

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Repair work in progress on a road in Wadi Bani Kharous

DAMAGED ROADS UNDER REPAIR IN AL AWABI

HARITH BIN NASSER AL BAHRI
AL AWABI, JULY 11

The Roads Department in Al Batinah South Governorate began repair work on a damaged section of a road in Wadi Bani Kharous in the Wilayat of Al Awabi.

This followed the emergence of a bulge in a section of the road prompting a visit by members of the Al Awabi Municipal Council and engineers from the Roads Department after receiving reports from citizens regarding the road's condition.

The technical team removed the affected section and repaired the bulge according to approved technical procedures before rehabilitating and paving it to ensure the road's efficiency.

Eng Ahmed al Adawi, Director of the Roads Department in the Al Batinah South Governorate, said that the technical teams dealt with the situation immediately upon arriving at the site, adding that bulges happen frequently in some roads due to technical or environmental factors, and are dealt with according to appropriate engineering solutions after conducting technical inspection.



Col Juma bin Matar al Thuhli signs the MoU with Malaysia's Financial Intelligence Unit.

NCFI SIGNS MoU WITH FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

KUALA LUMPUR: The National Center for Financial Information (NCFI) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Malaysia's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) on the sidelines of the Egmont Group's plenary meeting held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan.

The MoU aims to coordinate efforts in exchanging information and experiences and exploring the best practices in the field of combating money laundering, terrorism financing and the proliferation of weapons.

The MoU was signed by Col Juma bin Matar al Thuhli, CEO of the National Center for Financial Information. — ONA

RAFO OFFICER ACHIEVES TOP RANK IN UK AVIATION SYSTEMS PROGRAMME



Flying Officer Qais bin Ahmed al Subhi receives the award.

LONDON: Flying Officer Qais bin Ahmed al Subhi from the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) has secured first place in the Specialised Engineering Training Course in Aviation Systems, held at Cosford Air Base in the United Kingdom.

Al Subhi was awarded the Hallahan Trophy, presented to the officer who achieves the highest overall evaluation in the course. The achievement reflects the advanced level of training, technical capability and competitiveness of Royal Air Force of Oman personnel in specialised aviation fields. — ONA

Oman-Türkiye review housing investment

THE Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning discussed practical avenues for cooperation and investment in housing and urban planning with several official and private institutions in Türkiye.

The discussions focused on enhancing opportunities for the private sector in urban development projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Omani delegation to the Republic of Türkiye was headed by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning. The delegation comprised representatives from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Khazaen Economic City, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and Omani real estate developers.

During the visit, the delegation conducted an intensive programme of government and investment meetings and field visits. The aim was to expand economic partnerships, attract high-quality investments, and connect major urban development projects in the Sultanate of Oman with global expertise.

This aligns with national objectives for building sustainable cities and enhancing the real estate sector's contribution to economic development. The visit included more than 20 meetings, gatherings, and field visits, bringing together government officials, investors, real estate developers, construction companies, and investment and financing institutions.

It also included visits to several leading urban, tourism, and commercial projects.

The delegation held meetings with government entities concerned with housing and urban planning, Real Estate Developers Association, and a number of leading institutions in real estate development, investment, and construction, as well as field visits to mixed-use urban, residential, tourism, and commercial projects.



Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili held discussions with official and private institutions in Türkiye.

The discussions explored Turkish companies to participate in urban development projects

The meetings with the public and private sectors focused on reviewing strategic urban projects in the Sultanate of Oman, particularly future cities and integrated residential neighbourhoods. They also highlighted the Sultanate of Oman's investment environment, investment regulations, and

incentives offered to developers.

The discussions also explored mechanisms for Turkish companies to participate in urban development projects and leverage their expertise in real estate development, project management, modern construction technologies, and digital transformation. — ONA

El Niño raises heat concerns as Oman braces for long hot summer

NAJAH AL RIYAMI
MUSCAT, JULY 11

Oman is heading towards what forecasters expect to be one of its warmer summers in recent years, with above-average temperatures likely to continue across much of the Sultanate of Oman until September.

The latest seasonal outlook from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) indicates that temperatures are expected to remain higher than the long-term average, while rainfall is likely to stay below normal, extending the period of intense heat beyond the summer peak.

Compared with the previous year, summer 2026 is forecast to be warmer overall. While Oman experienced episodes of extreme heat in 2025, this year's outlook points towards a more

sustained period of above-average temperatures rather than short-lived heatwaves. The prolonged conditions are expected to increase heat stress, particularly for outdoor workers, residents in inland areas and vulnerable communities.

The forecast coincides with broader global climate projections, with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) noting that a strengthening El Niño phenomenon could influence weather patterns during the July-September period. The climate event is associated with warmer conditions across several regions and can affect rainfall patterns in parts of the world.

In Oman, El Niño is not the only factor determining summer weather, but it can interact with regional climate systems to influence seasonal temperature and



Meteorologists emphasise that seasonal forecasts indicate broader climate trends rather than predicting daily weather conditions.

rainfall patterns.

Oman's summer follows a familiar seasonal pattern, although conditions vary greatly between regions. Temperatures begin rising sharply in late May and

June, particularly across inland governorates such as Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and Al Wusta, where daytime temperatures frequently exceed 45°C.

July and August remain the hottest months, with inland areas occasionally approaching 48°C or higher. Coastal regions experience intense humidity that can make temperatures feel significantly higher. Warm nights provide limited relief, adding to heat stress during the peak summer months.

Meanwhile, Dhofar experiences a contrasting climate during the annual khareef season. Khareef which typically begins in late June and continues until mid-September, bringing clouds, mist and light rainfall that transform the mountains into lush green landscapes. Temperatures in the

region generally remain between 20°C and 27°C, offering a seasonal escape from the heat experienced elsewhere in Oman.

The khareef season progresses gradually, with increasing cloud cover and occasional drizzle in late June, followed by more persistent mist, rainfall and fog during July and August. Rainfall begins to decrease in September before the season concludes later in the month.

For the rest of Oman, noticeable relief from summer heat usually arrives gradually from the second half of September. More comfortable conditions are typically felt in October, as temperatures decline, humidity eases and outdoor activities become more pleasant. The country's most favourable weather generally extends from November through March.

بنك Dhofar

BankDhofar

Lionel Messi,
Official Mastercard Ambassador

Visit [bankdhofar.com](#)



Limited-edition
Messi Mastercard.

Get your branded card
only in 2026



Get your card today
For more information



SHORT TAKES



To curb the overcharging, the CPA has begun to monitor the markets and track the prices of tinting services.

Vehicle window glass tinting shops warned against price hikes

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JULY 11

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has warned the car accessories shops that offer vehicle glass tinting services against the price hike after the Royal Oman Police (ROP) issued a statement allowing 50 per cent more tinting.

This warning comes in the wake of complaints that some accessory shops raised charges for glass tinting in a bid to exploit the increased demand for vehicle tinting services during the summer season to make unjustified gains, according to the CPA.

To curb the overcharging, the Authority has begun to monitor the markets, track the prices of tinting services, and ensure that commercial establishments adhere to fair pricing and do not impose unjustified increases on consumers.

“We, at the CPA, continue to intensify our monitoring of car accessory shops that offer vehicle window tinting services. This comes in conjunction with the decision issued by the Royal Oman Police allowing the tinting of all side and rear windows of vehicles at a rate not exceeding 50 per cent, while continuing to prohibit the tinting of the front windshield, as part of the Authority’s commitment to protecting consumer rights and ensuring market stability,” a statement from the Authority said.

The inspection campaigns also include verifying the providers’ compliance with the systems and regulations governing consumer protection, ensuring price transparency and disclosure and monitoring any commercial practices that may violate the principles of fair competition or infringe on consumer rights, with legal actions taken against any violations in accordance with the provisions of the Consumer Protection Law.

The CPA has called on all providers to adhere to transparency and the applicable regulations, and not to exploit seasonal changes or increased demand to raise prices without justification.

It also urged consumers to report any violations or illegal commercial practices through the Authority’s official communication channels, contributing to enhanced oversight and the protection of consumer rights.

Oman participates in Brunei International Book Fair

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is taking part in the Brunei International Book Fair 2026, which began on Saturday and is running until July 21 in Bandar Seri Begawan, capital of Brunei Darussalam.

The ministry’s pavilion at the book fair offers valuable books and publications in the literary, intellectual, and heritage fields in both Arabic and English. The pavilion also displays a diverse collection of publications reflecting the richness of Omani culture as well



The book fair showcases the increasing interest of Bruneian society in Omani culture and the Arabic language.

as works highlighting the Sultanate of Oman’s literary, intellectual, and historical contributions, in addition to promotional brochures for Omani tourism.

The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in the exhibition comes within the framework of the strong bilateral cultural relations between the two friendly countries and represents a cultural bridge to convey Omani intellectual output in various international forums and book fairs in light of the increasing interest of Bruneian society in Omani culture and the Arabic language. — ONA

Joint Dialogue Committee supports labour stability

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 11

THE Ministry of Labour is strengthening social dialogue and cooperation among the government, employers and workers to promote a stable, resilient and productive labour market, with the Joint Dialogue Committee Affairs Section playing a central role in supporting these efforts.

Hussain bin Ali al Lawati, Director-General of the General Directorate of Labour Welfare, said the section serves as a key pillar of Oman’s social dialogue framework by facilitating communication and mutual understanding among the three production partners. He noted that social dialogue has become an important mechanism for balancing economic and social interests while creating a work environment that supports investment, productivity and sustainable development.

Al Lawati explained that the section provides technical, administrative and analytical support to the Joint Dialogue Committee, ensuring the effective organisation of discussions among government representatives, employers and workers. Its responsibilities include preparing meeting agendas,



HUSSAIN BIN ALI
AL LAWATI

The Joint Dialogue Committee Affairs Section serves as a key pillar of the social dialogue framework by facilitating communication and mutual understanding among the three production partners

documenting discussions, following up on decisions and monitoring the implementation of recommendations in coordination with relevant authorities.

He highlighted that the section’s role extends beyond administrative functions, as it conducts specialised studies, analyses labour market trends and evaluates employment data to support evidence-based policies. By providing accurate information and research, the section helps committee members address emerging challenges, develop practical solutions and enhance cooperation among stakeholders.

The section also prepares periodic and annual reports covering the committee’s activities, achievements and recommendations, helping assess progress and identify areas requiring further action. These reports contribute to improving labour relations and ensuring that social dialogue remains an effective tool for addressing workplace and economic issues.

Al Lawati said the committee continues to monitor developments affecting Oman’s labour market and various economic sectors, allowing it to respond proactively to changing conditions. Through research, analysis and consultation, the committee supports policies aimed at protecting employment,

improving workplace relations and maintaining labour market balance.

He added that strengthening institutional capabilities remains a priority, with efforts focused on developing databases, improving performance indicators and enhancing the professional skills of staff involved in supporting the committee’s work. These initiatives contribute to greater efficiency and ensure that decisions are based on reliable information.

The Director-General affirmed that the efforts of the Joint Dialogue Committee Affairs Section are aligned with the Ministry of Labour’s vision of promoting cooperation, shared responsibility and constructive engagement among all labour market partners. He said these efforts play an important role in supporting Oman’s sustainable development goals and enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy.

The increasing importance of the Joint Dialogue Committee reflects Oman’s commitment to building a balanced labour market through partnership and dialogue. By creating a structured platform for government, employers and workers to exchange views and develop solutions, the committee continues to contribute to stronger labour relations and long-term economic and social stability.

Stronger quarantine measures safeguard food supply chain

MUSCAT: Agricultural quarantine is playing a key role in protecting Oman’s agricultural resources from pests and plant diseases while supporting food security, investment, and the smooth flow of agricultural trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has said.

The ministry’s Agricultural Quarantine Department said ongoing efforts focus not only on monitoring imported plant products, but also on improving procedures, enhancing digital services, and strengthening cooperation with government agencies and the private sector.

The ministry said the development of electronic systems, regulation of

import processes, and intensified inspection at entry points are helping create a balance between safeguarding local agricultural production and facilitating trade.

During 2025, the department issued around 818 agricultural import permits, while approximately 194 permits were issued to companies during the first period of 2026.

The increase in efficiency comes after lifting permit requirements for a wide range of plant products, allowing shipments to undergo inspection and examination directly at entry points instead of requiring prior approval before importation.

The activation of the Tharawat platform has also contributed to



The department works closely with specialised laboratories and technical bodies to evaluate shipments.

organising product registration, improving statistical data collection, and enhancing regulatory oversight while facilitating import procedures.

Eng Ali bin Rashid al Ghafri, Director of the Agricultural Quarantine Department, said cooperation between the ministry and relevant authorities at border crossings has strengthened control over imported plant products and ensured their entry in line with approved standards.

He explained that quarantine teams monitor incoming shipments, conduct inspections, collect samples when required, and verify certificates and documentation to ensure products are free from pests and diseases that could threaten Oman’s agricultural sector.

Al Ghafri added that the department works closely with

specialised laboratories and technical bodies to evaluate shipments and determine appropriate measures, including release, detention, or further action based on inspection results.

He said Oman continues to strengthen cooperation with importers and private-sector companies by clarifying requirements, improving services, and encouraging compliance with quarantine regulations.

