa Air Base. There was no immediate comment from the US military, Bahrain or Amazon on the reported incidents, which Reuters was unable to verify. The Iranian army said it launched drone attacks against three US military bases in Kuwait on Tuesday. The Guards said they attacked a US military site in Jordan, while Jordan said its forces intercepted and destroyed five Iranian drones.

TANKERS STRUCK
The maritime security agency UKMTO

said on Tuesday a tanker in the Strait of Hormuz reported being struck by a projectile, forcing its crew to abandon the vessel and board a lifeboat. Also on Tuesday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said two oil tankers had caught fire after explosions while attempting to transit the southern route of the strait.

Just four commodity vessels crossed the strait on Monday, mostly using the northern shipping lane near Iran's coast, down from seven the previous day, Kpler data showed. Iran had been pressing Yemen's Ansar Allah to close the Bab el Mandeb gateway to the Red Sea if the US continued to attack Iranian power infrastructure - putting two of the world's most vital energy arteries at risk. A full closure of Bab el Mandeb could reduce global oil supply by 7% as it would leave most Saudi oil exports unable to leave the region, adding to the 10% cut in oil flows from the war in the Gulf.

DIPLOMATIC PUSH TO RESTORE CEASEFIRE
A senior Iranian official said that Tehran had received a proposal from mediators for a 10-day ceasefire in efforts to salvage the interim deal, intended to pave the way to a lasting agreement to end the war. Israel has not joined the latest round of strikes on Iran. "We have no desire to insert ourselves into this, but we are prepared for any scenario," Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said on Tuesday.

Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni had asked Pakistan to resume its mediation role. He arrived in Islamabad for further talks. The latest phase of fighting has proved to be among the deadliest of the conflict for US forces. US troop deaths rose to 17 over the weekend. Trump said the latest US strikes on Iran were avenging the deaths of American service members. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



A cargo ship sails in Saudi waters near the Dammam Port, Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

SAUDI CRUDE TANKERS TURN BACK FROM RED SEA

DUBAI: Two oil tankers carrying Saudi crude to Asia reversed course in the Red Sea on Tuesday after threats from Yemen's Ansar Allah, as a widening Middle East conflict disrupted shipping through two of the world's most critical energy chokepoints. The diversions came as US forces bombed targets in the south and west of Iran overnight, Tehran targeted US sites in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan and at least one tanker was hit in the Strait of Hormuz in the latest escalation of violence that has all but wrecked an interim peace deal signed last month.

The Yemeni group announced a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia on Monday, opening a potential new front in the war and raising the threat to global energy supplies and trade beyond the Gulf. The two tankers, which loaded Saudi crude bound for China and India this week, made U-turns and were headed towards the Suez, shipping data on LSEG showed. However, sources said Saudi Arabia's Red Sea port of Yanbu was operating normally.

Oil prices gained around 2% on the latest attacks, but signs that Tehran and Washington want to resume diplomacy helped to limit price rises. US Central Command said it had hit Iranian military command centres, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and air defence systems in its latest round of strikes. — Reuters

AOUN URGES TRUMP TO SUPPORT LEBANON'S ARMY

WASHINGTON: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun met US President Donald Trump to present a plan on how to disarm Hezbollah and secure Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Aoun, who served as the commander of Lebanon's US-backed army before being elected president last year, became the first Lebanese head of state in nearly 20 years to visit the White House when he met Trump face-to-face for the first time.

The meeting comes at a crucial moment for Lebanon. Israeli troops are occupying a swathe of the country's south and hundreds

of thousands of Lebanese remain displaced following Israeli strikes. "It's been a very badly treated place and country, and we're going to have it properly treated and treated with respect that it deserves," Trump said as he met Aoun in the White House's Oval Office. "There's a Hezbollah problem."

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged his US counterpart Donald Trump to maintain American support for his country's military, warning that southern Lebanon could see a return of the chaos of the 1970s without Washington's backing. — AFP/Reuters

UN condemns intensifying Israeli attacks in Gaza

GENEVA: The United Nations condemned on Tuesday intensifying Israeli military attacks in Gaza that it said had killed at least 57 Palestinians, including six children, in the past week. A ceasefire agreed in October remains in place between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas, but it has not halted the violence in Gaza. "Nine months after the announcement of a ceasefire, still, nowhere is safe for Palestinians in Gaza," UN rights office spokesman Thameen Al Kheetan told reporters in Geneva. He decried that "the Israeli military has intensified its attacks in Gaza in recent days, killing and injuring dozens of Palestinians".

The Israeli attacks had killed "at least 57 Palestinians, including six children and eight women" from July 13 to 20, Kheetan said. The Israeli army has in recent days announced a series of strikes in the Gaza Strip targeting Hamas members who it said were involved in the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that set off the war, or the holding of hostages after.



Mourners weep next to the body of one of the Palestinians in Gaza. — AFP

It also reported striking a weapons depot, an arms manufacturing site, and a rocket-launching position, saying that this infrastructure posed a threat to its troops. Kheetan said the strikes had targeted residential buildings, at least one tent sheltering internally displaced people, and

other crowded areas, with 34 of the victims "killed far away from the Israeli-imposed yellow line".

In attacks on July 17 and 18, for instance, he said the UN rights office had determined that 10 Israeli attacks in Gaza City, middle Gaza, north Gaza and Khan Yunis had killed at least 21 Palestinians. "In one of these attacks, on an apartment in Gaza City, five members of one family were killed together: both parents and three siblings, reportedly aged eight, 15, and 17," he said.

Kheetan stressed that "the killing of civilians in these attacks raises concerns of continuing violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and other possible atrocity crimes in Gaza". "Under international law, deliberately attacking civilians is a war crime." The spokesman also warned that Israel's constant moving of the "yellow line" westwards had left the Palestinian population in Gaza "trapped in an ever-shrinking area". — AFP

SHORTTAKES



British Prime Minister Andy Burnham holds his first Cabinet meeting, in London. — Reuters

BURNHAM TARGETS LOWER ENERGY BILLS IN FIRST PM MOVE

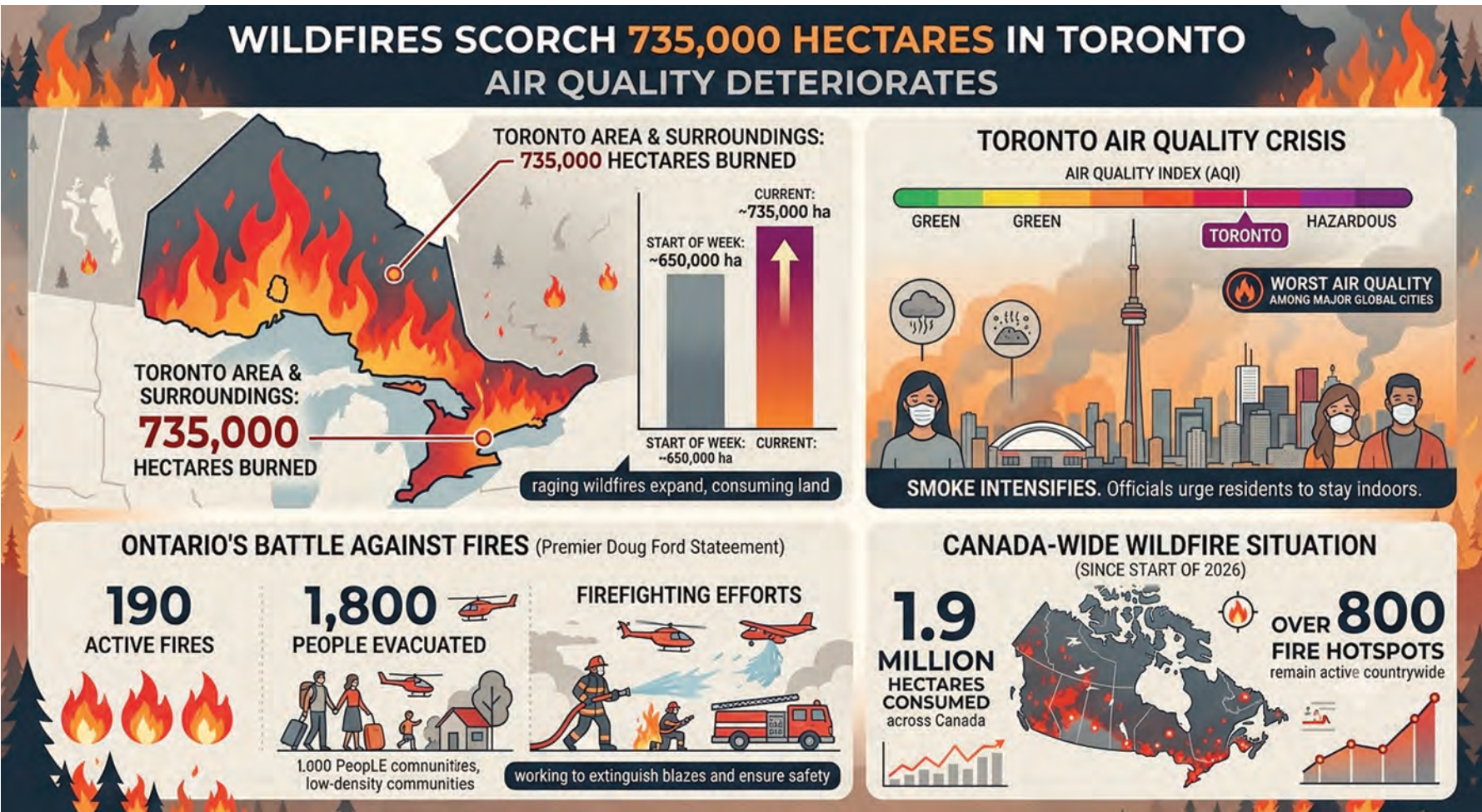
LONDON: British Prime Minister Andy Burnham said on Tuesday he would cut taxes on electricity bills, the first of several early moves to signal his intent to ease a cost-of-living crisis and quell anger over successive governments’ failure to bring change. On his second day in his new job, Burnham said his government would remove the value-added tax from domestic electricity bills from October 1, cutting around £45 from the average annual bill of around £1,862 that households pay.

With bond investors watching closely for how any fiscal support would be paid for, he said the move would be funded by savings from the cancellation of a £1.8 billion (\$2.42 billion) digital ID programme, announced on Sunday. “We’re taking immediate action to cut taxes on energy bills, put more money in people’s pockets and bring back hope,” he said in a statement, having pledged to give people more “breathing space” in their lives. At his first cabinet meeting of top ministers, Burnham again stressed that fiscal discipline was the touchstone for his new government - a message Healey reinforced. — Reuters

FRANCE SEES RECORD AREA BURNED



Wildfires burned more than 42,000 hectares of land in France by mid-July this year, surpassing the previous record set in 2022, according to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). The devastated area is about four times the size of Paris. And the area burned so far in 2026 has already far exceeded the total for all of 2025. France’s all-time annual record stands at 66,300 hectares burned in 2022. Wildfires that broke out during the first two weeks of July alone burned nearly 15,000 hectares, hitting Fontainebleau forest near Paris, as well as southern France and Corsica. — AFP



Canada faces one of its most intense fire seasons

WITH NEARLY 1,000 active fires and an area as large as Belgium already burned, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney says his country is facing one of the “most intense” wildfire seasons in its history. Barely halfway through the summer, virtually all Canadian provinces and territories have been affected. The largest fire, in Ontario, has forced mass evacuations and spread smoke as far as the US East Coast.

THOUSANDS OF FIREFIGHTERS While recent rainfall has slightly slowed the spread of the fires, more than 200 remained out of control across the country. More than 5,000 firefighters and 300 water tankers have been mobilised, as well as the Canadian Armed Forces. So far, three million hectares (7.4 million acres) have burned. In Quebec, authorities said assistance from the United States and France arrived at the weekend to “address the significant workload” in the northwest of the province.

Still, Yves Bergeron, a professor at the Centre for Forest Studies at the University of Quebec at Montreal, said it is “unrealistic to think we would have enough firefighters to extinguish all these fires,” which are mostly in remote areas, inaccessible by road. “The important thing is to focus our energy on protecting villages and infrastructure,” Bergeron said.

