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INBRIEF

OMAN CONDEMNS
ATTACK ON CHURCH
IN SYRIA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman denounced the bombing that targeted a church in the Syrian capital, Damascus. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman voiced its sincere condolences to the government and people of the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic and the families of the victims wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. The Sultanate of Oman reiterated its firm stance in rejecting all forms of violence and terrorism. — ONA

HM’S GREETINGS
CONVEYED TO
ALGERIAN PRESIDENT



President Abdelmadjid Tebboune with Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef in Algiers on Monday

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria received in Algiers on Monday Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the opening of the 56th Algiers International Fair, where the Sultanate of Oman is the guest of honour. During the meeting, the minister conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Algerian President, along with his best wishes of continued progress and prosperity to President Tebboune and the Algerian people. President Tebboune inaugurated the Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion as a guest of honour at the 56th Algiers International Fair. **REPORT ON P13**

His Majesty, King Abdullah II stress need
for efforts to de-escalate regional tensions

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik made a phone call on Monday with King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The two leaders exchanged views on the concerning developments in the region and their serious repercussions, particularly in the wake of recent US strikes targeting

facilities inside the Islamic Republic of Iran. They emphasised the necessity of combined regional and international efforts, along with enhanced coordination and

consultation, to halt escalation and extinguish the flames of war — both in the Gaza Strip and in relation to the ongoing conflict resulting from the Israeli aggression against Iran.

Qatar slams Iran attack

Oman expresses solidarity with Qatar, calls for end to missile attacks

OMAN EXPRESSED solidarity with Qatar, after Iran attacked the biggest US base in the Middle East near Doha. Qatar’s government has offered its “strong condemnation” of the attack on the Al Udeid Air Base.

Oman also condemned the ongoing regional escalation, triggered by Israel’s unlawful missile strike on Iran.

An official statement of the Foreign Ministry said the latest Iranian missile strike targeting sovereign sites in Qatar is unacceptable, constituting a violation of the sovereignty of a brotherly GCC state. The act contradicts the principles of good neighbourliness and raises the risk of expanding a conflict that brings only further destruction and instability, threatening the security and safety of peoples across the region.

It further called for an immediate halt to all military and missile operations, urging peaceful negotiations, and adherence to international law as the means to resolve the conflict and achieve a just settlement through legitimate avenues.

“We consider this a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Qatar, its airspace, international law, and the United Nations charter,” a spokesperson for Qatar’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on X. He says Qatar’s air defence systems “successfully thwarted the attack and intercepted the Iranian missiles” and the base had been evacuated earlier.

Al Udeid hosts the regional headquarters of the Pentagon’s Central Command.

Iran coordinated the attacks on the American air base in Qatar with Qatari officials and gave advanced notice that attacks were coming to minimise casualties, according to three Iranian officials familiar with the plans. The officials said Iran symbolically needed to strike back at the



Interceptor missiles are fired, after Iran’s armed forces say they targeted the US base in a missile attack, as seen from Doha on Monday. — Reuters

US but at the same time carry it out in a way that allowed all sides an exit ramp; they described it as a similar strategy to 2020 when Iran gave Iraq heads up before firing ballistic missiles an American base in Iraq following the assassination of its top general.

Oman Air cancelled flights to Dubai, Doha, Kuwait and Manama. The UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain suspended air traffic temporarily on Monday after the strikes in Qatar and Iraq. It was initially unclear which sites were targeted in Iraq. However, Iraqi media

reported that a state of maximum alert was declared and shelter orders issued at the Ain Al Asad Air Base in western Iraq.

An Israeli representative told media outlets that Iran had fired a total of 10 missiles at US targets in Qatar on Monday.

Shortly before the attacks in Qatar and Iraq were confirmed, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian wrote on X: “We did not start the war nor wanted it but we will not leave the aggression against the great Iran unanswered.” — Agencies

Oil falls nearly 4 per cent as Iran’s retaliates on US military bases

HOUSTON: Oil prices slipped more than \$3, or 4 per cent, on Monday after Iran attacked the US military base in Qatar in retaliation for US attacks on its nuclear facilities, and took no action to disrupt oil and gas tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

Oman oil price (August delivery 2025) reached \$75.82, comprising a decline by \$1.50 compared to the price of last Friday, which stood at \$77.32.

Brent crude futures were down \$2.91, or 3.8 per cent, at \$74.09 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) eased \$2.8, or 3.8 per cent, to \$71.06.

“Oil flows for now aren’t the primary target and is

likely not to be impacted, I think it’s going to be military retaliation on US bases and/ or trying to hit more of the Israeli civilian targets,” said John Kilduff, a partner at Again Capital.

At least two supertankers made U-turns near the Strait of Hormuz following US military strikes on Iran, ship tracking data shows, as more than a week of violence in the region prompted vessels to speed, pause, or alter their journeys.

About a fifth of global oil supply flows through the strait. However, the risk of a complete shutdown is low, analysts have said.

A telegraphed attack on a well-defended US base could



People visit the Hormuz Island in the Strait of Hormuz, off the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas. — AFP file photo

be a first step in reducing tensions provided there are no US casualties, Energy Aspects said in a post. “Unless there are indications of further Iranian retaliation or escalation by Israel/the US then we may see some geopolitical risk premium come out of the price in subsequent days,” it said.

Iran, which is Opec’s third-largest crude producer, said on Monday that the US attack on its nuclear sites expanded the range of legitimate targets for its armed forces and called Trump a “gambler” for joining Israel’s military campaign against the Islamic Republic. Meanwhile, Trump expressed a desire to see oil prices kept down amid fears

that ongoing fighting in the Middle East could cause them to spike.

Investors are still weighing up the extent of the geopolitical risk premium, given the Middle East crisis has yet to crimp supply.

HSBC expects Brent prices to spike above \$80 a barrel to factor in a higher probability of a Strait of Hormuz closure, but to recede again if the threat of disruption does not materialise, the bank said on Monday.

Iraq’s state-run Basra Oil Company said international oil majors including BP, TotalEnergies and Eni had evacuated some staff members working in oilfields. — Reuters



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SHORTTAKES



The winds will cause dust and dirt to rise in desert and open areas

NORTHWESTERLY WIND ACTIVITY TO CAUSE DUST

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

The Oman Meteorological Office has issued an alert stating that northwesterly winds will be active starting today and continuing until Wednesday evening, affecting most governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

These winds will cause dust and dirt to rise in desert and open areas, potentially leading to a decrease in horizontal visibility.

Along the Arabian Sea coasts, winds are expected to be southerly to southwesterly moderate to fresh, while along the Sea of Oman coasts they will be northeasterly light to moderate during the day, becoming northwesterly light to moderate at night. Over the rest of the governorates, winds will be southwesterly to northeasterly light to moderate, occasionally fresh over deserts and open areas.

The northwesterly wind could also result in sea waves rising on the coasts of western Musandam Governorate, reaching a maximum height of two metres and in the Sea of Oman, reaching a maximum height of 1.5 metres.

Clear to partly cloudy skies are expected over parts of Dhofar Governorate, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, and Al Wusta Governorate with a chance of isolated rain. Mainly clear skies are expected over the rest of the governorates with high clouds advection. According to the general weather forecast, there is also a chance of cloud formation and advection over south Al Hajar Mountains and the adjoining area, as well as a chance of dust rising over desert and open areas.

There are also chances of low clouds or fog patches late at night and early in the morning over coastal areas of the governorates of Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Wusta.

Tech conference aims to shape future of learning

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

IN A MAJOR STEP toward transforming the educational landscape in Oman and beyond, Onsor organised the Educational Technology Conference under the theme “Towards an Inspiring Educational Future Powered by Advanced Technologies.” The event was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The conference brought together a lineup of international education experts, policymakers and tech innovators to explore the future of learning in an increasingly digital world. Central to the discussions was the transformative role of immersive technologies — such as virtual and augmented reality — and their potential to enhance creativity, engagement and real-world readiness among students.

Moath bin Ahmed al Hinai, CEO of Onsor, emphasised the organisation’s commitment to reshaping education through cutting-edge tools. “At Onsor, we believe that education is the cornerstone of building a sustainable future,” he said.

“Immersive technologies offer a revolutionary tool to transform learning into a comprehensive and inspiring experience, enabling students to engage in realistic and safe educational scenarios.”

The conference unfolded across three main pillars: The Educational Forum: A platform for in-depth dialogue on the latest



The conference brought together a lineup of international education experts, policymakers and tech innovators.

digital innovation trends in education. Educational leaders shared global best practices and future-forward strategies for teaching and learning. Attendees explored how advanced technologies can transition traditional classrooms into vibrant, interactive spaces that promote active learning and creativity.

Live demos showcased applications not only within academic settings but also across sectors such as healthcare, aviation, safety and vocational training.

Participants and observers alike praised the event for reinforcing the importance

of integrating technology across the learning spectrum. By creating experiential environments that mimic real-world challenges, immersive technologies were recognised as a key enabler of skill-building and career- readiness in the digital age. The conference also served as a catalyst for strengthening partnerships between governments, educational institutions, and tech innovators.

Many noted the significance of aligning educational strategies with the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and global digital transformation goals.

Oman at ESCWA meeting on social development

ALGIERS: The Sultanate of Oman on Monday took part in the 16th session of the Social Development Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The meeting was held in the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Oman’s delegation to the meeting was headed by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

During its sessions, the ESCWA committee discussed topics related to social protection systems in the Arab region as a means of promoting equality. It also underlined the importance of adopting innovative and more



Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, at the ESCWA meeting in Algeria. — ONA

comprehensive policies to ensure the sustainability and efficiency of social programmes. The meeting reviewed ESCWA’s

efforts in the field of social development, recommendations issued by the Committee at its 15th session, activities of

ESCWA ‘Intersessional Expert Working Group on Persons with Disabilities’ and the organisation’s ‘Expert Group on Social Protection Reform’.

The session will include the ‘Fourth Arab Forum for Equality’, which will highlight the ability of social protection systems to address the most serious forms of inequality. The participation of the Ministry of Social Development in the meeting stems from its commitment to enhance regional cooperation, exchange expertise and support efforts for achieving sustainable development and ameliorate citizens’ quality of life. — ONA

Cold plasma technology introduced in Oman

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Neoplas Argon Jet was launched after successful trials and a landmark symposium attended by over 150 healthcare professionals, including 80 Omani doctors specialising in infection control and paediatric surgery from hospitals under the Ministry of Health as well as from the private sector.

A major advancement in wound care and infection management technology was celebrated at an event attended by top officials from the Ministry of Health with the official

launch of the Neoplas Argon Jet Cold Plasma treatment in Oman.

Oman has a 17 per cent increase in diabetic cases annually, prompting the medical community to explore innovative treatment methods.

The CE MDR-approved German technology was introduced following successful clinical evaluations at Khoula Hospital and Oman International Hospital.

To mark the launch organised by Alfarsi National Enterprises, a high-profile medical symposium was held in Muscat, drawing over 150 doctors and healthcare professionals from across the country. The event brought

together leading experts from Europe and Oman for a full day of scientific exchange, practical insight, and a live demonstration of the device.

Fatma al Adawi, a Podiatrist at Oman International Hospital, shared that the symposium was a valuable experience. The science behind cold plasma therapy shows promise, especially for chronic wound management.

The groundbreaking Neoplas Argon Jet utilises cold atmospheric argon plasma to accelerate wound healing, stimulate tissue regeneration, and inactivate pathogens without pain or side

effects. Its use in treating diabetic foot ulcers, chronic wounds, dermatological lesions and post-surgical infections has shown remarkable results in clinical settings at MoH hospitals.

Saju George, Managing Director of Alfarsi National Enterprises, stated, “This launch of advanced technology for diabetic foot ulcers and road accident victims marks a new chapter in how we approach wound care in Oman.” The Neoplas Argon Jet is the result of years of rigorous scientific collaboration involving neoplas med GmbH, the Leibniz Institute for Plasma Science

and Technology (INP), University Medical Center Greifswald, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, and various research and industrial partners across Europe.

The symposium featured renowned speakers including Dr Christian Seebauer, Dr Aleksandra Szlachcic, and Prof. Dr Ralf Lohmann, who shared their expertise in plasma-based wound care, dermatology, and diabetic foot ulcers, respectively. Dr Klaus Ruhnau, COO of Neoplas Med GmbH, also addressed the audience, highlighting the global momentum behind cold plasma therapy.

SHORT TAKES

OMAN, MAURITANIA
EXPLORE ARCHIVES
PARTNERSHIP

MUSCAT: Dr Hamed bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), on Monday received Mokhtar El Hosseinou Lam, Minister in charge of the General Secretariat of the Government in Mauritania, and his accompanying delegation. The Mauritanian delegation toured the National Records and Archives Authority as part of its official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Dhawyani and El Hosseinou Lam discussed various aspects of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of records, archives and historical studies.

The two sides looked into means of enhancing coordination in organising conferences, scholarly seminars and exhibitions. The Mauritanian delegation had a close look at the Sultanate of Oman's experience in the conservation and management of electronic documents, records and archives. — ONA

‘FUTURE SUMMER’
PROGRAMME
LAUNCHED AT UTAS-
AL MUSANNAH



The programme offers a wide array of interactive workshops and training courses

MUSANNAH: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Al Musannah) launched its annual summer initiative titled ‘Summer of the Future,’ organised by the Department of Continuing Education and Community Service. The programme reflects the university's ongoing commitment to bridging academic learning with real-world application while reinforcing its role in shaping an innovative, knowledge-driven society.

Designed to make productive use of the summer break, the programme offers a wide array of interactive workshops and training courses aimed at enhancing participants' knowledge and skills across various domains. These include technology, science, innovation, critical thinking, grammar, leadership, entrepreneurship and languages.

Featuring around 45 training sessions led by academic professionals and industry experts, the initiative is open to the university community, employees from both public and private sectors and members of the wider public seeking personal and professional growth.

Dr Khalifa bin Salim al Hatmi, Head of the Department of Continuing Education and Community Service, highlighted the university's vision for community engagement and capacity building.

NRH aims to shape the future of rehabilitative sciences

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The National Rehabilitation House (NRH) has been opened, reinforcing its role as a cornerstone of Oman's evolving healthcare landscape. The formal unveiling was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation.

The NRH is a centre for healing, education and research that aims to shape the future of rehabilitative sciences in Oman. By combining clinical excellence with academic innovation, it stands as a model for how academic institutions can

drive sustainable healthcare development and elevate rehabilitation standards locally and regionally.

