

O M A N  
عُومَانِ  
D A I L Y

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 241  
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

  
2010000387405



The Observer is bringing out an online supplement on FIFA World Cup 2026, which will be published on [www.omanobserver.om](#) at 12 pm daily.

IN BRIEF

HM CONDOLES QATAR EMIR

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, on the death of his father, Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathy to the Emir and all the Qatari people on this profound loss, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise, and grant them patience to bear the loss. — ONA

HM'S GREETINGS TO MONTENEGRO

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Jakov Milatovic of the Republic of Montenegro on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his good wishes to President Jakov and the people of his country, wishing Montenegro growth, prosperity, and stability, as well as the realisation of further achievements. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations of cooperation and friendship further development and expansion across various fields. — ONA

MUSANDAM TARGETED

MUSCAT: A security source reported that sites in the Governorate of Musandam were targeted by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The Sultanate of Oman affirms its condemnation and denunciation of this attack. — ONA

SEE P2

UN urges US-Iran ceasefire

UN

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the United States and Iran on Sunday to halt their new outbreak of fighting in the Mideast war and resume talks to end it.

Guterres specifically mentioned US attacks on Iran and the latter's strikes on ships in the Strait of Hormuz and US allies in the Gulf region. "These attacks must stop," Guterres spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

Meanwhile, US and Iranian forces have exchanged heavy missile and drone assaults, with Tehran targeting US facilities in states across the Gulf on Sunday and saying it had again closed the vital Strait of Hormuz.

The strikes were the latest in a cycle of attacks and counter-attacks as Iran seeks to assert control over shipping through the strait. However, the barrage marked an escalation in pace and range.

The strikes extended to Qatar, a mediator in ceasefire talks that had not come under attack since April, while the UAE which had not been targeted since early May, said its air defences had engaged missiles and drones from Iran.

Kuwait's defence ministry said on Sunday that three border posts and an offshore oil platform were attacked during a fresh exchange of strikes between the US and Iran.

"Three land border posts in the north of the country were subjected to a cowardly attack, resulting in material damage," the statement said, without specifying the origin of the assault.

Meanwhile, Iran said the Strait of Hormuz was closed on Sunday while the US insisted it remained open, after the confrontation over the vital waterway again sparked US and Iranian strikes.

The strait, essential to global oil and gas supplies, has become a central point of



A woman walks past a sign depicting the raised fist of the late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, at Imam Hussein Square in Tehran.

— Reuters

Oman summons Iran ambassador

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has summoned Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman, to hand him a formal note of protest following the targeting of sites in the governorates of Musandam and Al Wusta by unmanned aerial vehicles.

The note of protest was handed over by Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, when he received the Iranian Ambassador in Muscat on Sunday.

During the meeting, Al Muselhi voiced Oman's profound dismay at these irresponsible acts, underscoring the imperative of adhering to the provisions of state sovereignty, good neighbourliness, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for the established norms and moral principles that bind the relations between the two neighbouring countries and their peoples. — ONA

contention between the two foes, repeatedly leading to exchanges of fire despite an agreement aimed at ending the war that was struck last month.

The latest exchange was prompted by another Iranian attack on a commercial ship in the waterway whose crew was forced to abandon it after it went up in flames.

Before the war began with surprise US-Israeli strikes against Iran on February 28, there was free passage through Hormuz, but Tehran now insists that it will control the strait, while Washington is adamant it cannot. — AFP

SEE P6



AL MOUJ MUSCAT

A living legacy

Established in 2006, this year Al Mouj Muscat celebrates 20 years of distinction, leadership, development and growth, remarkable milestones and outstanding achievements.

20 Years of Impact





+1 Bn  $\text{AED}$

SALES REVENUE GENERATED

43.6%

IN-COUNTRY VALUE

878 Mn  $\text{AED}$

DIRECT GDP CONTRIBUTION

88%

MCKINSEY & COMPANY ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH INDEX

880 Mn  $\text{AED}$

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

167

SMES SUPPORTED

19 Mn  $\text{AED}$

TAXES PAID

5

WORLD CLASS HOTELS

385 K  $\text{AED}$

DAILY COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

90

NATIONALITIES LIVE IN OUR COMMUNITY

337%

SHAREHOLDER RETURN

70

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL AWARDS WON

RESIDENTIAL UNITS HANDOVER

2006



Shareholder and Development Agreement signed

2008



First Unit Handover

2010



625

2014



1,257

2018



2,154

2022



2,538

2026



3,272

## OMAN

## SHORTTAKES

# MUSANDAM TARGETED IN UAV STRIKE

**MUSCAT:** A security source reported that sites in the Governorate of Musandam were targeted by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

*The Sultanate of Oman affirms its condemnation and denunciation of this attack and confirms that it is taking all necessary measures to address these developments in order to safeguard the safety of the nation and its residents.*

Meanwhile, the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) reported that the competent authorities responded to a distress call issued by the commercial vessel 'GFS Galaxy,' which flies the flag of the Republic of Cyprus, following an accident 4.4 nautical miles off the coast of Musandam Governorate.

*The centre indicated that 23 crew members of the ship were rescued and provided with the necessary healthcare, while specialised teams continue search operations for one crew member who remains missing. — ONA*

# NRAA LAUNCHES 6TH EDITION OF 'LITTLE DOCUMENTARY GUIDE' PROGRAMME



*The programme features panel discussions with successful youth models.*

*MUSCAT: The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) launched on Sunday the activities of the sixth edition of the 'Little Documentary Guide' programme. Organised by the Department of Documentary Exhibitions, the programme runs until July 16 at the Permanent Exhibition of National Records and Archives.*

*The programme comes within the framework of the Authority's efforts to utilise the summer vacation to develop the capabilities of youth and enhance their awareness of the importance of national documents. This is achieved through a training programme that combines lectures, practical workshops, and field tours, aiming to develop guiding, communication, and public speaking skills, while consolidating the values of national identity and belonging.*

*The programme includes introductory visits to the Authority's facilities and practical applications in documentary guiding within the Permanent Exhibition. It also features panel discussions with successful youth models in the fields of Holy Quran memorisation, scientific innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital content creation, in addition to cultural competitions and awareness lectures that contribute to refining the participants' skills.*

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sabahi, Head of the Exhibition Organisation Section at the National Records and Archives Authority, said that the programme embodies the Authority's interest in investing in the energy of youth by introducing them to the role of documents in preserving national memory and providing them with guiding and communication skills. This contributes to preparing a generation that is aware of the value of documents, proud of its national identity, and capable of presenting information in a scientific and engaging manner.

—ONA

# MoHUP housing options benefit 189,000 families



*The ministry has adopted more flexible solutions to expedite families' access to housing.*

**YOUSSEF AL HABSI**  
MUSCAT, JULY 12

**THE** MINISTRY of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) continues to develop an integrated housing empowerment system. The system offers diverse housing options, enhances social housing programmes enabling citizens to choose housing solutions that meet their needs as well as expanding investment opportunities in government lands.

The ministry's approach is based on empowering beneficiaries to choose the most suitable housing solution according to their needs through seven main services: 'Choose Your Land', 'Plan Your Land', 'Obtain Your Land', 'Exchange Your Land', 'Integrated Residential Plans', 'Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods', and 'Future Cities'.

The system provides diverse options that meet citizens'

aspirations and contribute to building integrated urban environments that combine housing, services, and facilities thus enhancing quality of life and family stability.

These options enabled more than 15,000 families to choose land or housing units in 2025. The total number of beneficiaries of housing options between 2020 and the end of 2025 crossed 189,000 families.

Residential land was the most in-demand option representing 74.4 per cent of beneficiaries while developed residential land accounted for 25 per cent.

Regarding the empowerment of beneficiaries of social housing programmes, which aim to provide suitable housing for eligible families, 1,531 families benefited during 2025. A total of 700 homes were distributed to citizens, representing 46 per cent of the total approved projects, while another 831 homes, representing 54 per cent

of the total, are currently under construction.

The ministry also adopted more flexible solutions to expedite families' access to housing by expanding the purchase of ready-built homes. This constituted 42 per cent of all social housing projects in 2025, totalling 959 homes at the Sultan Haitham City projects and the Sorouh initiative, in addition to direct purchases from the local market.

From 2020 to 2025, more than 8,000 families attained housing stability through social housing programmes, with total allocations exceeding RO 200 million. This included the construction of more than 465 housing units at a cost exceeding RO 23 million, the provision of more than 540 housing units in partnership with the private sector, and the purchase of 270 housing units in future city and residential neighbourhood projects at a cost exceeding RO 11.8 million.

# *New SQU research maps renewable energy roadmap for remote communities*

In remote areas, where distance from major cities makes electricity not merely a service but a vital lifeline for daily life, development and stability, a study led by Professor Abdullah bin Hamad al Badi from the College of Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University has found that hybrid energy systems could provide more efficient and sustainable solutions for meeting electricity demand in isolated regions while simultaneously reducing costs and emissions.

The research examined the potential of hybrid power systems in Al Hallaniyat Islands, Masirah Island and Al Duqm. The study concluded that carefully designed combinations of renewable and conventional energy sources can offer reliable and economically viable alternatives for electricity supply in these locations.

The study employed a comprehensive



*The findings carry important implications for policymakers and the energy sector*

technical, economic and environmental assessment based on actual data on electricity demand, wind speeds and solar radiation from the three sites.

Using the HOMER Pro simulation platform, the research team evaluated several energy scenarios incorporating solar power, wind energy and battery storage, alongside supporting technologies such as diesel generators, natural gas generators and fuel cells.

The findings revealed that a renewable energy system integrated with natural gas provided the most favourable economic performance in areas with high electricity demand, particularly in Al Dugm.

The levelised cost of electricity was estimated at \$0.100 per kilowatt-hour, compared with \$0.126 per kilowatt-hour for a renewable-diesel configuration and \$0.610 per kilowatt-hour for a renewable system supported by fuel cells.



**burjeel**  
hospital  
By Burjeel Holdings

  **24399777**

[www.burjeelhospitaloman.com](http://www.burjeelhospitaloman.com)

**Dr. Mujeeb Ahamed**  
Specialist Cardiologist



**Dr. Waleed Bashandy**  
Specialist - Interventional Cardiology



**Your Heart Deserves the Best:  
Expert Care from Our Cardiologist!**



**Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair**

MOH 4219410/2025

SHORT TAKES



OMAN AIR, SALAM AIR ADD 192 FLIGHTS TO MEET KHAREEF TRAVEL DEMAND

MUSCAT: Oman Air and SalamAir announced a significant expansion of their operational activities to the Wilayat of Salalah, coinciding with the Khareef Dhofar Season 2026, by increasing their operational capacity by up to 400 per cent during the peak period of the season.

Oman Air increased the number of available seats to Salalah from around 675 seats per day last April to more than 3,000 seats during peak demand days, while SalamAir’s daily seat capacity rose from 495 seats to 1,505 seats during the same period. During the month of July alone, the two carriers added 192 additional flights and 35,639 extra seats on the Muscat–Salalah route, alongside enhancing domestic flights.

Oman Air maintained the fixed pricing for Omani citizens, which has been approved since 2023, allowing citizens to travel between Muscat and Salalah for RO 54. During the Khareef Dhofar Season, travellers will be able to choose from up to 23 daily flights between Muscat and Salalah at various times meeting different travel needs.

Con Korfiatis, CEO of Oman Air, explained that the Khareef Dhofar Season constitutes a key pillar of tourism attraction in Oman. From this standpoint, it is the responsibility of the national carriers to lead efforts aimed at enhancing air connectivity with this vital destination, noting that the expanded programme reflects the company’s commitment to achieving this balance, ensuring seamless travel opportunities for Omani citizens at subsidised and fixed prices.

Adrian Hamilton-Manns, CEO of SalamAir, said that the growth of the Khareef Dhofar Season, will be supported through the largest seasonal operational programme implemented by the company, and by expanding its network of destinations, increasing the number of flights, and enhancing seat capacity, thereby allowing travellers from various parts of the Sultanate of Oman and the region easier opportunities to reach Dhofar and enjoy its unique natural and tourist assets. — ONA

SPF ACHIEVES ISO CERTIFICATIONS

MUSCAT: The Social Protection Fund (SPF) obtained the international certifications of ISO 9001:2015 for Quality Management Systems, ISO 10002:2018 for Complaints Management, and ISO 18295:2017 for Contact Centre Management.

This achievement is the culmination of the SPF’s efforts to implement an integrated management system based on global best practices.

This system enhances service quality, improves operational efficiency, develops customer experience, and fosters a culture of quality and continuous improvement, aligning with the fund’s commitment to achieving institutional excellence. The SPF received international certification after completing all phases of the integrated management systems project.

The phases included a current situation assessment, gap analysis, development of an implementation plan, documentation of procedures, staff training, implementation of training programmes, internal audits, and an external audit that confirmed the SPF’s systems meet the requirements of the approved international standards. It also strengthens customer and beneficiary trust by providing services based on internationally recognised standards.

AL ASHKHARA TOURISM FORUM BEGINS ON JULY 22

JAALAN BANI BU ALI: The fourth edition of Al Ashkharah Tourism Forum will be held from July 22 to August 15. The event is organised by the Office of the Governor of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate in Al Ashkharah area, Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali.

Al Ashkharah Tourism Forum promotes activities that highlight the Omani heritage and enhance innovation and economic development.

Over the past few years, the



The forum succeeded in showcasing Al Ashkharah area into a tourist destination

forum succeeded in transforming the coastal strip of Al Ashkharah area into a destination that attracted thousands of visitors.

It utilised natural and cultural elements in generating an integrated tourism product that showcased the vitality of the countryside economy, in partnership with the local community.

The forum emerges as a comprehensive national platform rooted in the Omani identity and aligned with the aspirations of the tourism sector. It also saw the participation of 27 SMEs, 20 local business households and 31 craftsmen. — ONA

Mirbat Old Souq set for heritage revival project

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
MIRBAT, JULY 12

MIRBAT OLD Souq, one of Dhofar’s most significant historic marketplaces, remains awaiting restoration as residents and heritage enthusiasts call for the preservation and revival of a site that once stood at the heart of the governorate’s commercial and social life.

Located alongside Mirbat Fort, the old mosque and the former customs house, the souq formed part of the town’s historic administrative and trading centre. Closely connected to Mirbat Port, the marketplace played a key role in maritime trade routes linking Dhofar with Oman’s coastal governorates, India, East Africa, Yemen and the Gulf.

According to researcher Saeed bin Khalid al Amri, the historic market includes 53 shops spread across an area of around 4,000 square metres. The wider heritage zone, including the fort, customs house and surrounding areas, extends over approximately 13,000 square metres.

Al Amri noted that the souq was once a major centre for the trade of frankincense, dates, ghee, leather and imported goods. Beyond commerce, it served as a gathering place for the community, where residents met, announcements were made and social affairs were discussed.



The historic market includes 53 shops spread across an area of around 4,000 square metres.

The current structure of the souq developed during the early twentieth century, expanding through different periods as Mirbat’s commercial activity grew. However, its importance gradually declined from the late 1970s due to the decline of maritime trade, population movement towards newer areas and the emergence of modern shopping centres.

The site also holds archaeological value. Research by Al Amri refers to the discovery of an Ayyubid dinar dating back to 1178 AD

at the market site, while excavations around Mirbat Fort have uncovered remains linked to the Iron Age and later Islamic periods.

In recent years, parts of the old market have experienced deterioration, with some sections affected by weather conditions and the passage of time. The situation has renewed calls for a comprehensive restoration project that would preserve the site’s historical character while transforming it into a vibrant tourism destination.