REPEATED FIRES Canada’s 270 million hectares of boreal forest — that is forest in high-latitude environments — comprises 28 per cent of the world’s boreal zone. It is naturally affected by lightning fires that spread rapidly through the canopy, making them difficult to control. “Unlike Californian forests, where preventative measures can be taken through thinning, boreal forests, which are very dense, cannot be controlled,” Bergeron said.

These trees “need natural disturbances



Smoke rises from the southern flank of the Brunswick Creek wildfire near North Bend, Canada. — Reuters

such as fires,” according to the government department Environment Canada, but suffer from repeated, intense fires that prevent them from regenerating. Heat waves, low rainfall, and droughts contribute to the intensification of these violent fire seasons. “There is real concern that the forest will become less resilient to climate change,” said Bergeron, who added it is normal for between 0.5 and 1.0 per cent of Canadian forests to burn each year.

SUMMER PROSPECTS While still far from the devastating 2023 fire season, when nearly 18 million hectares went up in smoke, the current season could nevertheless reach new records, particularly due to the low rainfall forecast for Canada’s north and west. Fires further south, near settlements, could force authorities to order new evacuations, as happened on Monday in

Ontario. “In the future, we will need to focus on prevention, for example, by avoiding the possibility of villages being surrounded by forests,” Bergeron said, advocating for human adaptation to these fires, which are likely to intensify year after year.

President Donald Trump said he held talks on Sunday with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and called for damages over wildfires that have sent smoke across the northeast US.

Trump threatened Canada with tariffs before Sunday’s match, which the smoke had threatened to disrupt. “I have a good relationship with Mark Carney, but you know, we got to stop the fires up there,” Trump told reporters after arriving back in Washington. “If we can help them, we’ll help them. But maybe they should pay us some damages or something, or we should do some tariffs.” — AFP

UN signals major rise in Ukraine-Russia war civilian deaths

GENEVA: Civilian casualties in the war raging between Russia and Ukraine rose 37 per cent in the first half of this year, the United Nations said on Tuesday. Russia and Ukraine — who both deny targeting civilians — have stepped up daily strikes on each other in recent months, as US-led talks on ending the nearly four-and-a-half year conflict remain stalled.

Danielle Bell, head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, told reporters in Geneva that the unit documented 1,396 civilians killed and 7,978 injured. That was a 37 per cent increase from the same period in the previous

year and “almost doubled what we documented in 2024”, she said. Bell said the escalation was in part being driven by increasing use of long-range ballistic missiles and drones, “affecting densely populated urban areas that are far away from the front line”.

She pointed for instance to a missile strike earlier this month in Kyiv that hit a residential complex, collapsing an entire section of the building and killing 19 civilians and injuring 76 others.

Bell said there appeared to also be a significant increase in civilian casualties taking place in Russia as a consequence of Ukraine’s increasing



Rescuers work at a site of an apartment building hit by Russian air strike in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. — Reuters

use of long-range weapons firing into the country. Pointing to credible Russian open-source reporting, she said 250 civilians had been killed and 1,596 injured in attacks inside Russia during the first six months of this year. “This represents a 121 per cent increase in civilian casualties in the Russian Federation compared with last year,” she said.

The second driver of the swelling civilian casualty toll was the widespread use of short-range drones and glide bombs in frontline areas, Bell said.

She highlighted in particular the impact of so-called first-person view drones (FPVs), where the

drone operator can see the target in real time. “In the first six months of this year, civilian casualties from short-range drones increased by 65 per cent,” she said, lamenting that “these drones are fundamentally changing civilian life in frontline communities”.

During recent visits to Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Kharkiv and Dnipro, Bell said people had told her team that they feel “tracked by FPV drones while carrying out ordinary daily activities: gardening, walking their dogs, feeding their animals outside, going to the store, driving or simply walking or cycling outdoors”. — AFP

OPINION

When children need adults to listen



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

SOME NEWS stories ask us to look outwards. Others quietly invite us to look more closely at the spaces we call home.

A recent Sultan Qaboos University study analysed 1,070 confirmed cases of child abuse in Oman and explored why some children receive help later than others. The findings showed that delays were more likely in cases involving physical abuse or neglect, adolescents, and situations where the person causing harm was a family member. Cases identified by teachers, healthcare professionals and social workers were generally reported sooner.

These findings are difficult to read, yet they should not lead us into blame or suspicion. They offer something far more useful: an opportunity to become more aware, more compassionate and better equipped to protect children before their pain becomes a private burden they carry for years.

Most adults love their children deeply. Sometimes harmful behaviour is repeated not because a parent intends to cause lasting pain, but because certain forms of punishment, emotional withdrawal or neglect have been normalised across generations.

What was once accepted as discipline may leave a child feeling unsafe rather than guided. What an overwhelmed adult may dismiss as difficult behaviour could be a

child’s way of showing they are struggling.

Awareness is not an accusation. It is an invitation to pause and ask better questions. Children rarely disclose painful experiences in a neat, confident sentence. They may become unusually quiet, angry, anxious, withdrawn, or afraid. Their school performance may change. They may avoid a particular person or suddenly resist going somewhere they once accepted. None of these signs automatically proclaim abuse, and adults should not jump to conclusions. They do, however, deserve calm attention rather than dismissal.

The most helpful response begins with safety. A child who shares something difficult needs to hear: “I am glad you told me. This is not your fault. You are not in trouble. I am here to help.”

They do not need to be interrogated, pressured for every detail, or asked why they did not speak up sooner. Silence is often not consent or secrecy. It can be apprehension, confusion, loyalty, shame, or simply not having the words or feeling safe to express.

This is where our collective responsibility becomes helpful rather than heavy. Parents can create homes where children know that no feeling or truth will cost them love. Schools can keep strengthening confidential, child-friendly channels for support.

Healthcare professionals, teachers and social workers can continue developing the

Parents can create homes where children know that no feeling or truth will cost them love. Schools can keep strengthening confidential, child-friendly channels for support.

confidence to notice patterns and act early. Families can seek support when stress, anger or inherited parenting habits begin to overwhelm them, before a pattern becomes damaging.

Oman already has systems designed to help. Child Protection Committees operate across all eleven governorates, and the government provides a child-abuse reporting service that refers concerns to the appropriate Child Protection Officer. The national number for reporting child abuse is 1100.

Reporting a concern is not about breaking a family apart. It is about allowing trained professionals to assess what is happening and determine what support or protection may be needed. Sometimes the most loving thing an adult can do is admit that a situation has moved beyond what the family can manage alone.

Perhaps this study is not asking us to become more fearful. Perhaps it is asking us to become more available: to listen without panic, to respond without shame and seek help without waiting for certainty.

Children do not need perfect adults around them. They need adults brave enough to notice, gentle enough to listen and responsible enough to act. A safer childhood begins the moment a child learns that telling the truth will bring protection, not punishment.

KUWAITIS RATION ELECTRICITY AS IRAN HITS POWER GRID

KHALED SALEM

Residents of Kuwait, one of the world’s hottest countries, are cutting their use of air conditioning at the height of summer, as Iranian strikes on power plants turn rationing into a national priority. Kuwaiti authorities have called on the public to consume less energy so that they can maintain round-the-clock electricity as the grid comes under Iranian attack.

Nasser al Dhafiri, a civil servant in his forties, described “immense psychological pressure” on ordinary people as the attacks sparked fears of electricity outages.

For weeks, people have been waking up to sirens and explosions in Kuwait and Bahrain, Iran’s prime targets in the Gulf since its shaky ceasefire with the US collapsed. In the first phase of the war, which began in late February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, the Gulf also bore the brunt of the Islamic republic’s attacks.

Dhafiri said the daily strikes were “compounded by ongoing attacks on infrastructure, particularly power plants... creating anxiety and confusion in our daily life”. “Everyone now feels that maintaining essential services is a shared responsibility.” Kuwait said Iran hit several power and water plants on Monday, causing fires in the fourth such attack in as many days. Tehran had earlier said it was attacking US assets in the country. In the Gulf, most desalination plants are integrated power and water production facilities because the process requires intensive energy input.

“Freshwater output from these installations could thus be interrupted not only by strikes on the water treatment units but also on the energy plants and grid connections supplying them,” David Michel, a water and food security expert, wrote in March.

“Cut the water by cutting the power,” he added.

The strikes further strained a power grid that survived the 1990 Iraqi invasion and occupation, as well as a round of Iranian attacks earlier this year. “Conserving electricity means preserving the nation’s resources. We must not strain the electrical grid with unnecessary usage,” said Abdulrahman al Azmi, a Kuwaiti man in his sixties.

Despite being one of the largest crude producers in the OPEC oil cartel, Kuwait regularly has trouble meeting local demand, especially during the summertime, when temperatures top 50C. For Dhafiri, renewed war and power problems brought back memories of the Iraq invasion. — AFP

Spain’s victory: When method trumps madness

HAVE YOU been to Spain? If so, you have probably also found it one of the easiest countries in the world to fall in love with. Every visit reveals another reason why. You cannot help but admire the serenity and layered history of Andalusia, especially Granada, where centuries of Islamic, Christian and Jewish civilisations shaped one of Europe’s richest cultural landscapes. Catalonia reflects another side of Spain, one built on entrepreneurship, craftsmanship, culture and relentless hard work. Madrid demonstrates what thoughtful decentralised leadership and urban planning can do for quality of life, while Valencia and its orange aroma blend scientific ambition, innovation and one of Europe’s most productive agricultural regions. Across the country, vibrant festivals, regional traditions and the Mediterranean diet remind visitors that prosperity is not measured only by GDP, but also by culture, health and a shared sense of identity. Perhaps that explains why supporting Spain in the 2026 Fifa World Cup final came naturally to me. It’s worth mentioning that Spain’s victory over Argentina became far more than another World Cup title. It became a lesson in leadership. Football often mirrors society better than politics does. A World Cup is one of the few global events where leadership, culture, preparation, pressure and national identity are tested simultaneously before billions of people. Success is never accidental, and neither is failure.

Spain reminded the world that championships are not won in ninety minutes. They are built over decades. For nearly twenty years, Spain has invested heavily in coaching



KHALID ALSAFI AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

In an age increasingly captivated by shortcuts, spectacle and instant gratification, Spain offered something refreshingly different. A quiet but powerful reminder that the most enduring victories are still built the old-fashioned way, through preparation, discipline, humility and character.

education, youth academies, sports science and a coherent football philosophy. The country’s clubs, like the legendary Barcelona and Real Madrid, have produced generations of technically gifted players, while the national team has maintained a recognisable identity regardless of who occupies the bench. That institutional continuity has made Spain one of the few nations to repeatedly compete at the highest level. Ferran Torres’ extra-time winner was not a moment of individual improvisation. It was the reward for patience, positioning and collective discipline. Leadership often looks exactly like that: Not dramatic, nor emotional, simply consistent.

One of the greatest misconceptions about leadership is that it belongs to extraordinary individuals. In reality, exceptional organisations rarely depend on exceptional personalities. They depend on exceptional systems. Systems create habits, habits create culture, and culture creates results.

Too many governments, companies and even football clubs continue searching for heroic leaders while neglecting the institutions that enable ordinary people to consistently produce extraordinary outcomes. Spain chose the harder path. It built institutions before celebrating stars. Their team players have become global role models of discipline, sacrifice, and diversity, from Iniesta to Puyol, Yamal and Williams to name only a few. That lesson extends well beyond football. Across the world today, noise is frequently mistaken for influence. Outrage often receives more attention than competence. Disruption is celebrated even when it destroys more than it creates. Social media rewards instant reactions while leadership demands patient decisions whose benefits may not become

visible for years. Spain’s triumph quietly challenged that mindset. The team did not abandon its philosophy because the match became difficult. It trusted preparation over panic, method over madness and improvisation, and discipline over impulse. That distinction matters far beyond sport. Whether we are building businesses, universities, government institutions or emerging technology ecosystems, sustainable success almost always follows the same formula. A compelling vision attracts attention, but disciplined execution earns trust. Talent opens doors, yet culture can eat strategy for breakfast, and it determines how far an organisation ultimately travels.

There is one final lesson. Winning with dignity matters. Every generation faces the temptation to believe that success justifies any means. History repeatedly proves otherwise. Lasting achievements are not remembered solely because they were victorious. They are remembered because they elevated the standards by which victory itself is measured.