An initiative of the National University of Science and Technology (NU), NRH is built on the principles of integrated, patient-centred rehabilitation and aims to reinforce its role as a cornerstone of Oman's evolving healthcare landscape. NRH has already begun delivering essential services to individuals in need of therapeutic recovery.

The ceremony brought together senior representatives from the Ministry of Health (MoH), ambassadors, healthcare professionals and dignitaries from both local and international sectors -



NRH is built on the principles of integrated, patient-centred rehabilitation and aims to evolve healthcare landscape.

reflecting the broad support and shared vision to elevate rehabilitation services in the Sultanate of Oman.

“The establishment of NRH reflects the strategic foresight of the university in responding

to Oman's growing need for integrated, high-quality rehabilitation services. Rooted in the country's long-term healthcare goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040 and the Tenth Five-Year Plan,

61 INITIATIVES UNVEILED UNDER
YOUTH SUPPORT PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) has announced the launch of the 2025 edition of the ‘Youth Initiatives Support Programme’. The programme comprises 61 initiatives covering a broad range of activities spanning the fields of culture, health, sports, economy, media, religion, the environment and entrepreneurship. It serves all segments of society in the Sultanate

of Oman's governorates. Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, Director General of Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that the Ministry accords special attention to youth initiatives that address the needs of society and align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, notably in the areas of innovation, sustainability and social development.” Al Siyabi added that youth

initiatives include community projects or activities that address social and developmental issues through a voluntary, non-profit approach. The initiatives, he explained, reflect the spirit of innovation and active citizenship and accommodate the Omani cultural values.

Statistics show that the ‘Youth Initiatives Support Programme’ has seen steady growth and that, since its inception in 2016, it has provided support for more than 600 initiatives benefited more than 150,000 young men and women. The programme organisers also held exhibitions and local

activities that consolidated the media presence and institutional outreach of the initiatives.

The Ministry has prepared a guide and an integrated electronic system for evaluating and developing the initiatives, within the framework of supporting youth initiatives, regulating their objectives and improving their quality in cooperation with government and private establishments.

This reflects a strategic approach to upgrade these initiatives from mere voluntary experiences into active community institutions. — ONA

Global report highlights
education capabilities

BRITISH INSTITUTION Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) unveiled on Monday in Muscat the contents of its new global report, ‘Advanced Capabilities of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman’, highlighting Oman's growing role as an international hub for higher education.

The launch was held under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. The report underscored the significant growth in Oman's research output, which increased by 36.9 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023.

Dr Maryam al Nabhani, Director-General of Private Universities and Colleges, stated that Oman Vision 2040 has placed education, learning, research and national competencies at the heart of national priorities, forming the foundation for building a competitive and sustainable knowledge-based economy.

She added that the vision has set an ambitious goal of having four Omani universities ranked among the top 500 globally in the QS rankings by 2040. Notably, Oman achieved positive results in the 2026 QS World University Rankings, with five Omani universities included, compared to only two in the 2025 rankings — reflecting the sector's rapid progress.

Dr Al Nabhani explained that three private universities made their debut in the global



QS unveiled a report highlighting Oman's growing role as an international hub for higher education

rankings, namely Nizwa University (ranked 770-761), Dhofar University (ranked 900-851) and the German University of Technology in Oman ‘GUtech’ (ranked 1200-1001).

Additionally, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) made remarkable progress, climbing to 334th place globally, up from 362nd in 2025. Meanwhile, Sohar University achieved a qualitative leap, advancing to the 1000-951 bracket after being ranked 1200-1001 the previous year.

She attributed these positive outcomes to a strategic national approach, starting with

enhancing education quality, supporting research, improving innovation ecosystems and establishing institutional infrastructure that meets international evaluation standards — including QS criteria such as academic reputation, research quality, employability, international collaboration and the ratio of international students.

The QS report serves as a strategic reference document, promoting Oman's higher education institutions globally, supporting efforts to develop higher education and reinforcing Oman's position as a leading regional and global hub for education and research in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Moosa bin Abdullah al Kindi, Dean of the Modern College of Business and Science, stated that the release of the QS Higher Education Report on Oman marks a pivotal milestone in documenting and advancing higher education. He noted that the college's participation in this initiative aligns with its mission to actively contribute to national development through academic excellence, research and innovation.

He added that Oman's continued progress towards achieving Oman Vision 2040's goals makes such partnerships a vital tool for enhancing the global presence of its higher education sector. This event reflects the nation's commitment to improving education quality and achieving institutional excellence at regional and international levels. — ONA

Salalah Mills signs Russian wheat import deal

SALALAH: Salalah Mills Company in the Dhofar Governorate has announced the signing of an agreement to import 110,000 tonnes of Russian wheat, with the shipments expected to arrive during July and August.

This step comes as part of the company's efforts to strengthen Oman's strategic wheat reserves, keeping pace with regional developments and securing the needs of the local market.

Eng Ahmed bin Amer al Shanfari, Acting CEO



of Salalah Mills stated that the agreement falls within the company's plan to secure its wheat requirements for the second half of 2025. He emphasised the management's commitment to ensuring the stability of food supplies in Oman.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he noted that Salalah Mills is one of the leading flour production companies in Oman, with a daily production capacity of approximately 1,500 tonnes and a storage capacity exceeding 200,000 tonnes. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The academic programme offers diverse cultural and educational activities

SULTAN QABOOS
INSTITUTE WELCOMES
26 GLOBAL STUDENTS

MANAH: Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in the Wilayat of Manah, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, welcomed 26 new students from the United Kingdom, the Comoros, Hungary, Brunei Darussalam, Pakistan, India, Vietnam, Tanzania, Ghana and Iran. An orientation day was organised for the new cohort, beginning with an introductory session featuring the institute’s academic and administrative staff, as well as supervisors of the cultural programme designed for students. This was followed by a comprehensive tour of the institute’s facilities and educational services. The orientation programme included a visual presentation on Oman, highlighting its cultural, civilisational, and humanitarian features, as well as the elements that make the country a leading destination for Arabic language learning. Additionally, students received guidance to help them adapt and integrate into Omani society. Beyond Arabic language instruction, the academic programme offers diverse cultural and educational activities, including evening events, lectures, field trips to historical and natural sites, Arabic calligraphy lessons and a ‘Language Partner’ initiative to enhance cultural and linguistic interaction with the local community. — ONA

Aflaj systems foster social cohesion in communities

A GROUNDBREAKING research project titled ‘Aflaj Systems and Social Cohesion in Oman, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate’, led by Dr Majid Labbaf Khaneiki, Assistant Professor and Unesco Chair on Aflaj Studies and Archaeo-Hydrology at the University of Nizwa — has shed new light on the integral role of traditional water systems in shaping Omani tribal society.

Funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation’s Block Funding Programme, the study explores how the falaj irrigation system serves not only as a means of water distribution but as a vital pillar of social cohesion and economic sustainability among tribal communities in northern Oman.

Challenging Western anthropological views of tribalism as territorially rigid and isolated, Dr Khaneiki’s research reveals a contrasting narrative. The falaj emerges as a unifying force, facilitating intertribal cooperation through shared water resources — a structure the researchers term ‘hydro-tribalism.’

Using an inductive qualitative approach, the team combined ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews with falaj stakeholders, and comprehensive archival and literature reviews. Their findings



underscore how the technical and geographic realities of water mobility encourage communities to transcend territorial boundaries, promoting collective governance and reducing conflict.

Moreover, the falaj supports a broader hydro-economic network, enabling trade, standardised agricultural practices, and infrastructure investment — often sustained through waqf (endowments). However, urban

expansion and environmental threats now endanger this centuries-old system, making its preservation essential for maintaining social and ecological balance.

Dr Khaneiki advocates for viewing the falaj not just as a water system but as a cultural and social asset, offering a timeless model of sustainable development and resilience rooted in harmony and cooperation. The research was published in the Journal of Arabian Studies and GeoJournal, with contributions from Dr Abdullah al Ghafri, Amjad al Rawahi, Dr Khalifa al Kindi, Dr Nasser al Saadi, Zahra al Abri, and Ishaq al Shabibi.

اوميفكو
OMIFCO

INVITATION TO TENDER

Would like to invite all reputed & specialized companies, who have relevant experience to provide the required services mentioned against the below tenders for Fertilizer/Oil and Gas/Refinery/Petrochemical Industries to submit their best offer for the below Tender:

Tender No	02-15220-2025
Tender Description	Providing Of Housekeeping Services
Brief Details	Housekeeping Services Contract 2026 – 2031 is a 5 years (Extendable for 2 years) period contract for the Housekeeping Services of OMIFCO plants, supporting Ammonia Plants, Urea Plants, Utility & Offsite, Shipping & Jetty and other locations inside the plant.
Tender Collection	24 th June – 30 th June 2025
Site Visit	06 th July – 10 th July 2025
Tender Fees (Non-Refundable)	OMR. 250/= (Omani Rial Two Hundred Fifty, only).
Bid Bond	OMR. 5,000/= (Omani Rial Five Thousand, only)
Minimum Experience	Ten (10) Years of experience in the subject field in similar scope of work and scale.
Bid Submission due date	Not later than 31 st July 2025, 12:00pm (Oman time)

All bidders shall submit their offer in THREE (3) separate file as following:

- Technical Bid and Un-Priced Commercial Bid.
- Commercial Priced Bid.
- Bid Bond valid for 120 days, with total amount as mentioned above.

All three envelopes shall be sealed and tagged with the Envelop Title, Tender Title and Tender Number. Also, the company profile, registration documents and latest audited financials should be submitted along with the Technical Bid. All three envelopes should be submitted at OMIFCO Head Office in Sur - Tender Box at the Main Gate.

Further details can be obtained from OMIFCO Purchase and Contracts Department at Sur Industrial Estate
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TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2719114/2025	Construction of Water Distribution Network in Wilayat of A'Seeb - Package 3 (Phase 2)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	10/7/2025	25/8/2025
T/2719110/2025	Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision for STP, Sewer & TE Network System in Wilayat of Ibri	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	RO 1,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	10/7/2025	18/8/2025
T/2719104/2025	Consultancy Services for Design & Supervision of Water Networks in Wilayat of Barka	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 1,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	10/7/2025	18/8/2025
T/2719116/2025	Consultancy Services for Design & Supervision of Water Networks in Wilayat of Al Suwaiq	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	10/7/2025	18/8/2025

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into their (I-supplier Page).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> in order to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Business-with-Us/Supplierlogin>). All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of tender@owwsc.nama.om

SHORT TAKES



SYRIA PRESIDENT VOWS CHURCH ATTACKERS WILL FACE JUSTICE

DAMASCUS: Syrian interim President Ahmed al Sharaa vowed on Monday that those involved in a “heinous” suicide attack on a Damascus church a day earlier would face justice, calling for unity in the country. The shooting and suicide bombing on Sunday at the church in the working-class Dwelaa district of the Syrian capital killed 25 people and wounded 63, the health ministry said, raising an earlier toll of 22 killed. The authorities said the attacker was affiliated with the IS group.

“We promise... that we will work night and day, mobilising all our specialised security agencies, to capture all those who participated in and planned this heinous crime and to bring them to justice,” Sharaa said in a statement. The attack “reminds us of the importance of solidarity and unity of the government and the people in facing all that threatens our nation’s security and stability”, he added.

Condemnation has continued to pour in from the international community after the attack — the first of its kind in the Syrian capital since toppled longtime ruler Bashar al Assad in December. — AFP

MOORE STEPHENS LLC

NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF DAWOOD REBAR SPC

(AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1601)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of Dawood Rebar SPC, bearing commercial registration number 1648845, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company’s Shareholder on 25 May 2025. The liquidator alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company’s business at the following address:

Office No. 41, 4th Floor, Building No. 1022, Way No. 1013; Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099, Email: liquidation@moore-oman.com

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company’s creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company’s rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of Dawood Rebar SPC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

الروبيان الطبيعي للاستزراع السمكي ش.م.م

Natural Shrimp Aquaculture L.L.C

الروبيان الشرقي للاستزراع السمكي ش.م.م

Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture L.L.C

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDER

Natural Shrimp Aquaculture LLC and Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture are subsidiaries of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) inviting you to share offers for the below table.

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Collection of RFP	Last Date of Submission	Tender Fee
NSA/ ORA/ 005/2025	تعيين مصنع لمعالجة الروبيان Appointment of a Shrimp Processing Plant	29 th June 2025	15 th July 2025	OMR. 300
NSA/ ORA/ 006/2025	توريد صناديق كرتونية Supply of cartons on call off basis	29 th June 2025	15 th July 2025	OMR. 100

Please note:

- All proposals should be submitted via email to bidopening_osara@nsa.om. Failure to submit the bid to this email address will automatically disqualify the submission, and no further correspondence will be entertained.
- Any inquiries regarding the RFP should be directed to osara.tenders@nsa.om. Responses to queries will be provided in writing and shared with all suppliers approached for this RFP.

Gazans desperately need more aid: Charity group

A privately run aid organisation brought in to distribute food rations in war-hit Gaza last month with US and Israeli backing said that people in the Palestinian territory “desperately need more aid”. The admission by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) that it has been unable to meet demand came after severe criticism from other aid groups and near-daily deadly shootings near distribution points.

Gaza’s civil defence agency reported that Israeli troops had killed scores of people, including those who were seeking food in the territory which is suffering from famine-like conditions due to Israeli restrictions, according to aid groups.

In a statement on Saturday, GHF interim executive director John Acree said that the organisation was “delivering aid at scale, securely and effectively... But we cannot meet the full scale of need while large parts of Gaza remain closed.” He said the GHF was “working with the government of Israel to honour its commitment and open additional sites in northern Gaza”. “The people of Gaza desperately need more aid and we are ready to partner with other humanitarian groups to expand our reach to those who need help the most,” Acree said.

GHF’s operations have been slammed as a “failure” by the United Nations, while other aid groups have

Gaza’s civil defence agency reported that Israeli troops had killed scores of people, including those who were seeking food in the territory which is suffering from famine-like conditions due to Israeli restrictions

According to figures issued on Saturday by the health ministry in the Gaza Strip, at least 450 people have been killed and nearly 3,500 injured by Israeli fire since GHF began distributing meal boxes in late May. GHF has denied responsibility for deaths near its aid points, contradicting statements from witnesses and Gaza rescue services. It has said deaths have occurred near UN food convoys.

The head of aid group Doctors Without Borders, Christopher Lockyear, said that the “imposed system of aid delivery” in Gaza was “not only a failure, but it is dehumanising and dangerous”.

Israel’s military has continued its operations in Gaza, even as attention has shifted to its ongoing war with Iran since June 13.