Summer Arts students ready for July 16 theatre debut

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
MUSCAT, JULY 12

Theatre dreams are taking shape as young participants of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth’s ‘Summer Arts 2026’ programme prepare to present their original play on Thursday, July 16.

The two-week cultural programme, organised to nurture creativity among young people, has introduced students to various aspects of theatre, including scriptwriting, directing, acting, stage design and theatrical makeup.

Jalila al Fahdi, Manager of the Department of Theatre and Cinema, said the programme had received strong participation from students eager to explore the performing arts.

“Our programme is called ‘From Story to Theatre,’ and the students have shown great



JALILA AL FAHDI

enthusiasm and involvement throughout the sessions,” she said. At the theatre hall of the Omani Fine Arts Society, students have been transforming ideas into performance pieces under the guidance of experienced trainers.

Sarah al Ajmi, Head of the Theatre Department, explained that participants were receiving practical training in different areas of theatre production.

“The students have been



The Arabic play will be staged at the Oman Fine Arts Society

learning scriptwriting, directing and acting, while also being introduced to theatrical makeup and set design,” she said.

The workshop is being led by Omani writer and director Osama Zayed, who has conducted numerous theatre programmes and earned recognition across Oman and the GCC.

Describing the students’

progress, Zayed said their enthusiasm reflected the potential of young talents in the performing arts.

“The students have great energy and a strong desire to learn. The skills they gain from this workshop can also help them in their school theatre activities, whether in acting, writing or supporting their peers.”

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

KISWAHILI CELEBRATES SHARED HERITAGE BETWEEN OMAN, EAST AFRICA

KABEER YOUSUF  
MUSCAT, JULY 12

The Sultanate of Oman joined the global observance of World Kiswahili Language Day, celebrating the rich historical and cultural



PROF IBRAHIM BIN NOOR BIN SHARIFF AL BAKRY

connections between Oman and East Africa, as communities across Muscat and Salalah marked the occasion under the theme ‘Kiswahili for Peace, Solidarity and Global Economic Diplomacy.’

The event highlighted the growing role of Kiswahili in promoting dialogue, education, cultural

identity, regional integration and international cooperation, while reflecting the deep-rooted ties between Oman and East Africa shaped by centuries of maritime exchange and shared history.

Kiswahili is widely spoken in Oman, with estimates ranging between 22,000 and 50,000 speakers, mainly concentrated in Muscat and coastal areas. The language connection dates back to the period between the 17th and 19th centuries, when Oman maintained strong political, commercial and cultural links with Zanzibar and the East African coast.

Many Omani families of Zanzibari and East African heritage continue to use Kiswahili as a heritage language within their homes and communities, preserving a unique cultural bond that has endured for generations.

Unesco established World Kiswahili Language Day in 2021 to recognise the language’s contribution to peace, cultural diversity and unity among its more than 200 million speakers worldwide.

Speaking to Observer, Professor Ibrahim bin Noor bin Shariff al Bakry, a linguist and retired professor of Arts at Sultan Qaboos University, highlighted the historic linguistic connections between Oman and East Africa, noting the significant influence of Arabic on Kiswahili.

He explained that centuries of maritime trade and interaction between the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa resulted in thousands of Arabic loanwords becoming part of the Kiswahili vocabulary, reflecting the close cultural exchanges between the two regions.

“Kiswahili carries within it a history of interaction between different communities. The influence of Arabic, particularly through Omani connections with the East African coast, remains an important part of its development,” he said.

MAHADHA UNVEILS FIRST INTEGRATED FRUIT TREE PROJECT



The project involves an investment of over RO 171,000

**MAHADHA:** The first integrated investment project specialising in fruit tree cultivation in Al Buraimi Governorate is being implemented in Zaroub area of the Wilayat of Mahadha, with an investment exceeding RO 171,000, as part of efforts to strengthen food security and promote sustainable agricultural development.

The project focuses on the cultivation, production and marketing of figs, lemons and mangoes, reflecting the growing partnership between the public and private sectors in utilising agricultural resources and enhancing investment opportunities in Oman’s farming sector.

Dr Ahmed bin Saif al Amri, Director-General of Agriculture and Water Resources in Al Buraimi Governorate, said the project has achieved more than 80 per cent completion across the cultivated areas, with planting activities progressing efficiently since they began in March 2025. — ONA

LEADERSHIP ROOTING PROGRAMME CONCLUDES IN DHOFAR

**SALALAH:** The summer programme (Leadership Rooting) concluded on Sunday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Compound for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. The programme was organised by the Municipal Council of Dhofar Governorate in collaboration with the ‘Ta’seel’ Initiative Team over a two-week period, targeting 90 male and female students.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, who honoured the participating students, trainers, lecturers and contributors to the organisation, in recognition of their efforts in



The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani.

implementing the programme and achieving its objectives.

The programme encompassed a series of specialist lectures, workshops, interactive sessions and applied activities, delivered by over

26 trainers, lecturers and speakers. These sessions were designed to cultivate leadership capabilities among young participants, instil national values, enhance social responsibility and refine personal skills, thereby contributing to the preparation of a cadre of young national leaders.

The programme forms part of broader community-driven efforts aimed at nurturing a generation conscious of its national identity, steadfast in its values and equipped with the knowledge and leadership competencies necessary to make a meaningful contribution to the service of the nation and society. — ONA

Swimming lessons surge as safety takes priority

SIHAM AL SAIDI

**SURROUNDED** by thousands of kilometres of coastline and home to beaches and wadis, swimming in Oman is increasingly being viewed not merely as recreation but as a vital life skill. Yet for many children, learning to swim is often postponed until the summer holidays, when they finally have the time to attend regular training sessions.

Throughout the academic year, students balance school responsibilities, homework, examinations and extracurricular activities, leaving little room for additional commitments. For many parents, arranging two or three swimming sessions each week becomes difficult, making summer the most practical opportunity for children to build water confidence.

This seasonal demand has led to increased enrolment at swimming academies and sports centres across the country, with many programmes reaching capacity quickly as families seek places for their children.

Haroon bin Hussain al Shizawi, swimming coach at the Summer Sports Programme in Al Batinah North Governorate, said the programme had witnessed strong participation and enthusiasm among young swimmers.

“The participants showed remarkable commitment throughout the training period. We saw clear improvement in their swimming abilities and growing confidence in the water with every session. The programme successfully combined skill development with an enjoyable learning environment, encouraging children to continue practising beyond the training period.”



Summer Sports Programme saw strong participation and enthusiasm in Al Batinah North Governorate

Families enrol children in swimming lessons across Oman as it extends far beyond physical activity

He added that parents had expressed satisfaction with the programme’s organisation and focus on safety.

“Families appreciated the secure training environment and the close supervision provided by the coaching team. The programme not only improved children’s swimming abilities but also encouraged them to spend their summer holidays in a productive and meaningful way.”

For Al Shizawi, swimming extends far beyond physical activity. It develops safety awareness, fitness, discipline and self-confidence, making summer an ideal time for children to acquire these valuable skills.

Parents agree that the benefits outweigh the challenges of scheduling lessons.

“We simply cannot manage swimming lessons during the school

year,” said Fatma al Hosni, a mother. “Summer is our opportunity.

We no longer see swimming as just entertainment; we see it as a responsibility. Every child should know how to stay safe in the water.”

As Oman continues to encourage healthier lifestyles and youth development, many believe swimming should become more accessible throughout the year. Expanding affordable, year-round programmes could help more children gain a skill that combines enjoyment with safety.

Ultimately, the success of a swimming programme is not measured only by how quickly a child crosses the pool. It is measured by confidence replacing fear, independence replacing hesitation and the reassurance that one summer lesson may one day make all the difference.

450 mangrove seedlings cultivated in Shinas

**SHINAS:** The Environment Department in the Governorate of Al Batinah North has successfully cultivated 450 mangrove seedlings in Khor Hameira, Wilayat of Shinas. This step forms part of an environmental initiative that has contributed to the ecological rehabilitation of the site and the enhancement of its vegetative cover, which had previously been devoid of this species.

Findings from ongoing field monitoring have demonstrated the successful establishment of the planted seedlings in their natural environment, with healthy growth patterns observed.



The average height of the seedlings ranges between approximately 1.5 and 2 metres, reflecting both the success

of the cultivation operations and the suitability of the site for mangrove growth. The initiative was implemented

in two phases commencing in 2024, following the conduct of necessary measurements and tests for salinity levels and pH in both water and soil, to verify the environmental suitability for cultivation and ensure the long-term sustainability of seedling growth.

The success of this initiative has resulted in the formation of a new coastal vegetative cover in Khor Hameira, thereby supporting the restoration of natural habitats, enhancing biodiversity, providing a conducive environment for marine life and bird species and reinforcing the sustainability of the coastal ecosystem while protecting shorelines. — ONA

# QATAR'S FORMER LEADER HAMAD BIN KHALIFA DIES AT 74



**QATAR'S** government on Sunday announced the death of former leader Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, who led the country from 1995 to 2013. He was 74, according to a government website. "With hearts steadfast in faith in Allah's decree and destiny, the Bureau of the Emir mourns the great loss to the nation of the late — may Allah have mercy on him — His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani," read a statement published by the emir's office on social media.

Qatari officials said funeral prayers were held in the evening along with several days of public mourning across the country, which would see government offices and public institutions closed and flags flown at half mast.

The former leader was seen as one of the key architects of modern Qatar and led the country during a period of rapid economic growth. Shaikh Hamad took power in June 1995.

Within a few years, he laid the foundations for Qatar's rapid development. The country possesses one of the world's largest natural gas reserves.

Thanks to investments and international partnerships, the state became a leading producer and exporter of liquefied natural

gas. It also rose to become one of the wealthiest countries on the planet in terms of GDP per capita. Qatar's population under Shaikh Hamad's rule numbered barely two million, the majority of them foreign nationals. During his time in office, Al Jazeera was launched in 1996, following a decree issued by the emir, with the international broadcaster becoming one of the most influential media outlets in the region. The Qatar Investment Authority was established with the aim of investing billions of dollars, particularly abroad, in companies including German automaker Volkswagen, London's luxury department store Harrods, and French football club Paris Saint-Germain.

Shaikh Hamad was still emir when Qatar was awarded the right to host the 2022 Fifa World Cup in 2010. Also under his reign, Qatar began paying hundreds of millions of dollars to the Gaza Strip, notably funding road projects along the coast. A hospital in Gaza City bears his name.

In June 2013, Shaikh Hamad surprised many by voluntarily abdicating in favour of his son, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, a first in the recent history of the Arab world. Qatar has a population of around 3 million, most of whom are foreign workers. — AFP



المجلس الأعلى للقضاء

The Supreme Judicial Council

Bidding Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to Submit the following Bidding:

| Bidding No. | Bidding Title                                                                           | Bidding Document Sales End Date | Bid Submission Closing | Bidding Document Fee (non-refundable) |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 01/2026     | Leasing and Operation of Cafés in the Court Complexes of Sohar, Nizwa, Rustaq, and Ibra | 02/08/2026                      | 02/09/2026             | RO 25/-                               |

Companies and institutions wishing to obtain bidding documents may visit the Financial Affairs Department on the first floor of the General Secretariat building of the Supreme Judicial Council in Airport heights during official working hours. To receive the bidding conditions brochure against the specified financial fee.

The envelopes must be kept closed and sealed with red wax, with the phrase (café rental bid and the name of the bidder) written on them, provided that the name of the bidder or anything referring to him is not written on the envelope. Bids are submitted to the Tenders and Contracts Department in the same building and on the first floor during official working hours, before the hour. 10 a.m. on Thursday, 02/09/2026

- Any bid received after the specified date or that does not meet the conditions will not be considered.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Thailand's FM Sihasak Phuengketkeow speaks with Myanmar's FM Tin Maung Swe during their bilateral meeting in Bangkok. — Reuters

ASEAN MINISTERS  
PUSH STALLED PLAN  
IN MYANMAR TALKS

**BANGKOK:** Southeast Asian foreign ministers pressed their Myanmar counterpart for “concrete” progress on a stagnant Asean peace plan for the country during a meeting in Bangkok on Sunday, top Thai and Philippine diplomats said. The meeting between foreign ministers of several members of the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and Myanmar’s Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe was the first such gathering.

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuengketkeow told a press briefing on Sunday that his government supported “calibrated engagement” with Myanmar in an effort to implement Asean’s “five-point consensus” plan aimed at ending the war between the military and a coalition of pro-democracy rebels.

“We have some concrete expectations” with regard to humanitarian assistance, reduction of violence, especially against civilians, and promoting inclusive political dialogue, Sihasak told reporters. He also urged “further release of political prisoners and further positive development” with regard to 81-year-old Suu Kyi, who remains detained after she was moved from prison to house arrest. — AFP

NEW SYRIAN  
PARLIAMENT MEETS  
FOR FIRST TIME



Members of Syria's newly formed People's Assembly attend the body's inaugural session. — Reuters

**DAMASCUS:** Syria's new parliament convened for the first time on Sunday, 19 months after President Ahmed al Sharaa toppled Bashar al Assad, a milestone in the country's political transition despite the chamber's current limited powers. Sharaa, in a speech at parliament in Damascus, told lawmakers to “make this council a model of responsibility and competence” and described it as “a platform for truth and justice”. “Syria is writing a glorious history that reflects its heroism, and we face the responsibility of building both the nation and the individual,” he said.

Under the country's interim governing arrangements, two-thirds of the members of the 210-seat chamber were chosen last year by regional electoral colleges, while Sharaa named the remaining third on July 1. Officials have said this system was necessary because years of war had left millions displaced and made it impossible to rely on accurate population records or voter rolls.

A constitutional declaration introduced in 2025 granted parliament limited authorities, and there is no requirement for the government to win a parliamentary vote of confidence. — Reuters

Iran, US trade more strikes

VESSELS SET ABLAZE IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ



A projectile is fired during what the US Central Command said was a third round of strikes against Iran. — Reuters

**IRAN** SAID on Sunday it was closing the Strait of Hormuz and launched missiles and drones at Gulf neighbours after the US carried out a new round of strikes as their conflict escalated. The latest exchange of fire was sparked by another Iranian attack on a commercial ship in the strait, whose crew were forced to abandon the vessel after it went up in flames. The escalation is the latest to undermine an interim agreement between Washington and Tehran aimed at ending their war, which broke out in late February with US-Israeli strikes that killed Iran's supreme leader.

“Following this incident... the Strait of Hormuz will be closed until further notice and until the end of American interventions in this region,” Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday, according to state news agency IRNA. Iran said it had targeted two ships in Hormuz, claiming they had ignored instructions to use an approved transit corridor or were “violating regulations”, IRNA said.

The attacks prompted a barrage of US strikes across Iran in response,

The attacks prompted a barrage of US strikes across Iran in response, with the American military saying it had hit about 140 targets in its third round of attacks this week. Iranian media reported explosions in Bandar Abbas, Sirik, Jask and on Qeshm Island, as well as in Khuzestan province

with the American military saying it had hit about 140 targets in its third round of attacks this week. Iranian media reported explosions in Bandar Abbas, Sirik, Jask and on Qeshm Island, as well as in Khuzestan province, with one soldier reported dead in the southern city of Jask. “The United States is imposing a heavy cost by continuing to degrade Iran's ability to attack civilian mariners and commercial ships freely transiting the strait,” the US military said on X. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said: “Iran made a poor choice. Now they pay.”