The ministry is also enhancing digital transformation through platforms such as Tharawat to streamline procedures, improve data management, and support planning and monitoring activities. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT



KABEER YOUSUF

A single organ donor can offer a new lease of life to up to eight people facing life-threatening organ failure — a reality that remains little known among many members of society. Organ donation is increasingly being recognised in Oman as both a humanitarian responsibility and a means of saving lives.

Health authorities are encouraging more people to register as organ donors through the Ministry of Health's Shifa application, in a bid to support hundreds of patients awaiting life-saving transplants and reduce the burden of organ failure cases in the country.

Organ donation in Oman is legally regulated, with the Oman Transplant Society supporting patients suffering from organ failure and facilitating access to transplantation from approved donors. The initiative is based on the principle that a person who dies from irreversible brain injury can help several others survive through the donation of vital organs.

“In Oman, one deceased organ donor can indeed save up to eight lives by donating vital organs such as the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and intestines,” said Sumayya al Harthy, Organ Transplant Coordinator at the Royal Hospital. “In addition, tissue and eye donations can improve the quality of life of up to 75 more individuals.”

According to the National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP), more than 2,700 patients suffering from kidney failure are currently awaiting suitable donors. Meanwhile, more than 20,000 people have

registered as organ donors through the Shifa application as of May 2025, reflecting growing awareness and acceptance of organ donation in Oman.

The country has also recorded notable progress in transplantation services, with eight liver transplants, 17 kidney transplants and two heart transplants carried out during the past six months.

From an Islamic perspective, organ donation has received support from His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, Grand Mufti of Oman, who issued a fatwa permitting organ donation from brain-dead patients when carried out for humanitarian reasons and without commercial gain.

Oman's organ donation regulations prohibit the buying and selling of organs, exploitation of donors or recipients, and any form of financial compensation. The Ministry of Health has issued regulations governing the transfer and transplantation of human organs and tissues to ensure ethical and legal practices.

Oman's journey in organ transplantation began with the first kidney transplant from a living donor in October 1988, followed by the first deceased donor kidney transplant on December 19 of the same year. The date is now observed annually as Oman's Organ Donation Day.

In November 2021, Royal approval was granted for the establishment of the Omani Centre for Organ Transplantation, followed by the creation of the Omani Centre for the Regulation of Human Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation under Ministerial Decision No 252/2025.

ONE
DONOR,
8
LIVES

Oman pushes organ donation awareness

“In Oman, one deceased organ donor can indeed save up to eight lives by donating vital organs such as the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and intestines. Tissue and eye donations can also improve the quality of life of up to 75 more individuals.

SUMAYYA AL HARTHY
Organ Transplant Coordinator, Royal Hospital

- Oman is strengthening its National Organ Transplant Programme
- Organ donation is supported within Oman's Islamic framework
- Oman has achieved significant progress in transplantation, recording kidney, liver and heart transplant milestones

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



India's PM Narendra Modi (R) shakes hands with New Zealand PM Christopher Luxon (L) at Government House in Auckland. — AFP

New Zealand, India strike ‘milestone’ strategic partnership

AUCKLAND: New Zealand and India announced the creation of a strategic partnership encompassing defence and security, during a landmark visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prime Minister Christopher Luxon feted his guest with an indigenous Maori welcome and a guard of honour, seeking to expand relations after signing a free-trade pact in April that he has touted as an economic boon.

Modi described the strategic partnership as a “milestone” that would inspire greater energy and confidence, as he was hosted by the New Zealand leader for discussions at Government House in Auckland. “Our firm belief in democratic values makes us natural partners,” he said.

The pact covers tighter defence cooperation, including with naval exercises, as well as stronger ties in trade, diplomacy, culture, sport and science, the two countries said in a joint statement. The nations have a shared interest in a “free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific”, they said.

The two countries “quickly canvassed” the Chinese missile test, Luxon told reporters in a briefing after the talks. In the evening, the two leaders fronted an estimated 10,000 or more cheering Modi fans from the country’s 300,000-strong Indian diaspora who packed into Auckland’s Spark Arena. — AFP

Nigerian forces suffered casualties in Oyo kidnap rescue

IBADAN: Nigerian security forces suffered “casualties” during the rescue of over 40 kidnapped schoolchildren and teachers, the army said on Saturday, in an operation that put an end to a major security crisis in the country’s relatively safe southwest. The students, whose rescue was announced on Friday, had been seized from three schools in Nigeria’s Oyo state and held captive for nearly two months.

The army said the children and staff were rescued following “carefully planned and executed” operations alongside intelligence agencies, police and local vigilante groups. “However, there were some casualties on the part of the security forces,” it said, without elaborating.

The shock kidnapping, in Oyo’s Oriire local government area, was blamed on militants from Ansaru, a Boko Haram splinter group known to operate in central Nigeria, extending into the southwest. “I was almost shedding tears yesterday when I saw them. It was mental torture,” Abdulfatai Buhari, a senator from Oyo state, said, noting there were two- and three-year-olds among those kidnapped. “They were so frail,” he added.

Nigeria has been fighting a gang conflict that, over the years, has seen armed groups spread and fracture outside their strongholds in the northeast. But the attack in Oyo state sent shockwaves through a country where many had long written off such violence as a problem confined to the north. There, mass kidnappings have become an increasingly regular tactic of armed gangs known as “bandits”. — AFP

CORRUPTION INVESTIGATION

Indonesian prosecutor resigns over probe



A top Indonesian prosecutor resigned on Saturday after police conducted a series of raids related to corruption investigations and seized cash amounting to more than \$20 million in multiple currencies and 74 kg of gold bars. Febrie Adriansyah resigned from his position as head prosecutor of special crimes in the Attorney General’s Office to maintain neutrality amid the police investigation. Police have named Febrie a suspect, alleging extortion, bribery and money laundering. — Reuters

JAPAN SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES, LANDS REUSABLE ROCKET

TOKYO: Japan’s space agency said on Saturday its prototype reusable rocket successfully completed the first lift-off and landing test, marking a step forward in the cost-cutting technology dominated by SpaceX. The prototype, launched from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)’s test site in Noshiro, Akita region, reached a height of about 10 metres, and then landed.

The flight lasted about 40 seconds, according to JAXA. “I feel we have

put a great deal of time and effort into this, and now that the prototype has taken off and landed without problem, I must say I feel a great sense of relief,” JAXA’s Takashi Ito, who led the launch, told reporters. Ito said the agency will review data to fully determine the success of the test, but he is “confident” that it “obtained very useful data.”

Most rockets are designed for single use, with components falling into the sea, burning up in the atmosphere or remaining in orbit

as debris. The first launch stage is considered the most expensive component. But the deployment of partially reusable rockets would slash launch costs. SpaceX has been operating its reusable Falcon 9 rocket since 2017.

Japan is racing to boost the international competitiveness of the country’s rocket industry. Its flagship H3 rocket was launched successfully in June, months after a previous mission to put a satellite into orbit ended in failure. — AFP

Nearly 2 million people flee in China as typhoon lashes

NEARLY TWO million people have fled their homes in China as an approaching typhoon lashed northern Taiwan and Japan’s remote southwestern islands on Saturday, toppling trees and leaving tens of thousands without power. Extreme weather has already wreaked havoc on southern and central China this week, with storms leaving at least 39 dead and causing dozens of rivers to overflow and a reservoir dam to burst.

Typhoon Bavi is expected to make landfall early on Sunday in the eastern province of Zhejiang, where more than 1.7 million people have been evacuated from their homes, state media reported.

Classes, work, transport and outdoor activities have been suspended, and more than 400 flights and dozens of train services cancelled in the province. “The proactive, all-out mobilisation, which is sparing no effort or cost, is undertaken entirely to guard against the (worst-case) scenario,” the government in Wenzhou, a metropolis of nearly 10 million people in Zhejiang, said in a statement. Residents used wood to reinforce metal shutters protecting shops and taped windows, with Bavi forecast to bring “exceptionally heavy rains” to eastern Zhejiang and northeastern Fujian province, CCTV



A person with an umbrella walks past a shop secured with sandbags, tape and plastic sheeting in Wenzhou, China. — Reuters

Streets were largely deserted in northern Taiwan, where most businesses were shut for a second day as wind and rain buffeted the region. More than 14,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, hundreds of flights cancelled and more than 170,000 households

footage showed.

Torrential rain further north prompted the evacuation of more than 100,000 people from their homes in Beijing, the government said, as water discharge flows from the capital’s Miyun Reservoir were ramped up to capture potential floodwaters. More than 130,000 people have fled their homes in Fujian and around 34,000 people from Shanghai’s coastal areas and high-risk areas, state media reported.

Streets were largely deserted in northern Taiwan, where most businesses were shut for a second day as wind and rain buffeted the region. More than 14,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, hundreds of flights cancelled and more than 170,000 households across the island hit with power outages

because of the storm.

Bavi was downgraded to a typhoon as it moved across the Pacific Ocean after slamming into Guam and the Northern Marianas on Monday as a super typhoon. Its maximum sustained wind speeds slowed to 137 kilometres per hour, with gusts of around 173 kph on Saturday.

In the Philippines, the death toll from landslides and other incidents triggered by heavy rains driven by Bavi rose to 18, most on the southern island of Mindanao. Nearly 11,000 people across the archipelago fled their homes and dozens of ports remain closed, with 313 vessels taking shelter.

More than 18,000 households and facilities across Okinawa lost power as the typhoon pounded Japan’s remote southwestern islands, with the Miyako region hardest hit. Japanese airlines cancelled dozens of flights, affecting more than 26,000 passengers. Oceans experienced their hottest June on record and could set fresh highs in the months ahead, the European Union’s Copernicus Marine Service said last week. Warmer oceans help tropical storms to intensify and add more moisture, which can fall as heavy rain. Adding to the mix is the return this year of El Nino, a natural climate phenomenon that warms Pacific Ocean surface temperatures and typically occurs every two to seven years. — AFP



LEBANON DISCUSSES ISRAEL ‘PILOT ZONE’ WITHDRAWAL

BEIRUT: A US military delegation has met with Lebanon’s army in Beirut to discuss the implementation of Israel’s withdrawal from one of the “pilot zones” in occupied territory, a Lebanese military official said on Saturday. Under a framework agreement reached on June 26, Israel will gradually withdraw from areas of southern Lebanon where it has sent troops as part of its military campaign against Hezbollah.

As part of the agreement, the long-disempowered Lebanese military will take full control of two small areas dubbed pilot zones. “The American military delegation arrived and began meetings with the Lebanese army command to discuss the mechanisms for

implementing the first pilot zone from which the Israelis will withdraw, allowing the Lebanese army to deploy,” the official said, requesting anonymity. “This is the main objective the American military delegation is bringing to Lebanon... it is the translation and implementation of the framework agreement.”

US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa told President Joseph Aoun on Thursday that “an American military delegation will arrive in Beirut in the coming days to... determine the mechanism” for the deal’s implementation. In Washington, a US official had said that “we have moved to the implementation stage of the framework”. — AFP

CAPSIZED BOAT

Boat accident off Vietnam’s south kills 15



A speedboat carrying Indian tourists capsized off southern Vietnam’s Phu Quoc island, killing at least 15 people. The boat was carrying 36 people when it overturned around 400 metres off May Rut Ngoai islet. Multiple tourist and coast guard boats participated in a rescue effort, during which some people were plucked safely from the water. Police said 21 people had been transported to a hospital for emergency treatment, two of whom were in critical condition. — AFP

SEVERE WEATHER

Bangladesh floods strand over a million



Floods and landslides triggered by days of torrential monsoon rain have killed at least 44 people in southeastern Bangladesh and left over a million stranded. The disaster management ministry said that flooding across seven districts has disrupted daily life, isolated thousands of families, and stranded 267,918 households. Power outages, damaged roads and broken communication links have slowed rescue and relief efforts. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Children play in a splash pad during a heatwave in Paris. — AFP

PARIS LANDMARKS SHUTTER EARLY AMID HEATWAVE

PARIS: The Eiffel Tower and other Paris landmarks announced early closures over the weekend as a quarter of mainland France was under the highest heat alert level on Saturday in the third heatwave to hit the country since May. The operator of the Eiffel Tower said the latticed-steel monument would “exceptionally close” early on Saturday and Sunday at 4 pm, “due to the high temperatures forecast”. Two of the French capital’s most famous museums, the Louvre and the Musee d’Orsay, have taken similar measures. The Louvre, the most visited museum in the world, said on Thursday it would close at 4 pm from Friday through to Monday. The Musee D’Orsay announced it would also close early, “due to the extreme heat” at 5 pm from Saturday to Wednesday. Twenty-four departments, home to 22.2 million people, were under the maximum alert level issued by the national weather service Meteo-France on Saturday. Another 59 departments of 96 in mainland France were under an orange heat warning, a step below the highest, as people flooded trains and highways at the start of a holiday weekend ahead of France’s national public holiday on July 14. — AFP

RUSSIANS URGED TO WORK FROM HOME



Authorities in Russia’s Novosibirsk region have urged residents to work remotely and limit travel by car, amid a deepening fuel crisis triggered by Ukrainian strikes on oil refineries. The announcement comes after Ukraine struck an oil refinery in the neighbouring region of Omsk earlier this week, knocking out one of Russia’s largest oil processing facilities by capacity. More than 90 per cent of Russian regions have experienced fuel shortages since June, some of which have introduced rationing at petrol stations and bans on filling jerry cans, according to local media reports and officials. — AFP