Israel’s ban on foreign media entering the Gaza Strip and difficulties for local journalists to travel in the territory mean media is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by

rescuers and authorities. The Israeli army said that it was “looking into” the deaths which the civil defence agency reported near GHF distribution centres.

In the past, the military has said that its troops have fired on crowds approaching them in a threatening fashion and only after warning shots. Witnesses have said that injuries caused by drones and tank rounds.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that three people were killed by gunfire in the southern Gaza Strip, with another five killed in a central area known as the Netzarim corridor, where thousands of Palestinians have gathered daily in the hope of receiving rations from a GHF centre. Earlier this week, the UN’s World Health Organization warned that Gaza’s health system was at a “breaking point”, pleading for fuel to be allowed into the territory to keep its remaining hospitals running.

— AFP

A Palestinian girl waits next to a queue at a food distribution point, in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP

GREECE DECLARES EMERGENCY ON CHIOS DUE TO FIRES

ATHENS: Greece on Monday said it had put the Mediterranean island of Chios under a state of emergency because of major fires that have raged since the weekend. Civil Protection Minister Ioannis Kefalogiannis said the decision was made so the local authorities “can immediately take the necessary measures”. Chios, in the northern Aegean Sea, is Greece’s fifth-largest island and is currently facing five separate fire outbreaks.

Some 190 firefighters, 38 vehicles, 12 helicopters and four water-bombers have been deployed to tackle the flames, the fire service said. Kefalogiannis, who travelled to the island, said strong winds, estimated at force six on the Beaufort Scale were making the situation “very difficult”.

Reinforcements were being deployed, he told Greek news site iEidiseis, adding: “If the wind dies down a bit we might be able to get this fire under control. “But the wind really hasn’t dropped.”

On Sunday, about a dozen localities and hundreds of asylum seekers at a reception centre were forced to move while on Monday, seven villages had to be evacuated. Greece is particularly vulnerable to fires during the summer months, fuelled by strong winds, drought and high temperatures linked to climate change.

Forecasts predict a heatwave in the coming days, with temperatures of more than 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) expected, including in the capital Athens. — AFP

A firefighting helicopter makes a water drop, Chios island. — Reuters

شركة خيافة الصحراء ش.م.ع

Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)

P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT THE SECOND QUARTER ENDED ON MAY 31, 2025

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit an unaudited financial statement of the company for the second quarter that ended on May 31, 2025, along with related reports.

Revenue is RO 6,994,282 as against RO 6,302,135 in the corresponding period of the previous year whereas net Profit after taxes for the period is RO 1,365,575 as against RO 1,381,216 in the last year.

The total shareholders fund increased from RO 27,132,980 at the end of May 2024 to RO 28,026,705 at the end of May 2025 and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share has recorded RO 0.3,537.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express the most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector; Furthermore, I would extend our gratitude to his government for their cooperation and assistance with special mention to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, Muscat Stock Exchange, and Financial Services Authority.

I conclude this report by expressing appreciation to our shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers, and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position

as at 31st May, 2025

	2025	2024
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Fixed Assets	14,048	15,076
Current Assets		
Inventories	29	25
Trade & Other Receivables	6,052	5,788
Receivable from related party	41	59
Bank and Cash	11,991	9,983
	18,113	15,855
Total Assets	32,161	30,931
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	663	537
Payables to related parties	2,805	2,779
Lease liability	12	22
Tax liability	230	234
	3,710	3,572
Long-term liabilities		
Lease liability	-	12
Deferred Tax liability	399	193
Employees' end of service benefits	25	21
	424	226
Total Liabilities	4,134	3,798
Net Assets	28,027	27,133
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,641
Retained Earnings	17,463	16,569
Total Shareholders' Equity	28,027	27,133

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

For 6 months ended 31st May, 2025

	2025	2024
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	6,994	6,302
Gross Profit	1,690	1,711
Other Income	223	204
Administration & General Expenses	(303)	(286)
Operating Profit	1,610	1,629
Finance Charges	(3)	(4)
Profit before taxation	1,607	1,625
Taxation	(241)	(244)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	1,366	1,381

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such request may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), P.O.Box: 311, Postal Code –100, Muscat.

IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

Israel hits RG sites, jail; Tehran rains missiles



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi. — Reuters

Putin stresses ‘unprovoked aggression’ in Araqchi meeting

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin told Iran’s foreign minister on Monday there was no justification for the US bombing of his country and that Moscow was trying to help the Iranian people. Putin hosted Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi in Moscow two days after US President Donald Trump sent US bomber planes to strike Iran’s three main nuclear sites.

“The absolutely unprovoked aggression against Iran has no basis and no justification,” Putin told Araqchi in televised comments. “For our part, we are making efforts to assist the Iranian people,” he added. “I am very glad that you are in Moscow today, this will give us the opportunity to discuss all these pressing issues and think together about how we could get out of today’s situation.”

Araqchi told Putin that Iran was conducting legitimate self-defence, and thanked Russia for condemning the US actions.

He conveyed best wishes to Putin from Iran’s supreme leader and president. “Russia is today on the right side of history and international law,” said Araqchi.

It was unclear, however, what Russia might do to support Iran, an important ally with which Putin signed a strategic cooperation treaty in January. That agreement did not include a mutual defence clause. Before Saturday’s US strikes, Moscow had warned that US military intervention could destabilise the entire region and plunge it into the “abyss”.

Asked what Russia was ready to do to help Tehran, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: “It all depends on what Iran needs”. He said the fact that Moscow had offered to mediate in the crisis

was itself a form of support. Peskov condemned the US attacks.

“An increase in the number of participants in this conflict is happening – or rather, has happened. A new spiral of escalation of tension in the region,” Peskov told reporters. “And, of course, we condemn this and express regret in this regard, deep regret. In addition, of course, it remains to be seen what happened to (Iran’s) nuclear facilities, whether there is a radiation hazard.”

Peskov said Trump had not told Putin in detail about the planned strikes in advance. “There was no detailed information. The topic of Iran itself was repeatedly discussed by the presidents during their most recent conversations, certain proposals were voiced by Russia, but there was no direct detailed information about this,” he said.

Putin has repeatedly offered to mediate between the US and Iran, and has conveyed Moscow’s ideas on resolving the conflict to them while ensuring Iran’s access to civil nuclear energy. Putin said Israel had given Moscow assurance on the safety of Russian specialists helping to build two more reactors at the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran during air strikes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that Russia is stepping up production of its Oreshnik intermediate-range hypersonic missile, which it launched for the first time against Ukraine last November. “Serial production of the latest Oreshnik medium-range missile system is under way,” Putin told a graduating class of military cadets in televised comments. The system has “proven itself very well in combat conditions,” he added. — Reuters



People hold signs as they demonstrate in front of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP



Israeli security forces look on as a digger clears the rubble of a destroyed building. — AFP

ISRAEL hit Revolutionary Guard sites and Evin prison in Tehran on Monday, calling them its most powerful strikes yet on the Iranian capital on the 11th day of the war. Iran, in turn, fired missile barrages at Israel and vowed retaliation against the United States after it struck the republic’s nuclear sites a day earlier.

Loud explosions rocked the Iranian capital, where Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military hit “regime targets” with “unprecedented force”, adding to speculation that Israel may seek to topple Iran’s clerical leadership. The targets included Evin prison, which Katz said “holds political prisoners and regime opponents”, as well as command centres of the domestic Basij militia and the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The Israeli military said in a statement that the targets belong to Iranian forces “responsible... for defending the homeland security, suppressing threats, and maintaining the regime’s stability”. Iranian media and the

Israeli military said Israel also struck Fordo, a key nuclear enrichment facility buried deep in the mountains south of Tehran. The military said it had struck Fordo on Monday “in order to obstruct access routes” to the site, which Israel’s ally the United States hit the previous day with “bunker buster” bombs.

President Donald Trump boasted Sunday’s US strikes had “obliterated” Iran’s nuclear capabilities, but other officials said it was too soon to assess the impact on Iran’s nuclear programme, which Israel and some Western states consider an existential threat.

Sirens sounded across Israel on Monday and journalists reported blasts were heard over Jerusalem. Defence Minister Israel Katz said the Israeli military was “carrying out strikes of unprecedented force against regime targets and agencies of government oppression in the heart of Tehran”. Iranian media said Israel’s strikes hit a power supply system in Tehran, triggering temporary outages.

In Israel, the national electricity company reported “damage near a strategic infrastructure facility” in the south that

IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

IAEA seeks assessment of Iran nuclear sites

VIENNA: The head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog on Monday called for its inspectors to be able to return to Iran’s nuclear sites in a bid to “account for” its highly enriched uranium stockpiles. He called for a cessation of hostilities. The request follows attacks by Israel and the United States on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

“Iran, Israel and the Middle East need peace,” Rafael Grossi, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told an emergency meeting of the organisation’s board of governors in Vienna. “For that, we must take a number of steps,” he said. “First of all, we must return to the negotiating table and for that allow IAEA inspectors — the guardians on our behalf of the NPT (nuclear non-proliferation treaty) — to go back to Iran’s nuclear sites and account for the stockpiles of uranium, including, most importantly, the 400 kilogrammes enriched to 60 per cent.”

Grossi said Tehran had sent him a letter on June 13 announcing the implementation of “special measures to protect



Rafael Grossi

nuclear equipment and materials”. “There needs to be a cessation of hostilities for the necessary safety and security conditions to prevail so that Iran can let IAEA teams into the sites to assess the situation,” he said.

Over the weekend, the United States struck three Iranian nuclear sites, joining Israel’s bombardments of Iran’s nuclear programme. “Craters are now visible at the Fordo site, Iran’s main facility for enriching uranium at 60 per cent, indicating the use of ground-penetrating munitions,” he said. He added that “very significant damage” is expected to have occurred for the US bombing “given the explosive

payload utilised and the extreme vibration-sensitive nature of centrifuges”. “At this time, no-one including the IAEA, is in a position to have fully assessed the underground damage at Fordo,” he said.

The US strikes came after Israel began launching large-scale attacks on Iran on June 13 targeting its missile and nuclear facilities, military leaders and security services, and residential sites. Iran’s uranium enrichment has for decades caused tension, with Western powers voicing fears the drive is aimed at making an atomic bomb, a claim denied by Tehran.

Israel has maintained ambiguity about its own atomic arsenal, neither officially confirming nor denying it exists, but the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has estimated it has 90 nuclear warheads. European powers have urged Tehran to revive diplomatic efforts with the United States to find a solution in the standoff over its nuclear programme. Iran has said it can only consider diplomacy once Israel halts its bombardment of the Islamic republic. — AFP

Airlines weigh Middle East cancellations

Airlines on Monday were weighing how long to suspend Middle East flights as a conflict which has already cut off major flight routes entered a new phase after the US attacked key Iranian nuclear sites and Tehran vowed to defend itself. Cancellations in recent days to typically resilient aviation hubs such as Dubai, the world’s busiest international airport, and Qatar’s Doha by international carriers show how aviation industry concerns about the region have escalated.

The usually busy airspace stretching from Iran and Iraq to the Mediterranean has been largely empty of commercial air traffic for 10 days since Israel began strikes on Iran on June 13, as airlines divert, cancel and delay flights through the region due to airspace closures and safety concerns.

Finnair was the first to announce a prolonged suspension of flights to Doha, with cancellations until June 30. Leading Asian carrier Singapore

Airlines, which described the situation as “fluid”, moved to cancel flights to Dubai through to Tuesday, having previously cancelled only its Sunday service.

Air France KLM, IAG-owned Iberia and British Airways, and Kazakhstan’s Air Astana all cancelled flights to their Doha or Dubai both on Sunday and Monday. Air France also cancelled flights to Riyadh and said it would suspend flights to and from Beirut, Lebanon until Wednesday included. A spokesperson for Iberia said the carrier has not made a decision regarding later flights. BA said its teams were keeping the situation under review.

Carriers are likely avoiding airports in UAE and Qatar and, to a lesser extent, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, due to concerns that Iran or its proxies will target drone or missile attacks on US military bases in these countries, aviation risk consultancy Osprey Flight Solutions said.

With Russian and Ukrainian airspace also closed to most airlines due to years of war, the Middle East had become a more important route for flights between Europe and Asia. Amid missile and air strikes during the past 10 days, airlines have routed north via the Caspian Sea or south via Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Added to increased fuel and crew costs from these long detours and cancellations, carriers also face a potential hike in jet fuel costs as oil prices rise following the US attacks.

Australia-based Flight Centre Travel Group said it is getting a small number of customer requests to route journeys to Europe away from Middle Eastern hubs. “The most common transfer hubs that we’re seeing requested are Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Johannesburg, or even direct between Perth and London,” said Graham Turner, CEO of Australia-based Flight Centre Travel Group. — Reuters



Remains of a ballistic missile lie on the ground following missile attacks in northern Israel. — Reuters

OPINION

I have a degree; now what?



DR KHALFAN
AL HARRASI

The author is an
academic and
researcher

A student graduates. Family cheers. Someone hands them a shiny certificate. They post it with a lengthy caption: Hard work pays off, but then? Sometimes not much! Weeks pass, months pass. Job applications disappear into the Internet’s black hole. Suddenly, that fancy degree is beginning to look like a costly wall decoration. This is not about a particular country but a global issue, something that seems to be happening “everywhere else.” If it feels familiar, well, that’s purely a coincidence

Universities worldwide are producing graduates faster than bakeries make bread. And in nearly all of these places, employers are whispering the same thing: “The degree is nice, but can they actually do anything?” Ask a recruiter, and you will hear it straight: “This person knows the theory, but they can’t lead a meeting, can’t explain an idea clearly, can’t work in a team without drama, and thinks ‘soft skills’ means being polite.”

Now, let’s be fair; degrees aren’t useless. They are necessary. But these days, having a degree without any practical skills is like owning a smartphone with no apps. It looks smart but can’t do much. Real-world jobs require more than classroom knowledge. They need skills like critical thinking, time management, digital skills, adaptability, and yes, even how to send a professional e-mail. Believe it or not, some graduates are writing work e-mails as if they were texting their cousins.

The situation is so common now that even large companies are rethinking their

hiring practices. Siemens, for example, began hiring people based on attitude and then trained them on the job, requiring no prior experience. It turns out that work ethic, curiosity and coachability are more valuable than just knowing formulas. Meanwhile, some Gen Z entrepreneurs are skipping college altogether and diving straight into real-world projects, start-up fellowships and self-directed learning. Is that the solution? Maybe for some. However, others still require structure, and let’s be honest, not everyone is suited to be a 22-year-old CEO. Still, one in three high school grads globally admit they don’t feel ready for adult life. They know calculus but not how to budget or file taxes. Parents worry their kids are academically prepared but emotionally lost. Somewhere, something isn’t adding up.