- Hormuz Flashpoint  
Iran's response came quickly, with sirens and explosions soon heard in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, journalists and local authorities reported. Qatar said three people were injured by Iranian attacks, while the UAE issued a warning for incoming missiles but later said they did not enter its territory. Kuwait also said it was working to intercept an attack, while Jordan said three Iranian missiles fell inside the kingdom.

Iran closed the waterway to commercial shipping during the

war, heavily impacting the world economy because the strait is a key conduit for energy exports from the Gulf. Tehran insists on controlling the passage of ships and plans to charge fees, a stance Washington has rejected. Control of the waterway has emerged as key leverage for Iran, with an adviser to the country's supreme leader on Sunday saying it was more important than “dozens of atomic bombs”.

- Vessel Attack  
Sunday's attack on a Cyprus-flagged container ship in the waterway left one Indian sailor missing, New Delhi said. Iran said it had fired “warning shots”, but the US military accused Tehran of “blatantly” attacking the vessel. The crew abandoned ship and were on a lifeboat, the British maritime agency UKMTO reported. Separate Iranian strikes on ships in the Hormuz Strait had already triggered fighting earlier this week, along with heated rhetoric.

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has vowed revenge for the killing of his father and predecessor on the first day of the war on February 28. — AFP



ISRAELI ATTACKS IN GAZA KILL FIVE PEOPLE

**CAIRO:** Israeli attacks killed at least five people in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including a 9-year-old girl, Palestinian health officials said. Medics said Israeli gunfire directed at a tent encampment on the eastern side of the Al Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza killed 9-year-old Tala Abu Matar. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the girl's death. An air strike at a metal foundry in Gaza City's Sabra neighbourhood killed four people. Witnesses said the site was hit with three Israeli missiles.

The ceasefire agreed in October 2025 between Israel and Hamas halted major fighting in the enclave, but it has failed to stop Israeli attacks that have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians since it took effect. Four Israeli soldiers have been killed by militants in Gaza over the same period. The latest violence comes as Hamas leaders visited Cairo for further talks over implementing the second phase of US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan. Nearly all of Gaza's 2 million people, most of whom have been displaced several times, now live on a tiny strip of land along the coast, mainly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings. — Reuters

WEAKENING TYPHOON

Bavi downgraded to severe tropical storm



Typhoon Bavi was downgraded to a severe tropical storm after making landfall in eastern China, where authorities had evacuated nearly two million people in its path. The core impact zone experienced fierce winds and heavy rain, with rapid runoff forming on the ground and roadside trees being uprooted. The storm is now forecast to move northeast while “gradually weakening”, before reaching the Yellow Sea on Tuesday and transforming into an extratropical cyclone. — AFP

FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

Bangladesh monsoon death toll hits 50



Flash floods and landslides triggered by monsoon rains have killed at least 50 people in Bangladesh in the past week, local officials said, with tens of thousands displaced from their homes. For the last few days, army and border guard personnel have been ferrying food, drinking water and other essential supplies by boat to communities cut off because of heavy flooding in the country's southeastern districts. Some 35,000 people have been forced to seek shelter in centres. — AFP

LANDMARK VISIT

Iraqi PM to meet Trump in Washington



Iraq's Prime Minister Ali al Zaidi will travel on Monday to the United States to meet President Donald Trump in his first international visit since taking office, his government spokesperson said. During his one-week trip to Washington, Zaidi hopes to attract US investment to the country, which urgently needs to boost its economy, especially after significant revenue losses caused by the halt in oil exports due to the Middle East war. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko attends a session of Ukrainian parliament in Kyiv. — AFP

Ukraine’s president Zelensky orders government reshuffle

**KYIV:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced a major reshuffle of the government on Sunday, proposing the replacement of Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko and the heads of some law enforcement agencies. Zelensky did not say who would replace Svyrydenko or elaborate on the reasons for the changes.

“I am grateful to (Svyrydenko) for her clear, steady, and effective work as Prime Minister, for her years of productive service on Ukraine’s team, and I have offered her the opportunity to lead a new and important area of relations with a key partner,” Zelensky said on X. “I expect that, together with MPs, we will make the corresponding changes in the Government of Ukraine. There will also be changes among the heads of law enforcement agencies,” he added. Zelensky nominated Svyrydenko to the role of prime minister last year.

In a statement on X, Zelensky listed a number of tasks that Ukraine needed to undertake, including making progress towards joining the European Union and strengthening its border areas. He also said he planned to assign different people to manage different areas of foreign policy. “We determined that these changes require a renewal of the Cabinet of Ministers,” Zelensky said, without elaborating. — AFP

DROWNINGS SURGE IN GERMANY



Ninety-nine people drowned in Germany last month, the most since a record heatwave swept Europe in 2003, according to official figures. Germany was among the nations hit by a stifling June heatwave in western Europe, which set temperature records in several places across the country as the mercury rose as high as 41.7°C. The country “had not registered this many drownings since the heatwave of June 2003, when 107 people died”, the national life-guarding federation (DLRG) said in a statement. Forty of them were less than 30 years old. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA ISSUES FIRST EMERGENCY HEATWAVE WARNING

**SEOUL:** South Korea issued its first-ever emergency heatwave alert on Sunday under a new warning system launched this year, advising people to halt outdoor activities and keep cool. The new warning system was introduced to better deal with a rising number of heatwaves in South Korea, which have become longer and more intense, officials said. An emergency alert is issued when areas experiencing a heatwave are forecast to hit perceived temperatures of 38°C or an actual temperature of 39°C for one day. “The Korea

Meteorological Administration issued an Emergency Heatwave Warning at 10 am today for two cities in southern North Gyeongsang Province — Gyeongsan and Pohang,” said agency chief Lee Mi-Seon at a press briefing. “This marks the first time it has been issued since the system took effect,” she added. The affected areas saw temperatures reach the emergency criteria over the weekend. “An emergency heatwave warning does not simply mean the weather is extremely hot,” Lee said. “It indicates conditions in which even

healthy people face a significantly elevated risk of serious harm, including heat-related illness and death.” People engaged in outdoor activities should stop immediately and move to a cool place, and no one, including children or pets, should be left inside a vehicle, she added. Much of the country — including parts of Seoul — remained under heatwave warnings, which are issued when the perceived temperature is expected to stay at 35°C or higher for two consecutive days. — AFP

Evacuees to return after Spain wildfire stabilises

A WILDFIRE that killed at least 12 people in southern Spain has been stabilised, allowing around 1,500 evacuees to return home, officials said on Sunday. “The fire has been contained within its perimeter and brought under control, with no danger of flames spreading,” the head of the regional government of Andalusia, Juan Manuel Moreno, told reporters “This is, so to speak, the beginning of the end of a terrifying wildfire that has set records for how quickly it spread,” he added.

Some 600 people evacuated from the fire zone in Spain’s Almeria province had been allowed to return home late on Saturday, while the remaining 1,000 evacuees will now be able to do the same in stages, Moreno said.

Burned-out vehicles still line some roads where people were trapped as the fast-moving fire swept through the area at speeds of up to 100 metres per minute. “It’s just devastation, totally devastated.” James Shellingford, a 60-year-old Briton who lives in the small whitewashed village of Bedar where the victims were found, said. “We feel very sad for the people who have lost their homes and the people and the families who have lost their lives.” Lore Van Moll, 33, a Belgian woman visiting her parents in nearby Alfaix, said she felt fortunate that she was unharmed and that her family’s home had been spared. “It’s a really big relief,” she said.

Officials said the 12 people who died in the fast-moving fire had been trapped in vehicles or tried to flee on foot. “I said to my wife ‘Get out quick, leave everything. Get out.’ And the time it took to say that I was engulfed in a ball of fire,” a tearful Jerome Navarro told French television on Saturday. He and his French wife had just arrived at their holiday home when the flames closed in. Navarro escaped by throwing himself into a ditch and crawling away, but hasn’t seen his wife, who remains missing.

Authorities have kept the death toll at 12 and cautioned that the number of missing people remains uncertain until autopsies and the identification of recovered bodies



Campaign hats for Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump.

are completed. Officials have said many of the victims could be foreign nationals. The Civil Guard police planned another search of the affected area on Sunday to ensure no victims remain unaccounted for. “I sincerely hope they don’t find anyone else, but we need to carry out one final thorough search to make sure that’s the case,” Virginia Barcones, Spain’s top emergency management official, told public broadcaster TVE. Calmer winds and higher air humidity levels allowed firefighters on Saturday to directly attack the flames for the first time, officials said.

The authorities suspect the wildfire — one of the deadliest in Spain’s recent history — began on Thursday when a power line broke during an extreme heatwave that has pushed temperatures above 40°C in recent weeks. Winter and spring rains spurred abundant vegetation that later dried out in successive heat waves, leaving ample fuel for wildfires,

officials said. The fire has so far ravaged around 7,000 hectares (17,300 acres) of land, Moreno said.

Around 500 firefighters backed by water-dropping aircraft were battling the blaze which erupted on Thursday in the Gallardos area, home to many foreign residents. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez is scheduled to visit the devastated area on Monday. The identification of the victims has been delayed by difficulties collecting DNA samples from relatives, some of whom are travelling from abroad.

Scientists agree that climate change caused by humans burning fossil fuels is making extreme weather events such as heatwaves more likely and more intense. Deadly wildfires devoured almost 400,000 hectares (one million acres) of land in Spain last year, the highest figure recorded for the country by the European Forest Fire Information System. — AFP

US Republican senator, Trump’s ally Lindsey Graham dies at 71

**WASHINGTON:** US Senator Lindsey Graham, a key Republican who went from a vocal critic of Donald Trump to one of his most loyal allies on Capitol Hill after Trump became president, has died at age 71. The South Carolina lawmaker died after a “brief and sudden illness,” his office posted on X early on Sunday. US media said emergency personnel had responded to a call for cardiac arrest at his Capitol Hill home on Saturday night.

Graham, just back from a trip to Ukraine, had been scheduled to appear on the “Meet the Press” interview programme on Sunday morning, the network said. Shortly after his death was announced, Trump called Graham “one of the greatest people and senators I have ever known” and a hard-working patriot.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was “deeply saddened”, calling Graham “a true

defender of freedom and the values that make our world safer”. A defence hawk, Graham “consistently pushed for outcomes in the War on Terror that protect our long-term national security interests,” his website said. He was a prominent supporter of Israel and Ukraine and an opponent of Iran.

During the 2016 campaign, in which Graham was among many Republicans who lost the presidential nomination to Trump, he posted on social media: “If we nominate Trump, we will get destroyed ... and we will deserve it.” Graham told CNN in 2015 that Trump was “a race-baiting, xenophobic, religious bigot,” adding, “He doesn’t represent my party. He doesn’t represent the values that the men and women who wear the uniform are fighting for.”

Later, after becoming a loyal supporter and frequent golf partner, Graham still publicly disagreed with



Campaign hats for Republican President Donald Trump.

Trump’s decision upon returning to office last year to pardon about 1,500 of the president’s supporters who attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, saying it could lead to more violence. On Friday, Graham said China could play a decisive role in pressuring Russia towards peace talks, helping end its war in Ukraine. Graham met Zelensky in Kyiv. They discussed Ukraine’s air defence

needs and a Russian sanctions bill, Zelensky said.

Graham said bolstering Ukraine’s military capabilities and aligning sanctions with a diplomatic push could force Moscow into talks.

“The road to ending this war, the road to peace, passes through Beijing more than it does (through) Washington, Kyiv or Moscow,” Graham told reporters at Kyiv’s

Mykhailivska Square. “China has an oversized influence. I’d like them to use their influence for the good of the world.” “I don’t believe Putin is there yet, but it wouldn’t take much to get him there.” In a Facebook post, he wrote: “We will always be especially grateful for the recognition of our people and words of admiration for the courage of Ukraine’s defenders.”

Graham recently served as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and was a member of the Committee on Appropriations, the Judiciary Committee and the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

A former Air Force lawyer and member of the South Carolina Air National Guard, Graham was elected to the Senate in 2002.

Before that, he was elected to the House of Representatives in 1994 for South Carolina’s 3rd congressional district. — Reuters

OPINION

Liberal Arts is becoming relevant again in AI age



SANDHYA  
RAO MEHTA

The writer is  
Associate Professor,  
Sultan Qaboos  
University

THE doomscrollers have already had their day with the liberal arts. What is the purpose, cynics argue, of learning to write, paint, or play an instrument, if artificial intelligence can make a piece of music or write a novel within minutes?

At first glance, they do have a point. Multiple AI models have been known to produce art and entire stories written by chatbots. As the models continue to improve and self-learn, it may be difficult to distinguish between human- and machine-produced products. In such a scenario, the liberal arts, with their focus on organised writing, thoughtful discussions and creative output, seem to be outdated.

And yet, counterintuitively, the liberal arts are making a comeback, albeit gradually. In fact, experts suggest that consumption on the Internet itself has peaked. There is only so much that is attractive about 30-second reels of cats playing piano or the latest food trend.

Expressing oneself has been a human instinct from the beginning of time. Evidence for this comes from prehistoric cave paintings, Sumerian writing and texts on palm fronds. All this historically indicated

the need to document mercantile trade, but also to reflect on human pain, aspiration and achievement.

Today, AI may write, but there is something incomplete about its style, which is defined as ‘frictionless, repetitive, and pretending to sound profound’. The sentences are too perfect, smooth and complete. In short, it is exactly what human writing is not. There is tension, struggle, variation and change in voice when we write – AI completes each idea with total confidence in itself. It is literally too good to be true.

The increasing distrust of AI-generated writing is exactly why liberal arts are seeing an upsurge. While mechanical writing may be everywhere, it is now important to actually learn how to use these ideas, how to synthesise them, and even communicate them with a specific audience and their own unique level.

These are not skills that AI can ever master. A high school student in Mexico is not the same as an 18-year-old in Fiji, for example, as they both have vastly different backstories and cultural frames. Knowing such variations is a human skill, not a digital one.

Institutions and companies will also require humans with emotional intelligence,

Whether it is philosophy, literature or languages, the questions raised have been about ‘how’ and ‘why’ of concepts, ideas and trends. It asks fundamental questions like the meaning of existence and the truth about the universe. These are nuanced ideas that cannot be answered in simple binary terms.

those who can understand human psychology and go beyond the broad strokes and generalisations that AI can muster up.

It is also important to understand the ethics of using content generated by third parties. Nuanced questions like whose novel it is when written by a human and AI together, or who gets the copyright and royalties when music is solely produced digitally, cannot be answered by AI – there are just too many variables. This requires critical thinking, application of theories to specific contexts and experimentation with emerging ideas.

This is exactly what liberal arts were doing all along. Whether it is philosophy, literature or languages, the questions raised have been about ‘how’ and ‘why’ of concepts, ideas and trends. It asks fundamental questions like the meaning of existence and the truth about the universe. These are nuanced ideas that cannot be answered in simple binary terms.

As an article in Forbes magazine said, these are “enduring human skills in uncertain and rapidly evolving times”.

Liberal arts have always taught us to understand a changing world. Today, we will still have to turn to the humanities to help us face and cope with this latest challenge.

RESIDENTS  
RECALL ESCAPE  
FROM DEADLY  
SPANISH WILDFIRE

ALFONS LUNA

As flames raced towards the Spanish village of Bedar, Manoli Ramos received a desperate order from the mayor: run to the church and ring the bells to warn residents of the danger closing in.

“We rang the bells many times so people would know,” the 72-year-old Bedar town councillor said in the nearby town of Los Gallardos, where she has sought refuge since the blaze broke out on Thursday. Twelve people died after getting trapped in vehicles and as they tried to flee on foot - most of them foreigners, according to officials. The blaze has torn through over 6,000 hectares of land and devastated an area that had become a peaceful refuge for foreign residents, particularly Britons who came to retire or spend holidays among the green hills near Spain’s Mediterranean coast. Many lived in isolated homes outside the village, seeking privacy and tranquillity but potentially making it more difficult to receive warnings or escape as the flames spread.