It is a reminder that civilisation itself advances through the patient accumulation of good habits, trusted institutions and principled leadership, not through the support of genocidal, supremacist colonialism inflicting unspeakable suffering all over the world. In an age increasingly captivated by shortcuts, spectacle and instant gratification, Spain offered something refreshingly different. A quiet but powerful reminder that the most enduring victories are still built the old-fashioned way, through preparation, discipline, humility and character.

Long after our celebrations fade, that may prove to be Spain’s greatest legacy.

Despite everything, football remains a beautiful game



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

FOOTBALL IS one of the most beautiful sports ever played, with billions of fans around the world. From the rural fields of Brazil to the modern stadiums in Barcelona and other arenas across Europe, to the streets of Africa, football unites people like no other game.

The expression “Football is a beautiful game” originated from various sources, although its exact origin is debated. Many believe that Pelé, the legendary Brazilian soccer player, helped popularise the phrase in his 1977 memoir, “My Life and the Beautiful Game.”

The World Cup, held every four years, showcases the magnitude of this global event, uniting countries in celebration and friendly competition. Fans travel from around the world to support their teams, while millions more gather in homes, and public spaces to share every moment together.

Unfortunately, from Donald Trump’s refusal to vacate the podium during Spain’s trophy ceremony to Argentina players exchanging blows with celebrating Spanish substitutes, the aftermath of the 2026 World Cup final sparked outrage within the soccer community over how the Argentina team handled their defeat.

Television footage revealed that the initial altercation escalated into a widespread clash, prompting coaches and players from both teams’ benches to enter the field in an effort to separate those involved.

Observers were appalled. “This is absolutely disgusting. And people have normalised it under the name of ‘passion’... this is straight thuggery,” soccer commentator and analyst Aaron Cikaya wrote in a post.

Even during the World Cup presentation, TV footage showed them standing together near the 18-yard box with their backs to the Spanish players as the latter were presented with the World Cup.

Many spectators who anticipated the 2026 final between Spain and Argentina as a legendary showdown - where legacies would either be reclaimed or established - found the match not only lacking in “beauty” but also one of the most disheartening conclusions in World Cup history.

The final game lacked fluency and flow. Argentina offered minimal opposition as Lionel Messi and the defending champions concluded their journey. Messi and his team were unable to secure a second consecutive title, failing to produce a single shot or connect several passes effectively.

Thirty-nine seconds into the second half of extra time, Ferran Torres launched an 8-yard shot that ultimately crushed Argentina’s dreams. Spain emerged as the World Cup champions. By coincidence, the Spanish men’s team joined the women’s team as World Cup champions, making Spain the first country to hold both titles simultaneously.

We know that victory brings joy, celebration, and a strong sense of national pride. However, defeat can evoke equally

Nonetheless, amid all the chaos, drama, scandal and painful moments, the 2026 World Cup offered many delights. The month-long spectacle produced numerous unforgettable highlights – from inspiring underdog stories and stunning goals to thrilling comebacks

intense emotions such as disappointment, anger, sadness, and even a feeling of emptiness. Unfortunately, negative and extraordinary incidents dominated global headlines following the finals at MetLife Stadium.

Nonetheless, amid all the chaos, drama, scandal, pain, and remarkable moments, the 2026 World Cup offered many delights. This month-long spectacle produced numerous unforgettable highlights –from inspiring underdog stories and stunning goals to thrilling comebacks.

Consider Argentina - it provided countless exciting moments throughout the tournament. Messi scored eight goals in this World Cup and once again served as Argentina’s captain and motivator. He is the only player in history to start in three World Cup finals.

Of course, goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez will be remembered as the sole standout for Argentina in the World Cup final amid an otherwise lacklustre team effort.

However, I still believe the highlight was Cape Verde’s remarkable journey as World Cup debutants. This small island nation, with just over 500,000 inhabitants, amazed the football community by becoming the smallest country to advance to the knockout rounds. Like in every World Cup, the question is what legacy it leaves behind. Undoubtedly, the 2026 World Cup, despite all the chaos - including controversial VAR rulings and strict US immigration laws - delivered footballing brilliance.

EX-LABOUR LEADER ED MILIBAND NOW UK FOREIGN SECRETARY

JOE JACKSON

Ed Miliband, a former leader of Britain’s centre-left Labour Party who quit after losing the 2015 general election, capped a decade-long political rehabilitation with his appointment as foreign secretary. After several years in the political wilderness following his 2015 resignation, Miliband has staged a gradual comeback, first serving in former prime minister Keir Starmer’s shadow cabinet from 2020.

He then became secretary of state for energy security, aiming to deliver the transition towards a net-zero economy after Labour’s return to power in 2024, holding the post for two years.

His new job - one of Britain’s four so-called great offices of state, alongside the posts of prime minister, finance minister and interior minister - marks a promotion and high-point in Miliband’s revitalised career in government. Calling it “a great honour and privilege”, he pledged in a letter posted online to continue Labour efforts to “deepen and strengthen” EU relations and “nurture” Britain’s “essential alliance” with Washington. Miliband also vowed to be “at the forefront of issues which pose profound and substantial threats to justice and equality in Britain and across the world”.

A divisive figure dubbed by critics on the right an “eco-zealot” as well as “Red Ed” for his supposed socialist stances, he has also often appeared little-loved within Labour’s own fractured ranks. Rumours that he might be named finance minister rattled the markets earlier this month. Spearheading British diplomacy on the international stage will undoubtedly help bolster his experience and stature, which has been overshadowed at times by his elder brother David Miliband, himself a former foreign secretary. It also serves as an opportunity to prove his perpetual doubters wrong. “I’m a pretty resilient guy and I’ve been underestimated at every turn,” Miliband said shortly before quitting as Labour leader.

Born to Jewish immigrant parents - a Marxist academic father and a campaigning activist mother - Miliband grew up in a London household where prominent left-wing intellectuals from around the world came to dinner.

Encouraging their sons from an early age to take part in the discussions, their parents appear to have had a big influence on the brothers’ subsequent political journeys.

“They taught me most of all that politics can make a difference to people’s lives,” Ed Miliband told The Standard newspaper in 2021. He first became active in student politics at Oxford University and, after a stint as a journalist, quickly rose through Labour’s ranks. — AFP

France’s police shooting law puts justice at risk

FRANCE IS once again at the centre of a national debate over policing, this time following the National Assembly’s approval of a bill that would fundamentally change how fatal police shootings are treated under the law. The proposal, which passed by 313 votes to 199, would establish a legal presumption that police officers who kill while using their firearms acted lawfully unless evidence proves otherwise. The bill must still pass through the Senate before becoming law, but it has already sparked fierce opposition from human rights organisations, lawyers and victims’ families.

At first glance, supporters argue that the reform simply protects police officers who work under immense pressure and regularly face dangerous situations. No reasonable person disputes that officers should have the ability to defend themselves when confronted with genuine threats. But this proposed law raises a much deeper concern. It changes the starting point of justice itself. Instead of every fatal police shooting being examined from a position of neutrality, the law would begin by assuming the officer acted correctly. That may appear to be a subtle legal adjustment, but for the families of victims, it represents a significant shift. Every life taken by the state deserves an independent and transparent investigation.

Presuming legality before that investigation has even begun risks undermining public confidence in the justice system.

The concern is particularly relevant in France, which already records one of the highest numbers of fatal police shootings in Europe. According to Reuters, police shootings have increased significantly in recent years, particularly since reforms introduced in 2017 expanded the circumstances under which officers could use firearms during traffic



A woman walks past a car, burnt during nights of unrest following the death of Nahel, a teenager killed by a French police officer in Nanterre, at Saint-Eloy neighbourhood in Woippy, suburb of Metz, France. — Reuters



OMAN AL YAHYAI

The writer is a multilingual writer and media professional based in Paris. She specialises in human rights and immigration

The proposal, which passed by 313 votes to 199, would establish a legal presumption that police officers who kill while using their firearms acted lawfully unless evidence proves otherwise

stops. Critics argue that instead of strengthening accountability, France is now moving further in the opposite direction. This proposal also comes against the backdrop of several highly publicised police brutality cases that have shaken the country.

The death of Nahel Merzouk in June 2023 remains one of the most significant. The 17-year-old was shot during a traffic stop after allegedly refusing to comply with police instructions.

Officers initially stated that they had fired because they feared being struck by the vehicle. However, video footage later contradicted important elements of that account, showing an officer pointing his weapon through the driver’s window before firing as the car attempted to drive away.

Nahel’s death sparked nationwide protests and days of unrest, reopening long-standing debates about policing, racism and accountability in France.

Many people fear that under this proposed law, future cases could become even harder to investigate fairly. These concerns are particularly strong among Black and Arab communities, who have long argued that they experience disproportionately

frequent identity checks and police interventions. Repeated allegations of racial profiling have damaged trust between law enforcement and some communities. Introducing legislation that appears to strengthen legal protections for officers rather than oversight risks deepening that divide.

The debate is not unique to France. The United States has spent years confronting similar questions following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tyre Nichols and many others.

Each case sparked renewed conversations about police brutality and racism, and public trust depends on confidence that no one is above the law, not even those tasked with enforcing it.

That is why the French proposal has generated such widespread opposition. More than 360,000 people have already signed a petition opposing the legislation on the National Assembly’s website. The petition was launched by Issam El Khalfaoui, whose son was fatally shot by a police officer in 2021. For many families who have lost loved ones during police interventions, this reform feels less like additional protection for officers and more like another obstacle to obtaining justice.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The camp is designed to strengthen the players’ technical, physical and competitive abilities.

OMAN SENDS 13 JUNIORS TO CAIRO TENNIS CAMP

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 21

The Oman Tennis Association has sent 13 national junior players to a training camp at Smash Tennis Academy in Cairo, Egypt, as part of its preparations for upcoming regional and international competitions. Running until mid-August, the camp is being held for the second consecutive year and includes players from the under-10, under-14 and under-16 categories.

The first group, comprising five under-16 players, began training on Sunday and will remain in Cairo until August 15. Led by delegation manager Sara bint Abdulmajid al Balushi, the squad includes Abdulrahman bin Hamad al Rahbi, Moataz bin Issa al Mazroui, Areen bint Hafidh al Shaibani, Salma bint Issa al Riyami and Talia bint Issam al Busaidy. The players are training alongside junior athletes from Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The second group, made up of five under-10 players, will arrive on July 25 for a programme that runs until August 15. Led by Ahmed bin Ibrahim al Balushi, the squad consists of Omar bin Warith al Shaibani, Hatim bin Ahmed al Rahbi, Hood bin Khalid al Hashmi, Fayyadh bin Hatim al Hilali, and Ali bin Issa al Riyami.

The third group includes three under-14 players — Munther bin Amil al Amri, Imad bin Ahmed al Rahbi, and Reema bin Khalid al Hashmi — under the supervision of delegation manager Mohammed bin Abdullah al Dairi. Their training camp will run from July 25 to August 8.

The association said the camp is designed to strengthen the players’ technical, physical and competitive abilities while preparing national teams for future international events, including the 2027 Billie Jean King Cup Juniors and Davis Cup Juniors.

Sara al Balushi said the academy provides an ideal environment for Omani players to train alongside leading junior players from several Arab countries.

“Smash Tennis Academy hosts players from national teams including Saudi Arabia and Jordan and is regarded as one of Egypt’s leading tennis academies,” she said.

Oman Sail hosts women’s sailing championship



Oman’s sailors during the previous edition

OMAN Sail will host the 3rd edition of the Arab Women’s Sailing Championship from October 15 to 21, bringing together an expected 30 female sailors from across the region to compete in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 at Barceló Mussannah Resort.

Registration is now open and Oman Sail encourages national teams and sailors from across the region to take part in this important event for the growth of women’s sailing in the region.

Organised by Oman Sail in co-operation with the Oman Maritime Sports Committee and the Arab Sailing Federation, the regatta will be part of Oman Sail’s 15th edition of Al Musannah Race Week, further establishing the event as one of the region’s premier sailing festivals and reinforcing Oman as a vibrant hub for competitive women’s maritime sports.

Hosting this championship marks a natural next step for Oman Sail and builds directly upon the national team’s impressive performance at the previous two editions. In Bahrain in 2024, Hadeel al Mushaifri won a bronze medal in the Optimist



ABDULAZIZ AL SHIDI

Oman Sail’s Acting Director of Sailing



SHAIKH KHALIFA BIN ABDULLAH AL KHALIFA

class, while in Kuwait last year Tarteel al Hasani won silver in the Optimist category, Hadeel al Mushaifri followed up her success the previous year by finishing third in the ILCA 4 to take bronze while Ibtisam al Salmi won bronze in the ILCA 6 competition.