So who’s to blame? No one. Or maybe everyone. But not anyone in particular. Globally, many education systems continue to struggle to keep pace with the modern world. Some students think finishing school means they are done learning. Some employers still want fresh graduates with “10 years’ experience.” Obviously, “You can’t clap with one hand.”

And right now, some education systems and the job markets are clapping awkwardly with mismatched expectations.

So what should education systems be teaching? Sure, algebra and literature are important. But let’s also teach how to speak confidently in a meeting, how to disagree respectfully, how to think under pressure and

You cannot bring a
knife to a gunfight.
Many young people
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The paper is nice,
but life wants
performance.

how not to panic when someone says, “Can you share your screen?” Some universities are teaming up with employers to co-design programmes, incorporating real-world projects and emphasising “learn it, do it, reflect on it” cycles. That’s promising. But progress is uneven, and many institutions still treat employability as someone else’s department.

Meanwhile, companies are getting creative. Some use bootcamps, others prefer micro-credentials. Coursera’s 2025 report states that millions are now opting for short online courses to become job-ready in months, not years. Flexibility is the name of the game. The job market itself is changing faster than ever.

Remote work, automation and AI are all rewriting the rules. These days, your competition isn’t just the person next to you in class; it’s someone on another continent who can build a website, speak three languages and edit videos from their phone. So, a degree might open the door, but it is skills that keep the door open. This isn’t about blaming anyone. It’s about realising that where education isn’t evolving properly, we will continue to produce graduates who are well-educated but unprepared, motivated yet mismatched. You cannot bring a knife to a gunfight.

Many young people are currently bringing diplomas to a world that’s asking for resilience, resourcefulness and real results. The paper is nice, but life wants performance. This is a global issue. A shared reality. A gentle wake-up call, not an accusation.

Art market banking
on new generation of
collectors for growth

NATHALIE OLOF-ORS

The global art market is not immune to current economic and geopolitical tensions, and is counting on a new generation of collectors to revitalise the momentum.

Some big transactions were concluded last week during Art Basel, the world’s top contemporary art fair, notably by London’s Annelly Juda Fine Art gallery, which sold a David Hockney painting for between \$13 million and \$17 million, without disclosing the exact price.

The David Zwirner gallery sold a sculpture by Ruth Asawa for \$9.5 million and a Gerhard Richter painting for \$6.8 million.

However, prices did not reach the heights achieved in 2022, when the art market was in full swing. Back then, a sculpture by French-American artist Louise Bourgeois was purchased for \$40 million.

“The market is certainly softer,” Art Basel’s chief executive Noah Horowitz said, though major sales still happen at such fairs “despite, somehow, all that’s going on in the world.”

Switzerland’s biggest bank UBS and the research and consulting firm Arts Economics prepared a report for the fair. According to their estimates, the art market slowed in 2023, then fell by 12 per cent globally in 2024, to \$57.5 billion, with the decline particularly affecting works valued at more than \$10 million. “In the next six to 12 months, I don’t see any changes on the horizon,” said Hans Laenen, an art market specialist at insurer AXA XL. In a time of economic and geopolitical uncertainties, “investors are turning very strongly to gold,” he said. In the art sector, behaviour is “more conservative” among both buyers and sellers, who prefer to wait before putting works on the market in the current climate, he continues.

“The number of transactions is increasing,” but in “lower price segments,” he noted.

According to the insurance firm Hiscox, the number of lots sold for less than \$50,000 increased by 20 per cent in auction houses in 2024, while very highly priced works saw a sharp drop, indicating a change in collector behaviour.

According to Jean Gazancon, chief executive of art insurer Arte Generali, a younger generation of collectors is entering the market. — AFP

How Iran attacks are part
of a bigger global struggle

THERE are so many things to say in the wake of the US bombing of three key Iranian nuclear facilities that it is easy to get lost in the gripping details. So for now, let me try to step back and explore the global, regional and local forces shaping this story. What’s really going on here?

It is a very, very big drama, and it is not confined to the Middle East.

To my mind, Vladimir Putin’s war of Ukraine in 2022, with the sole aim of wiping its democracy off the map and absorbing it into Russia, and the attacks on Israel in 2023 by Hamas and friendly nations in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq were manifestations of a global struggle between the forces of inclusion and the forces of resistance.

That is a struggle between countries and leaders who see the world and their nations benefiting from more trade, more cooperation against global threats and more decent, if not democratic, governance — versus regimes whose leaders thrive on resisting those trends because conflict enables them to keep their people down, their armies strong and their thieving of their treasuries easy.

The forces of inclusion had steadily been growing stronger. Ukraine in 2022 was getting closer to joining the European Union. This would have been the biggest expansion of a whole and free Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, because it would have added to the West a huge agricultural, technological and military power and left Russia more



Israeli border police officers work at an impact site following a missile attack from Iran on Israel, amid the Iran-Israel conflict, in Tel Aviv. — Reuters



THOMAS L
FRIEDMAN

The writer is an
American political
commentator and
author

isolated — and looking more out of step to its own people — than ever.

At the very same time, the Biden administration was making rapid headway on a deal for the US to forge a security alliance with Saudi Arabia.

In return, Saudi Arabia would normalise relations with Israel, and Israel would begin talks with the Palestinians on possible statehood. This would have been the biggest expansion of an integrated Middle East since the Camp David peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979.

In short, Ukraine looked poised to join the West, and Israel looked poised to join the East.

So what happened? Putin attacked Ukraine to stop the first movement, and Hamas and Iran and others attacked Israel to stop the second.

As such, my first question in the aftermath of Sunday morning’s strike on Iran is: Does President Trump understand whose side of this global struggle Putin is on? Iran and Russia are close allies for a reason. Iran has been providing Russia with the drones it has used to more effectively kill Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. I do not ask Trump to drop a bomb on Russia, but I do ask him to provide Ukraine with the military, economic and diplomatic support it needs to resist Russia - every bit as much as the US is doing for Israel to defeat Hamas and Iran.

China has always had a foot in each camp. Its economy depends on a healthy and growing world of inclusion, but its political leadership has also maintained strong ties to the world of resistance. So Beijing plays in both leagues - buying oil from Iran but always worried that if Iran got a nuclear bomb, it might one day give a copy to fighters from Xinjiang.

That said, China’s oil purchases from Iran are a crucial part of this story. Those purchases are Tehran’s biggest source of external income. As my colleague Keith Bradsher reported from Shanghai, oil sales to China are today 6 per cent of Iran’s economy and equal to about half of government spending.

— The New York Times

What makes you, you?



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

HAVE you ever thought about what makes you the person you are? We think it is our thoughts. Maybe that is true in a way. But where do these thoughts originate from? There was an incident that made me think about it. It was a fast food restaurant, and I like to call it the Fatma experience. Fatma was energetic, humorous and helpful. Later, when she was talking to us, she explained that there is excitement in the air because the ownership has changed and they have been promised a salary hike starting this month.

“In the past, I was not interested in promoting or marketing anything, but now I feel good, and I participate wholeheartedly in everything because of the new developments,” she said.

She is experiencing motivation. The joy is genuine, and one can almost see her drifting off for a few seconds once in a while. What could be the changes this salary hike is going to create? Definitely, it has generated an element of hope in her.

Here, it was an external factor — a decision taken by the management that triggered her emotions that led to the motivation. No matter how hard one tries to stay self-motivated, an element of appreciation is a

booster that makes one leap forward, and it is an exceptional feeling.

It was not just Fatma but the whole team that was riding high on joy, leaving us too feeling nice.

After all, emotions are energy in motion. Emotions are considered as dynamic forces that can move through us.

Now wouldn't it be wonderful if every organisation could recreate that positive energy? Themes, ambience and marketing schemes can do a lot, but genuine happiness can be a game changer for an organisation.

Recently, I came across a blue ice cream truck named Al Hara Ice Cream.

It is Salam al Gamari's dream project. He makes his own ice cream. He started his project six years ago with two popular flavours, which were strawberry and vanilla. And when Covid-18 appeared, he had to stay at home, but he took up experimentation and came up with 13 flavours in total. He continued to pursue further, and now he has 23 to 24 flavours. He has four trucks and is on his way to Salalah for the Khareef season.

Can we say circumstances made him who he is? He used the challenging period of the pandemic to his advantage.

His knowledge is his asset, and his passion to serve his customers the best makes him

Authenticity makes the true you. This is probably why there is so much encouragement to find your true calling.

work harder and harder.

His passion fruit ice cream is sugar-free, and he is constantly trying to explore new recipes and flavours.

It must be a great feeling to watch his customers come back for more with complete satisfaction.

Interestingly, ice creams take us back to childhood memories. Again it brings back the emotions. The word 'emotion' is derived from the Latin word 'emotere'. And guess what it means? It means energy in motion.

An energy that is felt sometimes as feelings.

Emotions also have frequencies. Drkezchirolab.com talks about high and low frequencies of emotions: “Emotions like joy, love, gratitude, and passion are associated with high vibrational frequencies, while fear, anger, guilt, and sadness are linked to lower frequencies.” So when you are following your passion, there is that extra zest.

According to the experts, emotional energy relates to how negative or positive one feels.

But the biggest vibration could be authenticity. It is that which sets each one of us apart.

Authenticity makes the true you. This is probably why there is so much encouragement to find your true calling.

TURNING 80, UN FACES FRESH STORM OF DOUBTS

AMÉLIE BOTTOLLIÉ-DEPOIS

With its influence discredited and its budget in tatters, the United Nations is weathering a firestorm of criticism as it celebrates its 80th anniversary — and tries to convince a polarised and conflict-wracked world it is more vital than ever.

The UN's 193 member states will mark on Thursday the signing of the organisation's foundational treaty, the UN Charter, on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco.

After ratification, the United Nations came into being on October 24.

The anniversary comes as the world body faces a multi-faceted crisis that has raised questions about its future.

“Since the end of the Cold War, we have seen the organisation struggle in cases from the Rwandan genocide to the Iraq war,” Richard Gowan, an analyst at the International Crisis Group, said.

“When each big crisis comes, commentators announce that the UN is finished. And yet it still survives,” he added.

“That said, this is an especially bad moment,” Gowan acknowledged, pointing to numerous countries that are “deeply frustrated” by the UN Security Council's failure to act on major conflicts like those in Ukraine and Gaza.

That inaction is largely due to the veto power of the council's five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — which have competing interests.

For Romuald Sciora, a research fellow at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, the credibility issue can only result in the virtual disappearance of an organisation that is already a political “dwarf” on the world stage.

“I'm not sure the UN will cease to exist, even by its 100th anniversary,” Sciora said.

“I see a ghost vanishing, and the UN becoming a bit of a ghost,” like “these old organisations whose names we have forgotten.”

But experts say while the UN desperately needs to enact tough reforms, not all of its problems come from within, and it has become an easy scapegoat for its divided membership.

In a world devastated by the largest number of ongoing conflicts since 1945, and ravaged by major humanitarian crises, “the United Nations has never been more needed,” Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said recently.

Funding has nevertheless grown scarce as donors — especially the United States under President Donald Trump — pull back.

Given the financial constraints, Guterres launched the UN80 initiative in a bid to streamline operations.

Those changes could include thousands of positions being cut.

The United Nations remains a place where arch-rivals and enemies still sit at the same table to air grievances, and where the smallest member state can have its voice heard. —AFP

The attrition of Russia

IN the late 1970s, the Soviet Union launched a decade-long war in Afghanistan that would cost it 15,000 lives and contribute to its eventual implosion.

Nearly a half-century later, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his own war, against Ukraine, and this one has cost his side at least 250,000 lives in the three years since the full-scale invasion began.

At this rate, if Putin's invasion lasts as long as Leonid Brezhnev's Soviet-Afghan War, Russian casualties will be over 55 times greater — and Russia's population today is just over half that of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, with 45 countries across three continents maintaining sanctions against Russia, the consequences have not been confined to Russia and Ukraine.

We know that within Russia, the war has brought something resembling a 1930s-style fascist regime, though the Kremlin is relying on financial inducements, not just conscription, to feed the meat grinder. In the Samara region, the signing bonus for anyone who agrees to fight reached a record \$40,000 in January.

Obviously, such large payments for military service in Ukraine reflect growing reluctance on the part of would-be soldiers. While former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev reports that 175,000 men have signed up for the army in the first five months of this year, Mediazona estimates that 51,000 Russians died on the battlefield just in the second half of 2024. Perhaps Putin will still be able to recruit more than 30,000 per month, or perhaps not. In Samara, the bonus hike was reminiscent of how some gyms market memberships: the best perks were valid only for those who signed up by February 1.

Presumably, Putin has offered to reward regional governors for high recruitment figures. But if regional administrations are raising signing bonuses only to cut them soon thereafter, one can infer that the costs are becoming unsustainable. Since June 5, the bonus for “volunteers” in Bashkortostan, located between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains, has been reduced from \$20,400 to \$12,700; in the Belgorod Oblast near Ukraine, it was cut from \$38,200 to \$10,200 in January (after a three-month “promotion”). Throughout Russia,



Russian soldiers in body bags.



FEDERICO FUBINI

The writer is an editor-at-large at Corriere della Sera, is the author, most recently, of Sul Vulcano (Longanesi, 2020)

Despite the cracks that are beginning to show, Putin seems no closer to accepting a truce. On the contrary, his aggression is becoming even more indiscriminate and violent.

flat-rate federal signing bonuses for prison inmates were cancelled in January.

The need to increase payments reflects Russians' growing recognition of the odds of dying in Ukraine. In provincial areas such as Kurgan, located where the Urals and Siberia meet, cemeteries are being expanded. Nationwide, the “exit” bonus for dead soldiers' families has nearly doubled, from the equivalent of about \$95,000 to \$176,000.

Again, the recent cuts in signing bonuses suggest that the system is under financial pressure. After all, Russia has been selling oil, its main revenue source, for roughly \$50 per barrel, or 25 per cent, below the price originally estimated in its 2025 budget. Still, Putin will likely avoid another mobilisation of conscripts. When he tried that in September 2022, public support for his “special military operation” seemed to take a hit. He also undoubtedly remembers the Soviet misadventure in Afghanistan. The reason those 15,000 fallen soldiers mattered so much politically was that most of them had never chosen to go fight. Moreover, they were drafted not only from the Soviet periphery but also from Moscow and St. Petersburg, where the losses affected cultural elites, undermining the system's credibility.