“Foreigners live scattered outside Bedar,” Ramos said. “They have beautiful homes and their belongings. They like living a little away from the centre.” The authorities suspect the wildfire began when a power line broke as Spain sweltered in extreme heat, creating tinderbox conditions. For Hassan Oulghazzi, the fire first appeared as a dark cloud hanging over his home.

The 52-year-old Moroccan resident, who has lived in Bedar for 16 years, never saw the flames but watched as thick black smoke began to cover the area before police officers pounded on his door. “How could you not be afraid?” he said. “When someone knocks on your door and tells you: ‘Get up, come on, leave here. This is real, you have to go.’” Oulghazzi fled with his wife and daughter without being able to take their belongings. He later went to a municipal sports hall in the coastal town of Garrucha, where evacuees were receiving help from the Red Cross.

But he said his fear was nothing compared with the suffering of those who died.

“Everyone was afraid, but I am really touched by the dead and those who were burned. I really am,” he said. “There are some people I know.”

Officials said some of those who died had not followed orders to evacuate or to shelter in place once the flames got too close. Austin Crilly, an 87-year-old Briton who was evacuated from the affected area, said he has lived through plenty and has learned to accept whatever comes. “I’m old school. — AFP

Tracing Oman’s historic  
coastal identity

PEOPLE often assume that borders have always existed in their current form. A map makes that assumption feel reasonable.

However, for much of history, places were understood through daily life rather than through lines on paper. Along the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, the term Oman Coast emerged from this earlier way of seeing the world.

It was not a country and it was not a political claim. It was a practical way to describe a coastal region where people lived, worked, and moved in familiar patterns.

In those earlier periods, the word Oman was used more broadly than it is today. It appeared in descriptions of a wide coastal area linked by language, trade, and shared routines. Sailors, traders, and fishing communities moved between ports that felt familiar even when local leadership differed.

This sense of continuity came from common ways of life rather than from central authority. Clear borders were not necessary for people to understand where they belonged.

Coastal life followed practical needs. Boats left when the weather allowed. Fishing and pearling took place where conditions were right. Markets formed where ships could arrive safely. Local leaders handled local affairs and responded to immediate concerns.

Relationships between communities adjusted over time, shaped by opportunity and cooperation. Influence existed in many forms, but it was not fixed or permanent. Modern readers often look for clear answers that the past does not always provide. Questions about fixed control or permanent rule assume a structure that developed much later. People



DR KHALFAN  
AL HARRASI

The author is an  
academic and  
researcher

at the time lived with overlapping connections to family and local leadership, a workable system shaped by environment and necessity. During the 19th century, outside involvement introduced a new layer of organisation. British treaties and administrative practices led to terms such as Pirate Coast and later Trucial Coast.

These labels reflected external concerns about maritime safety and foreign relations. They were tools of administration and diplomacy. They did not replace local identities or everyday practices along the coast.

The term ‘Trucial Oman’ appeared within this treaty context.

It referred to coastal rulers who had agreements affecting foreign relations. It did not indicate governance from Muscat, and it did not describe a single political unit. Internal authority remained local.

The wording served administrative clarity at the time, even though it can sound stronger when read without context today.

As years passed, written records naturally gained influence. Reports and treaties survived and were later consulted, sometimes without the surrounding context of daily life. This occasionally led to misunderstanding, where geographic description or administrative language appeared to suggest political arrangements that did not exist in practice. Recent

historical work has taken care to clarify these distinctions.

Economic change then reshaped the region. The decline of pearling altered long-standing patterns of work. The discovery of oil increased responsibility and scale. Informal arrangements that once functioned well became less suitable. Security structures became more formal. Treaty systems gradually gave way to political frameworks better suited to changing conditions.

Over the same long historical arc, Oman’s presence was not limited to its immediate coastline. Omani sailors, merchants, and leaders built strong maritime networks that connected Arabia with East Africa and parts of South Asia.

Indian Ocean routes linked ports through trade, diplomacy, and navigation. Places such as Zanzibar and Gwadar became part of this wider world of exchange. This influence was shaped by seafaring skill, trust, and long experience at sea rather than by territorial expansion.

Geography quietly shaped all of this. Mountains influenced movement inland. Deserts limited settlement. Coastlines encouraged exchange. Sea routes supported cooperation. Similar ways of life developed along the shore without requiring political unity. Shared conditions created familiarity, not uniformity.

Seen in this light, the Oman Coast reflects a deep and respected chapter of regional history that developed long before modern borders took shape.

It helps explain how life, movement, and connection grew naturally through trade, navigation, and shared experience, without the need for political claims. This shared past continues to highlight Oman’s long-standing role as a centre of experience, stability, and maritime knowledge.

# Nature’s teamwork secrets offer lessons for human society



ABDULAZIZ  
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,  
translator and  
communications  
professional

Every morning, before the first commuter fights traffic, before the first office meeting begins, before the first political argument erupts online, a miracle of cooperation is already starting across the planet.

Imagine a world where millions of individuals work together without meetings, emails, performance reviews, or long debates. A world where survival depends not on competition alone, but on collaboration. Surprisingly, this world already exists all around us in forests, oceans, grasslands, and even beneath our feet.

While humans often pride themselves on being the most intelligent species on Earth, animals have spent millions of years refining the art of cooperation. Their societies reveal lessons that are both simple and profound, offering insights into how we can build stronger teams, healthier communities, and harmonious societies.

On the other hand, executives fly across continents to learn productivity from ants. Politicians attend masterclasses on communication taught by bees. Corporate managers queue for lessons in leadership from migrating geese. And social analysts spend hours analysing elephant societies in search of the secret ingredient that keeps communities together. Nature offers these lessons free of charge, but humans rarely pay attention.

For all the technological brilliance, humans remain strangely conflicted about cooperation. We celebrate teamwork

in speeches, but reward individual achievement. We praise unity while often practicing division. We acknowledge that no one succeeds alone, yet we continue to tell stories about individuals. However, the animal kingdom tells a different story!

Beneath our feet, ants are busy conducting one of the world’s longest-running experiments in collective action. There is no ant demanding personal credit for discovering a food source. No ant insisting that a tunnel bear its name. No ant posting updates about its individual accomplishments. The colony comes first.

Humans are taught to stand out, to distinguish oneself from the crowd. But ants have survived and thrived for millions of years by mastering a principle that results emerge when individuals commit to a shared purpose.

A few metres away, a honeybee lands on a flower. After gathering nectar, it returns to the hive and performs a dance. The dance is not a celebration, not self-promotion, but information: “Here is where the food is.” That single act transforms individual discovery into collective opportunity.

Imagine if every workplace functioned with the same instinct. Imagine if information travelled as freely as it does in a beehive. Many of our failures are not failures of intelligence, but failures of communication.

Then come the elephants, philosophers of the animal world. Elephants remember,

Leadership changes hands because the journey matters more than the leader. The truth is that nature’s greatest achievements are rarely individual performances, but collective productions

encourage and help the weak. They circle the helpless, support calves, climb riverbanks and stand beside injured companions. Their behaviour tells that cooperation is not simply a strategy for survival, but also an expression of compassion.

In many human societies, empathy is treated as a soft quality, admirable but secondary. Yet elephant herds reflect that caring for one another is one of the strongest forces holding a community together.

In fact, the best lesson is taught by the geese. Every year, they cross vast distances in a V-shaped formation. Scientists explain this aerodynamics as flying together reduces resistance and saves energy. But the most fascinating detail is not the shape, but the rotation. The bird at the front eventually tires, so another bird takes the lead. No drama, no struggle and no endless contest for authority.

Leadership changes hands because the journey matters more than the leader. The truth is that nature’s greatest achievements are rarely individual performances, but collective productions. The hive succeeds because of the flock. The herd survives because of the group. The flock reaches its destination because every member contributes.

Hence, the next time a flock of geese passes overhead, or a line of ants crosses a sidewalk, remember that you are witnessing something more than instinct. You are watching experts at cooperation. They have been teaching the same lesson for millions of years.

## TEEN VENEZUELA QUAKE SURVIVOR MOURNS HER ‘YOUNG FOREVER’ FRIENDS

SARAH KINOSIAN

Maria Alejandra Sanz turned away when she heard rescue workers had pulled the lifeless body of one of her best friends from the rubble of a building levelled by twin earthquakes that struck the state of La Guaira in northern Venezuela last month.

The 17-year-old high school student had lain in near-darkness for 17 hours after the June 24 quakes, trapped beneath the collapsed building in the coastal town of La Guaira where she had grown up.

Of the group of 10 friends who had been preparing a routine for their high school graduation, four did not make it out alive.

“I’m fine,” Sanz said unconvincingly during an interview in front of her former home nine days after the disaster, the Caribbean air still heavy with dust and grief. Earlier that day, rescuers had pulled the body of her friend, Gonzalo Marquez, from the rubble. Then came a string of unanswerable questions: Would her friends have survived if rescuers had arrived sooner? What if she had been with Marquez downstairs instead of fetching him water from her upstairs apartment? Why does she get to go to university, while he is laid to rest?

Raised amid economic collapse, mass migration and authoritarian rule, Sanz and her friends began 2026 believing the US ouster of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro might finally offer a different future. Then came the quakes, which the government says have so far killed over 4,000 people and injured nearly 17,000 others.

Sanz’s troupe had been practicing seven days a week in the month leading up to the quakes, sometimes going until 3 am.

Graduation was in three days. About 20 minutes before the quakes struck, Marquez asked Sanz for water. She went up to the third-floor apartment she shared with her parents, petted her dog Bruna for the last time and was about to reach the water when the building started to shake at 6:04 pm. She moved to the nearest door frame and seconds later was engulfed in darkness as the floors below her gave way. The door frame fell over her midsection diagonally, shielding her from a collapsed wall.

Sanz saw a sliver of light across her fingers and knew she was not buried too deep. She was able to free her feet by slipping out of the oversized sneakers she was given for the dance performance.

“If I have to die, let it be while I’m asleep,” she remembers thinking at the time. Sanz woke to light falling across her hand again and began clawing towards it, wedging her body slowly between chunks of concrete and making a hole she could fit through in the wall above her. — Reuters

# Learning to think before we explain the world

ONE of the defining features of contemporary Arab public discourse is not a shortage of information but a shortage of judgment. We have become remarkably adept at producing answers before asking questions, at offering certainty where inquiry should begin, and at explaining the world in ways that reassure us more than they illuminate reality.

Perhaps nowhere is this habit more visible than in our instinctive resort to conspiracy.

Every setback becomes evidence of a hidden plot. Every criticism from abroad is interpreted as an attack on identity. Every success achieved elsewhere is attributed to manipulation rather than competence.

Conspiracies undoubtedly exist; history offers abundant proof. But when conspiracy becomes a universal explanation, it ceases to be analysis and becomes an escape from analysis. This is not an Arab peculiarity; conspiratorial thinking is corroding public debate in Western societies as well, but we owe it to ourselves to confront the version we know from within. A mind that has one answer for every question has already stopped thinking.

More than a thousand years ago, the essayist and philosopher Abu Hayyan al Tawhidi captured this danger with remarkable economy: “The senses are pitfalls, illusions are pathways, and minds are kingdoms.” His point was not to dismiss the senses but to distinguish perception from judgment. Seeing is not the same as understanding. Reason begins precisely where appearances cease to be sufficient.

The distinction is more than philosophical. It is the foundation of civilisation itself.

Consider one of the simplest experiments in physics. To ordinary observation, a feather plainly falls more slowly than a stone. For centuries, this seemed beyond dispute because it agreed perfectly with common experience. Yet, remove air resistance and both



HAMED  
AL GHAIITHI

The writer  
is an Omani  
evolutionary  
biologist, translator  
and editor

Good judgment is never merely an individual virtue; it is a social achievement. If those responsible for producing ideas lose the capacity for critical judgment, the consequences inevitably spread throughout public life

objects fall at exactly the same rate. When David Scott, commander of Apollo 15, dropped a feather and a hammer on the Moon in 1971, they reached the lunar surface together.

The lesson extends far beyond physics. Civilisation advances not because it trusts appearances but because it develops ways of questioning them. The scientific revolution did not begin with better eyesight. It began with better judgment.

Our intellectual crisis, therefore, is not simply that we misread the world. It is that we inherit the intellectual tools with which we interpret the world without first asking how those tools were forged. We mistake familiarity for truth and inheritance for evidence.

Human beings never encounter reality directly. We see it through language, history, institutions, assumptions, and collective memory. Ideas that appear self-evident in one age often seem naive in another. What appears universal today may tomorrow become merely another chapter in the history of ideas.

If judgment requires more than perception, it also requires more than intuition. It demands that we understand where our concepts come from. Concepts are not timeless truths suspended above history; they are historical solutions to historical problems.

Take the modern nation-state. Whether one ultimately embraces or rejects it is beside the point. The concept emerged from particular European struggles over sovereignty, religion, war, bureaucracy, and political authority. Transporting its vocabulary without understanding the historical conditions that produced it inevitably generates confusion. Concepts travel across civilisations, but they do not travel empty of history.

Much of the Arab world’s intellectual turmoil over the past century reflects this failure precisely. We imported other societies’ concepts together with their arguments, or rejected both wholesale, without first asking what historical questions those

concepts were originally designed to answer. We borrowed conclusions before understanding the problems from which they emerged.

The consequences are not confined to universities or seminar rooms. Misunderstood concepts eventually become misunderstood institutions.

Good judgment is never merely an individual virtue; it is a social achievement. Universities, schools, newspapers, publishing houses, and research centres do more than transmit knowledge. They cultivate habits of inquiry. They teach societies not merely what to think but how to think. If those responsible for producing ideas lose the capacity for critical judgment, the consequences inevitably spread throughout public life.

Every civilisation that has learned to judge well has cultivated three indispensable habits.

Science teaches us to test claims against evidence, even when evidence contradicts intuition. Philosophy teaches us to examine assumptions that evidence alone cannot reach.

The Egyptian philosopher Fouad Zakaria understood the political consequences of intellectual decline. He argued that every party in Arab intellectual life shares complicity in what he called ‘the destruction of minds’, a crime, he wrote, graver than anything committed by undemocratic regimes. Minds are destroyed not only when they are forbidden to speak, but when they cease to ask questions; when ready-made answers replace inquiry; when inherited certainty becomes a substitute for evidence.

Al Tawhidi’s insight therefore remains strikingly contemporary. The senses may deceive us. Illusion offers comforting pathways. But minds are not instincts; they are kingdoms that must be patiently built through science, philosophy, freedom, and institutions that reward inquiry over certainty. ocieties do not prosper because they see more than others. They prosper because they learn how to see more clearly. That, more than information or ideology, is the beginning of sound judgment.



FIFA WORLD CUP  
2026



# ‘WE PUT NORWAY ON THE MAP’, SAYS HAALAND

## KIERAN

CANNING Erling Haaland said Norway’s World Cup performances had inspired a new generation despite the disappointment of a 2-1 quarterfinal defeat to England after extra-time on Saturday.

Haaland failed to score for the first time in 15 competitive games for his country in Miami as Jude Bellingham’s double fired England into the last four.

The Manchester City striker had scored seven times in his four games at a major international tournament to carry Norway to the quarterfinals in their first World Cup for 28 years.

That run included eliminating Brazil in the last 16 as Haaland struck twice to knock out the five-time winners.