POLAND TO CREATE MEMORIAL TO VICTIMS OF UKRAINIAN NATIONALIST ‘GENOCIDE’

WARSAW: Poland’s Prime Minister Donald Tusk on Saturday announced the creation of a new monument to civilian victims of what he called a “genocide” by “Ukrainian nationalists” in World War II. “A Wall of Remembrance will be erected in Warsaw, with an eternal flame and the names of every victim who has been found and identified,” he said on social media. Tusk’s announcement came on the eve of the anniversary of “Bloody Sunday” in 1943, when units from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organisation

of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) killed thousands of Poles in Volhynia, now in northwest Ukraine. According to Poland, between 70,000 and 100,000 civilians were killed between 1943 and 1945, while reprisals are thought to have claimed the lives of up to 12,000 Ukrainians. The UPA and the OUN are seen in Ukraine as groups that fought for independence against the Red Army and the Soviet Union. Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky caused outrage in Poland in May by announcing that he was

naming a military unit after the UPA. In retaliation, Polish President Karol Nawrocki stripped Zelensky of the country’s highest honour, the Order of the White Eagle. Tusk said, “Memory and truth must help us build a better future, without hatred and without contempt”. “The Europe of peace and mutual respect, the Europe reconciled after World War II, was made possible thanks to truth and to calling things by their name. “Whoever wants to join this community must be ready for this truth.” — AFP

Firefighters gain upper hand on Spain wildfire

FIREFIGHTERS AIDED by better weather on Saturday gained the upper hand on one of Spain’s deadliest wildfires as survivors described “horrific” and terrifying moments as they escaped the flames. Around 500 firefighters backed by over 20 water-dropping aircraft were battling the blaze which erupted on Thursday in the Gallardos area of the southern region of Andalusia, home to many foreign residents. “We were absolutely terrified. We could see the flames. It was horrific,” Manoli Ramos, 72, a councillor in the small whitewashed village of Bedar where the victims were found, said. She recalled another major wildfire in 2012 when residents had been able to return home the following day, saying: “This time it was like hell.” Officials said the 12 people who died were of different nationalities who had been trapped in vehicles and as they tried to flee on foot. Austin Crilly, an 87-year-old British resident evacuated by police from the wildfire zone, said he was watching television when he “saw a huge black cloud, well I thought it was a cloud”. “I thought, ‘My God, I will shut the door’. Then, five minutes later, there was banging at the door. They said, ‘Take your money, take your cards and get out,’” he said. Officials said some of those who died had not followed orders to evacuate or to shelter in place once the flames got too close. The fast-moving fire — one of the deadliest in Spain’s recent history — showed signs of easing on Saturday, allowing firefighters to directly attack the flames for the first time, officials said. “The overnight evolution has been favourable and the weather conditions allow us to face the day with better prospects than yesterday,” Antonio Sanz, the Andalusian regional government’s emergency chief, told reporters. “For the first time we will be able to carry out a direct attack on the fire. Until now, both the weather conditions and the nature of the blaze only allowed us to work defensively,” he added. Strong winds that had fuelled the fire had eased, humidity levels had risen and



Potteries in the courtyard of a house in a burnt landscape are pictured in Bedar, Almeria Province. — AFP

temperatures had fallen, Sanz said. The blaze has so far burned around 6,600 hectares (16,300 acres) in an area of steep ravines that is hard for vehicles to reach, he said. There was no immediate confirmation of the identities of the 12 who died but the authorities said many of the victims may be foreigners who were in Bedar. “It wasn’t good. Not good at all. I’d never seen anything like it. You see things like that in films, but never in real life,” said Martin Smith, 63, a British tourist who was evacuated with his wife, Elizabeth, 65, from the campsite where they were on holiday. Sanz said there had been no reports of additional deaths overnight, describing that as “the best news we could have”. He said Spain’s Civil Guard police had searched the affected areas without finding any further victims, although he cautioned that the search was continuing. “That does not mean it cannot happen, but after the Civil

Guard swept the area, including locations that were still hotspots, it gives us hope,” he said. Sanz said references to 23 missing people were misleading, explaining that the figure referred to people whose relatives had been unable to contact them and who could have reached evacuation centres or other safe locations. He said seven formal missing persons reports had been filed. However, officials said they could not establish a definitive toll until autopsies had been completed and the bodies recovered from the fire had been formally identified,. The authorities suspect the wildfire began when a power line broke as Spain sweltered in extreme heat, exceeding 40C in recent weeks, creating tinderbox conditions. Scientists agree that human-driven climate change is making extreme weather events such as heatwaves more likely and more intense. — AFP

North Korea condemns Nato summit over denuclearisation

SEOUL: North Korea condemned the United States and its allies on Saturday for what it called strengthening military blocs and accelerating arms buildups after a Nato summit this week. Pyongyang accused Nato leaders of portraying North Korea’s exercise of its legitimate sovereign rights as a threat, the foreign ministry said in a statement carried on state media KCNA. The alliance demonstrated a stronger commitment to bloc-to-bloc confrontation through increased arms spending and closer military cooperation with allies in the Asia-Pacific region, the ministry said. At the Nato summit in Türkiye, officials announced more than \$50 billion in military procurement and industrial agreements as European allies face continued pressure from US President Donald Trump to shoulder a greater share of the alliance’s defence burden. President Lee Jae Myung of Pyongyang’s rival South Korea said on the sidelines of the summit that he hoped Seoul would expand cooperation with

Pyongyang accused Nato leaders of portraying North Korea’s exercise of its legitimate sovereign rights as a threat, the foreign ministry said. The alliance demonstrated a stronger commitment to bloc-to-bloc confrontation through increased arms spending and closer military cooperation with allies in the Asia-Pacific region



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un speaks during the second plenary meeting of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), in Pyongyang, North Korea. — Reuters file photo

Nato allies in research and development, including in cutting-edge technologies, and in production of weapons systems. North Korea said the summit showed that Nato was a body geared towards war and confrontation, pursuing what Pyongyang

described as exclusive geopolitical interests at the expense of peace and security in Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Pyongyang, which says a push by the West for it to abandon nuclear weapons has been irreversibly terminated, believes instead that denuclearisation efforts should focus first on what it described as attempts by South Korea and Japan to pursue their own nuclear weapons under US protection, as well as the nuclear ambitions of Nato members participating in the alliance’s nuclear-sharing arrangements, the ministry said. It said North Korea would safeguard its sovereignty and security interests, as well as regional peace, through the responsible exercise of its sovereign rights. KCNA said on Friday that North Korea had decided on measures to strengthen its nuclear forces “quantitatively and qualitatively” as leader Kim Jong Un calls for modernising its military. Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping said China’s commitment to its traditional friendship with North Korea would not

change regardless of how the international situation evolves, according to letters exchanged with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and published by North Korean state media KCNA on Saturday. Kim, in a letter to Xi, said bilateral friendship and cooperation had risen to a “new strategic level,” KCNA reported. North Korea’s Premier Pak Thae Song arrived in Beijing on Friday for a three-day visit to attend an event marking the 65th anniversary of the neighbours’ friendship treaty. Xi travelled to Pyongyang last month for his first visit to North Korea in seven years, where he and Kim agreed to expand cooperation across politics, economy and culture. “Regardless of how the international situation changes, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government will continue to attach great importance to the traditional friendship between China and North Korea, continue to support North Korea’s socialist cause under the leadership of General Secretary Kim Jong Un,” Xi said. — Reuters

OPINION

Would you take the short cut?



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

A while ago, I was approached by Mr A, a young man at the beginning of his career. Like many young professionals, he was trying to build a future in a job market that had become increasingly competitive and uncertain. Although he felt fortunate to have secured a stable job, it paid below-average wages and offered limited opportunities for growth. He knew he wanted more, but he also wanted to earn it the right way.

His challenge began at home. His mother frequently encouraged him to use nepotism, commonly known as ‘wasta,’ to find a better-paying job.

In her eyes, there was simply no legitimate way left to compete in the current market. She believed that connections had become more important than qualifications, and that refusing to use them would only place him at a disadvantage.

At first, he felt offended. He interpreted her advice as an indication that she believed he was incapable of finding a better job on his own. To him, it suggested that his hard work, qualifications, and determination were not

enough, and that his future would ultimately depend on factors beyond his control.

He also worried that if he did obtain a job through ‘wasta’, he would always carry the knowledge that his competence alone had not been enough to earn the opportunity.

To be fair, his mother was not trying to discourage him or undermine his abilities. She genuinely wanted what was best for her son. Her advice reflected what she had been hearing from friends and relatives, many of whom shared stories of qualified people struggling to find work while others advanced through personal connections.

Over time, she had come to believe that this was simply how the system worked.

While Mr A understood her concerns, he could not bring himself to agree. His moral compass would not allow him to take that path, despite her repeated argument that ‘everyone else is doing it.’

For that reason, he decided to keep his next job search private. There were two reasons for this decision. More importantly, he wanted to avoid conversations that he

There are moments in life when the greatest achievement is preserving the person we want to become

believed might gradually persuade him to abandon the values he was trying so hard to uphold.

After a long and demanding search, Mr A received an offer for a new job. Along with it came something even more valuable than a higher salary. He had the satisfaction of knowing that he had earned the opportunity through his own abilities, perseverance, and integrity, without relying on unfair advantages.

Mr A’s story reminds us that success is measured by more than salaries or job titles. There are moments in life when the greatest achievement is preserving the person we want to become.

His greatest reward was not simply receiving an offer letter. It was the confidence to look in the mirror and know that he had remained true to himself.

In a world where shortcuts often seem tempting, and where people may insist that ‘this is just how things work,’ perhaps the greatest victory is proving, first to yourself, that another path is still possible.

RECORD TAXES:
VIENNA CASHES IN
ON TOURIST BOOM

BLAISE GAUQUELIN

As Vienna grapples with smashed record after smashed record for tourist numbers, a plan to more than double its visitors’ tax has worried hotel owners fearful of killing the Austrian capital’s golden goose.

In two decades, Vienna’s winning trio of cleanliness, safety and schnitzel has propelled the Austrian capital to the top of the rankings of the world’s best cities to live in, just behind Copenhagen and ahead of Melbourne.

Between 2005 and 2025, the number of overnight stays rocketed from 8.8 million to 20.1 million.

Hoping to cash in on that success, the municipality has decided to increase the visitors’ tax from 3.2 to five per cent from early July, before hiking it to eight per cent in July 2027.

Like other cities across Europe anxious about over-tourism, the authorities view the tax as a means to make the sector pay its fair share for the strain the crowds of visitors place on the city’s infrastructure. But Martin Stanits, spokesman for the Austrian Hotel Association (OeHV), lamented that the hike would make it “the second highest in Europe”, trailing only Amsterdam.

Arguing that hotels were already faced with high taxes and an explosion in the costs of energy, wages and food, Stanits argued that the authorities tend to treat tourism as a way to plug holes in the city’s budget.

“For decades, the city has been living beyond its means and is now making up its budget deficits at the expense of tourism,” he said.

“Killing the goose that lays the golden eggs is not really a great idea,” he said, singling out Vienna’s ruling social-democrat and liberal coalition.

His frustrations echo those of the travel agencies, which single out the \$16 tax already levied on plane tickets. Gregor Kadanka, who heads the Association of Austrian Travel Agencies, believes that piling on the taxes and fees threatens Austria’s attractiveness - pointing to low-cost carrier Ryanair’s decision to privilege flights to Bratislava just a few dozen kilometres away in neighbouring Slovakia instead of flying directly to Vienna.

He argued that rival destinations were gaining ground while Vienna, increasingly expensive compared to other central European capitals, “is losing its lustre”. But the municipality counters that the tax hikes are a way to ‘share responsibility’ for the city’s upkeep between it and the tourism sector - which ultimately benefits from its famously reliable public services.

“Tourism is making use of the city’s first-class infrastructure more than ever and also benefits from its maintenance and expansion - so it is understandable that it should contribute its share,” Isabella Rauter, media officer at Vienna’s tourism office, said. — **AFP**

Experiencing world-class
healthcare in Oman

I VISITED the Royal Hospital in Oman recently with one clear purpose: to help ensure that a member of my wife’s family, also a dear friend who is very ill, received the best treatment possible. When someone is seriously unwell, you don’t have time for vague reassurance. You look for the right level of expertise, timely escalation and a team that will take the patient’s needs seriously and urgently.

I should add that my experience is not confined to the Royal Hospital. I have received a good level of medical care in another hospital in Oman and that consistency matters. It suggests the standard is not merely down to one building or one department, but reflects a wider competence across the system.

Before the consultation, I spoke with the doctor handling general medicine, Dr Zulfiqar, who was about to visit my wife’s cousin on his morning rounds. I explained that I expected a consultant specialist to be involved because the illness was specific and serious, not something that should be treated as a generic case. I also told him I would ask technically relevant questions, because I did not think a generalist visit could answer everything properly.

I like this doctor, but I was genuinely uneasy at the prospect of a specialist not being present. To his credit, he dealt with my questions directly and competently, with explanations that showed deep understanding across a wide range of medical issues. My doubt was replaced by confidence, and what began as an anxiety became reassurance grounded in substance, not sentiment. What impressed me most was the blend of professionalism and empathy. Facilities and equipment matter, but healthcare is ultimately delivered by people.