To avoid repeating these mistakes, Putin has relied on more subtle forms of coercion. For example, last month, Yakutia, located in the Russian far east, reportedly held a

“Change Your Life” day to recruit local homeless men for the front lines. The courts are also playing a role. “I have followed hundreds of interviews with prisoners of war, obituaries, stories of soldiers among my acquaintances and family,” the exiled dissident Maria Vyushkova told me. “In recent weeks, I have come across three similar cases: men who ended up on trial for minor offences and were pushed by judges to join the army under the threat of heavy sentences.”

Russia has long used similar tricks to lure Kazakh or Nepalese migrants to the front lines. But now, it is Russians who are being targeted. Job vacancies for “drivers,” “security guards,” and “construction workers” in active combat zones have been cropping up everywhere — an obvious ruse to hide the war's brutal reality.

Meanwhile, the average age of new recruits is rising, with men over 60 joining those on the front line. Even authorised media outlets report cases of wounded soldiers being savagely beaten if they refuse to return to the front before fully recovering. In May, Russian soldiers on Telegram reported that their commander had sent men on crutches into battle. Earlier in the war, Russia's wounded at least got time to recover; no longer. With 23,000 armoured vehicles lost, mules are now being used to transport materiel.

Despite the cracks that are beginning to show, Putin seems no closer to accepting a truce. On the contrary, his aggression is becoming even more indiscriminate and violent. Most likely, he simply does not get it. Bad news does not necessarily reach him, since subordinates protect themselves by withholding it.

Ironically, Russia's military problems confirm the Kremlin's total identification with war. Russia has been at war for 19 of Putin's 21 years as president. Bent on revising the European order that emerged after the Soviet Union's collapse, Putin has created a regime that is willing to make choices that appear senseless to democratic societies. His war of attrition is therefore bound to continue. With US support for Ukraine dwindling, Europe needs to do more to widen the cracks in the foundation of Putin's praetorian regime.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



‘AL MARJANAH’ SHINES IN TOULOUSE WITH RUNNER-UP FINISH

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

The Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Royal Cavalry continued to showcase their excellence on the international stage, as their purebred Arabian mare ‘Al Marjanah’ secured a commendable second place in the sixth race held at the Toulouse Racecourse in France. The 2,100-metre race, which took place on Sunday evening, featured top-tier contenders from prestigious stables across Europe and the Gulf region.

‘Al Marjanah’ ridden by jockey Michael Forest and trained by the seasoned French trainer Elisabeth Bernard, delivered a strong performance and remained competitive throughout the race.

The Toulouse race attracted entries from several countries, including Oman, Qatar, France and Spain, reflecting the growing prominence of Arabian horse racing in Europe. The event was marked by high-level competition and tactical brilliance from jockeys and trainers alike, affirming the international stature of the racecourse and its importance as a platform for elite-level racing.

This latest success adds to a series of notable achievements by the Royal Cavalry in France. Where recently the mare ‘Al Rasha’ clinched first place in the eighth race over 1,600 metres at Bordeaux Racecourse, also under the guidance of Michael Forest and trainer Elisabeth Bernard.

Similarly, Royal Cavalry’s horse ‘Al Ghanim’ triumphed in the seventh race at Montauban Racecourse, covering a distance of 2,250 metres. The victory was secured under jockey Sami Lecoleus, with training again led by Bernard.

These accomplishments underscore the Royal Cavalry’s growing competitiveness in European circuits and highlight Oman’s strategic investment in showcasing its equestrian heritage on the global stage. Through disciplined training, expert handling, and selective international participation, the Royal Cavalry continues to raise the profile of Omani purebred Arabian horses in premier racing events.

‘Al Marjanah’ claimed the runner-up position behind ‘Makhzoom Al Shahania’, owned by HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Rohit, and ridden by Jean Bernard. While third place went to ‘Majaz’, owned by Al Shaqab Racing and ridden by Alexandre Gavilan. The Toulouse race attracted entries from several countries, including Oman, Qatar, France and Spain, reflecting the growing prominence of Arabian horse racing in Europe. The event was marked by high-level competition and tactical brilliance from jockeys and trainers alike, affirming the international stature of the racecourse and its importance as a platform for elite-level racing.

OC: T20 World Cup prize money to be given soon

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

OMAN CRICKET (OC) has confirmed that the prize money awarded by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the team’s participation in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2024 will be disbursed by July.

The board reiterated that the delay in disbursement of \$225,000 was procedural, dependent on formal post-event clarifications from the ICC, which are typically received after global tournaments.

At the centre of the controversy lies a highly unusual and deeply concerning episode in October 2024, when 11 senior players, including then captain Aqib Ilyas and ex-skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, withdrew from national duty hours before Oman’s campaign at the ACC Men’s T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup, which was held in Muscat.

While concerns over the delayed prize money had been raised, Oman Cricket officials, including OC Chairman Pankaj Khimji, had repeatedly assured the players that payments would be made in full following the ICC’s confirmation of the allocation and structure.

Despite these reassurances, the players escalated the situation and refused to play, putting Oman’s international commitment at serious risk.

“But to walk out at the last



PANKAJ
KHIMJI
OC Chairman



As an Associate nation, we have been at the forefront — not only in building world-class infrastructure — but also in treating our players like family...Our doors are open to talent, but closed to indiscipline



ALKESH
JOSHI
OC Treasurer

moment — just hours before representing the nation — was not only irresponsible, but it was also an insult to the entire team, the coaching staff, the board, and most importantly, the nation they were supposed to serve.”

Following the walkout, the OC Board met twice in emergency sessions and unanimously resolved to terminate the central contracts of the 11 players and bar them from all national and domestic cricket until further notice. The suspended players were Aqib Ilyas, Zeeshan Maqsood, Ayaan Khan, Kashyap Prajapati, Shoaib Khan, Ahmed Fayyaz Butt, Pratik Athavale, Kaleemullah, Rafiullah, Naseem Khushi, and Khalid Kail.

The board described the episode as a coordinated walkout that amounted to ‘blackmail’, an act of pressure unbecoming of national representatives.

“It is evident that the players were heavily influenced and misled by external voices — particularly the WCA — which encouraged them to abandon their duties under the guise of advocacy. What happened was not protest, but provocation,” Khimji said.

In the wake of the withdrawals, a new squad was swiftly assembled under the leadership of experienced batter Jatinder Singh.

Under Jatinder’s captaincy, Oman have won 9 out of 11 matches in the ongoing ICC World Cup League 2, showcasing both resilience and emerging talent.

The performance has helped restore belief in the team and underlined the depth of cricketing potential in Oman. OC Treasurer Alkesh Joshi said: “The response of the new squad has been nothing short of inspirational. They’ve played with heart, discipline, and a sense of responsibility — everything the national jersey should represent. It is a shame that the barred players came under the influence of certain people and organisations and threatened the sanctity of the game.”

To avoid future lapses, Oman Cricket has constituted a special internal committee to recommend a more robust, transparent structure for tournament-based remunerations and player engagement ahead.

Khimji said that over the years, the players have been the largest beneficiaries of Oman Cricket’s growth, with a sizeable percentage of ICC grants spent on their development.

“As an Associate nation, we have been at the forefront — not only in building world-class infrastructure — but also in treating our players like family. They have never been treated unfairly. This incident has been deeply unfortunate. Our doors are open to talent, but closed to indiscipline,” said the chairman.

“We will continue to support our players and honour their efforts — but we expect them, in turn, to honour the nation and the badge they wear.”

Al Zubair sets sights on golden weekend at Spa

MUSCAT: Oman’s Al Faisal al Zubair returns to the scene of one of his greatest racing achievements when he joins forces with Jens Klingmann, Ben Tuck and Neil Verhagen to compete in the Gold Cup category at this weekend’s Crowdstrike 24 Hours of Spa at the iconic Spa-Francorchamps circuit in the Belgian Ardennes region.

Last year, Al Zubair, Dominik Baumann, Mikaël Grenier and Philip Ellis guided their Al Manar Racing Mercedes to seventh overall and victory in the Gold Cup section.

On this occasion, the new team quartet head to Spa topping the standings in the Teams’ and Drivers’ Championships and will tackle the third round of the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup powered by AWS in their Al Manar Racing by Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 EVO. Al Manar Racing by Team WRT leads the Teams’ Championship by two points from Verstappen.com Racing after the opening two endurance rounds at Paul Ricard and Monza. Al Zubair, Klingmann and Tuck hold a similar cushion in the Drivers’ Championship. Points are awarded for positions after six, 12 and 24 hours at the season’s flagship event at Spa and the talented 24-year-old American driver Neil Verhagen has been recruited as the fourth driver



for the Belgian weekend. Al Zubair said: “Looking forward to Spa 24. This is the biggest race of the year for all of us. It is an important race for us to make sure we gather all the points, especially with it being a 24-hour race with points available at six hours, 12 and 24. It will be important for the championship for us to collect as many as possible during the race.

“It is looking very good in the championship at the moment. We are currently second in Sprint and first in Endurance. It has been a great start. Monza was fantastic to carry on the momentum and take it into Spa. We are all prepared and the team knows what it is doing, as they have shown multiple times this year. “We also have Neil Verhagen on the car. He’s a BMW driver who will be joining us and we are excited

that he is with us as the fourth driver. Hopefully, it’s a race that is even better than last year, if that is possible!”

Seventy-three GT3 cars have been entered across the various classes and will take to the track over the weekend in the presence of several members of the Belgian Royal Family.

Amongst Al Manar Racing by Team WRT’s Gold Cup rivals are CSA Racing, Herberth Motorsport, the Verstappen.com Racing Aston Martin, the Tresor Attempto Racing Audi and the Garage 59, Optimum Motorsport and Team RJN McLaren. The GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup powered by AWS shares the circuit with the GT4 European Series powered by RAFA Racing Club, the GT2 European Series, the Lamborghini Super Trofeo and McLaren Trophy Europe. On-track action on the demanding

7.004 km circuit gets underway with free practice from 11.20hrs on Thursday (June 26th) and precedes pre-qualifying from 17.40hrs and four qualifying sessions between 21.15hrs and 22.21hrs.

Additional night practice will then be allowed from 23.05hrs. A quiet Friday for the GTWC entrants sees Super Pole set for 16.10hrs and then a warm-up session permitted from 20.05hrs.

The 24-hour race then gets underway at 16.30hrs on Saturday afternoon and finishes at the same time on Sunday.

TEAMS – LATEST GOLD CUP STANDINGS

1. Al Manar Racing by Team WRT 44pts
 2. Verstappen.com Racing 42pts
 3. CSA Racing 33pts
 4. Tresor Attempto Racing 24pts
 5. Team RJN 21pts
 6. Optimum Motorsport 16pts
 6. Paul Motorsport 16pts
 8. Herberth Motorsport 12pts, etc
- ### DRIVERS – latest Gold Cup standings
1. Al Zubair/Klingmann/Tuck 44pts
 2. Lulham/Vermeulen/King 42pts
 3. Gachet/Rougier/Kell 33pts
 4. Mancini/Ogaard/Cazzaniga 24pts
 5. Barr/Foster/Buncombe 21pts, etc

SHORTTAKES



Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters

BUBLIK BEATS MEDVEDEV TO CLAIM HALLE TITLE

HALLE, GERMANY: Kazakh Alexander Bublik achieved his first win in seven meetings with Russian Daniil Medvedev to claim his second title on the grass of Halle, a week before Wimbledon. Bublik, ranked 45, claimed the scalp of world number one Jannik Sinner in the second round. The 28-year-old maintained his streak with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), victory in one hour and 22 minutes in his first clash on grass with third seed Medvedev. Thanks to his second Halle trophy after 2023 and fifth ATP title overall, Bublik will move to 30th in Monday's ATP rankings, while Medvedev, who was playing in his first final in 15 months, will move to number nine. "I was cursed against you, Daniil. But today, I'm happy to have won. Beating you here is a great honour for me," Bublik said during the trophy presentation.

In the first set, Bublik broke his opponent's serve to lead 5-3 and won the set on his serve. The Kazakh saved Medvedev's only break point, also a set point, at 4-5 in the second set, with a perfectly hit drop shot. He wrapped up the match in the tie-break with a service winner. "From the mental point of view, that's the toughest match I ever played in my life," said Bublik. "I have never beaten Daniil. He's a super tough player to play, especially with my gamestyle, and today everything clicked in mentally and physically. That's one of the wins of my career." "I had such tough months since last Wimbledon to probably this summer," said Bublik, who had dropped out of the top 75 until last month and conceded he was "close to calling it quits after Wimbledon (last year), because I was not enjoying it anymore". Bublik's also won titles in Montpellier in 2022 and 2024 and Antwerp and Halle in 2023. "Alexander Bublik played some great grass court play today. My heart always beats a little faster when you play like that on grass," said 57-year-old German Boris Becker, a three-time Wimbledon champion (1985, 1986, 1989), before presenting the trophy. A former world number one in 2022, Medvedev lost his sixth consecutive final, his 20th and last title was the Masters 1000 on clay in Rome in May 2023. "Keep playing like that, and please, Carlos (Alcaraz)or Jannik in your draw at Wimbledon," joked former US Open winner Medvedev, a two-time Wimbledon semi-finalist. — AFP



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) lifts the Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy. — Reuters