Abdulaziz bin Salim al Shidi, Oman Sail’s Acting Director of Sailing, said, “Hosting the 3rd Arab Women’s Sailing Championship is a momentous occasion for Oman Sail that underscores our commitment to elevating women’s sports across the region.

Following our team’s fantastic performances in the past two editions, bringing this event to home waters at Barceló Mussannah Resort gives our athletes a familiar platform to compete at the highest level.

We are confident that our infrastructure, combined with the determination of our sailors, will make this an unforgettable championship that inspires the next generation of female maritime talent.”

Shaikh Khalifa bin Abdullah al Khalifa President of the Arab Sailing Federation Stated: “We are delighted to see the Arab Women’s Sailing Championship continue to grow and bring together sailors

from across the Arab world. This championship reflects our commitment to developing women’s sailing, strengthening cooperation among Arab nations and providing athletes with the opportunity to compete at the highest level. We look forward to witnessing outstanding performances in Oman and to the continued growth of sailing throughout the region. The Oman Sail Women’s Sailing programme stands as a powerful example of how a sports initiative can be strategically aligned with the national development goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. Oman Sail has been 2012 and in women’s sailing within the region since launching the first all-female team in 2012, and hosting the 3rd Arab Women’s Sailing Championship will be the next stage in Oman’s commitment to developing women’s sailing in the Arab world.

By ensuring sailing offers equal opportunities, the programme serves as a high-impact catalyst for social change, contributing significantly to multiple pillars of the Vision, moving beyond sports to impact social, economic, and human capital development for the long-term benefit of the nation.

Oman to face Chinese Taipei after Bahrain loss

Oman’s national youth handball team suffered a 33-23 defeat to Bahrain in the 19th Asian Men’s Youth Handball Championship on Monday in Zhuzhou, China, reducing their hopes of progressing further in the tournament.

The squad has already shifted its focus to its final match against Chinese Taipei on Wednesday, taking part in a light recovery and training session as they aim to conclude their campaign with a positive result. The championship also serves as the Asian qualification tournament for the IHF Men’s Youth World Championship.

Oman made a confident start against Bahrain, with Maamoon al Hassani scoring the opening

goal as both Gulf rivals exchanged goals in an evenly contested first half. The Omani side impressed with disciplined defending and quick transitions, but Bahrain capitalised on late opportunities to edge ahead 15-13 at half-time.

Bahrain gradually took control after the break as the physical demands of the tournament began to affect the Omani players. Increased intensity, forced turnovers and effective fast breaks enabled Bahrain to extend its lead before sealing a 33-23 victory despite Oman’s determined efforts to fight back.

Following the match, the coaching staff immediately turned its attention to the decisive clash against Chinese Taipei, with recovery work and light tactical



The squad has already shifted its focus to its final match against Chinese Taipei on Wednesday.

training scheduled to help the players regain fitness while refining defensive and attacking adjustments. Team administrator Ahmed bin Rashid al Jassasi praised the players’ commitment despite the defeat.

“Our players have given everything since leaving Oman. The next match is extremely important for us, and we will prepare using every technical and administrative resource available. Everyone is united behind the team.”

He also revealed that head of delegation Amir al Dughaisi has promised the players a financial reward if they secure victory in the upcoming match.

Assistant coach Yahya bin Khamis al Maashani attributed the

defeat largely to fatigue.

“The first half reflected the players’ concentration and commitment. In the second half, fatigue became evident, mistakes increased and Bahrain took advantage. Now our full focus is on Chinese Taipei.”

The players also expressed confidence ahead of the final match. Al Khattab al Hassani said the team has already put the Bahrain defeat behind them, while Hamza al Hassani stressed that the tournament has provided valuable experience. Umair al Balushi praised the support of the coaching and administrative staff, and Waleed al Balushi said morale remains high as the team looks to end its campaign on a positive note.

SHORTTAKES



Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi. — AFP

MESSI TO MISS
NEXT TWO INTER
MIAMI GAMES

MIAMI: Lionel Messi and Inter Miami FC teammate Rodrigo De Paul will not play in the MLS club's next two games, ESPN reported on Monday. Both Messi and De Paul played in all eight matches for Argentina in the World Cup. Messi started all eight contests and played all 120 minutes in Sunday's 1-0 loss to Spain in the final. Also according to the report, both players, who were selected to the MLS All- Star Game on July 29, will not compete in the contest against the Liga MX All- Stars. Messi skipped the 2025 MLS All-Star Game without league approval and was suspended for Inter Miami's next regular-season match. Miami has informed the league that Messi will miss this year's game, per ESPN. FIFPRO, the global representative organisation for pro soccer players, has recommended a 21-day rest period at the end of each season for health reasons. In 2025, Fifa and FIFPRO agreed to a 72-hour rest period between matches for the World Cup. Messi and De Paul will not play against the Chicago Fire on Wednesday and CF Montreal on Saturday. Miami plays at home against Columbus on August 1, then competes in the Leagues Cup from Aug. 5-12 before returning to MLS action on Aug. 15. Barring injury, the two players would miss three MLS games that fall within the 21-day window. Messi scored eight goals and added four assists in the World Cup, finishing second to France's Kylian Mbappe in the Golden Boot race. Inter Miami sit in second place in the MLS Eastern Conference standings with a 9-2-4 record, five points behind first-place Nashville SC. — Reuters



Oman battle Pakistan in their opening match of the Men's Asian Hockey5s 2026. Photo by Abdulwahid al Hamadani

Hosts Oman open Asian
Hockey5s with tough tests

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 21

HOSTS Oman endured a challenging start to the Men's and Women's Asian Hockey5s 2026 as Pakistan and Iran delivered commanding performances on an action-packed opening day in Muscat on Monday. The championships are being held in Muscat from July 20 to 25 and serve as the Asian qualifiers for the FIH Hockey5s Under-18 World Cup. The opening day featured nine matches across the men's and women's Elite and Challenger categories, producing a remarkable 72 goals, with 36 scored in each competition. **OMAN TEAMS FALL TO PAKISTAN** Oman began their campaign in the Men's Elite category with a 5-0 defeat against Pakistan in the opening match of the championship. Pakistan imposed themselves from the early stages and demonstrated their attacking quality to build a comfortable advantage while maintaining a clean sheet against the hosts. Despite the result, the encounter provided Oman's young players with valuable competitive experience against one of the leading sides in Asian hockey as they look to improve during their remaining matches. Oman also suffered defeat in the Women's

Challenger category, going down 6-0 against Pakistan. The Pakistan women displayed attacking efficiency and defensive discipline throughout the contest, limiting Oman's opportunities while converting their chances at the opposite end. The hosts continued to compete until the final whistle but were unable to find a way through the Pakistan defence. **PAKISTAN MAKE PERFECT START** Pakistan strengthened their position in the Men's Elite category by defeating Bangladesh 5-2 in their second appearance of the day. The result gave Pakistan two victories from two matches after scoring 10 goals and conceding only twice, establishing them as one of the early contenders in the competition. India also made a successful start to their Elite campaign with an entertaining 7-3 victory over Bangladesh. The match produced 10 goals, with India's quick attacking approach and sharp finishing allowing them to take control of the contest. Bangladesh showed attacking promise by scoring five goals across their two matches but ended the opening day without a point following defeats against India and Pakistan. **IRAN DOMINATE CHALLENGER CATEGORY** Iran emerged as the standout side in the Men's Challenger category after recording two emphatic victories without conceding a

goal. The Iranian team opened its campaign with a 5-0 win over Iraq before producing the biggest victory in the men's competition on the opening day, defeating Saudi Arabia 9-0. Iran's two performances underlined the team's attacking strength and defensive organisation, with 14 goals scored and none conceded. The five matches in the men's championship produced a total of 36 goals. **CHINA RECORD BIGGEST WIN** In the Women's Elite category, China produced the biggest result across both championships by overwhelming Uzbekistan 12-0. China controlled the match from start to finish, combining effective teamwork with clinical finishing to make an emphatic opening statement. India also began their women's campaign positively, defeating Kazakhstan 8-3 in an attacking encounter that produced 11 goals. Kazakhstan responded strongly later in the day, overcoming Uzbekistan 5-2 to secure their first victory of the competition. Pakistan completed the list of winners in the women's championship following their 6-0 victory over hosts Oman in the Challenger category. The competitions continue in Muscat as the participating teams seek to strengthen their positions and move closer to qualification for the FIH Hockey5s Under-18 World Cup.

Former England captain and manager Keegan dies at 75

ENGLAND: Former England captain and manager Kevin Keegan has died at the age of 75, his former club Newcastle United said on Monday. Keegan's family and Newcastle announced in January that the two-time European Footballer of the Year was undergoing cancer treatment, without disclosing details of his illness. In June, Keegan, who was nicknamed 'King Kev' and 'Mighty Mouse' and was one of the most influential figures of his generation in English football, revealed he had stage four cancer. "We are devastated to learn of the passing of Kevin Keegan, one of the most iconic, influential and deeply loved figures in our club's history," Premier League Newcastle said in a

statement. "As a player, he brought world-class talent, ambition and belief to St. James' Park, helping to transform perceptions of what Newcastle United could be. "As a manager, he ignited our city. Kevin gave supporters hope and pride, and led a team whose style, spirit and passion captured the imagination of football fans around the world. He was so much more than an entertainer." **GLITTERING CAREER** Keegan began his career at Scunthorpe United before joining Liverpool in 1971. He made 323 appearances for Liverpool in all competitions, scoring 100 goals over six seasons. He won



Newcastle's Manager Keegan during Premier League on 2008.

three First Division titles, the FA Cup, two UEFA Cups and the 1977 European Cup during a glittering spell at Anfield. After moving to Hamburg, Keegan was named European Footballer of the Year in 1978 and 1979, becoming the only British player to win the Ballon d'Or twice. He later returned to England to play for Southampton and Newcastle before retiring in 1984 at the age of 33. Keegan scored 21 goals in 63 appearances for England between 1972 and 1982, captaining the side 31 times. He moved into management at Newcastle in 1992, guiding the club into the Premier League and transforming it into one of England's most entertaining sides. Keegan's team came agonisingly

close to winning the 1995-96 Premier League title before they were overtaken by Manchester United. After leaving St James' Park in January 1997, he had a brief spell at Fulham before taking charge of England in 1999 following Glenn Hoddle's departure. He resigned after Euro 2000 and a defeat by Germany at Wembley Stadium, famously saying he was "not good enough" to do the job, at a media conference. He won seven of his 18 matches in charge. Keegan later managed Manchester City before leaving the club in March 2005 and initially announcing his retirement from football. He made an emotional return to Newcastle in 2008, though his second spell at the club lasted only eight months. — Reuters

SPORTS



A 64-team format would comprise 128 matches if Fifa kept the 2026 structure

HOW A 64-TEAM WORLD CUP COULD TRANSFORM SOCCER 'S ECONOMICS

The first 48-team World Cup has barely finished, but Gianni Infantino has already acknowledged the possibility that soccer’s biggest tournament could one day grow larger still, a move that could fundamentally alter the economics of the sport. Speaking to Swiss television during the tournament, the Fifa president said a 64-team World Cup was among the ideas that could be examined once the finals were over, reopening debate over how large the game’s showpiece event can realistically become.

The logistical implications of another expansion are obvious. A bigger tournament would require more stadiums, more hotels, more transport and, most likely, more time.

But the financial implications could prove even more significant. By making qualification easier for many of the game’s biggest nations, a 64-team tournament could reduce the commercial value of qualifying competitions while increasing the importance of Fifa’s own flagship event.

If broadcasters place less value on qualifying campaigns, soccer’s six regional confederations could become increasingly dependent on Fifa’s own distributions, potentially shifting more financial influence — and power — towards the global governing body.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea for the World Cup itself, and it’s not a good idea for our qualifiers either. So I’m not supporting that idea,” UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said last year. The European governing body’s position has not changed since then.

Asian Football Confederation President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa has also voiced opposition, questioning last year where further expansion might end. Fifa did not reply to requests for comment.