“How we put Norway on the map is maybe one thing that touches me the most,” said Haaland.

“Hopefully now we can establish something when it comes to Euros, World Cups and everything because our generation is amazing and also all this gives motivation to young people back in Norway that it’s possible to play a big stage in the world with a Norwegian shirt.”

Haaland’s brand as a global superstar has soared in recent weeks with waves of new American fans taking to his affable off-field personality as well as his goalscoring prowess.

He is hoping Norway can build on their success in the United States to become a powerhouse in the coming years.

“It’s kind of difficult to take in this kind of a show or rollercoaster that we’ve been in now for the last six weeks,” added the 25-year-old.

“I think this changes Norway, I think it changes me. I’ve said it many times, we’re building on something in Norway.

“It’s about maintaining this because again we’ve shown that it’s possible to be one of the biggest football nations in the world.” Bellingham and Haaland spent two seasons together as teammates at

Borussia Dortmund and remain close friends — he said England were lucky to have the Real Madrid midfielder.

“We had so much fun together and I’m not surprised that he scores two goals today and performs the way he does,” added Haaland.

“I think he’s one of the best in the world and he’s a midfielder. He still scores goals, he still manages to dribble every single player on the field.

“It’s just praise for Jude, I think he’s unbelievable. England is lucky because everybody would want a Jude in the team.”

Despite Norway needing a goal, Haaland was substituted at half-time in extra-time as he struggled to cope with the searing Miami heat.

Norway boss Stale Solbakken said his only regret was possibly not taking off his talisman sooner.

“It was not a tough decision to take him out because he was finished and maybe I should take him out before,” said Solbakken.

“We used all his energy and power for game after game. He also got a dead leg in the second half, so that combined with the fatigue — he did everything he could. “He scored seven goals in five games for us. A fantastic World Cup.”

— AFP



Norway’s forward #09 Erling Braut Haaland. — AFP

“It’s kind of difficult to take in this kind of a show or rollercoaster that we’ve been in now for the last six weeks. I think this changes Norway, I think it changes me. I’ve said it many times, we’re building on something in Norway.

ERLING HAALAND



# SWITZERLAND COACH BLASTS ‘UNACCEPTABLE’ VAR RULE



Switzerland’s players argue with referee Pinheiro before he shows red card. — AFP



Switzerland’s Embolo shown a red card by referee Pinheiro after a VAR review. — Reuters



Argentina’s Messi reacts after he was fouled. — Reuters



Argentina’s Messi remonstrates with referee Pinheiro. — Reuters



Switzerland’s Embolo remonstrates with referee J Pedro. — Reuters

**SWITZERLAND** coach Murat Yakin described the rule behind Breel Embolo sending off as “unacceptable” after Argentina scored twice in extra time to end the Swiss fairytale World Cup run with a 3-1 quarterfinal victory on Saturday.

Embolo was shown a second yellow card for simulation in the 72nd minute, five minutes after Dan Ndoye had cancelled out Alexis Mac Allister’s early opener and with Switzerland carrying the greater threat.

The referee had initially booked Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes before a lengthy VAR review established that Embolo had not been fouled.

“There was definitely no reason to award a yellow card,” Yakin said. “It was a harmless situation. He should have let play continue.”

“We were punished because of a rule that is unacceptable. I don’t understand it. The fact that they intervened unnecessarily is extremely hurtful. It’s a rule that has nothing to do with football.

“It destroyed our game today. We have to accept it, but it is painful to lose that way.”

Switzerland held out until the 112th minute, when Julian Alvarez whipped a superb long-range shot into the top corner, before Lautaro Martinez added Argentina’s third nine minutes later.

The defeat ended Switzerland’s first World Cup quarterfinal appearance since 1954 and left them one victory short of reaching the last four for the first time.

Yakin said the dismissal had transformed a match his side had begun to control after recovering from Mac Allister’s 10th-minute opener.



Switzerland coach Yakin applauds fans after the match. — Reuters

“I would like to praise the entire team because we came back from a goal down against the world champions and we had the momentum,” he said.

“We were dominating and controlling the match, and then we were punished because of a rule that is unacceptable. I don’t understand it. My boys are the real heroes.”

Midfielder Remo Freuler also questioned the intervention and called on FIFA to explain the decision.

“I’m very proud of the team. You could tell that we gave 100%,” Freuler said.

“I don’t understand how VAR can make such a decision, and FIFA has to explain it to us.”

Embolo collapsed in tears after the red card and was consoled by his teammates before leaving the pitch.

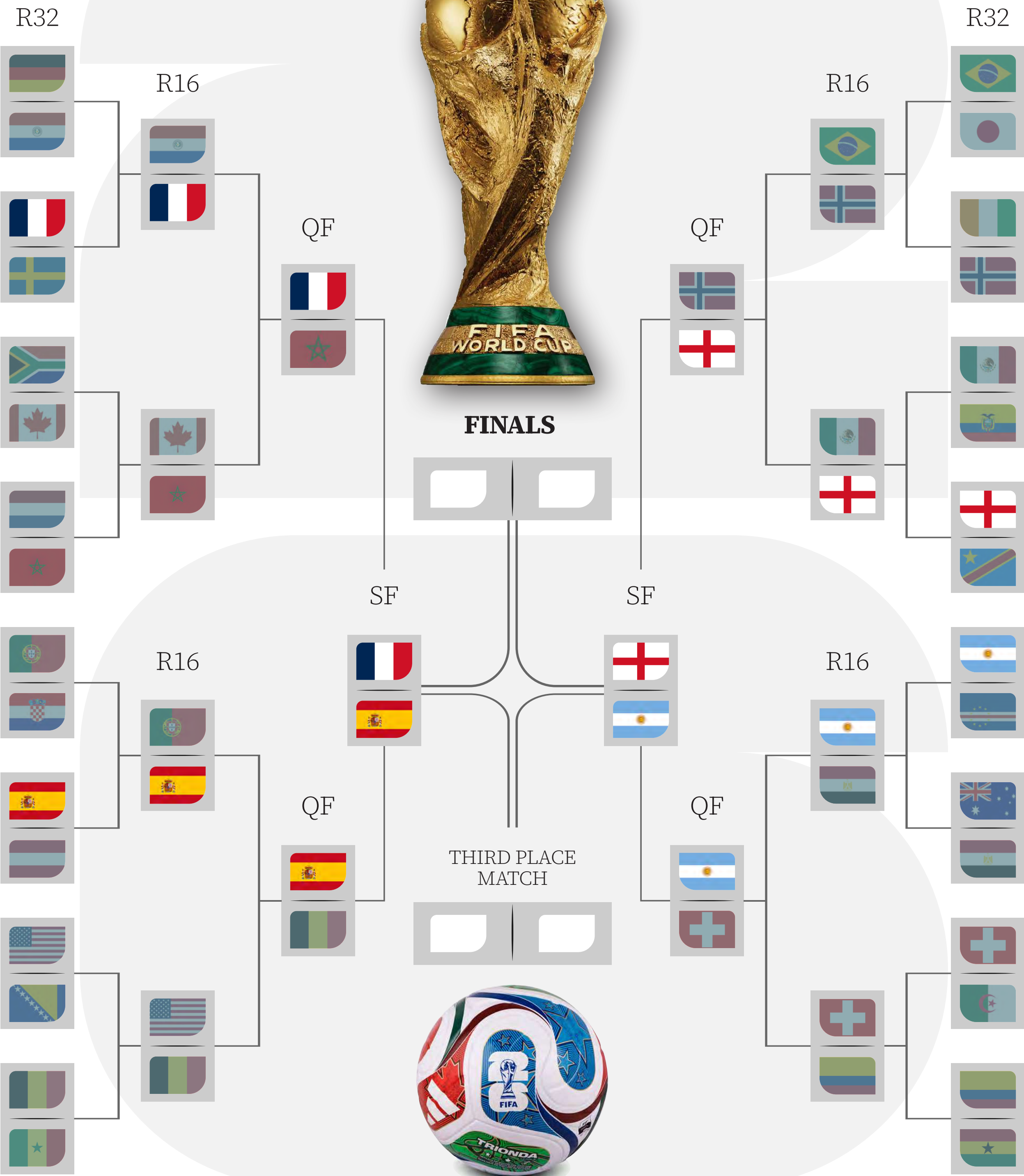
Yakin said the striker was devastated.

“He was fouled many times and he had a few very good moments in this game, but then he couldn’t help the team any more,” Yakin said.

“I don’t blame him. Obviously, he is shattered because he could not help the team. It was a refereeing mistake.” — Reuters



# SEMIFINAL



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE  
7,647.430

# BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



The project is expected to strengthen the zone's chemical and downstream industries portfolio.

## 11 MILLION FERTILISER PLANT PLANNED IN SALALAH

MUSCAT: Salalah Free Zone has signed a usufruct agreement with Majan Petrochemical Industries Company to establish an ammonium sulphate fertiliser plant with an investment exceeding RO 11 million.

The project, valued at about \$29 million, will be developed on an area of 43,669.63 square metres and is expected to strengthen the zone's chemical and downstream industries portfolio.

The agreement forms part of Salalah Free Zone's efforts to attract value-added industries, expand industrial value chains and increase the contribution of manufacturing to the Sultanate of Oman's economic diversification programme.

The planned facility will produce ammonium sulphate, a fertiliser widely used to improve soil fertility and support crop yields.

Its output is expected to serve regional and international markets, helping to increase non-oil exports through the Port of Salalah and strengthen the presence of Omani industrial products abroad.

The project will benefit from the free zone's location on major global trade routes, its direct connection to the Port of Salalah and access to markets across Asia, Africa and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

It is also expected to generate opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises operating in transport, logistics, engineering, maintenance, contracting and other industrial services.

The project could also support knowledge transfer and the adoption of modern fertiliser manufacturing technologies, while improving production efficiency and resource utilisation in line with industrial and environmental standards.

Dr Ali bin Mohammed Tabouk, Chief Executive Officer of Salalah Free Zone, said the project represented a strategic addition to the zone's chemical industries portfolio.

"This project reflects our focus on attracting investments capable of building integrated industrial value chains, rather than only establishing production facilities," he said.

Tabouk said the zone was developing an industrial environment that allowed investors to benefit from integrated logistics infrastructure, services and access to target markets. — ONA

# Food investments in Al Dhahirah reach ₪84m

## AL DHAHIRAH

Governorate has attracted 67 food security projects with investments totalling RO 84 million, as it seeks to expand agricultural production, strengthen local supply chains and develop value-added food industries.

The projects cover about 9,607 acres across the wilayats of Ibri, Dhank and Yanqul and include crop cultivation, livestock and poultry production, food processing, water bottling and agricultural services.

The total includes a recently signed poultry farming project involving Al Namaa Company with an investment value of RO 28.85 million.

Dr Talal bin Zahran al Busaidi, Director-General of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah Governorate, said the region had the potential to develop into an integrated food production and processing centre.

He cited fertile agricultural land, water resources, farming expertise, diversified production and recent infrastructure development among the factors supporting the governorate's expansion.

Its location also provides access to regional markets and creates opportunities for the growth of food manufacturing, storage and logistics services, he said.

Government services, including agricultural extension, veterinary care and support programmes, were also helping improve the viability and sustainability of private investment projects.

Ibri accounts for the largest share of existing investments, with 38 projects covering agricultural, livestock, manufacturing and service activities.

These include greenhouse vegetable production, date palm cultivation, fodder production, livestock and poultry farming, tissue culture laboratories, water bottling facilities and integrated agricultural and livestock projects.

Other activities include fertiliser production, veterinary hospitals



The total includes a recently signed poultry farming project involving Al Namaa Company with an investment value of RO 28.85 million.

Fertile agricultural land, water resources, farming expertise, diversified production and recent infrastructure development among the factors supporting the governorate's expansion. Its location also provides access to regional markets and creates opportunities for the growth of food manufacturing, storage and logistics services.

and table egg production.

Dhank has 10 investment projects spanning plant production, manufacturing and agricultural services.

The projects include date palm cultivation and date production, onion, potato, garlic and vegetable farming, food processing, animal waste utilisation, livestock breeding and table egg production.

The wilayat is regarded as a major agricultural production centre in Al Dhahirah and is expected to play a growing role in supporting self-sufficiency and economic diversification.

Yanqul has nine investment projects covering crop and livestock production, food processing and support services.

They include grape and fig cultivation, date palm farming, livestock breeding, fodder production, management and operation of the fish market, and

water purification and bottling facilities.

Al Busaidi said the directorate was targeting between RO 37.5 million and RO 50 million in additional investment during 2026 through new opportunities in crop, livestock, fisheries and water-related activities.

The planned investments are expected to increase production, diversify resources and strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's food security system.

He said the next phase should focus not only on increasing agricultural output but also on building integrated value chains covering production, sorting, packaging, storage, processing, marketing and exports.

Expanding food-processing facilities, packaging and storage centres, fodder projects and dairy and meat plants would increase local value addition and strengthen the sector's contribution to the economy, he said.

Potential investment areas include grain and strategic crop production, smart agriculture, fodder processing, livestock breeding, food manufacturing, cold storage, agricultural services, water projects and logistics.

The directorate has launched 36 new projects for 2026 through the Tatweer platform in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Housing and Urban Planning.

The opportunities include a veterinary hospital, a tissue culture centre, greenhouses, livestock developments and factories producing soft drinks and flavoured beverages.

A further 11 opportunities in food processing and organic fertiliser production have been offered through the platform in cooperation with specialists at Ibri Industrial City, which is operated by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates, or Madayn.

Al Busaidi said the projects supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources' efforts to raise self-sufficiency rates and build a more sustainable and competitive food production system under Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

# JV plans floating solar-based integrated energy project in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, JULY 12

A new investment platform aimed at integrating desalination, renewable energy, battery storage and green hydrogen infrastructure has been launched in Oman following the signing of a joint venture agreement between Shadid Capital, a regional investment and advisory firm and a group of strategic partners.

Known as the Oman Blue Infrastructure Platform (OBIP), the initiative seeks to develop scalable infrastructure projects that strengthen water security, accelerate the country's energy transition and support industrial growth in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The agreement was announced by Dr Nawar Boussaid, Chief Executive Officer of Shadid



The Oman Blue Infrastructure Platform will integrate floating solar photovoltaic (PV) generation, water desalination, battery energy storage systems, green hydrogen production and industrial water infrastructure. (Picture for illustration)

Capital, who described the venture as an important milestone in creating sustainable infrastructure through strategic partnerships.

"This initiative represents a shared vision to advance

sustainable infrastructure," Dr Boussaid said, noting that the platform will integrate floating solar-powered desalination, floating solar photovoltaic (PV) generation, battery energy storage systems (BESS), green hydrogen production, industrial water infrastructure and wider blue economy solutions.

According to details released by the partners, the first phase of OBIP is planned for Sohar and will feature desalination capacity of 100,000 cubic metres per day, supported by 250 MW of floating solar PV, 100 MWh of battery energy storage and a 50 MW green hydrogen electrolyser.

The platform is also expected to supply water to industrial users and port facilities while serving as a replicable model for deployment across the Middle East and Africa.

The initiative reflects a systems-

based approach that combines renewable power generation with water production, energy storage and hydrogen manufacturing within a single integrated infrastructure platform.

Such an approach could reduce and requirements through floating solar installations while improving renewable energy utilisation and providing reliable supplies of both electricity and desalinated water for industrial customers.

Shadid Capital, an investment and advisory firm specialising in infrastructure and energy projects across Africa and the MENA region, said the platform would bring together technology providers, engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractors, financial institutions, investors and energy companies to accelerate project delivery.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The Khareef season provides a strategic platform for BankDhofar to deepen engagement with customers.