Thunder beat Pacers to clinch NBA Finals crown

THE OKLAHOMA CITY Thunder crowned a dazzling season with an NBA title on Sunday, pulling away relentlessly in the second half to beat the injury-hit Indiana Pacers 103-91 in game seven of the NBA Finals. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 29 points and handed out 12 assists and the Thunder's swarming defense finally proved to much for a Pacers team that lost talisman Tyrese Haliburton to a leg injury just seven minutes into the contest. The underdog Pacers hung tough and held a 48-47 lead at halftime, but the Thunder out-scored them 34-20 in the third quarter and pushed the lead to as many as 22 points in the fourth. "It doesn't feel real, so many hours, so many moments, so many emotions, so many nights of disbelief," Gilgeous-Alexander said, his voice breaking "It's crazy to know that we're all here. "But this group worked for it, this group put in the hours and we deserved this." Gilgeous-Alexander put himself among some of the game's greats as he earned Finals Most Valuable Player honors to go with his regular-season MVP and scoring title along with his first championship. Jalen Williams scored 15 of his 20 points in the second half and Chet Holmgren added 18 points, eight rebounds, a steal and five of the Thunder's eight blocked shots. A crowd of 18,203 at Paycom Center were

given some tense moments as the Pacers chipped away at the deficit, but 23 Indiana turnovers leading to 32 Thunder points were ultimately too much for the Pacers to overcome. The Thunder, who led the league with 68 regular-season wins, captured their first title since the club's controversial move to Oklahoma City in 2008, the franchise having won it all in 1979 as the Seattle SuperSonics. The Pacers, three-time American Basketball Association champions in the 1970s — remain in search of a first title since joining the NBA in the NBA-ABA merger. HALIBURTON INJURED Haliburton, already nursing a right calf strain when the Pacers won game six to force the first Finals game seven since 2016, had scored nine points — all on three-pointers — when he went down as he tried to drive past Gilgeous-Alexander. Haliburton's right leg gave out and he sprawled forward, slapping the court in pain and disappointment. Teammates gathered around him before he was helped off the court and to the locker room, supported and hopping on one leg with a towel over his head. In his absence, the Pacers dug in. Down by three after the first quarter, they took a 43-42 lead on a three-pointer by Benedict Mathurin with 2:02 left in the second quarter. Oklahoma City would take the lead again

before Andrew Nembhard drilled a step-back three-pointer with 4.3 seconds left to put the Pacers up 48-47 at halftime. The first half featured 10 lead changes, both teams coming out with determination on the defensive end with everything at stake. The three-point shot was an early difference-maker for the Pacers, who connected on eight of 16 from beyond the arc in the first half, but had just three after the break. The Thunder struggled early from long range, but Gilgeous-Alexander made his first three-pointer of the night with 8:16 left in the third, Holmgren followed with a trey and Jalen Williams added another — the quick 9-0 run giving Oklahoma City a 65-56 lead that set the stage for the rest of the game. "We had 24 minutes to go get it — we had 24 minutes to finish our season," Gilgeous-Alexander said of the Thunder's mindset coming out for the third. "It was either gonna be bad or it was going to be pretty. We did everything we could." Benedict Mathurin led the Pacers with 24 points off the bench. Pascal Siakam and T J McConnell added 16 points apiece and Andrew Nembhard scored 15. But the famously resilient Pacers, who rallied from a 10-15 season start and authored a string of stirring comeback wins, finally came up short. — AFP

Pant piles on agony for England with record-breaking century

LEEDS: Rishabh Pant became the first India batsman to score hundreds in both innings of a Test against England as the tourists strengthened their grip on the series opener at Headingley on Monday. The swashbuckling wicketkeeper, who made 134 in the first innings, completed a 130-ball century, including 13 fours and two sixes on the fourth afternoon. He was out for 118, caught by Zak Crawley off the bowling of Shoaib Bashir. Pant's dismissal ended a stand of 195 with KL Rahul that started with the match in the balance when India were 92-3 in their second innings. India, however, were 298-4 at tea — a lead of 304 runs — with opener Rahul 120 not out.

Pant is just the second wicketkeeper in Test history to score hundreds in both innings of the same match following Andy Flower's scores of 142 and 199 not out for Zimbabwe against South Africa in 2001. After a morning session in which India captain Shubman Gill was the only batsman dismissed, Rahul and Pant upped the tempo in their contrasting styles. Right-hander Rahul hit off-spinner Bashir for a textbook cover-drive four, while left-hander Pant nicked Josh Tongue through the vacant second slip position before thrashing him through the covers. Pant completed an 83-ball fifty before driving Bashir for two soaring sixes in three balls.



Rishabh Pant walks off after being caught by England's Zak Crawley off the bowling of Shoaib Bashir. — Reuters

He had made 75 when he hammered a Bashir delivery to short cover where diving England captain Ben Stokes did well to get a hand to the ball as he tried to complete what would have been a sensational catch. An England attack missing express quicks Mark Wood and Jofra Archer was largely powerless to stop the run spree as Rahul and Pant took advantage of the old ball on a good batting pitch. Rahul completed a 202-ball century featuring 13 fours with a trademark cover-drive — his ninth century in 59 Tests. Pant, severely injured in a life-threatening car crash in December 2022, was stuck in the 90s before a quick single took him to a 130-ball

century featuring 13 fours and two sixes. India great Sunil Gavaskar, watching from the stands, encouraged Pant to mark this century with the familiar somersault with which he had marked his first-innings hundred, but this time Pant celebrated in more conventional style. India are strongly placed in the game, with the outstanding Jasprit Bumrah, the world's top-ranked Test bowler, leading their attack. But England chased down 378 — their record successful chase — against a Bumrah-led India attack at Edgbaston three years ago. And the tourists will now want to avoid a repeat of what happened in their first innings at Headingley. — AFP



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham in action. — Reuters

Man City to CWC last 16, Real Madrid win with 10 men

MANCHESTER City hit Al Ain for six on Sunday to secure a place in the last 16 of the Club World Cup after Real Madrid shrugged off an early red card to beat Mexican side Pachuca 3-1.

Juventus proved too strong for Wydad Casablanca while Red Bull Salzburg and Al Hilal drew 0-0 as the second round of group games at the tournament came to a conclusion.

The match between City and Al Ain in Atlanta was dubbed the “Abu derby”, with the English club’s owner and United Arab Emirates vice-president Sheikh Mansour facing off against his elder sibling, Sheikh Mohamed, president of the Emirati team and also the country.

Ilkay Gundogan put City ahead early on before 19-year-old Claudio Echeverri netted his first goal for the club with a free-kick and Erland Haaland slotted in the third with a penalty in first-half

stoppage time.

In the second half, Gundogan struck again before two substitutes joined in, with Oscar Bobb rolling in the fifth and Rayan Cherki grabbing his first City goal for 6-0.

The result, in a game watched by a crowd of over 40,000, means both City and Juventus are through to the knockout phase after each winning their first two matches in Group G.

They will now face each other in Orlando on Thursday to decide who tops the section.

“Now we have to see whether we’ll be first or second in the group,” said City coach Pep Guardiola, who changed his entire starting line-up following the 2-0 opening win against Wydad.

“We played a little bit better than the first game, especially in the second half.”

Juventus triumphed 4-1 against Moroccan giants Wydad

“It became really intense for us, but we defended with a lot of sacrifice and solidarity, which is what it takes

ALONSO

in Philadelphia, as Kenan Yildiz played a starring role.

YILDIZ STARS FOR JUVENTUS

The Turkish international forward scored twice after forcing the early own goal which put Juve ahead in front of almost 32,000 at Lincoln Financial Field.

His shot found the net with the aid of a slight but crucial deflection off Abdelmounaim Boutouil, and Yildiz then smashed in the second on 16 minutes with a brilliant half-volley.

South African winger Thembinkosi Lorch pulled one back for Wydad, but the impressive Yildiz made it 3-1 midway through the second half and Dusan Vlahovic converted a penalty in injury time to seal the win for Igor Tudor’s side. “He has great potential,” Tudor told broadcaster DAZN when asked about Yildiz. “A wonderful player, so there is a big future in front of him.”

In Charlotte, Real Madrid

overcame the early sending-off of Raul Asencio to beat Pachuca and get their first win under new coach Xabi Alonso. Defender Asencio was dismissed after just seven minutes for pulling down Salomon Rondon with the Venezuelan clear on goal. That left the Liga MX team sensing the chance for an upset in front of 70,248 fans at the home of the NFL’s Carolina Panthers.

RUDIGER COMPLAINS OF RACIST INSULT

However, Real took the lead on 35 minutes when Jude Bellingham buried a left-foot shot into the bottom corner, and they scored again before the interval through Arda Guler. Fede Valverde got their third in the second half, with a deflected Elias Montiel effort pulling one back for Pachuca. Alonso praised the way his team handled the early sending-off.

“It became really intense for us, but we defended with a lot of

sacrifice and solidarity, which is what it takes,” he said.

Alonso also said that Real defender Antonio Rudiger had complained of a racist incident at the end of the game when the German was visibly angered following an exchange of words with Pachuca’s Gustavo Cabral.

“I think the Fifa protocol has been activated to investigate, but if it has happened, all measures should be taken and we support Antonio because it’s something unacceptable,” said the coach.

Cabral, the 39-year-old Argentinian centre-back, denied the accusations, saying his words had been misinterpreted.

Real are level at the top of Group H on four points with Salzburg, who drew 0-0 with Al Hilal in Washington, DC. Madrid and Salzburg meet each other next in Philadelphia, while Al Hilal have two points and can still qualify with a win when they play Pachuca, who are now out. — AFP



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The rise in inflation was primarily driven by higher prices in the personal goods.

OMAN'S INFLATION RISES 0.6% IN MAY

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman recorded a 0.6-per cent increase in its General Consumer Price Index (CPI) in May 2025, compared to the same month in 2024, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The rise in inflation was primarily driven by higher prices in the personal goods and miscellaneous services group, which surged by 6.4 per cent. The transportation group followed with a 2.4 per cent increase, while prices in the restaurants and hotels group rose by 1.4 per cent.

Other sectors also saw moderate increases: the health group by 0.8 per cent, clothing and footwear by 0.6 per cent, culture and entertainment by 0.3 per cent, and education by 0.1 per cent.

The food and non-alcoholic beverages group registered a 0.8 per cent decline, while prices for furniture, household equipment, and routine maintenance fell by 0.2 per cent. Prices in the housing, utilities, communication, and tobacco categories remained stable year-on-year.

Drilling deeper into the food and beverage group, prices for sugar, jam, honey and sweets rose by 3.7 per cent, while other unclassified food items increased by 3.6 per cent. Dairy products including milk, cheese, and eggs recorded a 1.9-per cent rise, oils and fats were up by 1.8 per cent, and meat prices inched up by 0.2 per cent.

In contrast, vegetable prices fell sharply by 8.6 per cent. Fish and seafood declined by 2.3 per cent, fruits by 1.6 per cent, and non-alcoholic beverages by 0.1 per cent. Prices for bread and grains remained unchanged.

Among Oman's governorates, Al Dakhiliyah posted the highest inflation rate at 1.5 per cent, followed by Musandam at 1.1 per cent and Al Sharqiyah South at 1.0 per cent. — ONA

OIA boosts local content spending to RO 265.5m

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

LOCAL

content
spending
by Oman
Investment
Authority

(OIA), the government's investment arm, totalled RO 265.5 million in 2024, OIA President Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi revealed on Sunday.

Addressing the Authority's annual media briefing, Al Murshidi stated: "OIA has fulfilled its role in maximising local content and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with spending on SMEs reaching RO 265.5 million by the end of 2024.

Of this amount, RO 139 million was allocated to Riyada card holders, increasing the share of SMEs in total supply chain expenditures to 19.8 per cent."

According to the Authority's 2024 Annual Report, the share of local content contractual expenditure within OIA and its subsidiaries rose from 30 per cent to 32.4 per cent in 2024.

The contribution to local content is part of OIA's strategy of creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurs, SMEs and innovative startups, particularly those which are adopting and localising advanced technologies and retaining investment capital domestically.

This, in turn, drives development, enhancing



In-Country-Value (ICV) development is a main pillar of OIA's objectives.

economic diversification and boosting national competitiveness.

In-Country-Value (ICV) development is a main pillar of OIA's objectives. In 2024, the Authority advanced its Ring-Fencing Programme, which is designed to increase the market share of local companies by allocating specific business scopes to Omani firms exclusively.

A total of 32 ring-fenced domains were approved in 2024, enabling business opportunities worth RO 71



ABDULSALAM
AL MURSHIDI
OIA Chairman

million to be channeled to local firms in these domains.

Furthermore, 38 small and medium enterprises were suitably developed to receive a total of RO 11 million in contracts under its Vendor Development programme.

Moreover, OIA launched of the third edition of the mandatory list programme, which stipulates the types of services and products that OIA companies are required to procure from Omani

businesses.

Included in the latest edition are 311 products and services provided by local vendors.

Additionally, the authority implemented a new performance monitoring system for the programme in 2024.

Furthermore, in line with maximising local content and empowering small enterprises, the Authority issued a revised version of its procurement and tender policy which obliges contractors to meet specified Omanisation rates.

The policy also contributed to improving incentives provided to SMEs and Riyada card holders.

Oman highlights trade, investment potential at Algiers International Fair

ALGIERS: President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria inaugurated the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion as guest of honour at the 56th Algiers International Fair on Monday. The fair, which runs until June 28, is being held at the Exhibition Palace in the Algerian capital.

Accompanied by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the president toured the 900-square-metre Omani pavilion featuring participation from 60 Omani companies and institutions representing industrial, commercial and service sectors, along with several government entities.

This participation reaffirms the distinguished fraternal and economic relations between Oman and Algeria, building on the foundations laid during the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham



The Algiers International Fair provides an excellent platform to showcase Oman's commercial, investment and cultural assets.

bin Tarik to Algeria last May, which established a new phase of comprehensive cooperation between the two nations.

Al Yousef emphasised that Oman's participation as the guest of honour came in response to an official invitation from the

Algerian president, as confirmed in the joint communique during His Majesty the Sultan's visit. He noted the participation includes major, medium and small enterprises that will enhance trade opportunities between the two countries, with

particular representation from the pharmaceutical, construction materials and food industries, along with dedicated sections for handicrafts and cultural displays.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated that this participation represents an important opportunity to strengthen Oman's external economic presence and reflects the depth of fraternal and economic relations between the two countries.

He emphasised the growing role of Oman's private sector in international economic forums and its contribution to expanding trade

and investment horizons between the two nations.

Saif bin Nasser al Badai, Ambassador of Oman to Algeria, stated that Oman's participation as guest of honour aims to explore trade and investment exchange opportunities between the two countries, and examine potential partnerships and export possibilities to the Algerian market and regional markets.

Eng Dawood bin Salim al Haddabi, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and Chairman of 'OPEX' Committee for Omani Products Promotion, explained that the supervisory team's participation – represented by Madayn, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority – builds on the longstanding relations between Oman and Algeria. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS



This step reinforces the bank's position as a leader in environmental innovation.

BANKDHOFAR
PIONEERS HYBRID
FLEET TRANSITION
IN OMAN’S BANKING
SECTOR

MUSCAT: In a landmark move for the Sultanate of Oman’s financial industry, BankDhofar has announced the transition of its operational vehicle fleet to hybrid electric models, becoming the first bank in Oman to adopt this sustainability-driven initiative.

This step reinforces the bank’s position as a leader in environmental innovation and aligns with the national goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

The transition involves replacing the bank’s existing petrol-powered vehicles with 25 hybrid cars, recognised for their superior fuel economy and lower carbon emissions. These vehicles emit just 98 grammes of carbon dioxide per kilometre, a significant reduction from the 167 grammes emitted by the previously used models. This shift translates into a 41-per cent decrease in emissions per vehicle.

BankDhofar estimates that its new fleet will collectively avoid over 76,000 kilogrammes of carbon dioxide emissions each year, equivalent to the environmental benefit of planting nearly 1,900 trees annually. Over a five-year period, this reduction will amount to approximately 380,880 kilogrammes of CO₂, effectively matching the environmental benefit of removing 83 conventional gasoline-powered vehicles from the road for a full year.