“I think it is important that when you want to organise a World Cup, you do it for the whole world — not just Europe and South America,” Infantino said when discussing the idea of an expanded tournament. “If you don’t give smaller countries a chance to participate in the World Cup, they’ll lack the incentive to keep improving.”

CHALLENGES ON AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SCALE
The 2026 tournament in Canada, Mexico and the United States was the first since 1998 to move away from the 32-team format, expanding to 48 nations and 104 matches over more than five weeks.

If the competition retained the same basic structure, with four-team groups followed by a 32-team knockout stage, a 64-team World Cup would comprise 128 matches — 24 more than in 2026 and double the total staged under the old 32-team format.

Unless Fifa compressed the schedule or staged more games simultaneously, that could add roughly another week to a tournament already lasting more than five weeks.

Plans are in place for Spain, Portugal and Morocco to stage most of the 2030 finals, with Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay each hosting a single opening-round match to mark the tournament’s centenary. Accommodating 64 teams across six host nations presents a formidable organisational challenge. Doing so in a single country could prove even more demanding.

Saudi Arabia, due to host the tournament alone in 2034, already faces significant scheduling questions. Ramadan is expected to begin in mid-



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ALEKSANDER CEFERIN
UEFA President

November that year, making the November-December window used for the 2022 World Cup in neighbouring Qatar difficult to replicate and potentially forcing another unprecedented reshaping of the global football calendar.

A 64-team tournament would magnify those challenges, requiring more stadiums, training facilities, hotels, transport capacity and volunteers while placing additional pressure on infrastructure in a country still developing its tourism industry.

The Saudis have proposed 15 venues for the existing 48-team format, with eight stadiums in Riyadh, four in Jeddah and others in Khobar, Neom, and Abha. Construction and renovation work is already under way ahead of the 2027 Asian Cup.

DOMESTIC PRESSURE
An expanded World Cup would also place greater strain on an already congested international calendar and increase pressure on domestic leagues, many of which have aligned themselves with Europe’s traditional August-to-May season. Japan’s J-League is about to begin its first August-to-May campaign, while US Major League Soccer plans a similar switch from next year. Any future winter World Cup would therefore disrupt an ever-growing number of competitions rather than primarily Europe’s major leagues, as was the case in 2022.

World Cups can be costly for national federations, even rich ones like France. The French Football Federation had been expecting to spend 24.5 million euros (\$28 million) at this year’s World Cup, with federation president Philippe Diallo saying Les Bleus would probably need to at least reach the semi-finals not to lose money.

At the April Fifa Congress in Vancouver, Diallo said Fifa needed to provide greater financial support to participating nations.

If a 48-team tournament is already stretching the finances of participating federations, a longer 64-team event could increase those costs further.

Player welfare concerns would also intensify, with more matches adding to the workload of elite players. A 64-team tournament would give more nations access to football’s biggest stage but could also reignite debate over competitive balance, tournament length, fan costs and whether the World Cup risks losing some of the exclusivity that has long underpinned its appeal. Whether the idea progresses beyond discussion may depend in part on how the first 48-team World Cup is ultimately judged.

— Reuters



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,010.118

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$81.79
BRENT \$89.70
LIGHT \$82.98



SHORTTAKES



Al Sharqiyah North emerged as the country’s largest honey-producing governorate in 2025.

OMAN HONEY OUTPUT NEARS ONE MILLION KILOGRAMMES

MUSCAT: Honey production in the Sultanate of Oman climbed to a record 934,443 kilogrammes in 2025, reflecting the continued expansion of the country’s beekeeping sector even as imports of natural honey exceeded RO 2.1 million, according to official data.

Figures released on Tuesday showed local honey production increased by more than 49 per cent over the past three years, rising from 623,313 kg in 2023 to 765,054 kg in 2024, before reaching 934,443 kg last year.

Al Sharqiyah North emerged as the country’s largest honey-producing governorate in 2025, accounting for 248,547kg, followed by Al Dakhiliyah with 176,428 kg, Al Batinah North with 158,097 kg and Al Sharqiyah South with 128,120kg. Al Dhahirah produced 97,818kg, while Dhofar contributed 64,216kg, with the remainder coming from other governorates across the Sultanate of Oman.

The data highlights the growing importance of beekeeping as an agricultural activity supporting rural livelihoods and local food production.

Oman’s production infrastructure comprised 47 establishments engaged in beekeeping and the production of honey and beeswax, alongside two facilities manufacturing molasses and sugar syrup. The country also maintained 12 beekeeping units and two research units between 2023 and 2025, reflecting stable research and development capacity for the sector.

Despite the increase in domestic production, Oman continued to rely on imports to meet demand. Imports of filtered natural honey were valued at RO 2.13 million, with China remaining the largest supplier at RO 541,881, followed by India at RO 417,333, Saudi Arabia at RO 406,940, Australia at RO 234,102 and the United Arab Emirates at RO 229,355.

Imports of natural honey, including honeycomb, totalled RO 42,941, led by Türkiye and Australia, while imports of wooden beehives reached RO 15,629, with Egypt accounting for the largest share. — ONA

Islamic banking hits 19% of Oman bank assets: S&P

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 21

ISLAMIC banking in Oman continued its steady expansion in 2025, with assets reaching \$25 billion — around 19 per cent of the banking system’s total — after gaining roughly 200 basis points of market share over the past two years, according to a report published on Monday by S&P Global Ratings.

The ratings agency expects growth in Islamic banking to keep outpacing conventional banking, though at a gradually moderating pace as the sector matures. The segment’s share of deposits and credit stood slightly higher, at 22 per cent, reflecting Islamic banks’ smaller securities portfolios.

The sector comprises two fully fledged Islamic banks: Bank Nizwa and Alizz Islamic Bank — alongside five Islamic windows operated by conventional lenders.

Together they account for more than a third of Islamic banking assets. Bank Nizwa submitted a non-binding proposal last week to acquire Alizz Islamic Bank, subject to regulatory and shareholder approvals.

S&P said the merger, if completed, could create a national Islamic banking champion with scale advantages likely to improve profitability, although the combined entity would remain a relatively small player with less than 7 per cent of the overall market. Bank Nizwa held total assets of \$5.3 billion at end-March, Alizz \$3.9 billion. Corporate financing has been the sector’s



Assets of Islamic banks reached \$25 billion at the end of 2025.

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main growth engine, contributing 63 per cent of gross Islamic financing in 2025 and expanding at a compound annual rate of 12 per cent between 2020 and 2025, against 8 per cent for retail, supported by the development of Oman’s non-oil economy.

The agency cautioned that asset quality may be at a turning point. The non-performing financing ratio rose to 4.2 per cent at end-March 2026, from 3.6 per cent at end-2025 and 2.3 per cent in 2020 and is expected to converge towards the conventional banking average — 4.6 per cent in the first quarter, as portfolios mature.

Real estate and construction account for about 12 per cent of Islamic banks’ exposure. Profitability has improved but continues to trail conventional peers, with return on average

assets of 0.9 per cent against 1.2 per cent, partly reflecting a cost-to-income ratio of around 50 per cent versus 44 per cent.

Strong capitalisation, with an average Tier 1 ratio of 15.1 per cent and a funding base that is 98 per cent customer deposits — among the highest shares in the region — support the sector’s resilience, S&P said, alongside full coverage of non-performing financing.

Looking ahead, the agency pointed to the Banking Law of 2025 and the Central Bank of Oman’s launch of Islamic liquidity management instruments late last year as supportive of growth, while warning that the regional conflict could weigh on real estate, construction and hospitality, though less severely than elsewhere in the region.

OMAN CRUDE CLIMBS ABOVE \$81 AMIDST TENSIONS

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman crude oil for September delivery rose \$2.34 on Tuesday to \$81.79 a barrel, up from \$79.45 in the previous trading session.

The Oman oil price gained alongside international crude benchmarks as investors assessed reports of renewed diplomatic efforts to ease tensions between the United States and Iran while



remaining cautious over continued military exchanges in the region.

Brent crude futures rose 48 cents, or 0.5 per cent, to \$89.70 a barrel,

while Light crude for September delivery gained 50 cents, or 0.6 per cent, to \$82.98. Market sentiment was supported by reports that mediators had proposed a 10-day ceasefire between US and Iran.

The average official price of Omani crude for July delivery stood at \$102 a barrel, \$2.73 lower than the average price recorded for June delivery. — Agencies

Al Mazunah Free Zone holds talks with Yemeni traders

AL MAZUNAH: Al Mazunah Free Zone on Tuesday held a coordination meeting with representatives of import and export companies operating in the Yemeni market, attended by Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). The meeting highlighted the zone’s services and facilitations and reviewed a proposed open market initiative.

Discussions also covered challenges and opportunities for boosting trade and investment flows between Oman and Yemen.

Al Yousef stressed the importance of the meeting in strengthening private sector partnership and addressing investor needs linked to the Yemeni market, to enhance the business environment and the zone’s competitiveness.

Eng Ahmed bin Khamis Al Kasbi, Director-General of the



Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), attended the event.

zone, said its strategic location near the Yemeni border makes it an ideal logistics and trade platform for import-export companies. The meeting aimed to encourage companies to establish a permanent presence in the zone,

offering additional competitive advantages. The zone has proposed an open market or permanent exhibition initiative, allocating space for participating companies to consolidate, display and re-export

products to Yemen and other markets. The six-month pilot phase will allow for evaluation and refinement based on investor feedback. The meeting reviewed proposed incentives and heard company representatives

outline key challenges and proposals for improving logistics and procedures. Both sides stressed the need for continued government-private sector coordination to overcome challenges and boost trade and investment.

The meeting is part of efforts to enhance the zone’s attractiveness, develop initiatives leveraging its strategic location, and consolidate its role as a regional hub for trade and logistics serving regional markets, particularly Yemen.

Managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Al Mazunah Free Zone serves as the Gulf gateway for transit trade to Yemen and East Africa. It offers tax exemptions for up to 30 years, customs duty exemptions, 100 per cent foreign ownership, and exemption from minimum capital requirements under Oman’s company law. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The award recognises his outstanding leadership and significant contributions to the growth and transformation of the global jewellery retail industry.

Malabar Group Vice-Chairman honoured at JEA 2026

MUSCAT: Abdul Salam K P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group, has been honoured with the prestigious Jewellery Association Show (JAS) Global Jewellery Retail Leadership Award by Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Member of Parliament and former Union Minister, in the presence of leading industry stakeholders, business leaders, and members of the jewellery fraternity at the Jewellery Eminence Awards (JEA) 2026 in Jaipur.

The award recognises his outstanding leadership and significant contributions to the growth and transformation of the global jewellery retail industry.

The JAS Global Jewellery Retail Leadership Award is regarded as one of the industry's distinguished recognitions, honouring visionary leaders who have demonstrated exceptional excellence in retail strategy, business innovation, customer experience and global brand building.

A key member of the founding team behind Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Abdul Salam K P has played a pivotal role in shaping the brand's growth journey, strengthening its position as one of the world's leading jewellery retailers and expanding its presence across international markets.

His visionary leadership has been instrumental in fostering a culture of compliance, innovation and excellence across the organisation.

Expressing his gratitude on receiving the award, Abdul Salam K P said: "I am deeply honoured to receive the JAS Global Jewellery Retail Leadership Award. This recognition reflects the collective dedication of our leadership, management team members, associates and customers who have been integral to our journey.

At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, we believe sustainable growth is built on trust, transparency, innovation and excellence. I dedicate this award to every member of the Malabar family, whose unwavering commitment continues to inspire us to set new benchmarks in the global jewellery industry". Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the flagship company of Malabar Group, is currently the world's 4th largest jewellery retailer with over 445 showrooms in 14 countries covering India, the Middle East, the Far East, the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Renowned for its diverse jewellery collections, exceptional craftsmanship and customer-first philosophy, the brand continues to set benchmarks in the global jewellery retail sector.

Kia Vision Meta Turismo wins Red Dot Award 2026

KIA Corporation (Kia) has earned a Red Dot Award 2026: Design Concept for the Kia Vision Meta Turismo, with the futuristic sports sedan concept recognised in the 'Cars and Motorcycles' category.

Recognition from the acclaimed international design body underscores Kia's global design leadership and reflects the continued relevance of the brand's 'Opposites United' design philosophy in shaping progressive, human-centred mobility solutions.

Having made its global debut at Milan Design Week, the Kia Vision Meta Turismo reinterprets the grand tourer for the digital age and Kia's next generation of customers.