BANKDHOFAR NAMED GOLD SPONSOR OF KHAREEF DHOFAR FESTIVAL 2026

**MUSCAT:** BankDhofar has been announced as a Gold Sponsor of the Khareef Dhofar Festival 2026, one of the region’s most celebrated tourism and cultural events. The festival attracts large numbers of visitors from across the world, offering a distinctive seasonal experience defined by monsoon mist, lush greenery, cultural heritage showcases and traditional music.

The Khareef season provides a strategic platform for BankDhofar to deepen engagement with customers and strengthen its market presence in Dhofar Governorate.

As part of its participation, the bank will host a dedicated pavilion at Ittin Plain, designed in alignment with the visual identities of both BankDhofar and Dhofar Islamic.

The pavilion will showcase a comprehensive suite of banking solutions, including retail and SME banking services, personal finance offerings and advanced digital banking channels.

In addition, the bank will roll out a series of activations across key tourist and heritage destinations throughout the governorate, further reinforcing its community outreach and customer engagement initiatives during the peak tourism season.

Enhancing accessibility across Dhofar, BankDhofar will also deploy its innovative mobile branch during the Khareef period. Fully equipped to deliver end-to-end banking services and personalised financial advisory support, the mobile unit will operate across multiple high-traffic locations, ensuring convenient and seamless service for residents and visitors alike.

BankDhofar recognises the Khareef season as a key economic catalyst for Dhofar, driving activity across hospitality, retail, transport and small businesses. Hotels and lodges operate at full capacity during the season, while local vendors of frankincense, honey and traditional crafts benefit from heightened demand.

Many of these transactions are increasingly supported by digital payment solutions such as the bank’s SoftPOS service, improving efficiency and customer convenience for merchants and visitors.

Through its sponsorship, BankDhofar reaffirms its commitment to corporate social responsibility, financial inclusion and local economic development. The bank continues to play an active role in supporting Dhofar’s social and economic ecosystem, anchored in principles of service, sustainability and shared growth.

Mitsubishi Motors Oman launches cool summer offers

**MUSCAT:** General Automotive Company (GAC), a part of The Zubair Corporation and the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, has announced the launch of its Cool Summer Offers, bringing customers an exciting range of exclusive benefits across the entire Mitsubishi range.

Designed to deliver exceptional value and peace of mind, the limited-time campaign combines attractive ownership benefits with the quality, reliability and performance that Mitsubishi Motors is renowned for.

As part of the Cool Summer Offers campaign, customers can take advantage of an exceptional financing opportunity with 0%



Customers can take advantage of an exceptional financing opportunity with 0% interest for up to 24 months and enjoy exclusive benefits.

interest for up to 24 months and enjoy exclusive benefits that include complimentary insurance and registration, free service for up to 4 years or 50,000 kilometres and a generous 6-year unlimited mileage warranty that comes with roadside assistance. Additionally, customers will receive free Llumar window tinting, enhancing comfort and style.

The campaign has been designed to suit a wide range of customer needs, whether they are looking for a practical city sedan, a versatile crossover, or a capable family SUV.

With attractive offers available across the entire Mitsubishi range, customers can enjoy greater savings while investing in a vehicle that

delivers outstanding performance, advanced technology and dependable reliability.

Manoj Ranade, General Manager at General Automotive Company, said: “At Mitsubishi Motors Oman, our focus is always on delivering greater value to our customers without compromising on quality or ownership experience.

Through our Cool Summer Offers campaign, we are making it even easier for customers to own a Mitsubishi by combining flexible financing with a comprehensive range of ownership benefits. We are confident these offers will provide exceptional value and reinforce the trust our customers place in the Mitsubishi brand.”

Lexus RX: Innovation meets performance

**THE** automotive landscape is evolving and the Lexus RX remains firmly at the forefront of luxury SUVs. Designed for those who refuse to compromise between thrilling performance and family-focused practicality, this iconic vehicle redefines what a premium journey feels like. This summer, the Lexus RX invites automotive enthusiasts across Oman to step into a world where head-turning style meets next-generation engineering.

THE POWER OF CHOICE: THREE ADVANCED WAYS TO MOVE

Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all drive, the Lexus RX distinguishes itself through three highly specialised powertrains. Motorists looking for classic, turbocharged excitement can opt for the RX350, which utilises a 2.4-litre turbocharged engine throwing out 275 hp through an 8-speed automatic transmission.

For those looking to maximise efficiency without losing premium smoothness, the hybrid-electric RX350h blends a 2.5-litre engine with electric power to deliver an exceptional fuel economy of 20.7 km/L.

Meanwhile, performance enthusiasts can look to the RX500h F Sport, a sustainable hybrid powerhouse that commands 366 combined hp paired with a sharp 6-speed automatic system.

THE CRAFTED SANCTUARY: IMMERSIVE TECH & COMFORT

Step past the sleek exterior and the RX transforms into a meticulously curated private lounge. The interior experience centres around fine premium leather, a panoramic sunroof and a 3-zone climate control system that keeps summer heat



The Lexus RX invites automotive enthusiasts across Oman to step into a world where head-turning style meets next-generation engineering.

entirely at bay. Tech integration is seamless and highly intuitive: the person at the helm is guided by a head-up display and a digital rear-view mirror, while passengers enjoy a 12.3-inch rear entertainment system complete with individual headphones.

From the ambient lighting system to the theatre-like acoustic precision of the Mark Levinson premium surround sound system, every detail is engineered to soothe.

THE INVISIBLE SHIELD: INTELLIGENT SAFETY SYSTEMS

Peace of mind is built directly into the DNA of the Lexus RX. Driving confidence is elevated by the intelligent Lexus Safety Sense suite, an advanced network of driver

assistance technologies that actively monitor the road.

Features like the Pre-Crash System, Lane Keeping Assist and Adaptive Cruise Control work in harmony to prevent incidents before they happen.

Combined with everyday practicalities—like four front and rear parking sensors, a Blind Spot Monitor and automated headlamp cleaners for sudden weather shifts—the RX acts as a vigilant co-pilot on every commute or weekend getaway.

To truly understand how innovation meets luxury, a firsthand experience is essential. The stunning Lexus RX line-up is available for viewing and personalised test drives at nearest Lexus Oman showrooms.

Vodafone Oman engages with business community

**MUSCAT:** As North Al Batinah continues to strengthen its position as one of Oman’s leading industrial and economic centres, businesses across the governorate are increasingly focused on growth, digital adoption, and long-term competitiveness.

Reflecting its growing focus on the enterprise segment, Vodafone Oman engaged with business leaders, entrepreneurs, SMEs, and government stakeholders in Suhar to discuss the opportunities and priorities shaping the next phase of business growth in the governorate.

Held in the presence of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North and attended by representatives from more than 80 companies, the discussions explored the role of technology,



The discussions explored the role of technology, collaboration, and innovation in supporting business development.

collaboration, and innovation in supporting business development.

Dr Ali bin Mohsin al Lawati, Chief Commercial Officer of Vodafone Oman, said: “Businesses today are looking for more than connectivity alone. They are looking for partners who understand

their challenges, support their ambitions, and can help them navigate an increasingly digital and competitive environment.

As Vodafone Oman continues to expand its enterprise business, we remain focused on delivering solutions that help organisations operate more effectively, adapt more quickly,

and unlock new opportunities for growth.”

Discussions highlighted the opportunities emerging across Al Batinah North’s business landscape and the increasing importance of stronger engagement between the public and private sectors in supporting economic development.

Participants also exchanged perspectives on digital transformation, business resilience, and the evolving needs of organisations across different industries.

As Vodafone Oman continues to grow its enterprise presence across the Sultanate, the company remains committed to supporting businesses through solutions, partnerships, and initiatives that contribute to long-term growth and competitiveness.

SHORTTAKES



The project covered coastal locations in the wilayats of Dibba and Khasab and the Niabat of Lima.

MUSANDAM FISHING SITES UPGRADED

**DIBBA:** The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has completed a project to rehabilitate marine sites in Musandam Governorate, including the construction of 12 fixed jetties and 11 shelters for fishing communities.

The project covered coastal locations in the wilayats of Dibba and Khasab and the Niabat of Lima as part of efforts to improve fisheries infrastructure, support the sustainability of fish resources and provide better working conditions for fishermen.

The locations rehabilitated in Dibba included Haffa, Sanat, Shariyah Al Hilwah, Adas, Al Sadwin, Dini and Aqaba.

In Khasab, the project covered Nazifi, Sham, Sibi, Ghab Ali, Quba, Shisha, Shabus, Al Balad, Ghafoul, Al Bout and Kumzar, while work in the Niabat of Lima included the areas of Emis and Maiwi.

Dr Ali bin Abdullah al Alawi, Director-General of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources in Musandam Governorate, said fishing remained one of the governorate’s most important economic activities and a major source of income for local communities.

Musandam’s marine environment supports diverse fish resources, but many fishermen operate from dispersed coastal sites located within khors and far from the centres of the wilayats, he said.

This made it necessary to rehabilitate the sites and provide basic infrastructure and services for fishermen and their families.

The project included fixed jetties and shaded areas intended to improve services, ease operational challenges and provide safer and more efficient fish-landing facilities. The infrastructure is also expected to help maintain the quality of landed fish and protect fishing equipment from damage. — ONA

Oman LNG exports reach 11.9 million tonnes in 2025

JOMAR MENDOZA  
MUSCAT, JULY 12

**OMAN** exported 11.9 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas in 2025, making

it the world’s eighth-largest LNG supplier and accounting for 2.7 per cent of global trade, according to the International Gas Union’s 2026 World LNG Report.

The volume exceeded the Sultanate of Oman’s installed liquefaction capacity of 10.4 million tonnes per annum, placing its three-train Oman LNG complex among the industry’s strongest-performing facilities. The report’s capacity-utilisation chart showed Oman operating above its nominal capacity during the year.

Oman’s exports came as global LNG trade rose 6.3 per cent to a record 436.98 million tonnes, connecting 24 exporting markets with 50 importing markets.

The United States remained the largest exporter with 110.74 million tonnes, followed by Qatar with 81.51 million tonnes and Australia with 80.32 million tonnes.

The Middle East supplied 98.03 million tonnes in 2025, an increase of 3.8 million tonnes from the previous year, supported mainly by higher Qatari output.

Oman represented about 12 per cent of the region’s LNG exports, based on figures in the report.

The IGU listed Oman LNG’s two original trains, commissioned in 2000, at 3.55 million tonnes per annum each,



The volume exceeded the Sultanate of Oman’s installed liquefaction capacity of 10.4 million tonnes per annum.

while the third Qalhat train, commissioned in 2006, has capacity of 3.30 million tonnes per annum. Together, the trains form the country’s 10.4-million-tonne annual export base.

The report also identified 1 million tonnes per annum of approved liquefaction capacity in Oman at the end of 2025, equal to 0.4 per cent of the global approved project pipeline.

A further 3.8 million tonnes per annum was listed at the pre-final investment decision stage, representing 0.3 per cent of proposed global capacity.

Those projects could strengthen Oman’s position as buyers seek more geographically diversified LNG supplies.

The report said geopolitical uncertainty surrounding the Strait of Hormuz and damage to

liquefaction facilities elsewhere in the Gulf could renew interest in projects offering more stable supply routes.

Oman’s LNG facilities at Qalhat, on the Arabian Sea coast, are located outside the Strait of Hormuz, giving the country direct access to international shipping routes without requiring cargoes to transit the waterway. That position has gained importance as supply disruptions in early 2026 increased competition for flexible cargoes and pushed Asian benchmark prices sharply higher.

The Platts JKM benchmark averaged \$12.16 per million British thermal units in 2025, up 2.1 per cent from 2024. It then surged nearly 70 per cent to \$25.39 on March 3, 2026, as Middle East disruptions

tightened supply and increased hedging activity.

Global liquefaction capacity reached 524.5 million tonnes per annum at the end of 2025, while average utilisation slipped to 83.9 per cent.

Against that backdrop, Oman’s above-nameplate performance highlighted the reliability and commercial importance of its established LNG infrastructure.

The report said 68.4 million tonnes per annum of new liquefaction capacity received final investment approval globally in 2025, the highest level since 2019.

It added that investment, technology selection, emissions performance and construction efficiency would remain central to competition among future LNG projects worldwide.

163 million water projects strengthen Al Sharqiyah supply

**IBRA:** Nama Water Services has completed a strategic RO 120 million water transmission project linking Al Sharqiyah North and South, while implementing additional projects worth more than RO 43 million to strengthen supply security and expand network coverage.

The investments form part of a wider programme to establish an integrated water system capable of meeting population growth, urban expansion and infrastructure development across Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

The completed transmission project connects the water systems of Al Sharqiyah South, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Dakhiliyah governorates, creating a more flexible network designed to meet rising demand until 2050 and improve reliability during emergencies.

The system comprises 17 reservoirs with a combined storage capacity of 265,000 cubic metres, located in the wilayats of Al Qabil, Ibra and Al Mudhaibi.

It also includes 312 kilometres of main transmission pipelines with diametres ranging



The system comprises 17 reservoirs with a combined storage capacity of 265,000 cubic metres, located in the wilayats of Al Qabil, Ibra and Al Mudhaibi.

from 600 millimetres to 1,300 millimetres, in addition to four main pumping stations designed to maintain stable water pressure.

Nama Water Services said the projects were intended to secure sustainable supplies across all wilayats in Al Sharqiyah North , improve operational efficiency, reduce water losses and extend services to remote communities.

The company has also expanded distribution networks to address the governorate’s dispersed population.

The first phase of a water connection project in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi has been completed and is operational, providing 13,836 connections in central Al Mudhaibi and the villages of Al Rawdah, Al Akhdar, Lazq and Khadra Bani Difa, as well as the Niabat of Samad Al Shan.

A second phase, valued at more than RO 15 million, is 35 per cent complete and will provide 4,065 additional connections. The phase covers Khadra Bani Difa, Al Khashbah, Al Sudayrah, Al Muntarib, Al Mutayli, Al Washahi, Al Wafi, Al Khurais, Al Tasawir and Al Majazah. It includes 40 kilometres of transmission pipelines, 217 kilometres of distribution networks, a pumping station and an elevated reservoir.

A separate project serving villages in Wadi Andam in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi has also been completed and became operational. The RO 3.668 million scheme provides 1,229 connections across 10 villages.

Nama Water Services has also started work on the Al Jardah water pipeline in Al Mudhaibi and the Malah pipeline in the Wilayat of Dima W’attayeen, at a combined cost exceeding RO 28 million.

The project will establish an integrated transmission and distribution system comprising main and booster pumping stations, reservoirs with capacities of up to 4,000 cubic metres and water tanker filling stations.

It includes about 77.8 kilometres of main transmission pipelines and nearly 433 kilometres of distribution networks, with diametres ranging from 110 millimetres to 600 millimetres.

The scheme will also include one main pumping station and eight reservoirs with a combined capacity of 34,000 cubic metres. It is expected to provide more than 6,200 connections for existing and future homes. The company is separately implementing four packages of smaller development projects to extend potable water services to remote villages.

SAUDI CABINET

Prince Abdulaziz takes industry role



Saudi Arabia has appointed Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman as minister of Iindustry and Mineral Resources in addition to his current portfolio, according to a royal order carried by state news agency SPA.