Commenting on the milestone, Ammar Askari, Head Customer Experience & Sustainability stated, “This transition reflects our resolve to lead by example. By cutting emissions by 76 tonnes annually, we’re not just reducing our carbon footprint – we’re investing in Oman’s future.”

He added, “The hybrid cars efficiency proves that eco-friendly choices can also drive operational excellence. This is a win for our planet and our stakeholders.”

The initiative underscores BankDhofar’s strategic commitment to sustainability, a value enshrined at every level of its operations. As detailed in its 2024 Sustainability Report, the bank has institutionalised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles across all tiers of leadership, ensuring that sustainability is not a side project but a core business priority.

The hybrid vehicle rollout is the latest in a series of measures designed to help BankDhofar contribute meaningfully to Oman’s transition to a Net-Zero economy by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Beyond its internal operations, BankDhofar continues to invest in green finance, energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction initiatives, demonstrating that responsible banking is not only possible but essential in today’s financial landscape.

BANK MUSCAT
RECOGNISED
AS THE BEST
BANK FOR
OFFERING
INVESTMENT
SOLUTIONS

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to demonstrate its leadership as one of the top asset managers in the MENA region with Assets Under Management (AUM) of \$3.5 billion as of March 31, 2025.

In this context, the Bank is pleased to announce that it has recently been awarded The Best Bank for Alternative Investments at the Euromoney Private Banking Awards 2025.

Khalifa bin Abdullah al Hatmi,

Deputy General Manager – Investment Banking and Capital Markets at Bank Muscat, said: “We are tremendously thrilled at being recognised with the best bank in Oman for offering alternative investment solutions to individual and corporate customers.

“We thank Euromoney for this prestigious recognition, which stands as a testament to the excellent performance of our Asset Management team and, in specific, to our capabilities in managing Real Estate across asset classes as

well as local and regional markets.

“This recognition also reaffirms the trust of the international financial community in the Bank’s performance and the unparalleled products and sustainable services it provides. We aim to continue developing contemporary and customised solutions to accommodate the unique requirements of our customers by consistently focusing on innovation, agility and customer-centricity in all of our engagements and solutions.”

Ford Taurus now with
summer benefits

OWN the Ford Taurus now and get exclusive benefits including 5 years/100,000 km service (whichever is earlier), 5 years/100,000 km manufacturer’s warranty, free registration, free 3M paint protection film and free accessory package. (Conditions apply. Please visit the Ford showroom for details.). The offer ends on July 23, 2025.

Bold, refined and effortlessly powerful, the Ford Taurus redefines what it means to drive in style. With a design that exudes modern elegance and a performance that commands attention, the Taurus has been crafted to elevate your drive, turning every journey into a memorable experience.

From its first impression to the last mile, the Taurus captivates. Its aerodynamic form is accentuated by sleek 19-inch polished alloy wheels, a distinctive chrome-accented grille, signature dual exhausts and a flowing hood-line that speaks volumes of its confidence.

LED auto high beams, a futuristic two-piece headlamp



The Ford Taurus redefines what it means to drive in style.

design and power-deployable door handles not only add character but bring unmatched functionality.

The Taurus roars with purpose. Its 2.0L EcoBoost engine offers an exhilarating 239 hp and 382 Nm of torque, delivering punchy acceleration and smooth cruising power through an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission.

Whether you choose to drive in Normal, Sport, or Eco mode, you will enjoy the perfect fusion

of thrilling performance and fuel efficiency, clocking up to 15.3 km/l.

Slide into the cabin and step into a sanctuary where luxury and comfort meet cutting-edge design. With 10-way power-adjustable driver seating and dual-zone automatic climate control, every ride becomes satisfying.

Enhanced with noise-reducing materials and customisable ambient lighting in seven hues, the Taurus offers a peaceful,

premium environment wherever you go.

The experience is further elevated by the dual-panel panoramic moon roof, flooding the cabin with natural light and openness. The 520-litre trunk ensures you are ready for any adventure from cross-country trips to everyday errands.

But what truly elevates the Ford Taurus is its unwavering focus on peace of mind.

It is equipped with an intelligent suite of driver-assist features including Blind Spot Information System (BLIS), adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning and collision mitigation.

Manoeuvring is effortless with front and rear cameras, sensors and smart safety tech like the SOS post-crash alert system and six strategically placed airbags. Technology takes centre stage with a crisp 13.2-inch touchscreen, powered by the intuitive SYNC 4 system.

Stay connected with wireless charging, voice control, smartphone integration and a rich six-speaker audio experience all at the fingertips.

Savour the flavours of Thailand at Charm Thai

MUSCAT: Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC is set to transport guests on a culinary journey through the vibrant streets of Thailand with the launch of Thai Street Food Night at Charm Thai. Taking place on the last weekend of each month – this season on June 27 & 28 and July 25 & 26 – the event promises an immersive dining experience inspired by Bangkok’s lively night markets.

Hosted at Charm Thai’s stylish open-air venue, the evenings will feature a menu specially curated by the restaurant’s renowned Thai chef, Chef Praiwan.

Guests can look forward to



an array of beloved street food favourites, including grilled meats, crispy spring rolls, rich and aromatic Thai curries, prawn cakes, the ever-popular Pad Thai, and traditional mango sticky rice.

Each dish is prepared using authentic recipes and fresh ingredients, capturing the essence of Thailand’s bustling street food scene.

The event will also feature live cooking stations, bringing the energetic flair of Thai market vendors to life. Complementing the main dishes will be a variety of Thai salads, stir-fries and steamed and purple rice, offering guests a

complete and flavourful experience.

The setting is lively yet relaxed – perfect for families, couples and anyone with a passion for international cuisine.

The event begins at 6:00 PM and is priced at RO 18 net per person. Due to limited seating and expected high demand, advance reservations are strongly encouraged. For bookings, guests may contact +968 98035301.

Whether you’re a long-time lover of Thai cuisine or curious to explore its rich and diverse flavours, Thai Street Food Night at Charm Thai offers a delightful escape – right in the heart of Muscat.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds crosses 400 showrooms globally

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally, proudly celebrates a major global milestone with the launch of its 400th showroom.

The showroom was inaugurated by M P Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, in the presence of O Asher, Managing Director – India Operations; K P Veerankutty, Group Executive Director; Salish Mathew, Group Chief Marketing Officer; P K Siraj, Head – Retail Operations (Rest of India); N K Jishad, Regional Head – North; and other senior management team members, customers & well-wishers.

This landmark expansion



The brand is targeting an exponential increase in revenue to \$9 billion.

was marked by the opening of a new showroom at Noida, India, reinforcing the brand’s rapid global expansion.

The launch of Malabar’s 400th showroom is part of a broader, ambitious growth strategy aimed at deepening Malabar’s presence across India and globally. With a current turnover of \$7.36 billion and presence in 13 countries, the brand is targeting an exponential increase in revenue to \$9 billion and to open 60 showrooms expanding its presence to 15 countries and 22 States and 3 Union Territories India in the current FY.

As Malabar scales its retail

footprint, it remains committed to generating employment, with plans to expand its global workforce to nearly 27,250 management team members: further solidifying its status as one of the world’s most trusted and responsible jewellery brands.

M P Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group, stated, “We are thrilled to mark the opening of our 400th showroom in Noida. This milestone is a testament to our growth ambitions and marks a significant step in our ever-expanding footprint across India and globally in the journey to be the No 1 global jewellery retailer.”

BUSINESS

ECONOMICINTEGRATION



The event is part of wider efforts to support economic integration and improve the accuracy and transparency of digital economy data in the region.

GCC WORKSHOP
STRENGTHENS
DIGITAL ECONOMY
DATA SYSTEMS

MUSCAT: A regional workshop on e-commerce and digital economy statistics commenced in Muscat on Monday, bringing together experts and officials from across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to enhance statistical capabilities and promote data-driven policy development. Organised by the Gulf Statistical Center (GCC-Stat), the two-day event is part of wider efforts to support economic integration and improve the accuracy and transparency of digital economy data in the region.

Intisar al Wahaibi, Director-General of GCC-Stat, said the rapid rise of e-commerce has transformed global economic activity, and the Gulf region has been an active participant in this shift. This growth has been supported by robust digital infrastructure, population expansion, and ambitious national strategies for digital transformation.

Dr Hajar al Hadawi, Director-General of the Digital Cooperation Organisation, highlighted the importance of accurate and timely digital statistics in understanding the evolving business environment. She noted that GCC-Stat is working through its Trade Cooperation Committee to develop a unified mechanism for measuring e-commerce across the GCC, as part of implementing the GCC Unified Strategic Framework for E-Commerce.

Dr Al Hadawi also expressed interest in deeper cooperation with national statistical bodies in the GCC to develop common indicators and regional benchmarks that align with global standards.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), global e-commerce sales reached \$27 trillion in 2022, marking a 60-per cent increase from 2016. In the GCC, the e-commerce market is expected to grow to \$33.3 billion by 2025 and \$46.1 billion by 2029, expanding at an average rate of 10 per cent annually.

The first day of the workshop featured two key sessions. The first session focused on defining and measuring e-commerce and digital economic activities, outlining how data can be collected and analysed based on transactions conducted through digital platforms.

The second session introduced a GCC-Stat project aimed at building a unified statistical database for the digital economy. It also reviewed current practices among GCC countries, available data sets, and gaps in national capacities for digital economy measurement. — ONA

ESCALATING CONFLICT

Oil prices rise in a volatile session



Oil prices rose on Monday in a volatile session following the United States’ weekend move to join Israel in attacking Iran’s nuclear facilities, as investors weigh the potential risks to oil supply disruptions as a result of the escalating conflict.

Brent crude futures were up 78 cents, or 1.01%, to \$76.33 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose by 76 cents, or 1.03%, to \$74.68. — Reuters

SHORT-TERM
TREASURY
BILLS TOTAL
RO 23.4
MILLION

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced the successful allocation of government treasury bills worth RO 23.4 million for the week. The issuance includes both 28-day and 91-day maturities, offering competitive yields to investors.

According to a statement from the CBO, the 28-day treasury bills amounted to RO 1.2 million.

The average accepted price stood at RO 99.700 per RO 100, resulting in a discount rate of 3.91071 per cent and a yield of 3.92248 per cent.

The 91-day treasury bills were valued at RO 22.2 million.

The average accepted price was RO 98.944, with a minimum price of RO 98.930. These bills offered a higher discount rate of 4.23683 per cent and an average yield of 4.28209 per cent.

The repo rate for transactions with the Central Bank on these bills is 5 per cent, while the discount rate for the treasury bill facility stands at 5.50 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term, government-backed instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance

to provide secure investment opportunities for licensed commercial banks. The Central Bank of Oman serves as the issuing agent and plays a key role in facilitating liquidity through discounting and repurchase (repo) operations.

These instruments not only offer banks a flexible liquidity management tool but also help set benchmark short-term interest rates in the local financial market.

The government also uses them as a reliable means to meet short-term funding needs. — ONA

GreenUp strategy to drive sustainability in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 23

VEOLIA, a global leader in environmental solutions, has rolled out its GreenUp 2027 strategic programme in Oman, showcasing three major projects that embody the company’s commitment to sustainable development and innovation in waste, water, and energy management.

The initiative strengthens Veolia’s position as a key player in supporting Oman Vision 2040 and the Sultanate of Oman’s broader shift towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy.

PIONEERING BIOGAS-TO-ENERGY FROM LANDFILLS

At the core of Veolia’s waste management strategy is the transformation of the Barka and Al Multaqa landfills into advanced facilities featuring biogas-to-energy systems — the first of their kind in the Gulf.

The Barka landfill, the largest in Oman, receives close to 1 million tonnes of municipal waste annually, while Al Multaqa processes around 380,000 tonnes.

Over the past decade, Veolia has managed these sites for Oman Environmental Services



The Rima Wetlands use natural wetlands integrated with physical, biological treatment processes to handle 66,000 cubic metres of oily produced water daily.

Holding (be’ah), ensuring high environmental standards through leachate treatment, daily cover, and biogas collection for flaring.

Under the GreenUp 2027 programme, these sites are now being equipped to capture and convert landfill gas into 1.08 MW of renewable energy, enough to partially power local operations. By reaching a compaction rate of 1 ton per cubic metre, Veolia maximises landfill capacity while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The contract includes engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) and operations and maintenance (O&M) services, initially set

for two years and subject to extension.

RIMA WETLANDS: A NATURE-BASED OILFIELD WASTEWATER SOLUTION

In partnership with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Veolia is spearheading one of the region’s most innovative wastewater treatment projects at the Rima oilfield in southern Oman.

Spread across 25 km², the Rima Wetlands use natural wetlands integrated with physical and biological treatment processes to handle 66,000 cubic metres of oily produced water daily.

This solution not only lowers

operational costs but also reduces CO₂ emissions by 48,000 tonnes per year, compared to traditional disposal methods. Operational since 2022 and now at 71% utilisation, the 20-year Design-Build-Own-Operate (DBOO) project is also creating a thriving wildlife habitat, highlighting the project’s broader environmental impact.

SOLAR-POWERED WATER SECURITY IN SUR

Water sustainability forms another pillar of GreenUp 2027. In the eastern city of Sur, Veolia operates one of Oman’s most vital water infrastructure assets — the Sur Desalination Plant, which integrates one of Oman’s largest solar farms dedicated to water production.

The plant supplies over 600,000 residents and is contracted under a 27-year Build-Own-Operate agreement with Nama Power and Water Procurement Company.

Since becoming operational in 2007, the plant has produced more than 400 million cubic metres of potable water, powered increasingly by renewable sources. The facility boasts advanced reverse osmosis (RO) technology, including smart membranes and Veolia’s proprietary Barrel Pilot system, which boosts energy efficiency.

OQGN AWARDS MAJOR CONTRACT FOR FAHUD–SUHAR GAS PIPELINE

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks SAOG (OQGN) has awarded a key contract for the construction of a second gas pipeline loop between Fahud and Suhar, reinforcing Oman’s energy infrastructure and supply capacity. The 42-inch, 193-kilometre pipeline will be developed under a contract signed with The Petroleum Projects Company Petrojet and Partners LLC.

The Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) agreement was signed on June 17, 2025. In parallel, the company awarded the contract for supplying the line pipe to Jindal Saw Limited.

The total project, valued at approximately RO 105 million, is scheduled for completion within 24 months. OQ confirmed that the cost will be integrated into its Regulated



This new pipeline forms a critical part of OQ’s strategy to expand its transmission network.