In this consultation, the doctor’s communication was clear, his thinking was careful and he responded as if the patient’s welfare truly mattered — not only



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

Oman, for me, continues to feel like a place where people can access high-quality medical treatment with real compassion.



In Oman sustained investment is translating into real standards at the bedside.

as a clinical case, but as a human situation that families carry with fear and responsibility.

I am British and I am not here to condemn doctors and nurses in England. Many of them are excellent. In my experience, they care deeply. But the pressures associated with overcrowding, bed constraints and stretched capacity can limit what clinicians are able to do, even when they personally want to provide more time and more attention.

When pressure mounts, the difference patients feel is often not the intent of staff but the availability of time, the speed of decisions and the confidence that specialists will be brought in when they need to be. That helps explain why some people feel drawn to seek medical care abroad. It is rarely about dismissing expertise at home. Often it is about seeking certainty: the certainty that the right specialists are accessible, that questions will be answered honestly and technically and that

care will escalate swiftly when conditions worsen.

For me, Oman stands out not only for hospital investment and continuous improvement but also for the atmosphere around patient care. I have also seen broader progress in education and administration and in sectors such as telecommunications. Healthcare requires major funding and budgets shape capacity and outcomes. What I have observed in Oman suggests that sustained investment is translating into real standards at the bedside. After leaving the Royal Hospital, I felt grateful and genuinely reassured that my friend had been properly assessed and that the care plan was grounded in competence. Oman, for me, continues to feel like a place where people can access high-quality medical treatment with real compassion. And for residents and Omanis alike, that should be something to recognise and feel proud of.

Bad decisions, with good intentions, are still bad decisions



RAY PETERSEN
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

THE MIDDLE EAST, fraught with the debauchery of international politics, bristling with a humbling diversity of religious factions, tortured by the extremes of inequality of wealth, is a profound contemporary tragedy. Especially when seen through the lens of the current Israeli-Iranian/American conflict and impasse.

With Israel and America, together and alone, deciding that Iran was developing its nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities beyond what they considered to be ‘appropriate,’ as Secretary of War Pete Hegseth commented, saying that Iran was “actively seeking the military means – especially nuclear weapons – to bring the West to its knees”.

Now, few support terrorism, but to use third-party allegations as a justification for war? Well, Russia, China, and America all have much to answer for elsewhere in the world themselves, don't they? It's a pot-kettle-black thing, isn't it? Alongside the military operations of February 28th, President Trump called upon the Iranian people to “rise up and overthrow the corrupt regime of Ayatollah Khamenei,” certain that their ‘shock and awe’ missiles and bombs would have the Iranian military waving the white flag, and the ‘oppressed citizens’ coming out waving American flags and singing ‘Hallelujah.’ Hegseth said that in “obliterating” the Iranian

military, they had “won the war. However, nobody told the Iranians.

They had displayed shocking arrogance and hadn't done their homework or studied their opponents. In ‘The Art of War,’ the greatest military mind of all time, Sun Tzu, wrote, “If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer defeat.” The current impasse, with as much victorious perspective as the Vietnam conflict, I guess, is what you get when you have a realtor and a news anchor leading your armies.

Historically, the Iranian, or Persian, soldier is renowned for their bravery and resilience. Indeed, Persian history features the 10,000 ‘Immortals’ of the Achaemenid Period, the dynamic Parthians, the peerless Sassanian Cavalry, and even a militarist's respect for today's Artash, or conventional army. The Persians, despite Thermopylae, have proven disciplined, difficult and willing to lay down their lives dearly. Above all, both present and past, they are warriors, and nobody takes them lightly. Well, almost nobody.

Further, the much-vaunted Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is a brutal, ideologically inspired military force, well-trained, and resourced with an intelligence service that may be barbarous, insidious, and merciless, but is in control, and the population is deeply entrenched in fear, ingrained in the population, since the Shah

You have cost your countries, and others, billions, forced your Gulf State allies into being your proxy targets, and driven Russia, China, and India towards closer relationships with Iran having little more than a bloody nose

was deposited in the Fall of 1979.

Given the extent of this Orwellian subservience, this was never going to be a war, or even a battle, won at the point of a gun, but by hearts and minds, and even the most optimistic of neutrals could see this as imprudent. Put simply, having lived under the jackboot for 50 years, the ordinary, average Iranian is scared witless of further confrontation with the hierarchy.

Finally, there is the Strait of Hormuz, which was always going to be the Iranian's ‘trump card,’ and that itself is a delicious irony to those who oppose the ‘Americanization’ of the region. Yes, the straits are an international waterway, but in practical terms, this has only been so due to the unsteady peace within the region inspired by mutual interest and sustained through international goodwill towards the Sultanate of Oman, due to its ongoing efforts to maintain peace in the region and globally.

Now, the Strait of Hormuz is closed. “What are you going to do now, Israel, America?” You have cost your countries, and others, billions, forced your Gulf State allies into being your proxy targets, and driven Russia, China, and India towards closer relationships with Iran having little more than a bloody nose.

Don't make the world, many of them your allies, pay the price for your foolhardy venture. Sort it, now!

What a tiny mouse teaches us about the resilience of life

CHARLOTTE CAUSIT

At first glance, it's just a rodent. But the Andean leaf-eared mouse is, in fact, a natural marvel.

The small mammal is capable of living at altitudes exceeding 6,700 metres (21,982 feet) in the Andes, and its capabilities challenge our understanding of physiological limits.

Six years after discovering the animal living on some of the world's highest peaks – places where mammalian life was previously considered impossible – a team of international researchers is beginning to unravel the secrets of this extraordinary animal.

The mouse that can fit in the palm of a hand holds several world records, said Zachary Cheviron, a biology researcher at the University of Montana and co-author of a new study on the mammal published this week in the prestigious journal Science.

“They have the world's record for the highest dwelling mammal on the planet,” the researcher said, saying that it can live in areas where mountaineers can barely venture for more than a brief period.

The species was found hundreds of metres above the dwellings of the Himalayan pika, the small animal that had previously held the title.

But on top of that, the little mouse has range.

The same species that can survive atop Chilean peaks has also been found at sea level: they “have the broadest elevational distribution of any mammal on the planet,” Cheviron said.

The animal's vast range is made possible by a resilience and adaptability that is phenomenal in several respects, wrote the team of researchers, who believe their findings could offer valuable insights for human medicine.

The study shows that the mice living both down low and up high are genetically similar, not so different from humans who have evolved to life in deserts, tropical regions ,or at high altitudes.

“It's kind of a nice model of humans in a lot of ways,” Cheviron said.

Mice living at high elevations were found to have a handful of distinct genes, including one already known to be linked to adaptation to hypoxia – oxygen deprivation – in Tibetan populations.

But the bodies of these mice respond differently.

They “have gained these superpowers to be able to survive in a low oxygen environment,” said Jay Storz, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Nebraska, who is also a climber.

Experiments conducted in a cold-chamber setting reveal that these mountain mice are particularly adept at maintaining body heat.

Initial findings also suggest that the rodent does not produce extra red blood cells to capture oxygen more efficiently – as other mammals do – but instead breathes more rapidly.

In order to counteract any harmful effects stemming from such accelerated breathing, the animal relies on a modified enzyme. — AFP

Khamenei funeral: What it tells about Iran, region?

THE FUNERAL of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, marked by massive public crowds and the attendance of foreign officials, became far more than a religious ceremony. It was a political and strategic event that conveyed multiple messages to Iran's domestic audience, the wider region, and the international community. At moments of political transition, such occasions become a test of a state's ability to preserve cohesion, demonstrate institutional continuity, and project resilience.

Now that the ceremonies have concluded, the more important question remains: What did the funeral reveal about Iran, and what might it suggest about the region's next phase amid ongoing conflict and rising tensions?

Domestically, Iran sought to demonstrate that the passing of a leader of Ayatollah Khamenei's stature would neither create a political vacuum nor undermine the state's institutional stability. The scale of public participation reflected the government's continued ability to mobilise supporters during critical moments.

A DIVERSE NATION

This is an important consideration when assessing contemporary Iran. Reducing the country's political landscape to a simple contest between the state and its opponents risks overlooking the complexity of Iranian society. Like many nations, Iran encompasses diverse political and social constituencies. Yet the funeral suggested that the political system continues to retain significant domestic sources of resilience, challenging assumptions that it faces imminent collapse or rapid internal fragmentation.

Official messaging reinforced this theme by emphasising that governance rests on institutions rather than on the authority of a single individual. The funeral therefore became an opportunity to project continuity, stability, and confidence despite an important leadership transition.

Internationally, the significance



ANWAR AL KHANJARI
alkhanjarianwar@gmail.com

The author is a translator and researcher interested in the region's political and social history

of both attendance and absence extended well beyond diplomatic protocol. The participation of some governments reflected a willingness to preserve channels of communication with Tehran despite ongoing disagreements, while others stayed away in accordance with their strategic priorities and political alignments. This contrast illustrates a broader regional trend towards pragmatic diplomacy.

Increasingly, governments appear to be balancing national interests with regional security considerations rather than relying exclusively on rigid geopolitical alignments.

SYMBOLISM

One particularly noteworthy aspect of the ceremonies was the recitation of carefully selected Quranic verses during the reception of foreign delegations. If these recitations were intentionally tailored to individual guests, they reflected a sophisticated use of religious symbolism as a tool of diplomacy. In this context, the Quran functioned not only as a religious text but also as a symbolic language conveying carefully calibrated political and cultural messages.

More broadly, Iran used the occasion to reaffirm Ayatollah Khamenei's standing as both a religious and political leader whose influence shaped the Islamic Republic's domestic and regional trajectory for decades. The presence of representatives from allied governments and movements also conveyed that Iran's regional partnerships are intended to be understood as institutional and strategic relationships rather than personal ones.

This is particularly relevant to Iran's network of regional allies, often described as the “Axis of Resistance.” Tehran appears eager to demonstrate that the transition in leadership will not fundamentally alter its regional commitments. At the same time, rival states will be watching closely to determine whether continuity prevails or whether the new leadership gradually adjusts Iran's approach

to regional influence and conflict management.

NO CHANGE IN CONFLICTS

The funeral itself is unlikely to alter the trajectory of ongoing regional conflicts. Nevertheless, it offered an important indication of the Iranian state's ability to maintain internal cohesion under pressure. It also suggested that strategies based on expectations of rapid domestic weakening may underestimate the resilience of Iran's political institutions.

The region, however, remains open to multiple possibilities as political and security crises continue to overlap. The most likely scenario appears to be one of calibrated escalation, with competing actors seeking to strengthen their positions while avoiding a full-scale confrontation whose costs all sides understand.

Ultimately, the funeral suggested that the region may be entering a phase in which managing strategic balances takes precedence over attempts to resolve disputes through force. Geography remains an enduring reality, making prolonged estrangement neither practical nor sustainable. In this environment, states capable of maintaining dialogue and building bridges across regional divides are likely to play an increasingly influential role.

Observers may differ in their interpretations of the funeral, but it clearly represented more than a farewell ceremony. It served as a demonstration of state resilience, a message to allies and adversaries alike, and an early indication of the strategic calculations likely to shape the region's next chapter.

The ceremonies have ended, but their implications will continue to influence regional politics. Whether this moment opens the way for greater dialogue or becomes another milestone in an unresolved conflict remains uncertain. What is clear, however, is that geography will continue to bind the region's states together, making dialogue and crisis management a less costly path than allowing confrontation to escalate further.



SHORTTAKES



SOUTH AFRICA
MOURNS WORLD CUP
MIDFIELDER ADAMS

CAPE TOWN: South Africa international midfielder Jayden Adams, who featured in all three of his side’s group stage games at the 2026 World Cup, has died, the country’s sports ministry said on Saturday.

No cause of death was given.
Adams, 25, started the Group A fixtures against Mexico and the Czech Republic, and came off the bench in the 1-0 win over South Korea that earned the side a first-ever place in the knockout rounds, where they were beaten by Canada.
The player’s grandmother died a day before South Africa played the Czechs, and he was replaced at halftime during the fixture.
He played for the Pretoria-based Mamelodi Sundowns in South Africa, helping them to the African Champions League title in the 2025/26 season.