Combining a striking cab-forward silhouette with a lounge-inspired interior, the car offers dynamic driving performance and immersive digital interaction, embodying Kia's futuristic approach to a new era of electric mobility.

Karim Habib, Executive Vice President and Head of Kia Global Design, commented: "It is always an honour for everyone at Kia to receive a prestigious Red Dot Award, as it reflects the creativity, commitment and dedication of the countless people involved.

The Vision Meta Turismo represents an opportunity for us to experiment, challenge ourselves and imagine future user experiences through design. It's rewarding to see that work resonates with the jury and motivating to see our 'Opposites United' design philosophy continue to connect with people around the world through our vision of future mobility."

The Kia Vision Meta Turismo was recognised for translating Kia's future mobility vision into a distinctive concept that combines performance character, digital interaction and human-centred



The Kia Vision Meta Turismo reinterprets the grand tourer for the digital age.

design. The concept's exterior design brings together an extreme cab-forward architecture and a soft geometric surface language that results in a modern, technical and futuristic piece of sculpture, creating a dynamic sports sedan that conveys speed, technology and a new dimension of user experience.

Inside, the Vision Meta Turismo elevates driving to a multisensory level. Digital layers, intuitive physical controls and configurable experience modes combine to create a grand tourer for the digital age and transform electric mobility into a more deeply emotional and engaging experience.

The Vision Meta Turismo explores mobility as a new relationship between speed, technology and human emotion.

The car's design brings together three

core experiences: performance driving, Immersive digital interaction and Lounge-like space and comfort.

This approach demonstrates Kia's commitment to exploring the convergence of speed, technology and human experience in future electric mobility.

It also demonstrates how concept car design can help make future-facing ideas tangible and enable customers to visualise new, transformative mobility solutions and experiences.

The Vision Meta Turismo creates separate but complementary spatial experiences. The driver's cockpit is designed for optimum focus, control and immersion, while the passenger area emphasises greater comfort, relaxation and enjoyment of AR content via 3D HUD.

National Finance advances its Miras Programme

MUSCAT: Committed to cultivating a future-ready workforce of young Omani professionals equipped to lead and innovate, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance and leasing company, continues to advance its flagship Miras Graduate Programme, designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and professional employment.

Since its launch in January 2026, the programme has reached a significant milestone, with its inaugural cohort of 10 high-potential Omani graduates successfully completing seven development modules as part of a structured 12-month journey.



The company continues to reaffirm its commitment to nurturing young talent.

As the first finance company in the nation to introduce a dedicated graduate development programme, National Finance continues to reaffirm its commitment to nurturing young talent and strengthening the nation's human capital pipeline.

Through a comprehensive curriculum that combines technical training, hands-on workplace experience, mentorship and professional development, the Miras Graduate Programme equips graduates with the practical skills, industry knowledge and confidence needed to transition into the professional world and contribute meaningfully to the country's evolving workforce.

Bank Muscat supports activities of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2026

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its steadfast commitment to supporting national initiatives that contribute to economic and tourism development, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced its participation in the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2026, organised by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate from July 15 to August 30, 2026.

During the opening ceremony, Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) honoured the bank for its successful participation in the festival. Sami bin Mohammed al Kindi, Regional Manager of Bank Muscat branches in Dakhiliya, received the award.

This participation reflects Bank Muscat's strategy of supporting events that stimulate tourism, promote local development and



Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, the Minister of Heritage and Tourism honoured the bank for its successful participation in the festival.

provide valuable platforms for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurs and home businesses. It also aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to diversify the national economy and strengthen the contribution of the tourism sector to sustainable economic growth.

The festival is recognised as one of Oman's most prominent annual tourism events. It is held in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, a destination renowned for its spectacular mountain scenery and pleasant summer climate, making it a preferred destination for visitors from across Oman and beyond.

The wilayat has also seen significant tourism and development projects that have enhanced its infrastructure, attracted further investment and reinforced its position

as one of the Sultanate of Oman's leading tourism destinations at both the national and regional levels.

This year's festival features a comprehensive programme spanning more than six weeks, offering a wide range of cultural, heritage, recreational and sporting activities that showcase the unique natural and cultural attractions of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

The event will also see the participation of more than 85 exhibitors, including SMEs, home businesses, farmers, restaurants, cafés and retail outlets, creating opportunities to promote local products, support entrepreneurs and generate sustainable economic value. Previous editions of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival have achieved remarkable success in attracting visitors and stimulating economic activity.

SHORTTAKES



A container terminal is seen at the Busan New Port in Busan, South Korea. — Reuters

SOUTH KOREA EXPORTS SURGE

SEOUL: South Korea’s exports surged 52.3 per cent year-on-year in the first 20 days of July, driven by booming global demand for semiconductors fuelled by the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence technologies, official data showed on Tuesday.

Preliminary figures released by the Korea Customs Service showed exports reached \$54.9 billion during the July 1-20 period, compared with \$36 billion in the corresponding period last year.

Imports also increased, rising 20 per cent year-on-year to \$42.7 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$12.2 billion, underscoring the resilience of Asia’s fourth-largest economy despite continued global economic uncertainty.

Semiconductors remained the dominant driver of export growth, with overseas shipments soaring 180 per cent to \$22.1 billion. The strong performance reflects sustained investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure and data centres, which continues to boost demand for advanced memory chips and other semiconductor products manufactured by South Korean companies.

Exports of petroleum products also recorded solid growth, rising 33.4 per cent to \$3.41 billion, supported by stronger global energy demand and higher export values.

Ship exports climbed 70.8 per cent to \$2.44 billion, reflecting continued strength in South Korea’s globally competitive shipbuilding industry, while steel exports rose 11.1 per cent to \$2.46 billion.

In contrast, automobile exports fell 10.6 per cent to \$3.24 billion, highlighting uneven performance across the country’s manufacturing sector.

Oman and Philippines to expand investment ties

OMAN and the Philippines will seek to expand cooperation in investment, trade and key economic sectors when the Third Oman-Philippines Strategic Majlis Forum opens in Manila next Sunday, bringing together senior government officials, business leaders and experts from both countries. The forum, a high-level platform established to strengthen bilateral relations, will focus on identifying new opportunities for strategic partnerships in tourism, technology, logistics, agriculture and fisheries, while promoting closer collaboration between the public and private sectors.

The Omani delegation will be led by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and will include Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, Muneer bin Ali bin Nasser al Muneeri, Deputy Chairman of Oman Investment Authority for Operations and Eng Nasser bin Said al Manwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of the Philippines, together with representatives from several government entities and private sector organisations.

The forum will centre on three main pillars: strengthening economic cooperation through increased trade, investment and joint ventures; reinforcing diplomatic relations and coordination on regional



The Omani delegation will be led by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

and international issues; and expanding collaboration in emerging sectors, including technology, energy, logistics, transportation, agriculture and fisheries.

The event forms part of Oman’s broader economic diplomacy strategy, which seeks to build long-term international partnerships that support economic diversification and attract foreign investment in line with Oman Vision 2040.

To mark the third edition of the forum, the Foreign Ministry and the Unified Promotional Identity Office of the Sultanate of Oman unveiled an official logo symbolising the initiative’s long-term vision.

Inspired by an upward arrow representing growth and progress, the logo incorporates elements of Oman’s national identity together with the Invest in Oman and Live in Oman initiatives, reflecting the country’s efforts to promote investment, tourism and international cooperation.

Eng Al Manwari described the forum as an important platform for strengthening the growing relationship between Oman and the Philippines.

“We view this forum as a unique opportunity to deepen our strong and expanding partnership with the Philippines”, he said.

“The launch of the forum’s visual identity reflects

our commitment to using economic diplomacy to build lasting international partnerships that deliver practical and mutually beneficial outcomes”.

He said discussions were expected to generate new avenues for cooperation that would benefit businesses and investors in both countries.

Philippine Ambassador to Oman Noralyn Jobira Baja said the forum marks a new chapter in bilateral relations.

“For decades, our relationship has been closely associated with the thousands of Filipino professionals and workers who have found opportunities and a welcoming environment in Oman”, she said.

“Today, this institutional platform enables us to build on that trust and transform it into concrete investments, business partnerships and broader economic cooperation”.

The Oman-Philippines Strategic Majlis Forum was established as a recurring high-level dialogue bringing together policymakers and business leaders to explore investment opportunities and address issues of mutual interest.

Officials expect this year’s meeting to further strengthen economic ties and expand strategic cooperation, reinforcing the growing partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of the Philippines across a range of priority sectors. — ONA

Rakiza deepens Oman’s water infrastructure push

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 21

Rakiza Fund I and IV3 Aqua have agreed to acquire Majis Industrial Services SAOC from OQ, strengthening private-sector investment in Oman’s industrial water infrastructure as the Sultanate of Oman accelerates efforts to support manufacturing growth and economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040.

The acquisition brings together Rakiza Fund I, co-managed by Oman Infrastructure Investment Management (Rakiza) and Equitix, with specialist water infrastructure investor IV3 Aqua to take ownership of Majis, the country’s leading integrated industrial water utilities provider serving SOHAR Port and Freezone under a long-term concession framework.

Majis supplies cooling seawater, process water, potable water and wastewater treatment services to a



The transaction marks another step in expanding private investment in strategic infrastructure supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s industrial economy.

broad base of industrial customers operating in Suhar, one of Oman’s largest industrial and logistics hubs.

The transaction marks another step in expanding private investment in strategic infrastructure supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s industrial economy.

Rakiza said the partnership with IV3 Aqua combines long-term infrastructure investment with specialist expertise in the water sector, positioning Majis for its next phase of growth through improved operational performance, sustainable development and reliable service delivery.

Khalid al Khatib, Chief Executive Officer of Rakiza, said the investment reflected confidence in infrastructure assets that underpin Oman’s industrial expansion.

“As the leading integrated water utilities platform in SOHAR, Majis combines strategic importance, a high-quality customer base and long-term contracted revenues, making it a highly attractive investment that aligns with our long-

term strategy”, he said.

IV3 Aqua said the acquisition builds on its existing investments in Oman, where it owns and operates the Qurayat Independent Water Project, including the 200,000-cubic-metre-per-day desalination plant.

The company said adding Majis significantly expands its operational footprint across the Sultanate of Oman while reinforcing its commitment to investing in critical water infrastructure needed to support industrial development.

“As Oman advances its Oman Vision 2040 ambitions, reliable and resilient water infrastructure will play an increasingly important role in enabling sustainable industrial expansion”, IV3 Aqua said in a statement.

It added that the acquisition strengthens its ability to provide reliable, large-scale water solutions for industrial customers while supporting long-term economic growth and creating lasting value for

customers, stakeholders and local communities.

The deal also highlights continued international investor interest in Oman’s infrastructure sector, particularly assets with stable, long-term contracted revenues.

Rakiza said the investment supports the government’s strategy of increasing private-sector participation in strategic assets while demonstrating the attractiveness of the Sultanate of Oman’s infrastructure market to long-term institutional capital.

Rakiza Fund I focuses on essential infrastructure investments across the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia, while Equitix manages about \$20 billion in infrastructure assets globally.

Rakiza currently co-manages more than \$2 billion in infrastructure assets spanning utilities, transport, telecommunications, energy and social infrastructure.

CRYPTO MARKETS

Bitcoin climbs on ETF inflows



Bitcoin climbed 2.6 per cent to a two-week high of \$65,755.40, supported by stronger inflows into spot exchange-traded funds, signalling a recovery in institutional demand.

The cryptocurrency Ethereum advanced 4.6 per cent to \$1,934.71. Hopes for easing US-Iran tensions also helped improve market sentiment, contributing to lower oil prices and easing inflation concerns. — ONA

ENERGY SUPPLIES

US oil reserve hits low



US emergency crude oil stockpiles fell to their lowest level since 1983 after the Strategic Petroleum Reserve declined by 5.1 million barrels, Energy Department data showed.

The drawdown forms part of a programme to release about 172 million barrels to stabilise markets. Weekly inventory data due on Wednesday will provide a clearer picture of US supply conditions. — ONA

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold gains on diplomacy hopes



Gold prices rose as falling oil prices and renewed diplomatic efforts to ease US-Iran tensions improved investor sentiment.