Former Industry minister Bandar Alkhorayaf was named minister of State and assigned responsibility for overseeing the General Authority for Military Industries. — Reuters

ALUMINA EXPANSION

Aditya Birla plans \$1.26bn investment



India’s Aditya Birla Group plans to invest an additional \$1.26 billion to triple the capacity of its Kansariguda alumina refinery in Odisha to 3 million tonnes annually.

The expansion, to be undertaken by Hindalco Industries Ltd, will raise the project’s total proposed investment to about \$2.1 billion, according to a statement issued by the Odisha state government. — Reuters

LABOUR TALKS

Ford reaches tentative Canada deal



Ford Motor and Canadian union Unifor have reached a tentative agreement on a three-year national labour contract covering more than 5,000 unionised workers in Canada.

The deal remains subject to ratification by union members before existing agreements expire on September 20. Unifor is also negotiating with General Motors and Stellantis over pay, job security and benefits. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s AI Zone can drive the next economy



MATVII DIADKOV

The writer is Founder of Bitmedia Labs

OMAN’S Artificial Intelligence Special Zone shows that the country is thinking about AI in a practical and forward-looking way. It is not treating artificial intelligence only as a technology trend, but as part of a broader economic transition.

The real value of the zone will be measured by execution. If developed well, it can connect policy, infrastructure, data, talent, capital and private-sector demand into practical AI deployment across Oman’s economy.

That is what makes the initiative strategically important: it gives Oman an execution layer that can turn national AI ambition into measurable economic output.

AI is often presented as a software story, but its economic impact depends on more than algorithms. Companies need power, data capacity, connectivity, regulation, land, talent and a clear path from testing to deployment.

Oman is creating a dedicated environment where these conditions can work together.

The AI Zone also fits into a model Oman already understands well. Special economic zones have long been used to attract capital, support industrial growth and concentrate infrastructure around priority sectors.

OPAZ oversees 23 special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, with total committed investment reaching RO 22.4 billion. The AI Zone extends that logic into the digital economy.

Oman does not need to measure its AI opportunity against Silicon Valley or any other technology hub. Its advantage can come from strategic geography, ports,

energy potential, industrial zones, long-term national planning and a growing focus on digital transformation.

The numbers point in that direction. Oman’s National Digital Economy Programme aims to raise the digital economy’s contribution to GDP from around 2 per cent to 10 per cent by 2040. The first phase of the AI Special Economic Zone covers around 100,000 square metres, with about RO 100 million reported in initial investment inflows.

The recent agreement to develop a 150MW sustainable AI data centre also shows how digital infrastructure, energy and AI are starting to converge.

For Oman, this creates a practical opportunity. In places such as Al Duqm, Suhar, Salalah and Muscat, the question is not only whether AI companies can be attracted. The bigger question is whether AI can be connected to the sectors that already shape Oman’s economy.

A logistics company may need better forecasting. A port operator may need smarter cargo management. An energy company may need predictive maintenance. A bank may need stronger fraud detection and compliance tools. Public institutions may need faster document processing and better citizen services.

These are not abstract AI use cases. They are practical areas where better data, automation and decision-making can improve productivity.

The stronger outcome for Oman would be to help these ideas move beyond experimentation and into everyday operations. This is where the private sector

The real value of the zone will be measured by execution. If developed well, it can connect policy, infrastructure, data, talent, capital and private-sector demand into practical AI deployment across Oman’s economy.

becomes essential. The government can create the framework, but companies, institutions and investors turn that framework into economic activity.

The main risk is familiar for many ambitious economic zones: attracting companies and infrastructure, but falling short in turning pilots into deployed products.

Registrations, leased capacity and early experiments may signal momentum, but the real test is whether they become commercial tools used by local companies and institutions.

The success of Oman’s AI Zone should therefore be measured through practical outcomes: pilots launched, products commercialised, local companies adopting AI, Omani talent trained, digital infrastructure deployed and solutions developed in Oman that can later serve regional markets.

For this to happen, Oman will need more than physical infrastructure. Ports, logistics networks, energy assets, banks and public institutions all generate valuable operational data. AI companies need that data to be usable, governed and connected to real workflows.

Oman also needs local engineers, data specialists, cybersecurity experts, product managers and sector professionals who understand both the technology and the industries where it will be applied.

The next economy will not be shaped only by those who announce new technologies early. It will be shaped by those who turn them into working systems. Oman’s AI Zone points in that direction.

ALUMINIUM SUPPLY SHOCK REVIVES LONG-IDLED WESTERN SMELTERS

ANDY HOME

The supply shock caused by the Iran war is sparking old Western aluminium smelters back into life. In the US, Magnitude 7 Metals is reactivating the New Madrid smelter in Missouri.

Across the Atlantic, Norwegian producer Hydro has announced the partial restart of the Slovalco joint venture smelter in Slovakia. Both plants have been fully idled for several years, victims of low aluminium prices and the energy price spike that followed Russia’s war of Ukraine in 2022.

The restarts are laden with political significance for Washington and Brussels, both equally desperate to reduce import dependency on a metal that is ubiquitous across a diverse range of industrial sectors.

Neither will move the global dial much, but the return of these zombie smelters shows how much has changed in the aluminium market since Middle East hostilities broke out in February. New Madrid, with annual production capacity of 263,000 metric tonnes, began operations in 1971, originally under the ownership of Canada’s Noranda. Idled in 2016, it was reactivated by privately owned Magnitude 7 Metals in 2018 and closed again with little warning in early 2024.

The smelter had the dubious distinction of being the worst-polluting plant in the country in 2019.

The plan is to restart one 75,000-tonne-per-year potline by the end of the year, with the possibility of operations ramping up further in 2027.

The resuscitation of New Madrid has undoubtedly been helped by US President Donald Trump’s doubling of import tariffs to 50% last year. The resulting premium for US delivery has ballooned to \$2,375 per tonne over the London Metal Exchange (LME) basis price.

But equally significant to New Madrid’s revival is the rise in the LME basis price from \$2,200 per tonne at the start of 2024 to \$3,165 today, even after the recent and possibly premature unwind of the war premium.

The Slovalco plant, owned 55.3% by Hydro and 44.7% by Central Europe-focused Penta Investments Group, is also planning to restart 75,000 tonnes of capacity. — Reuters

A snapshot of the global risks that lie ahead

THIS era is marked by complexity, rising fragmentation, and prolonged conflict with regional spillover that has deliberate and far-reaching ramifications.

The paradigm shift in technology from AI to quantum computing is driving exponential innovation and reshaping how we live, work, and create new growth engines.

And the world is caught amid heightened trade tensions and policy uncertainty. According to the World Economic Forum, global growth is projected at 3.1% for 2026.

The global outlook depends not only on the ability of economies to confront short-term risks but also on their preparedness to harness innovation to boost productivity over the long term.

Within this context, businesses, governments, and civil society must address global risks. The WEF Global Risks 2026 study defines “global risk” as a potential event or circumstance that, if it occurs, could cause a significant negative impact on several countries or industries within the next 10 years, with variations in GDP, population, and resources.

The rise of geopolitical and geoeconomic confrontation is at the top of the list of risks, followed by state-based armed conflict; the fragmentation of the global economy and trade will impact economic growth and prosperity.

Fragmentation is no longer just a risk but a growing reality, with the potential for reduced trade and global output, with emerging economies being hit hardest.

Global trade is like a wave; it moves all the boats, and when it begins to shrink, it affects every economy, especially developing economies, increasing foreign exchange costs, import taxes, tariffs, and domestic and societal pressures. In trade conflicts, people are



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an Assistant Professor at the Marketing and Management Department, CBFS

The rise of geopolitical and geoeconomic confrontation is at the top of the list of risks, followed by state-based armed conflict; the fragmentation of the global economy and trade will impact economic growth and prosperity.

more concerned about who will win and who will lose.

However, that is inconsequential, as in the end, everyone loses because trade opportunities have diminished.

Earlier, the world was driven by efficiency, opportunities, and business scaling, but today, the drivers of trade policy are national security and geopolitical dynamics. Trading systems are fragmented and increasingly politicised; as a result, linear pyramid global supply chains are becoming strategically dangerous and evolving into diamond-shaped structures.

At the top, critical capabilities are extremely scarce, and a broader network is decentralised and local to mitigate disruptions and enhance resilience.

Technological risks are multiplying with the rise of misinformation, disinformation, and cybersecurity threats. AI is a foundational and transformative technology that builds on cloud, mobile, and internet technologies.

Advancements in quantum computing could speed up climate and weather modeling, as well as drug discovery. Still, they also risk becoming another facet of strategic rivalry, economic bifurcation, and political polarisation.

The technological infrastructure to support AI is becoming increasingly strained, as AI investment could outstrip available capital, creating uncertainty.

Technological risks are also anticipated to worsen over the next decade, with adverse outcomes from AI technologies and frontier technologies.

Over the next ten years, the main global risks are likely to include geo-economic confrontation, intensified state-level armed conflict, persistent economic instability, widespread misinformation and disinformation, cybersecurity threats, extreme weather events, natural resource

shortage, and ecosystem disruption.

According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report, the outlook for the next two years is turbulent or stormy.

The short-term risks are geopolitical, and the long-term risks are environmental.

With governments using a broader range of economic instruments, often to advance national security objectives, geoeconomic conflict is expected to intensify.

There is mounting evidence that the rules-based international order is under strain, and multilateralism is facing ever greater challenges from unilateral actions and geopolitical rivalry.

There will be new threats to the rule of law and social stability as a result of local division, global rivalry, and the resulting incapacity to address common issues.

There is a set of underlying structural conditions that will influence the global risk landscape, including technological acceleration, geostrategic shifts, climate change, and demographic bifurcation, which shape how risk evolves.

While all these forces have global ramifications, some can unfold into more multi-dimensional trajectories, amplifying uncertainty about the future impacts.

The future is not a straight, fixed path but offers a range of possibilities, each of which depends on the decisions of the global community. By anticipating, we make our world better prepared to handle tomorrow’s challenges.

We can create partnerships, institutions, and policies better equipped to address future challenges and to actively steer outcomes toward greater security, equality, and resilience by anticipating geoeconomic tensions, conflict, technological upheaval, and environmental stress.

# CLASSIFIEDS

■ SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

SENIOR Accountant: Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

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

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

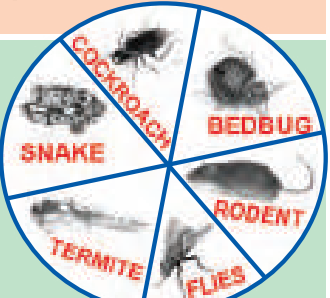
LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499



### PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]



**Tel: 24787606, 24787503**  
**Direct Line: 24786077**  
**GSM: 99382355, 99172309**

**pcomctom@omantel.net.om**  
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

### Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)



**Contact No: 99074072**

■ SIT. WANTED

EXPERIENCED Accounts & Finance Candidate Seeking Suitable Opportunity. Expertise in Accounts, Invoicing, Reconciliation & Reporting. Contact: 75177637

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

### ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King  
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: [www.siddhayur.com](http://www.siddhayur.com)



### JOB VACANCY

Furniture company requires for immediate placement:-

- 1- Accountant with at least 3 years experience
- 2- Store Keeper at least 3 years experience
- 3- Driver with heavy driving license
- 4- Outdoor sales, 5 years experience in furniture and wall to wall carpets, Oman driving license

Please send CV to **Email: [wm8457577@gmail.com](mailto:wm8457577@gmail.com)**

And mention in subject **Job number 1 or 2 or 3 or 4**



WJ Towell Group Company

**Quality car rentals at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684  
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325  
[www.orbit-oman.com](http://www.orbit-oman.com)



- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

■ SIT. WANTED

PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

Senior Logistics Coordinator seeking opportunity. 8 years' experience in Import, Export, Customs Clearance & Freight. PH +968 92267276

■ SIT. WANTED

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

INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. Contact: 94158080

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: [kirit@bustaninternational.com](mailto:kirit@bustaninternational.com) Mobile: 95544641

■ FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

■ SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman. Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, [issacantony2002@gmail.com](mailto:issacantony2002@gmail.com)



# OMAN DAILY

# Observer

## FREE\* CLASSIFIEDS

### ● SITUATION WANTED

\* NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

-----

-----

-----

-----



To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



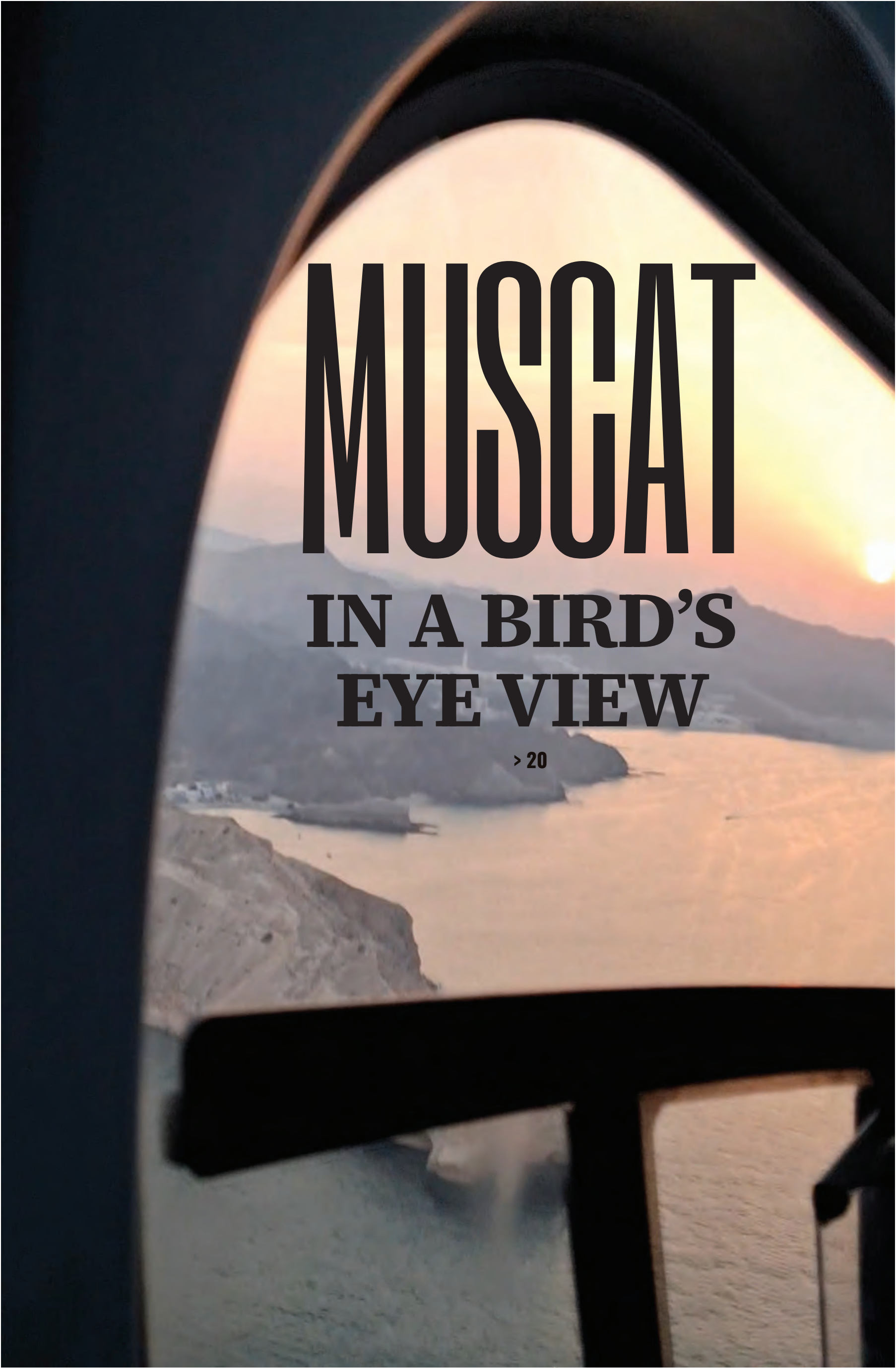
To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530  
[adv@omaninfo.om](mailto:adv@omaninfo.om)  
[izdiyar\\_info](https://www.instagram.com/izdiyar_info) [izdiyar.info](https://www.facebook.com/izdiyar.info)

ازديهار  
izdiyar



# ART/LIFE



## MUSCAT IN A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

> 20

### MUSIC **LEGEND**

STARS PAY TRIBUTE  
TO 'TOTAL ECLIPSE'  
SINGER BONNIE  
TYLER, WHO HAS  
DIED AT 75



Bonnie Tyler, the Welsh singer whose powerful ballad *Total Eclipse of the Heart* became one of the defining songs of the 1980s, has died aged 75 in hospital in Portugal.