“South African football has lost a gifted player, a proud servant of the game and a young life that still had so much to offer,” the South African Football Players’ Union, an official body for players in the country, said in a statement.
South Africa’s Minister of Sport Gayton McKenzie also expressed his condolences.
“Our nation mourns alongside his family, his team-mates and the millions of supporters who watched him grow from a promising academy prospect into a full Bafana Bafana international,” McKenzie said in a statement.
Fifa President Gianni Infantino offered his condolences via Instagram, saying his “thoughts and condolences, as well as those of everyone at Fifa and the global football community, are with his family, friends and team-mates”.
Adams came through the youth development structures at Stellenbosch FC and joined Sundowns in January 2025.
He made his international debut against Mozambique in 2022 and won 13 caps, scoring two goals, both in qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. — Reuters



Martinez backs referees
after Egypt controversy



Argentina’s #06 Martinez during Egypt match. — AFP

ARGENTINA

defender Lisandro Martinez dismissed controversy over refereeing in the World Cup on Friday and said match officials had done an excellent job after Egypt criticised decisions in their dramatic 3-2 round-of-16 defeat by the South American side.
Argentina reached the last eight after rallying from 2-0 down with 11 minutes remaining to beat Egypt. The match, however, sparked complaints from the Egyptian Football Association over the use of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR), particularly the disallowing of a Mostafa Zico goal in the 62nd minute that would have doubled the North Africans’ lead. Fifa refereeing chief Pierluigi Collina has since defended the officials, rejecting allegations of bias and insisting referees operated independently.
“No, absolutely nothing,” Martinez told reporters when asked whether he had anything to say about the refereeing in the tournament.
“I think they are doing an excellent job. That’s something for you (the media), who sometimes generate the controversies. We concern ourselves with giving our best on the pitch and nothing more,” he added.
Argentina take on Switzerland on Saturday in the quarter-finals in Kansas City, with the defending champions voicing respect for the European side while stressing the need to remain focused on their own performances.
“As always, what identifies this team is respecting the opponent,”



Egypt coach Hassan is shown a yellow card by referee Letexcier. — Reuters

Argentina take on Switzerland in the quarter-finals with the defending champions voicing respect for the European side

Martinez said.
“If Switzerland are at this stage, it’s because they have a lot of merit. We watched their match against Colombia and they always try to play. They are very strong physically and also in set-pieces. I think it will be a great spectacle because both teams try to play.”
Defender Cristian Romero echoed that message, saying

Argentina were concentrating primarily on fixing their own shortcomings.
“Regardless of who we face, whatever the opponent’s name or where they are from, we always focus on ourselves and on correcting the mistakes we have,” said Romero, who scored Argentina’s first goal against Egypt. — Reuters



Hilal al Kharousi with fans



Mazin al Buraiki in the stadium.

OMANI FANS WITNESS A WORLD CUP LIKE NEVER BEFORE



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 11

For thousands of football supporters, attending the 2026 Fifa World Cup is a lifelong dream. For a growing number of Omani fans, the 2026 edition has become far more than simply watching matches from the stands, as it has been an unforgettable journey combining elite football, technological innovation, cultural exchange and exceptional hospitality.

Despite the long journey from Muscat to the tournament's host cities across the United States, Canada and Mexico, several Omani supporters made the trip to experience football's biggest spectacle firsthand. Speaking to Observer, they described a tournament that has set new standards in fan engagement, stadium operations and the overall matchday experience.

Among them was Mazin al Buraiki from Al Musannah, who attended five matches in the United States, including Morocco versus Brazil, France against Senegal, Sweden versus France in the Round of 32, Saudi Arabia against Spain, and Morocco's clash with Haiti.

"The World Cup exceeded all my expectations," Al Buraiki said. "I watched matches at two magnificent venues, including New Jersey Stadium, which will host the final, and Atlanta Stadium. Every match offered a unique atmosphere, but what impressed me most was how smoothly everything was organised from arrival until departure."

He explained that crowd management inside and around the stadiums was remarkably efficient. "The supporters are allowed to arrive only minutes before kick-off without worrying about long queues. Even during peak periods, entering and leaving the stadium rarely took more than ten minutes. The smart architectural design, multiple access points, escalators, elevators and wide walkways ensured continuous movement and

eliminated congestion," he noted.

According to Al Buraiki, the World Cup experience extended well beyond the 90 minutes on the pitch. "Fan zones surrounding the stadiums featured food markets representing cuisines from around the world, live entertainment, interactive games, football challenges, music performances and giant digital screens that kept supporters entertained for hours before kick-off. It felt like attending an international festival rather than simply watching a football match," he said. "Fans could participate in competitions, appear on giant screens and enjoy entertainment regardless of which team they supported."

Transportation also stood out as one of the tournament's strongest features. Al Buraiki praised the seamless integration between airports, city centres, stadiums and fan zones through extensive rail networks, intercity buses and affordable domestic flights.

"The organisers made travelling between host cities incredibly convenient," he explained. "Whether by train, bus, or budget airline, every option was designed to accommodate the massive number of supporters moving across the country."

He also highlighted Fifa's comprehensive digital support, pointing to mobile applications providing real-time navigation, transport updates and interactive maps, while volunteers stationed at airports, railway stations and tourist attractions assisted visitors throughout their journeys.

Perhaps the biggest technological leap came inside the stadiums themselves. "The visual experience was extraordinary," Al Buraiki said. "Massive LED displays and infinity screens surrounded the stadium, providing live statistics, instant 4K replays and immersive graphics."

He was particularly impressed by the tournament's augmented reality features. "Using the Fifa application, supporters could point their phones towards the pitch and instantly see players' names, movement patterns,

passing routes and live statistics through augmented reality. It made the match feel like an interactive experience."

Al Buraiki also praised the outstanding media facilities, noting that journalists benefited from dedicated entrances, complimentary hospitality services, high-speed internet and live monitoring of simultaneous matches, while sponsors enhanced the tournament atmosphere through innovative interactive exhibitions.

DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE
Another passionate Omani supporter, Hilal al Kharousi from Al Suwaiq, experienced the tournament across several destinations, including New York, Atlanta, Miami and Mexico. "My World Cup journey was much more than attending football matches," Al Kharousi said. "It became a sporting, cultural and human experience that allowed me to witness how football unites people from every continent."

He began his journey in New York by watching Morocco face Brazil inside the stadium that will stage the World Cup final. "From the moment I arrived, the atmosphere was breathtaking," he recalled. "The flags, songs, colours and passionate Moroccan and Brazilian supporters created a truly unforgettable occasion."

His next stop was Atlanta, where he watched Saudi Arabia take on Spain. "The Saudi supporters created an incredible Arab presence inside the stadium," he said. "Their passion and energy made us all proud to see an Arab team competing on football's biggest stage."

Beyond the stadiums, Al Kharousi said Miami showcased another dimension of the World Cup through lively fan zones combining sport, tourism, music and entertainment. "The city transformed into an international celebration where football blended naturally with local culture," he explained.

His visit to Mexico offered yet another distinctive experience. "There, football was visible everywhere, not only inside the stadiums but throughout the streets. Music, celebrations and spontaneous gatherings reflected the country's deep passion for the sport."

For Al Kharousi, the tournament's greatest achievement lies in its ability to bring people together regardless of nationality or language. "In every city I visited, I met supporters from different countries. We exchanged conversations, photographs and memories despite speaking different languages. Football truly becomes a universal language during the World Cup."

The supporters agreed that the Fifa World Cup represents far more than an international sporting event. It is a global celebration where football, technology, culture, tourism and hospitality merge to create lifelong memories.

Al Buraiki highlighted Fifa's comprehensive digital support, pointing to mobile applications providing real-time navigation, transport updates and interactive maps



FIFA WORLD CUP
2026



Every flag
tells a story
of pride



Belgium fan poses with a national flag during the match. — Reuters



Spain fans inside the stadium before the match. — Reuters



An Argentine fan holds cardboard cutouts depicting Messi. — AFP



Spain fans react during the match. — Reuters



Belgium fans react during quarterfinal match between Spain and Belgium. — AFP



Norwegian fans gather at Ocean Drive in Miami Beach. — AFP



A young Norway fan wears sunglasses featuring the national flag. — Reuters



Argentine fans dressed as nuns take part in a gathering. — AFP



Belgium fans react during the match. — Reuters



Spain fans outside the stadium before the match. — Reuters

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The value of merchandise exports reached RO 7.6 billion by the end of April 2026.

OMAN TRADE SURPLUS HOLDS ABOVE ₪2 BILLION

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman recorded a merchandise trade surplus of RO 2.09 billion in the first four months of 2026, broadly stable compared with RO 2.11 billion in the same period a year earlier, preliminary official data showed. The value of merchandise exports reached RO 7.6 billion by the end of April, while imports stood at RO 5.5 billion, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Oil and gas exports, which accounted for the largest share of outbound trade, fell 7.5 per cent to RO 4.7 billion from RO 5.1 billion in the corresponding period of 2025.

Non-oil exports also eased to RO 2.1 billion from RO 2.2 billion a year earlier.

The decline was partly offset by a sharp increase in re-exports, which rose 66.8 per cent to RO 770 million from RO 462 million in the first four months of 2025, reflecting stronger transit and regional trading activity.

The United Arab Emirates was the largest destination for the Sultanate of Oman's non-oil exports, receiving goods valued at RO 480 million. Saudi Arabia ranked second at RO 233 million, followed by India at RO 214 million.

Non-oil exports to the United States amounted to RO 168 million, while shipments to South Korea were valued at RO 160 million.

The UAE also led re-export destinations, with shipments valued at RO 331 million, followed by Saudi Arabia at RO 140 million and Iran at RO 98 million.

On the import side, the UAE remained the largest supplier to the Sultanate of Oman, with goods valued at RO 1.5 billion during the period.

China ranked second with RO 801 million, followed by Türkiye at RO 422 million. Imports from Saudi Arabia stood at RO 413 million, while goods imported from India were valued at RO 392 million. — ONA

Oman offers ₪16 million healthcare projects

THE Sultanate of Oman has launched four healthcare investment opportunities valued at about RO 16 million as it seeks to expand specialised medical services, strengthen local manufacturing and attract private-sector investment.

The projects cover early disease detection, medical rehabilitation and the production of healthcare supplies, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said.

The package was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones as part of efforts to prepare investment projects aligned with market demand.

The largest opportunity involves establishing an early detection centre in the Wilayat of Bausher at an estimated investment of RO 7.5 million. The proposed facility is intended to address growing demand for early diagnosis, health screening and preventive medicine services.

A specialised rehabilitation hospital is also planned in Muscat Governorate at an estimated cost of RO 6 million. The hospital will provide comprehensive rehabilitation services using modern medical practices and treatment technologies.

The package includes two manufacturing projects aimed at increasing domestic production of medical supplies and strengthening healthcare supply chains. The first involves manufacturing chlorhexidine gluconate solution in Salalah Free Zone at an estimated investment of RO 2.4 million.

Chlorhexidine gluconate is widely used as an antiseptic and disinfectant in medical and healthcare applications. The second manufacturing opportunity involves the production of paraffin-embedded



The projects cover early disease detection, medical rehabilitation and the production of healthcare supplies.

The largest opportunity involves establishing an early detection centre in the Wilayat of Bausher at an estimated investment of RO 7.5 million. The proposed facility is intended to address growing demand for early diagnosis, health screening and preventive medicine services.

gauze in Sohar Free Zone in Al Batinah North Governorate, with an estimated investment of RO 577,500.

The projects are expected to support local medical manufacturing, reduce reliance on imported products and improve the competitiveness of Omani-made healthcare supplies in regional markets.

Lamia bint Sultan al Habsi, Assistant Director-General of the Directorate-General for Investment Promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the healthcare sector was undergoing rapid transformation. She attributed the shift to population growth, increasing demand for specialised services and national efforts to localise medical industries.

“Through this package, the ministry aims to provide high-quality investment opportunities based on actual market needs, offering investors economically viable and value-added projects.” She said the projects would

increase the private sector's contribution to economic development and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The opportunities were developed through the Invest in Oman platform using sector-specific studies and cooperation with government entities, she said.

The approach is intended to move beyond traditional project proposals by providing investors with more detailed and investment-ready opportunities, including greater clarity on commercial prospects and sector requirements.

Balqees bint Saud al Makhmari, Director of the Investment Empowerment Department at the Ministry of Health, said stronger partnerships with private investors were central to developing the Sultanate of Oman's healthcare system.

She said the projects would expand specialised healthcare services, strengthen domestic medical manufacturing and improve the sector's ability to respond to future demand. — ONA

Oman, Dutch partners step up green hydrogen corridor initiative

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 11

Building on expanding cooperation in green hydrogen, a high-level Omani delegation visited the Netherlands for two days of meetings and technical engagements hosted by the Holland Hydrogen Hub (H3), as both countries moved to accelerate plans for a dedicated green hydrogen corridor linking the Sultanate with Europe.

The programme brought together government officials, infrastructure operators, technology developers, researchers, logistics providers and prospective hydrogen offtakers, reflecting growing momentum behind efforts to establish Oman as a major supplier of renewable hydrogen and its derivatives to European markets.

In a statement, Holland Hydrogen Hub - an alliance of Dutch clean energy stakeholders - said the visit enabled “valuable exchanges on hydrogen development, energy corridors, international collaboration, and



Representatives from Oman and the Netherlands meeting at the North Sea Port at the start of the programme (Credit: Holland Hydrogen Hub).

the acceleration of the energy transition.”

The Omani delegation was led by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aafi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and included Dr Mansoor bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation, Hamood al Sawafi, Director-General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, along with representatives from SOHAR Port and Freezone, Asyad Group and the Oman

Hydrogen Centre.

The mission marked one of the first practical implementation steps following a series of strategic initiatives unveiled during the World Hydrogen Summit & Exhibition 2026 in Rotterdam.

Those initiatives included the launch of the NoorBridge programme to develop a clean energy corridor between Oman and Europe, studies into a dedicated hydrogen export corridor connecting Oman with

Dutch ports, discussions on integrating Omani hydrogen into the Netherlands' emerging hydrogen backbone, and engagement with European offtakers and logistics providers to support long-term exports of green ammonia, liquid hydrogen and other renewable hydrogen derivatives.

The programme commenced with a networking session and harbour tour at North Sea Port, one of Europe's leading industrial ports and a future gateway for imported renewable hydrogen and green ammonia.

Participants represented virtually every segment of the hydrogen value chain, including LBC Tank Terminals, Vesta Terminals, Evos, Yara Clean Ammonia, Hynetwork Services, Gasunie and a number of prospective European offtakers.