Spot gold gained 0.5 per cent to \$4,023.56 an ounce, while US futures also advanced. Markets are closely watching developments in the Middle East and the Federal Reserve’s policy outlook as higher interest rates continue to weigh on bullion demand. — Reuters

OPINION

Rethinking energy use in Oman



RAYYAN
AL JABRI

The writer is a young Omani innovator and SQU economics graduate

AS the global transition toward sustainability accelerates, attention is often directed toward large-scale energy solutions such as solar and wind power. While these remain essential, such a focus can sometimes overlook less visible yet meaningful opportunities embedded within everyday economic activity.

In Oman, one such opportunity may lie within the country's expanding industrial and mining sectors, through a phenomenon often taken for granted: mechanical vibrations generated by heavy machinery.

Typically viewed as an unavoidable byproduct of production, these vibrations represent a form of energy that is continuously lost. This raises a simple yet powerful question: what if these vibrations could be converted into usable electrical energy?

The relevance of this idea becomes clearer when considered within Oman's economic structure. In recent years, the Sultanate of Oman has experienced notable growth in industrial zones such as Suhar and Al Rusayl, alongside the expansion of mining activities across multiple governorates.

This widespread industrial presence implies not only increased production but also a continuous flow of untapped

mechanical energy across the country.

From this perspective, the value of the idea does not lie solely in localised energy generation, but in its cumulative potential at a national level. While the energy produced at any single site may be modest, aggregating it across multiple locations from north to south could yield meaningful results over time, particularly when supported by storage solutions such as batteries.

Economically, this concept highlights efficiency in resource utilisation. Wasted energy represents a form of hidden economic loss, one that affects overall productivity. Converting even a portion of this lost energy into a usable resource improves system efficiency and reduces waste.

This approach may also hold particular relevance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often face increasing operational costs. Solutions that harness energy within existing work environments could provide a partial alternative, reducing reliance on external energy sources without requiring significant infrastructure investment.

Looking ahead, the potential of this concept could be further enhanced through the integration of intelligent analytical tools capable of identifying optimal vibration patterns and energy-generation points. The

While the energy produced at any single site may be modest, aggregating it across multiple locations from north to south could yield meaningful results over time, particularly when supported by storage solutions such as batteries.

electricity generated, even if limited, could power low-consumption systems such as sensors and monitoring devices, thereby reducing pressure on primary energy sources.

Importantly, this line of thinking aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises sustainability, innovation, and the efficient use of local resources.

Rethinking how energy is utilised within existing sectors reflects a broader shift from expansion-focused growth to efficiency-driven development.

Beyond its economic and operational value, this approach carries clear environmental benefits. By capturing and reusing energy that would otherwise be wasted, it contributes to lowering the environmental footprint of industrial activities. Even small improvements in efficiency can play a meaningful role in supporting more sustainable industrial practices.

Ultimately, the significance of this idea lies not in replacing existing energy systems, but in complementing them. It reflects a broader shift toward smarter resource utilisation one that recognises value in what has long been overlooked, opening the door to a more efficient, resilient, and environmentally conscious model of development.

WHAT IS CHINA’S NEXT SURPRISE FOR OIL MARKETS?

CLYDE RUSSELL

If there is a surprise to China’s response to the Iran conflict, it’s not that the world’s biggest crude importer cut back on oil imports and refinery processing, it’s the extent to which it did.

China has a strong track record of lowering crude imports in response to higher prices and boosting arrivals when they decline.

But the collapse in imports to the lowest in nearly 10 years in June was dramatic, especially given that even though crude prices did surge in the weeks after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, they didn’t scale the heights reached in 2022 when Russia attacked Ukraine.

China’s June crude imports were 7.12 million barrels per day (bpd), the lowest since October 2016 and down 41.3 per cent from the same month last year, according to official data.

Ordinarily a drop of that magnitude should have resulted in a massive draw on China’s inventories, but this didn’t happen.

Rather, China’s refiners cut processing rates to 12.47 million bpd in June, down 17.7 per cent from the same month in 2025, the lowest point since March 2020, which was during the Covid-19 pandemic.

China does not disclose the volumes of crude flowing into or out of its strategic and commercial stockpiles, but an estimate can be made by deducting the amount of oil processed from the total crude available from imports and domestic output.

On this basis, crude oil imports of 7.12 million bpd and domestic output of 4.41 million bpd means refiners had a total of 11.53 million bpd available.

They processed 12.27 million bpd, meaning that about 740,000 bpd was drawn from inventories, up from about 500,000 bpd in May.

Despite drawing on stockpiles in the past two months, China still added to reserves for the first half as a whole, with surplus crude of around 530,000 bpd.

Part of the reason China was able to cut refinery runs sharply in June was because Beijing placed unofficial restrictions on exports of refined products, a response viewed as a measure to ensure sufficient supply of fuels to the domestic market during the Iran conflict.

China exported 393,000 barrels per day of light and middle distillates in June, according to data compiled by commodity analysts Kpler, slightly down from about 400,000 bpd in May but up from the 54-month low of 338,000 bpd in April.

There is little doubt that China has played a significant role in adjusting demand for crude oil during the current Iran crisis, which has seen the loss of around 10 million bpd of crude and refined product supply through the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

But China has also contributed to the tightness in product markets by cutting back on its exports since April. The question for the market is what is China likely to do in response to the ongoing crisis. — Reuters

Can Islamic finance fuel tourism growth in Oman?

INCREASINGLY

recognised by stakeholders as a sound financial solution, Islamic finance represents a strategic lever for accelerating Oman’s tourism industry.

Islamic finance thrives alongside tourism, with multiple synergies driving the potential for harmonious growth. Policy measures and investments now emerging can give this growth an added boost.

Islamic finance optimises the growth trajectory of Oman’s tourism sector through the development of Sharia-compliant financial products, financial inclusion for micro-businesses and start-ups pursuing the halal economy and the branding of Oman as a halal travel destination.

By diversifying Oman’s tourism finance sources with sukuk and Islamic banking, the sector benefits from risk-sharing models, broader access to capital and ethical finance principles appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim travellers.

Capitalising on Islamic finance’s strong momentum amid growing global interest in tourism, Oman enjoys a window of opportunity to establish a strong position through timely policy measures.

Bridging policy intentions with project-level implementation, Nasser al Kindi, CEO of Invest Oman, said: “At Invest Oman, we view tourism and real estate as key drivers of diversification, offering world-class opportunities rooted in sustainability and culture. By streamlining approvals, fostering partnerships and ensuring investor confidence, we align global capital with Oman Vision 2040 to deliver lasting value for Oman.”

Such growth holds more relevance as Tourism industry keeps expanding due to Oman Vision 2040, accounting for an estimated 2.7 per cent of the GDP, thus forming a critical element of the economy’s diversification efforts.

To secure economic future and create vibrant jobs across many youth segments; integrated strategies promoting tourism development have been adopted by the Sultanate of Oman, viewing finance as a strategic lever to



Islamic finance optimises the growth trajectory of tourism sector.



DR MAYSSA
AHMED BEN
BELGACEM

The writer is professor at the Oman Tourism College

By diversifying Oman’s tourism finance sources with sukuk and Islamic banking, the sector benefits from risk-sharing models, broader access to capital and ethical finance principles appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim travellers.

enhance further opportunities for economic development creation.

Specifically, the controlled emergence of Islamic finance instruments and products in Oman since 2011 reinforces the recognition of Islamic finance as a formal part of the nation's economy and society and signals its availability to accompany the much-needed revival of tourism activities across the country. In terms of broader prospects, the value of Islamic finance in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the prediction by Fitch Ratings, should reach \$45 billion in 2026.

Research and practical experience asserted that the impact of Islamic finance has been observed in a variety of industries, including agriculture, manufacturing and services, as well as in sectors such as aviation, education, health care, transportation and logistics.

The global economic challenges that many countries continue to face again reinforce the role and importance of Islamic finance as a catalyst for growth in the tourism sector. As such, the Sultanate of Oman has always been focused on promoting sectors not dependent on oil, while at the same time maintaining cultural traditions and sustainable ecology of the region.

There is room for growth in Islamic financing, as there could be a great need for better financing and risk-sharing tools. Khalid al Kayed, former CEO of Bank Nizwa reinforced the importance of Islamic finance by underscoring that “The role of financial institutions is much more than just providing capital”.

Our contribution also lies in

helping to shape ideas and promote joint action. Our intention is to broaden the debate regarding the possible ways in which Islamic finance can be used to develop in new emerging areas, promoting innovations and building resilience in the process. By participating in these kinds of meetings, we show our will and ability to develop new sustainable financing models, exchange experience and propose effective solutions considering socio-economic peculiarities of the Sultanate of Oman.”

Notably, Islamic financial tools can be used to cater to the different capital needs of the tourism industry. The reason being that through the use of Mudarabah and Musharakah techniques, there is the ability to create asset backed projects that can be distributed incrementally to relieve any funding problems in the development stage such as those involving the establishment of beach resorts and religious tourism facilities in Oman.

Off-balance sheet Sukuk issuance as well provides other means for raising capital, whether from new projects or old ones. The benefits come from portfolio gains derived from tourism clusters, cross-border tourism visits and increased liquidity of assets.

The best example of this tendency is cooperation between OMRAN Group and Alizz Islamic Bank in Madinat Al Irfan, which shows growing trends in Islamic banking towards expanding investments in infrastructure development and creation of economic projects.

Tourism and Islamic banking form inseparable parts of Oman’s economic diversification policy—tourism brings socio-economic benefits to the country and Islamic banking contributes to ethics, risk sharing and asset investments.

Accordingly, prioritising tourism-related asset-backed Islamic financing can drive a substantial impact across the economy. Policy incentives to create viable development clusters, complementary regulatory enhancements and configuration of project risk-sharing structures to fit the domestic Islamic finance marketplace can support the scale-up of this model.

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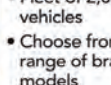
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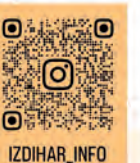
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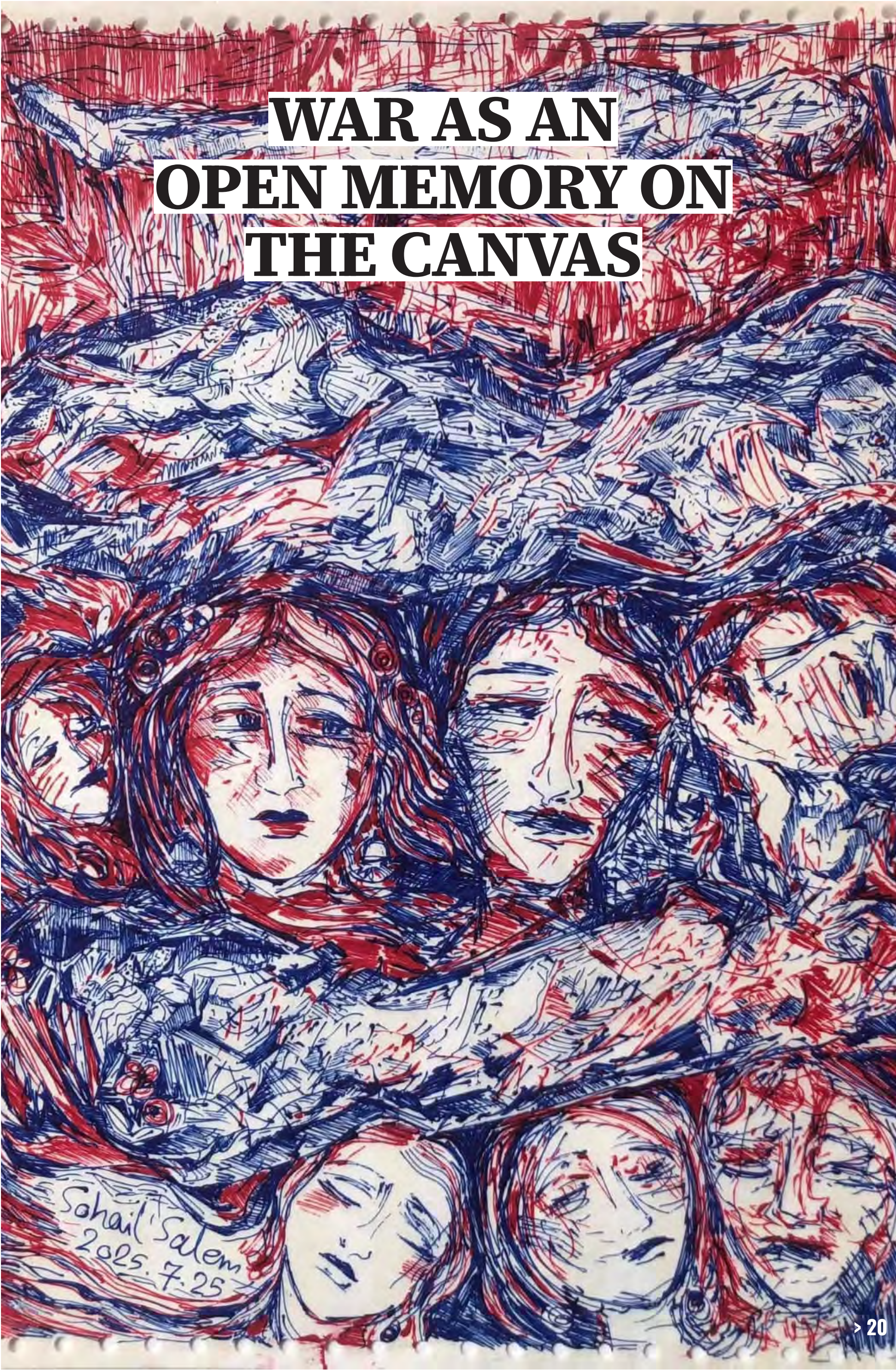


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ART/LIFE



WAR AS AN OPEN MEMORY ON THE CANVAS

ON SECOND **THOUGHT** THE WORLD CUP WAS GOOD FOR BUSINESS



Yeru Ebuén
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

Days before the World Cup final, conversations were already happening across Oman. It was not only about whether Argentina or Spain would win. The bigger question was: where were we going to watch it?