Her family announced on Facebook that she passed away after being treated for an illness, prompting an outpouring of tributes from political leaders and fellow musicians.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer described Tyler as “one of Britain’s greatest recording artists”, saying her music “continues to touch lives”. Singer Rod Stewart remembered her as “a good pal” and “a true soul stirrer”, while Welsh actress Catherine Zeta-Jones, who had Tyler perform at her wedding, called her “an extraordinary woman with vocals to match”. Canadian rocker Bryan Adams praised her “great voice”, and classical singer Katherine Jenkins hailed her as “a true Welsh legend” who brought Wales to the world stage.

Born Gaynor Hopkins in Neath, Wales, in 1951, Tyler grew up in a working-class family with five siblings. Her father worked in the coal mines while her mother was a housewife. She left school at 16, worked in a grocery shop and sang in local clubs before being discovered in 1975 by talent scout Roger Bell while performing in Swansea. After signing with RCA Records, she adopted the stage name Bonnie Tyler.

Shortly afterwards, surgery to remove nodules on her vocal cords unexpectedly gave her the husky, distinctive voice that became her trademark.

Tyler’s first major hit came with ‘It’s a Heartache’ in 1978, but international superstardom arrived in 1983 with ‘Total Eclipse of the Heart’, written by Jim Steinman. The song became one of rock music’s most celebrated power ballads, selling more than six million copies. In 2026, 43 years after its release, it surpassed one billion streams on Spotify, while its iconic music video also exceeded one billion views on YouTube.

She followed that success with ‘Holding Out for a Hero’, featured in the blockbuster film *Footloose*. During a career spanning five decades, Tyler released 17 studio albums, received three Grammy Award nominations and represented the United Kingdom at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2013.

Reflecting on her enduring popularity, Tyler said in a 2025 interview: “People ask me if I get tired singing the old songs, but why wouldn’t I? As soon as I start one of those numbers, the whole audience sings it back to me — it’s magic.” — AFP

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



#### EVENTS

British-American filmmaker Christopher Nolan poses with a fan upon his arrival to attend the premiere of ‘The Odyssey’ in Mumbai. — AFP



#### CULTURE

A dancer prepares for the Yosakoi performance at the Remo-Yosakoi Festival, marking 29 years of Surabaya-Kochi ties. — AFP



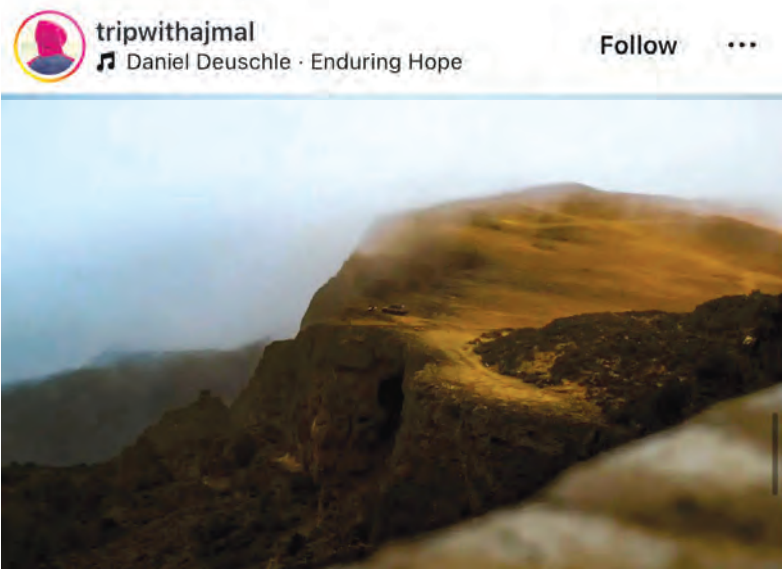
#### FILM AWARDS

French actress Juliette Binoche reacts after having been awarded with the Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



The Brahminy Kite, where elegance meets precision



Chasing horizons clouded with fogs in Jabal Samhan

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

CLIMATE CHANGE PUTS UK MUSEUMS AT RISK



As Britain experiences another summer heatwave, museums and heritage sites are facing growing challenges in protecting valuable collections from rising temperatures, humidity and flooding.

At London’s Grant Museum of Zoology, staff closely monitor display cases using sensors that track temperature changes.

The system was introduced after an antique specimen jar containing a nearly 200-year-old preserved cat burst during a previous heatwave. Curators hope early warnings will help safeguard the museum’s 100,000 specimens for future generations.

Museum officials say climate change is creating new risks for collections, while Emma Howard Boyd, chair of the National Heat Risk Commission, described its impact on the cultural sector as a present-day reality. Last month’s heatwave forced several London attractions, including parts of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Tower Bridge and the Cutty Sark, to close temporarily.

Beyond heat, heritage sites are also contending with heavier rainfall and flooding. Claire Teasdale of the National Trust said increasingly extreme

weather is affecting historic properties and their collections. At Cragside, a 19th-century mansion in northern England housing works by artists including J.M.W. Turner and John Everett Millais, changing humidity levels pose a growing threat.

Flooding has also caused significant damage. Derby’s Museum of Making was hit by Storm Babet in 2023, resulting in repair costs exceeding £100,000 and a closure lasting nearly three months.

Experts say traditional air conditioning is not always practical for historic buildings. Instead, researchers are exploring low-energy cooling and ventilation systems inspired by ancient “windcatcher” designs, long used in Middle Eastern architecture to improve airflow and reduce indoor temperatures.

Howard Boyd believes museums and heritage venues must strengthen their climate resilience while also serving communities during extreme weather. A UK-wide initiative launched last month now highlights cultural venues that can provide cool public spaces during periods of intense heat.

— AFP



Japanese actor Yutaka Matsushige performs a dining scene during the filming of an episode of the TV drama series ‘Solitary Gourmet’ at a tuna restaurant in Yokoshibahikari, Chiba prefecture. — AFP

JAPAN’S ‘SOLITARY GOURMET’ TV HIT



Actor Yutaka Matsushige, lead actor in ‘Solitary Gourmet’, during an interview in Tokyo. — AFP



A crew member prepares food for a scene for Japanese actor Yutaka Matsushige during the filming of an episode of the TV drama series ‘Solitary Gourmet’ outside a tuna restaurant in Yokoshibahikari, Chiba prefecture. — AFP

**THE** Solitary Gourmet has built a devoted following across Asia with its quiet celebration of food, nostalgia and everyday Japanese life.

The series follows fictional businessman Goro Inogashira, played by Yutaka Matsushige, who travels for work and uses his journeys as an excuse to discover small, family-run restaurants. Each episode centres on his solitary meals, with simple storytelling that blends culinary exploration and local culture.

During a recent shoot visited by AFP, Matsushige studied the menu at a tuna restaurant, spoke with the owner about her recommendations and even suggested script changes to include unexpected dishes.

“The atmosphere of a restaurant and the welcome from its owners create the story,” Matsushige

A quiet television series about one man eating alone has become a cult hit across Asia. The Solitary Gourmet celebrates family-run restaurants, local traditions and the simple joy of discovering authentic Japanese cuisine, proving that everyday moments can make for compelling storytelling.

said. “Sometimes they recommend dishes that weren’t planned, and we add them during filming.”

The 63-year-old actor has portrayed Goro since 2012. The character originates from the manga by Jiro Taniguchi and Masayuki Kusumi, which Matsushige describes as less of a traditional story and more of a journey through unfamiliar places connected by food.

He said the series was designed to feel almost like a documentary, allowing viewers to experience the atmosphere of each restaurant. Goro’s inner thoughts, paired with lingering close-ups of dishes, create a distinctly Japanese viewing experience.

Initially attracting modest late-night audiences in Japan, the show gradually became a hit across Asia, particularly in Taiwan and South Korea, where some

episodes were filmed. A Mandarin-language remake was also produced in Taiwan.

Matsushige believes the show’s appeal lies in its subtlety, contrasting with modern television’s focus on spectacle.

He hopes it evokes the quiet, everyday sensibility found in the films of Yasujiro Ozu.

Beyond entertainment, the series shines a spotlight on small, family-run restaurants, often leading to long queues after episodes air. Producer Shiori Kojima said the team deliberately chooses modest eateries that suit Goro’s character.

Matsushige says many featured restaurants preserve decades of culinary tradition.

“You understand that the katsudon is the fruit of an entire lifetime of experience,” he said. “That’s what makes the dish so delicious.” — AFP

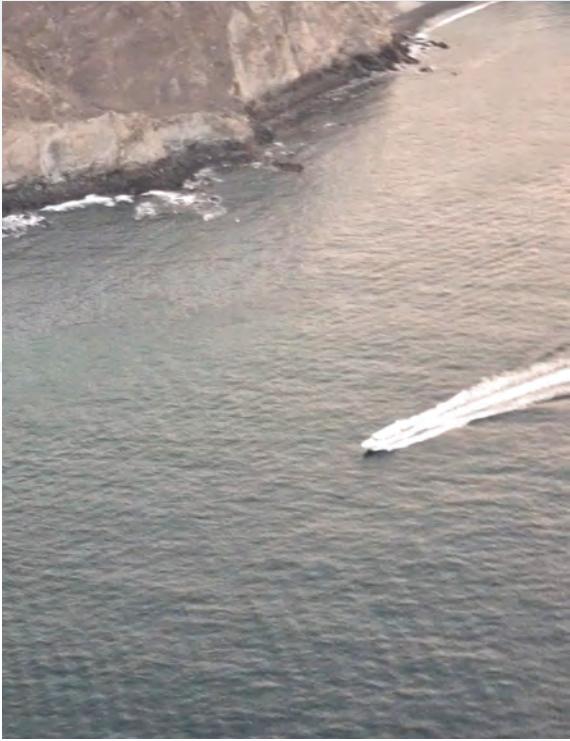
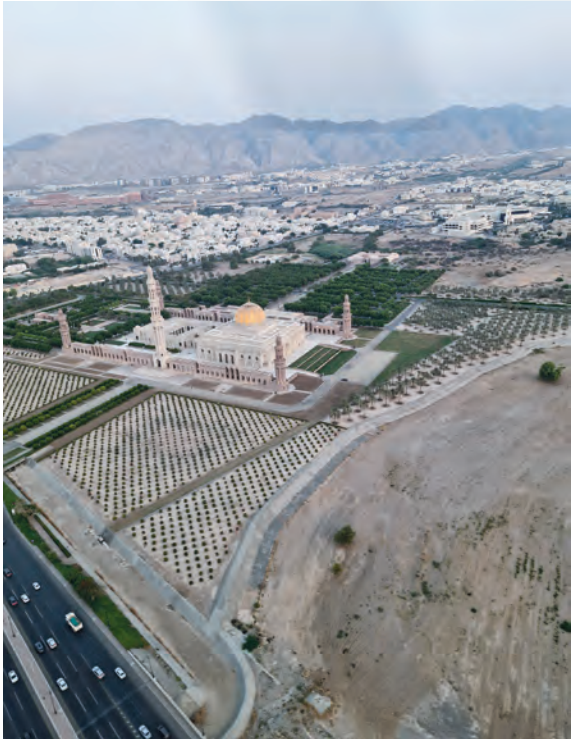
FEATURES



# MUSCAT

## IN A BIRD’S EYE VIEW

*Like a bird soaring into the sky*



KABEER YOUSEF

A bird’s-eye view changes everything. From thousands of feet above Muscat, the capital’s roads, buildings and vehicles shrink into tiny marks on a vast canvas, while its mountains and coastline reveal a striking three-dimensional landscape. From this height, Muscat feels both monumental and miniature, its urban rhythm suddenly visible in full.

Taking off from the city’s coast with Al Sharqiya Aviation (ASA), the 15-to-20-minute flight passes over some of Muscat’s best-known landmarks, from historic forts and royal palaces to the dramatic meeting point of mountain and sea. In just a few minutes, the familiar becomes almost unrecognisable.

As the helicopter climbed, each turn revealed another side

of the city. The late afternoon sun washed the rugged mountains in crimson, while the turquoise sea and white-edged waves framed the forts, castles and tightly packed neighbourhoods below.

“The world looks completely different from an altitude,” said pilot Ivan through the intercom. “We normally see the world as flat, but from the air, you experience it in a completely different way.”

That difference was especially clear over Muttrah. Streets and alleyways that feel narrow and enclosed from the ground opened into a wider pattern from above, revealing how the old city sits between steep mountains and the sea.

Hidden among the giant rocks was a cluster of white Portuguese graves. From the air, the small “valley of peace” appeared almost cradled by the coastline, with waves

gently reaching the shore.

The route offered a rapid sweep across Al Athaiba, Qurum, Wadi Kabir, Ruwi, Darsait, Muttrah and Qantab. Familiar landmarks including Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the Rose Garden, Royal Opera House Muscat, Al Bustan Palace and Al Alam Palace appeared like carefully placed pieces of a much larger artistic composition.

The aerial view did more than showcase Muscat’s beauty. It also revealed the city’s geography: neighbourhoods tucked into valleys, roads bending around mountains and landmarks positioned against a landscape that often hides their scale from street level.

The experience was organised by Al Sharqiya Aviation, Oman’s private helicopter operator, which began operations in 2020. The company operates Airbus H145 twin-engine

and H125 single-engine helicopters, as well as the H145 D3, described by ASA as the first helicopter of its kind in the Middle East.

Before the flight, Tamar Al Gendy, ASA’s Vice President of Rotary Wings and a pilot, briefed passengers on safety procedures and explained the company’s wider operations.

Beyond sightseeing, ASA provides passenger and corporate transport, filming and media support, air ambulance services, oil and gas aviation support, crop spraying, advertising and heavy-load lifting. Its helicopters can transport loads of up to one tonne to remote or difficult-to-access locations.

The aircraft have also supported major productions and events. According to Al Gendy, three Bollywood films and the Tour of Oman have used ASA’s helicopter services. The company also provides flights for weddings and aerial crop

spraying for palm plantations.

The Airbus H145, valued at about \$13 million, can be converted into an air ambulance using a specialised stretcher system. It is also equipped with emergency flotation devices that allow it to remain afloat after landing on water. The helicopter requires an advance order of around two years.

ASA employs eight pilots and crew members of different nationalities. Its helicopters can reach speeds of around 240 kilometres per hour and fly at altitudes of up to 20,000 feet.

The company is also considering expanding sightseeing services to Salalah during Khareef although Dhofar’s misty weather and reduced visibility remain operational challenges.

For now, Muscat flight offers something rare: a chance to see a familiar city made new, suspended between mountains, sea and sky.