The discussions highlighted the infrastructure required to establish a commercial hydrogen corridor, encompassing storage terminals, port facilities, pipelines, logistics networks and distribution systems capable of handling large-scale imports of green molecules

from Oman.

A broader group of Holland Hydrogen Hub partners also participated, including SoluForce, Voyex, Nedstack Fuel Cell Technology, Desolenator, Duiker Clean Technologies, Avans University of Applied Sciences, Port of Rotterdam, Vopak, Advario and TNO.

Collectively, these organisations showcased the breadth of the Dutch hydrogen ecosystem, spanning pipeline technologies, hydrogen mobility, fuel cells, sustainable desalination, industrial decarbonisation, applied research, storage infrastructure and Europe's largest energy port.

Their expertise is expected to play an important role in supporting Oman's ambitions to develop an integrated green hydrogen export industry.

The programme concluded with a visit to Dutch technology company H2FLEXX, where the Omani delegation explored the company's H2EASY solid hydrogen carrier technology and observed hydrogen production at its research facilities.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



This July promises something special for visitors.

Dubai Calendar unveils July 2026 programme of events

MUSCAT: Dubai Calendar has unveiled its July 2026 programme, bringing together an exceptional mix of live performances, sporting action and seasonal highlights. At the heart of the season is Dubai Summer Surprises, a family-centred celebration that anchors a broader calendar designed to delight all ages and interests. From internationally acclaimed stage acts to dedicated fan zones that capture the excitement of the FIFA World Cup, this July promises something special for visitors.

RETAIL
Dubai Summer Surprises
Date: July 2 – August 30, 2026
Location: Citywide
About: Dubai Summer Surprises returns for another edition, transforming the summer months into a citywide celebration of retail, entertainment and family experiences. Visitors can expect special seasonal prices across leading retail destinations, alongside prize draws, hotel and attraction offers, and a broad programme of family-friendly activities.

SPORT
DWTC Fanzone
Date: Until July 19, 2026
Location: Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC)
About: DWTC Fanzone by DXB LIVE offers a dedicated space for football fans to follow every match of the FIFA World Cup in a family-friendly environment. With large screen telecasts, live entertainment, interactive activities and a variety of dining options, the venue creates a communal matchday experience for visitors of all ages. Designed as a gathering place for supporters of the game, the venue offers an energetic matchday experience from kick-off to the final whistle.

Emirates Our Home
Date: Until 19 July 2026
Location: Dubai Festival City Mall
About: Emirates Our Home transforms Dubai Festival City Mall into a round-the-clock football destination during the FIFA World Cup. Alongside live match screenings, visitors can expect entertainment programmes, interactive activations, dedicated family areas, premium dining, and exclusive hospitality areas, all designed to provide an immersive tournament atmosphere for football fans and visitors.

Citywide Football Fanzones
Date: Until July 19 2026
Location: Citywide
About: A wide range of venues across Dubai are screening the FIFA World Cup 2026 matches live throughout the tournament, featuring special food and drink offers, themed activations and entertainment. The citywide programme brings together a variety of match-day experiences designed for groups, families and football fans.

NBO hosts 2nd Digital Partnership Awards

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted the second edition of its Digital Partnership Awards at its Head Office in Muscat, bringing together representatives from government entities, private sector organisations, and SMEs to celebrate the strategic partnerships that continue to advance the Bank’s digital transformation journey and support Oman’s wider digital ambitions. The awards recognised partners whose collaboration has played a vital role in enhancing customer experiences, expanding our digital payment capabilities, and advancing digital banking services across the Sultanate of Oman. The Best Digital Payment Processor Excellence Award was presented to the Royal Oman Police, the Civil Aviation Authority, and the Public



Prosecution, among others, while the Best Digital Payment Acquirer Excellence Award was presented to the Tax Authority, Muscat Municipality, the Ministry of Health, and

the Central Bank of Oman, among others. In addition, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs received Muzn Islamic Banking’s Best Digital Payment Processor and Acquirer Excellence Award. The event underscored the importance of strategic partnerships in accelerating digital adoption, strengthening collaboration across sectors, and delivering seamless, customer-centric banking experiences that create lasting value for customers, businesses, and the wider economy. Through its continued collaboration with government entities and industry partners, NBO remains committed to expanding its digital capabilities, simplifying customer journeys, and contributing to Oman’s digital transformation in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

All-new Nissan Tekton premiered in India

NISSAN unveiled the all-new Nissan Tekton at its world premiere in India, marking an important milestone in the company’s transformation journey and reinforcing India’s growing role in Nissan’s future. The launch reflects the progress being made through Nissan and demonstrates how Nissan’s vision is becoming a reality through a stronger portfolio, strategic partnerships and focused market growth. Developed under Nissan’s ‘One Car, One World’ philosophy and manufactured in Chennai, India, for domestic and export markets, the all-new Tekton highlights India’s importance as both a growth market and strategic export hub. The model will be exported to 50 global markets across the Middle East and Africa, further strengthening India’s role in Nissan’s global manufacturing and product strategy. Speaking at the world premiere, Guillaume Cartier, Chief Performance Officer, Nissan, said: “We are building a stronger and more competitive Nissan in India. As we continue to strengthen our SUV-led portfolio and sharpen our market focus, the world premiere of the all-new Nissan Tekton reflects our ambition to leverage strategic partnerships to expand our market coverage. Tekton is a clear expression of how Nissan is transforming with purpose - towards a more competitive, diverse portfolio.”



The all-new Tekton highlights India’s importance as both a growth market and a strategic export hub.

Lulu opens new store in Salalah

SALALAH: Lulu has further expanded its presence in the Sultanate of Oman with the official opening of a new Lulu Xpress store in Al Morooj, Salalah. The store was officially inaugurated by Shaikh Dr Said bin Humaid bin Abdullah al Harthy, Wali of Salalah. , in the presence of Shabeer K A, Director of Lulu Oman, along with other dignitaries and senior officials. Strategically located to serve Salalah’s growing urban residential communities, the new Xpress store spans 3,000 square metres and offers a thoughtfully curated range of products to meet customers’ everyday needs.



The store was officially inaugurated by Shaikh Dr Said bin Humaid bin Abdullah al Harthy, Wali of Salalah.

The store also features dedicated self-checkout kiosks, express counters, and ample parking facilities, ensuring

a convenient and hassle-free shopping experience for shoppers. “The opening of the Lulu Xpress store in Salalah underscores our commitment to expanding our footprint across the Sultanate of Oman while offering customers greater convenience and accessibility. This expansion also creates new employment opportunities and contributes to the continued economic development of the region,” said Shabeer K A, Director of Lulu Oman. This marks another step in LuLu’s ongoing efforts to bring modern, accessible, and customer-focused retail experiences closer to communities across the region.

Kia Seltos: For modern families and professionals

MUSCAT: The Kia Seltos continues to stand out across the Sultanate of Oman as a stylish and practical compact SUV, perfectly suited for young office-goers, and small families seeking comfort, technology, and everyday versatility. Designed for both daily commutes and weekend outings, the Seltos offers a commanding SUV driving position that provides excellent visibility and confidence on busy city roads. Powered by a refined 1.4L Turbo



The Seltos offers a commanding SUV driving position.

engine producing 138 horsepower, paired with a smooth 7-speed Dual-Clutch Transmission (7-DCT), the Seltos delivers responsive performance alongside impressive fuel efficiency of 17 km/litre. Kia also has another variant of the Seltos, which comes with a 1.5L engine, producing 113 horsepower, with advanced features including Smart Cruise Control, Electronic Stability Program (ESP) etc. Inside, the spacious five-seater cabin is built for comfort and convenience, featuring generous

legroom, a panoramic sunroof, ventilated front seats, and a practical 429-litre boot ideal for everyday family and lifestyle needs. The Seltos also offers a connected and tech-forward driving experience with an 8-inch display audio system supporting Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, wireless charging, ambient lighting, and advanced convenience features including Smart Key Entry, rear-view monitor, electronic parking brake, and Parking Distance Warning (PDW) sensors.

SHORTTAKES



SMIIC is an institution affiliated with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

OMAN JOINS ISLAMIC STANDARDS BODY

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has been approved as a member of the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, or SMIIC, from 2027, giving it a greater role in developing common technical and halal standards across Islamic markets.

The membership is expected to strengthen cooperation in standardisation, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment, while helping facilitate trade between member countries.

SMIIC is an institution affiliated with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and is headquartered in Türkiye. Oman's membership was accepted during the institute's 31st Board of Directors meeting following an application submitted by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director-General of Standards and Metrology, said membership would allow Oman to participate in developing and improving standards used by member states.

It would also give Omani specialists access to training programmes, workshops and technical exchanges intended to strengthen national capabilities in standardisation, quality and metrology, he said.

The Directorate-General of Standards and Metrology will represent the Sultanate of Oman in the SMIIC General Assembly and in technical bodies including the Standardisation Management Council and the Metrology Council.

Participation in the councils and committees will give the Sultanate of Oman a role in formulating technical policies and standards adopted across Islamic countries.

Dr Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Director of the Oman Accreditation Centre at the ministry, said membership would also support the development of the national halal system.

He said cooperation with SMIIC and its member states would help the Sultanate of Oman build an integrated halal accreditation framework covering products, services and halal certification bodies. Common standards could facilitate the entry of Omani products into overseas markets, increase their competitiveness and reduce technical barriers to trade, al Busaidy said.

OQEP secures investment-grade ratings

MUSCAT: OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) has received investment-grade credit ratings from S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings, strengthening the Omani energy producer's position in international capital markets.

The agencies assigned OQEP a long-term global-scale rating of "BBB-" with a stable outlook and a standalone credit assessment of "bbb-". S&P Global also assigned the company a Gulf Cooperation Council regional-scale rating of "gCAA-".

The ratings reflect OQEP's financial position, stable cash generation, low-cost operations and established role in the Sultanate of Oman's upstream oil and gas sector,



The agencies assigned OQEP a long-term global-scale rating of "BBB-" with a stable outlook.

the company said. Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Hashmi, Chief Executive Officer of OQEP, described the ratings as an important milestone in the company's growth and said they reflected confidence in its financial and operational performance.

"Obtaining investment-grade credit ratings from two prestigious international agencies represents a significant milestone in the company's growth trajectory," al Hashmi said.

He said the assessments demonstrated the strength of OQEP's business model and its ability to generate sustainable cash flows under varying market conditions,

while improving the company's access to capital markets.

The ratings were supported by long-term exploration and production agreements, stable output and a financial policy designed to maintain low debt levels, including under conservative oil-price assumptions, the company said. OQEP's production reached approximately 224,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day by the end of 2025.

The company has operated and jointly held interests across several producing and prospective areas in the Sultanate of Oman, including Blocks 60, 10, 65, 9, 53 and 61. The portfolio supports stable production

and recurring cash flows.

OQEP is also implementing capital projects aimed at improving operating efficiency, maintaining production, lowering costs and reducing emissions.

The company recently received the CSR Gold Accreditation from the United Kingdom-based Corporate Social Responsibility Accreditation Foundation.

The accreditation recognised its integration of social responsibility practices into its operations and initiatives covering education, healthcare, youth development, environmental awareness, volunteering and community engagement. — ONA

CHIP SHORTAGE

SK Hynix warns of memory crunch



SK Hynix expects the global memory chip industry to face its worst supply shortage in 2027, with customer demand likely to outstrip production capacity beyond 2030, Chief Executive Kwak Noh-jung said.

The chipmaker is considering future wafer fabrication investments in the US, Japan and Southeast Asia while expanding capacity to meet surging demand driven by AI. — Reuters

MARKET RULES

SEC tightens activist disclosure requirements



The US SEC has ordered activist investors to disclose the identities of clients backing their campaigns in regulatory filings.

The guidance affects key disclosure documents and reflects growing scrutiny of investment structures, including special purpose "sidecar" vehicles, increasingly used to finance activist campaigns seeking boardroom or corporate changes. — Reuters

TECH SCRUTINY

EU targets Meta platform features



The EU has warned Meta Platforms to change addictive features on Facebook and Instagram or face potential fines under the Digital Services Act.

Regulators said autoplay, infinite scroll and personalised recommendations could encourage compulsive use, while arguing that Meta's existing safeguards and parental controls are insufficient to address the associated risks. — Reuters

189 promising investment prospects across Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 11

THE Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has published the 44th issue of *Duqm Economist*, featuring a collection of economic files, reports and surveys highlighting the latest developments in investment and development across the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The issue features a special report on 189 promising investment opportunities offered by the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in the sectors of industry, logistics, renewable energy, mining, tourism, food industries and advanced technologies. It also includes a report addressing the question, "Why Choose the Special Economic Zone at Duqm for Investment?", outlining the zone's competitive advantages, including its strategic location, advanced infrastructure, investment incentives and integrated logistics ecosystem supporting a wide range of economic activities.

The issue also covers the latest investment projects, led by the signing of 10 investment agreements and memoranda of cooperation in the Special



OPAZ's latest newsletter, *Duqm Economist*.

Economic Zone at Duqm, with a total investment value of RO 2.9 billion, in addition to new investment agreements across the economic zones and free zones exceeding RO 200 million, covering projects in manufacturing industries, energy, electric vehicles, chemicals, steel, pipes and pharmaceutical products.