In one corner of a mall on the night of the final, dozens of teenagers gathered as one of them handed out tickets he had bought in bulk. Restaurants, cafés, hotels and cinemas were announcing viewing parties. Some people watched from rooftops. Others were willing to pay just to get the best seats in the house.

This may look like ordinary football excitement, but there was real business happening behind it.

Summer is normally a difficult season for many businesses in Oman.

Residents and locals travel to cooler places, while those who remain often prefer to stay at home. Restaurants become quieter, malls lose some of their usual crowd and businesses have to work harder to bring people through their doors.

The World Cup changed that, even if only for a few weeks.

Every match became an opportunity. Restaurants created special menus. Hotels turned their lounges into viewing areas. Cinemas sold tickets.

Supermarkets sold more snacks and drinks, while food-delivery riders remained busy long after midnight. Even smaller cafés benefited simply because people wanted somewhere to sit, watch and argue about football together.

The biggest money, of course, went to Fifa, broadcasters, advertisers and major sponsors. Their deals cost millions.

But they were not the only ones earning. The money trickled down to businesses that had no direct connection to the tournament. All they needed was a screen, enough chairs and people willing to spend.

We have seen this before. Every four years, the World Cup takes over Oman. Football is deeply woven into life here. It is played in neighbourhoods, followed inside homes and discussed in offices.

It is no longer something that belongs only to men. Mothers watch with their children. Women follow clubs and players. Families plan their evenings around important matches.

Then came the final.

For those supporting Argentina, Spain's 1-0 victory was painful. Messi's likely last World Cup campaign ended in disappointment, while Lamine Yamal and a new generation of Spanish players celebrated.

Some decisions during the tournament appeared painfully uneven, something viewers could now examine repeatedly and in 4K, but Spain fought a good fight and deserved to be congratulated.

The tournament also gave Oman something it badly needed. During a slow summer and at a time when regional tensions continued knocking on our doors, football gave people something joyful to talk about.

It filled restaurants, brought families together and kept part of the business engine running.

The World Cup did its job. Now we wait for the next one, hopefully under much better circumstances.

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



MUSIC

Members of 'The Jacksons' group perform at the 60th Carthage International Festival in Carthage, Tunisia. — **AFP**



OPERA

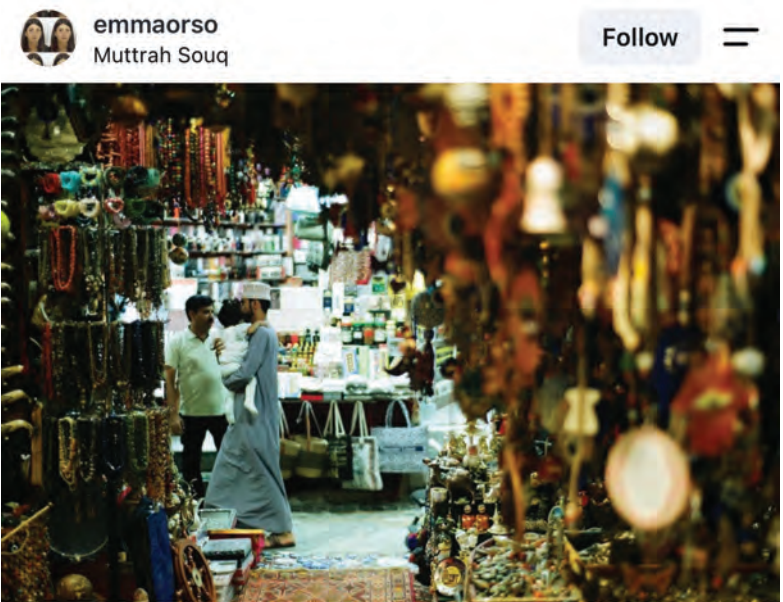
Chilean tenor Jonathan Tetelman performs as Don José during a dress rehearsal of Bizet's Carmen at the Salzburg Festival in Austria. — **AFP**



FESTIVAL

Members of the Yi ethnic minority carry flaming torches during the Torch Festival in Sichuan Province, China. — **AFP**

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LOUVRE HEIST GALLERY TO REOPEN WITHOUT JEWELS



The Louvre Museum's Galerie d'Apollon (Apollo's gallery). — AFP

The Apollo Gallery at the Louvre Museum, where French crown jewels worth €88 million were stolen in a brazen 2025 heist, reopens to the public today.

However, no jewels will be displayed. Instead, the space will return to its original 17th-century function as a state gallery, an informed source said. Confirming a report by French newspaper Le Parisien, the source said the gallery would reopen today. Culture Minister Catherine Pegard is expected to attend the reopening.

In an interview with the newspaper, Louvre president Christophe Leribault said the collections and precious objects previously displayed in the gallery had been removed.

On October 19, 2025, robbers disguised as construction workers entered the gallery in the morning using a truck-mounted lift.

They stole eight crown jewels, which remain missing.

The jewellery that was not stolen will eventually be moved to a secure, windowless vault elsewhere in the museum.

“It’s a major construction project and we have to find the ideal location.

And the funding”, Leribault said.

The burglary stunned the world and exposed major security lapses at the Louvre, the world’s most-visited museum, which welcomes around nine million people annually.

The theft also triggered an internal crisis and led to Leribault replacing former museum president Laurence des Cars.

A French parliamentary commission examining museum security concluded in mid-May that security concerns at the Louvre had been neglected in recent years. — AFP



US actress Zendaya signs autographs for her fans as she attends “The Odyssey” premiere. — AFP

‘THE ODYSSEY’ STORMS NORTH AMERICAN BOX OFFICE



British director Christopher Nolan and his wife British producer Emma Thomas. — AFP



British actor Tom Holland. — AFP

CHRISTOPHER Nolan’s “The Odyssey” sailed straight to the top of the North American box office, bringing home \$124.5 million in its opening weekend, the best live action debut of the year, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

The latest remake of the nearly 3,000-year-old epic captured another \$139 million in overseas sales for a total of \$263.5 million, according to Exhibitor Relations, more than paying for the film’s reported \$250 million price tag.

The film, with a high-voltage cast led by Matt Damon and Anne Hathaway; and produced by Universal, pillaged earlier estimates that forecast an opening weekend haul of less than \$100 million.

“Nolan is the only filmmaker working today who could take an ancient story like this, attract a cast as sprawling and accomplished as this and make it a pop culture event”, said veteran industry analyst David A Gross.

Based on Homer’s ancient epic



US rapper Travis Scott attends “The Odyssey” premiere. — AFP

poem, the film tracks hero Odysseus as he faces obstacle after obstacle on his way home from the Trojan War.

It is the first film ever to be shot entirely on IMAX film cameras, as Nolan leaned into filmmaking heritage for this modern adaption of one of humanity’s oldest stories.

In distant second place, Disney’s “Moana” brought in \$19 million in its second week for a total of \$82 million in North America and \$178 million globally.

Trailing “Moana” was Universal’s “Minions & Monsters”, which earned another \$14.8 million over the weekend domestically for a global three-week total of nearly \$357.6 million. Disney’s “Toy Story 5” fell to fourth place in its fifth week, with an estimated domestic weekend take of \$13 million, for a global total of nearly \$958 million.

“Evil Dead Burn” from Warner Bros. raked in \$5 million over the weekend domestically, bringing its domestic total over the last two weeks to more than \$24 million or \$51 million globally. — AFP

FEATURES

WAR AS AN OPEN MEMORY ON THE CANVAS

SAUD AL ANSARI

THE recent war on Gaza has produced a body of art that extends far beyond visual documentation. Rather than simply responding to catastrophe, these works seek to preserve what remains when cities collapse — human dignity, memory and the fragile relationship between people and place. While photographs freeze a moment in time, art lingers on what conflict leaves behind: grief, displacement, resilience and the quiet struggle to remain human.

The paintings and drawings created by Gaza's artists have become visual testimonies shaped by different experiences of war. Some were produced amidst the ruins, others in displacement and still others from exile by artists who continue to carry the city in their memory. Together, they offer a deeply personal narrative of conflict, one that records not only physical destruction but also its lasting emotional impact.

For Palestinian artist Sohail Salem, the war transformed both his practice and the conditions under which it was created. After the studio he rented was destroyed, he salvaged what remained of his work before beginning again with little more than pen and ink on UNRWA school notebooks while living in displacement. Each drawing became a visual diary created under the constant possibility of loss, prompting him to share his work almost daily because there was no certainty that either the drawings or their creator would survive.

Yet Sohail resists describing his work as documentation. Instead, he views it as an act of psychological resistance and a form of mourning.

His aim is not merely to record tragedy, but to preserve the dignity of those who endure it. The people who appear in his paintings are portrayed as individuals with memory, identity and presence, rather than anonymous victims reduced to symbols of suffering.

His black ink drawings reflect this approach. Faces gather closely together, bodies lean into one another and expressions carry the quiet weight of

exhaustion and grief. Violence is rarely depicted directly. Instead, it is conveyed through the emotional traces left on human faces, inviting viewers to contemplate the unseen burden of survival.

In another work, a woman cradles the body of a martyr resting upon cactus and ruins. Rather than illustrating a single event, the composition evokes themes of motherhood, endurance and sacrifice, suggesting that when homes disappear, the human body itself becomes the final refuge.

A different yet equally intimate perspective emerges in the work of Majed Shala. After his studio was destroyed, he moved between displacement camps carrying only paper and black pens. Like Salem, Shala rejects the label of documentary artist, explaining that his drawings were an attempt to comprehend a reality in which, as he describes it, “my life was turned completely upside down”. One of his paintings portrays two figures embracing above a landscape of shattered homes and fading tents. The image shifts the focus from destroyed buildings to the deeper meaning of home itself — as a place of belonging, protection and emotional security. In this composition, the embrace becomes a substitute home, the last remaining shelter in a city stripped of its physical foundations.

Executed with restrained colour, delicate washes and an economy of visual language, the work does not seek dramatic effect. Instead, its quiet simplicity amplifies the emotional weight of loss, making the tragedy feel intimate rather than distant.

Together, the works of Sohail Salem and Majed Shala demonstrate how art can preserve experiences that often lie beyond the reach of conventional reporting. Their paintings are not simply records of war; they are reflections on memory, displacement and survival. In doing so, they remind viewers that while conflict may erase buildings and alter landscapes, it cannot extinguish the human impulse to create, remember and bear witness.



In this composition by Majed Shala, the embrace becomes a substitute home, the last remaining shelter in a city stripped of its physical foundations.



For Palestinian artist Sohail Salem, the war transformed both his practice and the conditions under which it was created.



Artist Majed Shala



Artist Sohail Salem