It also reviews a Korean project for the production of electric vehicles and battery cells in Duqm, the Royal Decree establishing the Artificial Intelligence Special Zone in Muscat Governorate and its role in advancing the digital

economy and attracting technology investments, as well as a report on the Oman International Financial Centre, which represents a major step toward strengthening the national economy and attracting investment.

Khazaen Economic City and investment opportunities within Food City, where investments have reached RO 181 million, are also highlighted in the report. In addition, the issue features a report on the industrial cities operated by Madayn, highlighting that the total number of projects has reached 2,493 investment contracts

distributed across 12 industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the continued growth of the industrial sector and its contribution to economic diversification and the attraction of local and foreign investment.

The issue also features an interview with Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, in which he reviewed the issuance of 8,882 environmental permits for projects in the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities during 2025, in addition to environmental monitoring mechanisms and coordination with operating entities to strengthen environmental compliance and achieve a balance between economic development and environmental protection.

The issue further includes specialised surveys and reports, including one on investment opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry, another highlighting Thamrait Industrial City as a promising logistics and industrial gateway, and a report on the Zone Service Platform, presented as an integrated digital gateway for investment opportunities and services provided to investors.

It also showcases the success story of the Omani brand Oman Luxury and Vale's experience in the mining industry.

MUSCAT: Credit extended by conventional commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman to the private sector rose 8.2 per cent to RO 23.1 billion by the end of May 2026, according to Central Bank of Oman data.

Total outstanding credit granted by conventional banks increased 11.8 per cent between May 2025 and May 2026, reflecting continued

growth in domestic lending, the central bank said in its monthly report.

Banks also expanded their securities portfolios, with total investments rising 29.8 per cent year on year to about RO 7.1 billion at the end of May.

Investments in government development bonds increased 26.3 per cent to RO 2.4 billion, while

holdings of foreign securities rose 36.1 per cent to RO 2.6 billion. On the liabilities side, total deposits held by conventional commercial banks increased 13.7 per cent to RO 28.6 billion.

Government deposits rose 9 per cent to approximately RO 6.3 billion, while deposits from public-sector institutions jumped 42.9 per cent to about RO 2.4 billion. — ONA

CHIP SHORTAGE

SK Hynix warns of memory crunch



SK Hynix expects the global memory chip industry to face its worst supply shortage in 2027, with customer demand likely to outstrip production capacity beyond 2030, Chief Executive Kwak Noh-jung said.

The chipmaker is considering future wafer fabrication investments in the US, Japan and Southeast Asia while expanding capacity to meet surging demand driven by AI. — Reuters

MARKET RULES

SEC tightens activist disclosure requirements



The US SEC has ordered activist investors to disclose the identities of clients backing their campaigns in regulatory filings.

The guidance affects key disclosure documents and reflects growing scrutiny of investment structures, including special purpose "sidecar" vehicles, increasingly used to finance activist campaigns seeking boardroom or corporate changes. — Reuters

TECH SCRUTINY

EU targets Meta platform features



The EU has warned Meta Platforms to change addictive features on Facebook and Instagram or face potential fines under the Digital Services Act.

Regulators said autoplay, infinite scroll and personalised recommendations could encourage compulsive use, while arguing that Meta's existing safeguards and parental controls are insufficient to address the associated risks. — Reuters

OPINION

Investing in the future of the economy and local content



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is a local content, sustainability and innovation expert

INVESTMENTS and infrastructure don't reflect the only new measures of economic growth. In fact, growth of a country's people, investment value, and local organisation strengthening all show economic growth.

Therefore, national investment is the most strategic investment any nation can afford and is the base of effective local content policies.

Of course, local content means much more than simply increasing local participation in national projects. It's a development strategy seeking to maximise the growth and retention of a country's resources. It builds and sustains local enterprises, improves national workforce participation and skills, advances innovation, and solidifies national supply chains.

All of this, however, is of little use without people and institutions whose skills and capabilities allow the delivery of a service that meets international standards. Looking at the local content policies, the most important and the most valuable resource of all is the available human capital.

Engineers, project managers, procurement officers, technicians, businessmen and women, and researchers all make it possible to transform investment into a sustainable economic benefit. It is therefore important to make education, formal and informal professional training, and upgrading of skills available to all and seen as an economic investment.

Workforce capability is a country's greatest asset and every increase strengthens national economy and reduces national reliance on foreign expertise.

Strengthening local businesses, specifically small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is important for building national capability. SMEs can dominate the local economy, but many SMEs lack technical skills and struggle with quality, digitisation, and finance.

Mentoring, supplier development, technology transfer, and innovation support are examples of capability-building interventions that help SMEs engage with large enterprises and integrate into the national and international value chains.

The development of local suppliers increases the economy's resilience and competitiveness.

Capability development requires technology and innovation. Local content strategies more readily leverage technology and innovation, including the use of digital technologies, AI, data analytics, and performance measurement frameworks to strengthen decision-making and transparency.

Improvement of digital technologies enables local content performers to accurately indicate, and validate local content performance, pinpoint developmental needs, and direct their resources and investments optimally in local content initiatives.

The local content transformations from a compliance exercise to a strategic management framework for continuous improvement.

Looking at the local content policies, the most important and the most valuable resource of all is the available human capital. Engineers, project managers, procurement officers, technicians, businessmen and women, and researchers all make it possible to transform investment into a sustainable economic benefit.

Robust governance frameworks and policies are a prerequisite for the successful alignment of capability development to national needs. Investments in capability development are more likely to yield economic benefits when there are clear policies, transparent reporting, measurable key performance indicators, and engaged stakeholders.

Local content should not be considered a stand-alone effort, but should be embedded in the workforce, procurement, industrial development, and innovation policies.

One thing countries that have implemented successful local content policies have in common is their focus on investing in their citizens. Such countries understand that the development of national capabilities is a lengthy process, but the servers of applying consistent investment are valuable.

Strong national capabilities also improve investment quality, and create economic diversity and a competitive industry. On top of that, they create high-value jobs and help countries become less vulnerable to global economic crises.

Consistent with the main targets of the Omani Vision 2040 and similar economically disruptive agendas, sophisticated capability development is seen as facilitating the best sustainable growth.

By concentrating on people and perceived investment within the country, long-term value is more a product of the developed resources than the private activity of finance.

Water-based renewable projects gain momentum

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

Floating solar power is rapidly emerging as one of the renewable energy sector's fastest-growing technologies, with governments and utilities increasingly deploying photovoltaic (PV) systems on reservoirs, lakes, irrigation ponds and former quarry sites to overcome land constraints while boosting clean electricity generation.

Unlike conventional ground-mounted solar farms, floating photovoltaic (FPV) systems are installed on buoyant platforms anchored to the water's surface.

The approach offers several advantages, including reduced competition for valuable land, improved solar panel efficiency due to the cooling effect of water, and lower evaporation rates from reservoirs in arid regions.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), global solar deployment continues to accelerate at record levels, with floating solar expected to play an increasingly important role in countries facing limited land availability or growing water management challenges.

The World Bank has previously estimated that only a small proportion of suitable artificial water bodies could support hundreds of gigawatts of floating solar capacity worldwide.

Several countries are now scaling up deployment. China remains the world's largest floating solar market, operating some of the biggest installations on flooded former mining sites.

India is commissioning large projects on reservoirs to support its expanding renewable energy targets, while nations including Indonesia, Singapore and South Korea continue to integrate floating solar into national energy strategies. In Europe, France, the Netherlands and Portugal are also investing in the technology to diversify renewable electricity generation.

Innovation is also extending beyond inland reservoirs. Developers are advancing offshore floating solar systems capable of operating in coastal waters, often alongside offshore wind farms.

Hybrid renewable energy projects that combine floating solar with hydropower are becoming increasingly attractive because they can utilise existing grid connections while helping balance electricity production throughout the day.

The hidden economy beyond the farm gate

WE tend to think of agricultural success as something that happens in the field. We count the land cultivated, the tonnes harvested and the percentage of domestic demand covered by local production. We ask farmers to raise yields, adopt technology and use less water.

These are important ambitions. But they tell us only how much food is produced — not how much economic value survives after production.

A crop does not become a successful product simply because it has been harvested. It must still be collected, transported, stored, graded, packaged, marketed and sold. At every stage, value can be protected, increased or lost.

This is the part of agriculture Oman should examine more closely. A farmer may deliver a good harvest and still finish the season with a poor return. Too many growers may bring the same crop to market at once. Transport may arrive late. Storage may be unavailable. A buyer may know that the farmer cannot afford to wait.

The produce reaches the market, but much of its value does not remain with the person who produced it.

This is not only a farmer's problem. It is an economic one. A tomato carries more than its retail price. It contains water, energy, labour, fuel, finance and months of risk. When it spoils or is sold at an unsustainable discount, Oman loses part of every resource invested in growing it.

In a country where water is limited, that loss deserves particular attention. Producing more from scarce resources is important. Allowing less of that production to lose value may be equally important — and sometimes cheaper.

The State Council's recent examination of the plant agricultural sector points in the right direction. It places value addition, innovation and stronger



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

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

Oman's agricultural ambition should be measured not only by what its farms produce, but by how much value survives the journey to the consumer.

distribution chains alongside the familiar questions of water, financing, legislation and research.

That is a necessary shift in the debate. Agriculture cannot be judged only by what leaves the farm. It should also be judged by what reaches the consumer, what income returns to the producer and what further activity is created through logistics, packaging and food processing.

Oman has already shown that intervention after the farm can produce real results. The move to the integrated facilities at Silal improved the handling, cooling and storage of fruit and vegetables. Reported spoilage fell sharply compared with conditions at the former wholesale market.

The lesson is not simply that Oman needed a better market. It is that the design of the chain matters. When storage, inspection, transport and trading work together, less value disappears. But a modern wholesale market cannot recover value already lost before the crop reaches it.

The next frontier therefore lies closer to the farm. Farmers need to know what the market is likely to require before they plant, not after they harvest. They need access to collection and storage without being forced to build those facilities individually. Small producers need ways to combine volumes so that they can meet the requirements of supermarkets, hotels, processors and other large buyers.

Above all, they need more negotiating power over a product that loses value with every hour it remains unsold. This may help explain one of the more frustrating contradictions in agriculture: farmers can receive weak prices while consumers continue to pay relatively high ones.

The answer is not always that someone in the middle is making excessive profit. Sometimes the chain itself is expensive, fragmented and inefficient. Transport is duplicated. Volumes are

inconsistent. Products pass through several hands. Losses are absorbed and then reflected in the final price.

That is why the solution cannot be another campaign telling farmers to grow more.

Production without an organised route to market can deepen oversupply rather than strengthen food security. Nor is the answer to guarantee a buyer for every crop. Agriculture remains an economic activity. Producers must respond to quality, price, water availability and real demand.

The state's role is not to remove commercial discipline. It is to ensure that viable production is not undermined by avoidable weaknesses in the chain. Food processing should be part of that equation.

A crop that cannot be sold fresh may still have value as juice, sauce, dried food, animal feed or an industrial ingredient. Without processing, a farmer often has only a brief window in which to sell. With processing, the commercial life of the harvest becomes longer and the economic base around agriculture becomes wider.

This is where farming becomes more than production. It becomes transport, storage, manufacturing, branding, retail and employment. It becomes an economic ecosystem rather than a field of separate projects.

Oman's agricultural performance should therefore be measured more intelligently. Tonnes produced remain important, but they are not enough.

We should also ask how much reached the market in good condition, how much of the final value returned to the producer, how much was processed locally and how much water and energy were effectively lost through spoilage and poor distribution.

These questions would not diminish the progress made in local production. They would help Oman extract more value from that progress.

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



IZDIHAR_INFO

ART/LIFE

SPIRIT OF AN OMANI SUMMER



SUMMER IN STROKES:
THE SEASON IN EVERY SHADE

> 20

RAVE**REVIEWS**

BLAZY’S WHIMSICAL CHANEL COUTURE



A model presents a creation by designer Matthieu Blazy as part of his Haute Couture Fall/Winter 2026-2027 collection show for the fashion house Chanel. — Reuters

Franco-Belgian designer Matthieu Blazy delved into fairy tales as inspiration for his second Chanel Haute Couture show from “Jack and the Beanstalk” to “Goldilocks”. The 42-year-old has won rave reviews from fashion experts since being appointed in December 2024 to start a fresh chapter in the life of the venerable Parisian fashion house. “Much like the story of (Chanel founder) Gabrielle Chanel, Matthieu Blazy’s tenure at the maison writes itself like a fairy tale,” Elle magazine’s fashion editor wrote on Tuesday.



MATTHIEU BLAZY
Franco-Belgian designer

His first collections have been snapped up by buyers worldwide, helping the group report a slight rise in sales last year when many of its peers were struggling with lower demand. For the Autumn/Winter Haute Couture collection, unveiled at the Grand Palais exhibition space in central Paris, Blazy sent out models against a backdrop of colourful flowers, climbing plants and magic mirrors. The collection featured pieces with direct references to fairy tales: coats made to look as though they were crafted from straw, evoking scarecrows, and almost transparent dresses embroidered with climbing vines. Other details, such as a handbag shaped like a sleeping teddy bear or a row of buttons showing a duck transform into a swan, hinted at other stories. “I asked myself whether Gabrielle Chanel’s life was a fairy tale. In her library I found the little book ‘Les Fées, contes des contes’ (which translates as ‘Fairies, Tales of Tales’ by Charles Perrault) and, together with the Haute Couture ateliers, we explored the idea of clothes that carry stories, like books,” the designer said in a statement. The model who opened the show was carrying a copy of Perrault’s book. — AFP

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

RED CARPET



US actress and singer Zendaya poses during a photocall ahead of the premiere of the film ‘The Odyssey’ at the Grand Rex Cinema in Paris. — AFP

ANIMAL KINGDOM



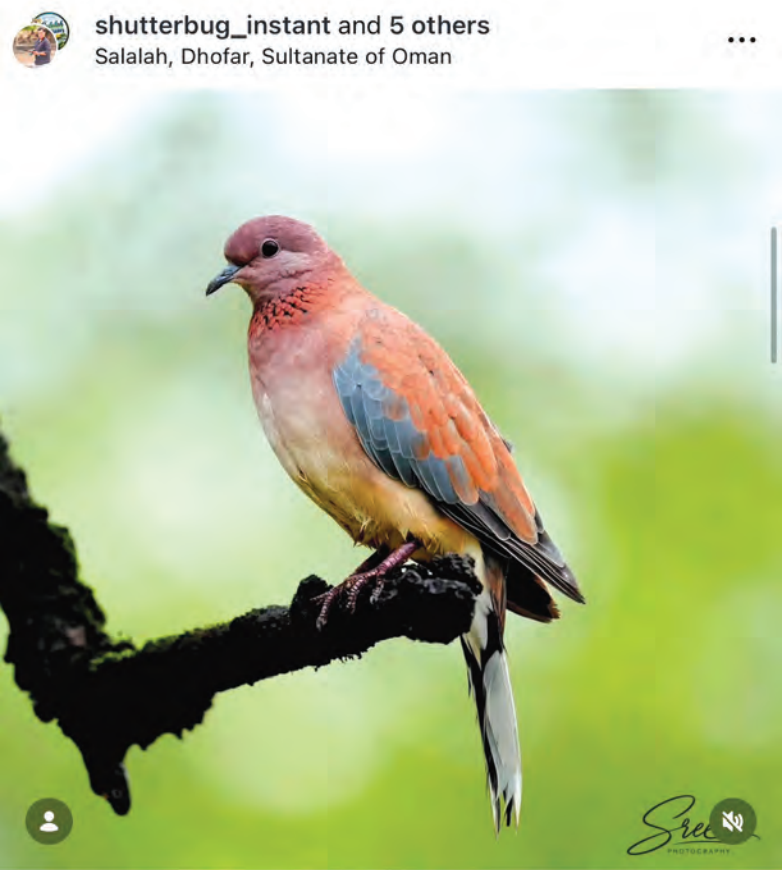
This photograph shows a brown bear (Ursus arctos) at the Arcturos Bear Sanctuary in Greece, a refuge for bears rescued from captivity. — AFP

BEAUTY PAGEANT

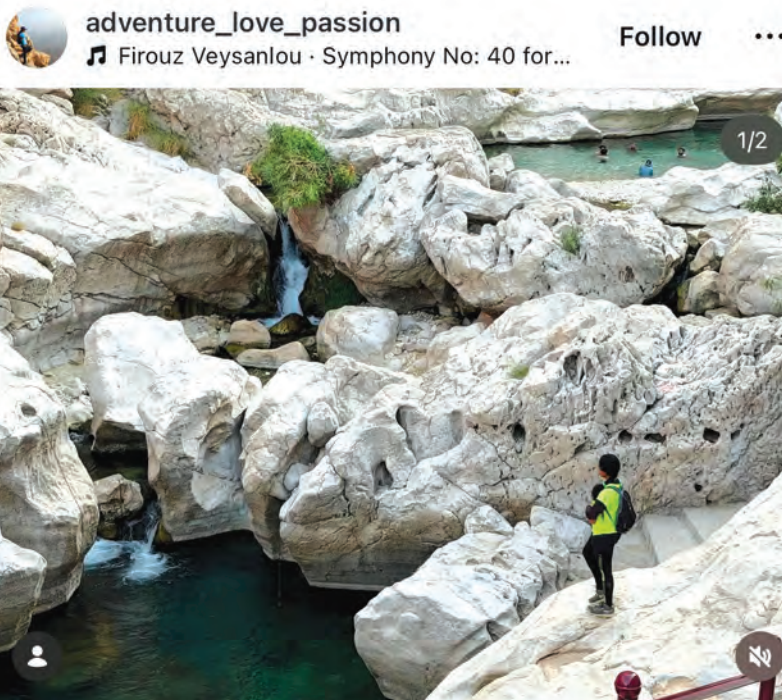


A model walks the runway wearing traditional attire during the “Noche de la Chola Pacena” event, where candidates are presented for the Chola Pacena 2026 pageants. — Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Spilopelia senegalensis, better known as the laughing dove.



The peaceful nature of Wadi Bani Khleid.

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.

BIEBER ADDED TO WORLD CUP FINAL HALFTIME SHOW

Justin Bieber has been added to the star-packed lineup of the first-ever World Cup final halftime show as organisers confirmed that the entire musical performance will last 11 minutes.

Canadian megastar Bieber joins Madonna, Shakira and K-pop sensation BTS for the Super Bowl-style halftime show on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

Coldplay's Chris Martin is curating the extravaganza, a first for a football World Cup final and one that has raised concerns over how long the game's halftime break will be.

The laws of football allow a halftime interval "not exceeding 15 minutes."

Even an 11-minute musical performance could still require the break to be extended, given the time likely required to set up and disassemble the show.

FIFA chief Gianni Infantino has said the halftime show will be "definitely the biggest stage ever," with "a couple of billion" expected to tune in.

The show, which will also feature characters from "Sesame Street" and "The Muppets," will support FIFA's Global Citizen Education Fund, an initiative



working to raise \$100 million for children worldwide during the World Cup.

"The FIFA World Cup brings the world together in a way nothing else can," Bieber said.

"I'm grateful to be part of this halftime show, and even more grateful knowing it's already helping expand access to education for children around the world," added the "Stay" and "Love Yourself" hitmaker.

Also added to the lineup were Nigerian singer-songwriter Burna Boy and Venezuelan classical conductor Gustavo Dudamel. Coldplay will feature in a collaboration with PS22 Chorus, an acclaimed choir of students from a New York public elementary school. — AFP

‘The Pitt,’ ‘Hacks’ lead Emmy nominations

MEDICAL DRAMA “The Pitt” and intergenerational comedy “Hacks” dominated this year’s Emmy nominations, television’s equivalent of the Oscars.

“The Pitt” earned 25 nominations, including best drama, while the fifth and final season of “Hacks” received 24 nominations, including best comedy. The success marked a major boost for HBO Max, which led all platforms with 122 nominations. Netflix followed with 111 nods, led by limited series contender “Beef,” which received 16 nominations.

“The Pitt,” which won last year’s best drama award, follows the intense lives of emergency room workers in Pittsburgh, with each episode unfolding in real time. The series tackles issues including abortion rights, immigration and mass shootings, gradually becoming a word-of-mouth hit. Its star Noah Wyle, who rose to fame through ER, is once again nominated for best drama actor after winning an Emmy for the role.

Another major drama contender is Pluribus, created by Vince Gilligan, which earned 18 nominations. The post-apocalyptic series follows a world transformed by an alien virus that creates a peaceful collective consciousness, leaving only a small number of immune survivors. Its star Rhea Seehorn is considered a strong contender for best drama actress.

Other best drama nominees include The Diplomat, Slow Horses and A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms.

On the comedy side, “Hacks” leads the race with 24 nominations. The series follows veteran comedian Deborah Vance and her complicated relationship with her younger assistant. Its star Jean Smart, who has already won four Emmys for the role, is nominated again alongside co-star Hannah Einbinder.

Newcomer Widow’s Bay also made an impact with 19 nominations. The series stars Matthew Rhys as a quirky New England mayor attempting to attract tourists to an island believed by residents to be haunted.

Other comedy contenders include Shrinking and the final season of The Bear, which has previously won 21 Emmys.

Among limited series nominees, “Beef” competes alongside “Love Story: John F. Kennedy Jr and Carolyn Bessette,” which drew attention for revisiting the famous couple’s relationship, and “DTF St. Louis,” starring Jason Bateman, David Harbour and Linda Cardellini.

The Emmy Awards ceremony will take place on September 14 in Los Angeles, hosted by Mariska Hargitay. — AFP



The Pitt secured 25 Emmy nominations to lead all shows.

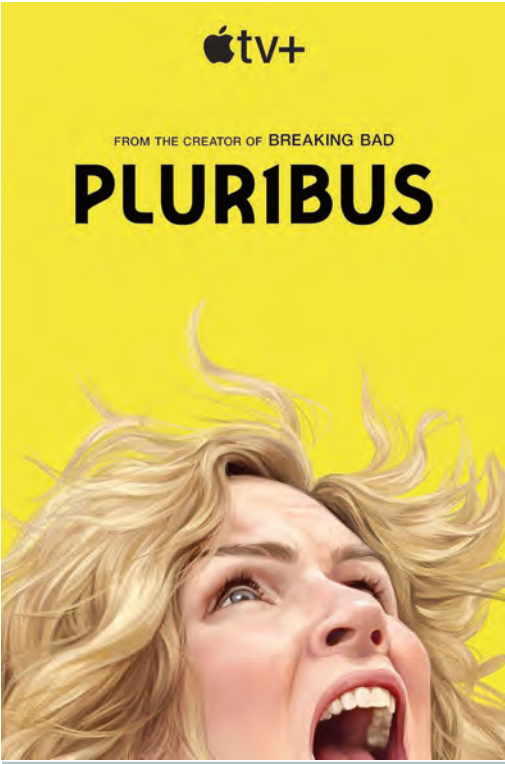
‘The Pitt,’ which won last year’s best drama award, follows the intense lives of emergency room workers in Pittsburgh, with each episode unfolding in real time. The series tackles issues including abortion rights, immigration and mass shootings, gradually becoming a word-of-mouth hit



Hacks achieved 24 nominations, setting a comedy record.



Beef picked up 16 nominations in the limited series category.



Pluribus earned 18 nominations for its breakout debut



A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms received 9 nominations for Outstanding Drama Series

FEATURES



SUMMER IN STROKES: THE SEASON IN EVERY SHADE

FROM SHIMMERING SEASCAPES TO ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONS AND VIBRANT PORTRAITS, STAL GALLERY’S SUMMER EXHIBITION BRINGS TOGETHER 11 ARTISTS WHOSE DIVERSE WORKS CAPTURE THE COLOURS, MEMORIES AND SPIRIT OF AN OMANI SUMMER



seascapes shimmer with fishing boats, distant mountains and coastal villages, evoking the country’s maritime soul. Nearby, expressive abstract canvases pulse with energetic brushstrokes, where cobalt blues collide with crimson and ochre, capturing summer not as a landscape but as an emotion. Elsewhere, vibrant portraits of Omani women dressed in richly patterned traditional attire celebrate heritage through radiant palettes that seem to glow beneath an imagined golden-hour sun.

Among the featured artists is Janin Walter, an art researcher, curator and urban designer based between Muscat and Berlin. Her mixed-media works, *Colours of Diba/Oman* and *Suspended Horizon*, belong to her ongoing *On Oceans I* series, exploring the fleeting relationship between sea, light and memory.

Rather than depicting the ocean literally, Walter dissolves familiar horizons into fields of colour where sea and sky drift into one another. In *Suspended Horizon*, the line that usually anchors the eye appears to hover weightlessly, inviting viewers to linger in the uncertainty between presence and disappearance. The result is less a place than a feeling, an impression of standing before water as memories quietly surface with the tide.

While Walter’s work embraces quiet contemplation, the wider exhibition celebrates summer through both movement and stillness. Some artworks pulse with expressive brushstrokes and dynamic forms, capturing the energy and vitality of the season, while others draw on Oman’s cultural identity through depictions of traditional attire, coastal landscapes and mountainous terrain. Together, they weave heritage, memory and contemporary expression into a vibrant visual tapestry that reflects the many moods of summer.

Ahmed al Yazidi, an Omani art enthusiast, found the exhibition’s diversity its greatest strength. “What struck me most was how every artist spoke a completely different visual language,” he said. “Some paintings are bold and energetic; others are calm and reflective, yet together they tell one story. They capture the spirit of summer, not just through sunshine and sea, but through memories, culture and the emotions the season awakens.”

The exhibition proves that summer is more than a season. In the hands of these artists, it becomes a feeling, one painted in waves, woven into tradition and suspended somewhere between memory and the horizon.

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

The summer is often described through rising temperatures and endless blue skies. At Stal Gallery and Studio in Muscat, however, it is reimagined as something far more poetic, a season of memory, movement and colour, where every brushstroke carries the warmth of the sun and the rhythm of the sea.

Running from July 1 to August 22, the Summer Exhibition brings together works by HH Sayyidah Afra al Said, Adnan al Raisi, Juma al Harthy, Anwar Sonya, Hassan al Meer, Mohamed Mehdi, the late Moosa Omar, Idris al Hooti, Hussain Obaid, Tarnini Agarwal and Janin Walter, each presenting a distinct interpretation of the season while contributing to a harmonious visual dialogue.

Walking through the gallery feels much like travelling across Oman itself. Brilliant cerulean

The Summer Exhibition brings together works by top artists, each presenting a distinct interpretation of the season while contributing to a harmonious visual dialogue