Asset Base (RAB), ensuring that the return on investment will be calculated under the approved Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC).

Under Price Control 3, the applicable WACC is set at 7.79 per cent and will remain in effect until 2027.

This new pipeline forms a critical part of OQ’s strategy to expand its transmission network and improve the resilience of natural gas supply to key regions in northern Oman. It will help accommodate increasing industrial demand and improve energy access in major zones such as Suhar.

The project also supports national economic diversification by enabling more efficient and reliable delivery of energy to existing and emerging industries.

CONSECUTIVE DECLINE

Germany cuts 2025 economic forecast



The German economy is set to contract more than previously expected in 2025 as US tariffs weigh on exports, the BDI industry association said on Monday.

In January, BDI had forecast a 0.1% contraction, but flagged that changes to United States’ tariff policy might impact the export-driven economy further. A contraction in 2025 would mark Germany’s third consecutive decline. — AFP

SEQUENCE REDUCTION

French private sector downturn deepens



France’s private sector output declined further in June as manufacturers joined services providers in the contraction territory, flash survey results from S&P Global showed on Monday.

The HCOB flash composite output index declined to 48.5 in June from 49.3 in the previous month. A reading below 50 indicates contraction. Although the fall was moderate, it took the sequence of reduction to 10 months. — dpa

OPINION

Is your organisation sinking? Numbers don't lie



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman.

YOU used to work for an organisation that had a strong brand. Almost everyone you speak with/to was either a happy customer (for having used or is using the organisation's product/service) or was feeling lucky as an employee (for having worked or is working in the same organisation in question). The workforce was massive, the customers were recurring and long-term, and the organisation's reputation was superior due to their consistent quality and excellence delivery of services, as perceived from the eye of every stakeholder, be it from the employees, customers, partners, government to the shareholders per se.

Fast forward today, everything may look great from the outside, be it from the brand visibility, media coverage, leadership and the workforce in place, yet the reality is the titanic ship (the organisation) may be sinking slowly. Does that apply to you (as a stakeholder) or as an external observer?

Here's a tip for those interested, check the financial performance as the numbers don't lie.

Having served in a number of institutions, as an employee (providing a service) and/or as a customer (availing a service), providing professional advisory and consultancy to local and international organisations, and presently continue to serve as a director of boards for academic and financial institutions here in Oman, I had the opportunity to learn, observe, research and so as witness these type of

organisations first hand, not in theory but in practice as well.

If there is one advice I can share from the different sectors and cases I was exposed to on the same that would be the earlier you spot the warning signs, the greater your chances are for saving the organisation and the business from sinking.

The signs is what I will share in my article today. Profits are declining, not only quarter by quarter, but also year over year. Revenue continues to fall while costs keep rising. The organisation's share price continues to decline, keeping shareholders' value low. These information are available for anyone to review (for any organisation that trades publicly in a stock exchange).

For Oman, you may simply obtain the information via looking into the organisations that trade in the Muscat Stock Exchange website. For the private owned companies, just ask the owners for their audited financial performance results (balance sheet, profit & loss statement and the cash flow).

Numbers will give you details about the organisation's health (profitable and making money or not). Internally, projects would be delayed, meetings will be many without clear agenda in place yet filled with colorful excuses, and talented employees would either be un-utilised or would leave quietly.

Furthermore, the leadership team would either continue to change, especially the critical roles, and the remainder will operate on emotions as opposed to merit (who to

Profits are declining, not only quarter by quarter, but also year over year. Revenue continues to fall while costs keep rising. The organisation's share price continues to decline, keeping shareholders' value low. These information are available for anyone to review.

promote or support) to stay afloat.

According to a report published by McKinsey, only 1 in 10 companies that undergo a performance decline make a successful and sustained turnaround.

Also, PwC study found that 70% of companies that failed to transform early ended up downsizing, selling off their assets, or even ultimately shutting down within a few years as a result. For those interested to read the report, you may find it under the title "Business growth: The leader's blueprint" which explores the challenges large companies face in sustaining growth. Readers will find valuable insights into why many established organisations struggle to maintain momentum.

This article has no relation to any specific organisation but is rather generic know-how for those suffering the signs I mentioned in this article.

Kodak, Blockbuster, Yahoo, Blackberry and Nokia, are examples of organisations that once had a spectacular brand name and was a leader in their respective industry i.e. in photography, mobile phone, internet service, movies and entertainment that sank like the titanic ship and virtually vanished off the globe.

The cause was simply not seeing or taking action on the signs. Leaders (and well-wishers) that see the signs must not wait for the crisis to force change (as that may be too late). They need to lead the change by keeping emotions aside and facing the realities head on.

IRAN CONFLICT COULD TILT GLOBAL BALANCE OF POWER

HUGO DIXON

HOW will the Iran conflict affect the global balance of power? Answering this question may seem a fool's errand given how fast events are moving now that US President Donald Trump has joined the war on Israel's side. A lot depends on whether Tehran retaliates or sues for peace.

Still, it is possible to identify some factors that will help determine whether the United States, China, Russia and Europe emerge from the conflict with more or less power.

Will Iran's nuclear programme come to an end, will war topple its regime, will a new government be less hostile to the US, or will the country descend into anarchy?

Other key considerations are whether the US can limit its involvement to a short, sharp strike or gets sucked into a drawn-out conflict, and whether the rest of the world views it as a rogue power. If Israel kills more people in Gaza while the world's attention is diverted to Iran, some may also blame the US for giving it cover.

The oil price is another critical factor: by last Friday, the cost of a barrel of Brent crude had risen about 11% since Israel first bombed Iran on June 13. Disruptions to shipping or pipelines could push it up further.

Yet another key factor is whether outsiders play a role in resolving the crisis and gain anything from doing so.

The US has much to gain or lose. Ending Iran's nuclear programme would be a big win and would enhance the perception that the US is the world's superpower. But despite Trump's claim to have "totally obliterated" Tehran's nuclear-enrichment facilities, some experts think its nuclear threat may be far from over.

Some of Trump's most prominent Republican supporters, as well as allies in Gulf states and some European leaders, were worried that the US could cause chaos by joining the war. But if Trump manages to neutralise Iran's nuclear threat and avoid a long conflict, those doubts will melt away.

The US might then be able to switch its attention from the Middle East to China, the only serious threat to its superpower status. Washington could focus its strike groups on the Indo-Pacific, says Richard Fontaine of the Center for a New American Security.

If the conflict also topples the regime led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the consequences are unclear. While a new government could be less antagonistic to Washington, it might be just as hostile. And if Iran became a failed state, American allies and enemies would blame it for wanton destruction and further destabilising the region.

If the US gets embroiled in a new "forever" war, it would suffer even more damage. — Reuters

Al Rawdah SEZ: A defining moment for Oman

THE recent unveiling of the Al Rawdah Special Economic Zone (SEZ) signals more than just a new development zone. It represents a turning point in Oman's economic journey — an ambitious, forward-looking initiative designed to reshape how we do business, attract capital and integrate with regional and global markets.

Located right on the border with the United Arab Emirates, in Al Buraimi Governorate, Al Rawdah SEZ is not just well placed — it is perfectly positioned. It links Oman directly with the UAE's vast logistical and financial infrastructure while remaining rooted in Oman's vision of inclusive and sustainable growth.

This is an opportunity that deserves serious attention from the private sector, investors, SMEs and government entities alike.

This zone is unlike anything we've built before. It offers seamless cross-border access via the Rawdah border post and is strategically connected to two of the Gulf's most important ports — Sohar in Oman and Jabal Ali in Dubai.

The ability to shift goods quickly, cut customs delays and operate within both Omani and Emirati markets from a single base is a game changer. For businesses focused on speed, efficiency and cost reduction, this is precisely the kind of setup we need in today's unpredictable global trade environment.

Moreover, the development is backed by world-class players. DP World, the globally respected ports operator behind Dubai's Jabal Ali Free Zone, is the majority partner in the zone's development. This isn't just a real estate investment — it's a serious, strategic partnership.

Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones (OPAZ) has joined hands with DP World through Mahadha Development Company to bring international expertise together with national development goals.

When such experienced partners are involved, it sends a strong message to the market: Al Rawdah



Al Rawdah SEZ is not just well placed — it is perfectly positioned.



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED AL BALUSHI

yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

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

SEZ is built to deliver.

The first phase of the project includes a dry port with a handling capacity of 1.24 million containers annually. That's not just infrastructure — it's economic muscle. It gives businesses flexibility in managing imports, re-exports and regional supply chains.

Combined with dedicated roads, services and utilities, it allows manufacturers and logistics firms to operate with confidence and speed.

But what truly excites me as an economist is the policy framework behind this zone. Oman's new unified law on Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Royal Decree 38/2025) simplifies how businesses engage with SEZs.

We now have a consistent, transparent and investor-friendly legal foundation. The law allows for full foreign ownership, 10-year tax holidays (with possible extensions), customs exemptions and easy profit repatriation.

Perhaps most importantly, it introduces a one-stop-shop for licensing — cutting red tape and improving the investor experience significantly.

This is precisely the kind of bold regulatory reform the business community has been calling for. It's also perfectly in line with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises economic diversification, job creation, private sector growth and knowledge transfer.

Investors are not just being

asked to set up shop; they're being welcomed into a system that respects their capital and time.

The target sectors also show a smart and balanced strategy. Manufacturing, logistics, food processing, mining, pharmaceuticals, plastics and safety services are all part of the initial rollout.

These industries not only generate jobs and exports, they also bring technical know-how, help grow SMEs around them, and create demand for local services — from transportation to maintenance to hospitality.

SMEs, in particular, have a lot to gain from this development. Al Rawdah is not just for large multinational firms. The ecosystem being built offers opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises to plug into regional value chains. If we plan wisely, SMEs can provide support services, sub-contracting, packaging, distribution, and even tech-based solutions to the major tenants of the SEZ.

What makes this zone even more relevant is its timing. Our trade with the UAE reached a record \$15.2 billion in 2024. Al Rawdah SEZ is perfectly positioned to drive that number higher.

By reducing friction and encouraging co-location of Emirati and Omani businesses, we are laying the groundwork for more value-added exports and regional production.

This is not just about Oman serving the UAE; it's about both countries co-building competitive industries.

Of course, no project of this scale is without challenges. Regional competition is fierce. Human capital development remains critical. We must ensure that our education, training and business development programmes are aligned with the needs of the zone. However, these are not reasons for hesitation — they are reasons for action.

I call on Omani entrepreneurs, business owners and investors to view Al Rawdah SEZ as more than a project — it is a platform.

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GOLDEN JEED TRAD SPC – Commercial Registration No. 1001971 – to the new sole proprietor: Mr. Sakhr Mohammed Mohammed Ahsan (Civil No. 139354591).
With effect from the date of this publication, Mr. Ahsan assumes exclusive responsibility for the management of the company and for all existing and future obligations of the business. The former owner is fully discharged from any liability whatsoever.
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* Images are representative

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ART/LIFE



HOW A NEW MUSCAT ZOO-LIKE EXHIBITION IS HELPING CHILDREN GROW MORE CONFIDENT AND CALM > 20

FILM

Pixar film ‘Elio’ follows a family’s imperfect intergalactic journey



ZOE SALDANA feels like her new film “Elio,” from Walt Disney’s Pixar Animation Studios, is a story about the imperfect journey that parents and their children go through.

“I think it’s okay to look at your kids and sort of just not know what to do, because that is a way that you can connect with your children, because half of the time they don’t know what to do as well,” Saldana, a mother of three, said.

“Elio” debuts in movie theatres on Friday. The film follows a lonely eleven-year-old boy named Elio Solis, voiced by Yonas Kibreab, who unintentionally becomes the intergalactic ambassador of Earth after being sent to a planet called CommuniVerse. He must work with alien lifeforms, eventually realising that he is not alone.

Film critics have applauded the movie from Pixar, the famed animation studio behind “Toy Story” and “Finding Nemo.” “Elio” has earned an 81% positive score in reviews collected on the Rotten Tomatoes website.

Hollywood studios, however, have faced challenges in drawing audiences to theatres for films with original stories. “Elio” may debut with some of the lowest opening weekend ticket sales of any movie from Pixar, according to industry analysts. From Friday through Sunday, “Elio” is expected to bring in between \$18-24 million for opening weekend in US and Canadian theatres, said Shawn Robbins, founder and owner of Box Office Theory and director of analytics for Fandango.

Disney projects an opening around \$25 million.

In the movie, Saldana voices Olga Solis, Elio’s aunt who takes care of him, alongside Brad Garrett as Lord Grigon, a bulky, worm-like alien warlord, father and ambassador.

Garrett, a father of two, noted that Grigon has his own parenting journey in the film that starts off a little rocky.

“There’s so many over-controlling parents, right? That tried to mould their kid into what they had wanted to be, or what they think they should be,” Garrett said, referring to Grigon. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



HERITAGE

A red panda, a species marked “endangered” on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, was photographed at the Menagerie, the Zoo of the Jardin des Plantes, Natural History Museum. —AFP



FILM

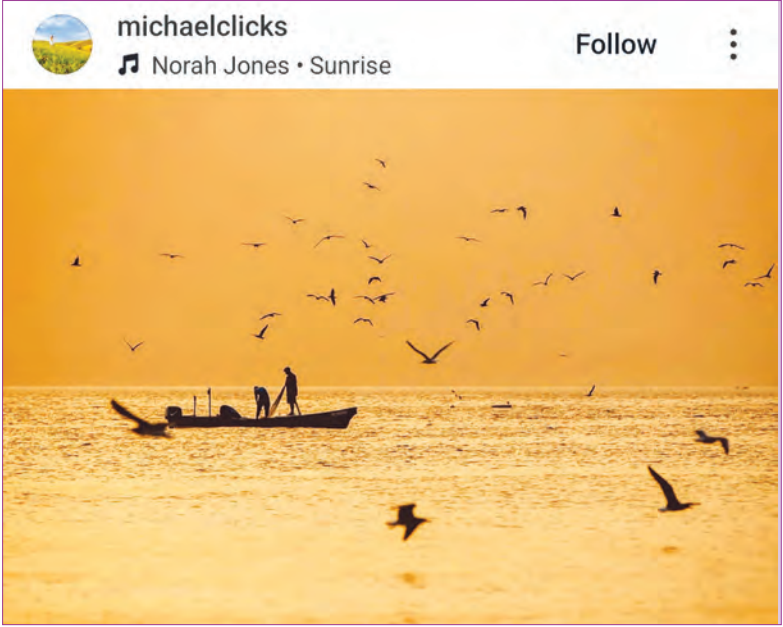
British actor Aaron Taylor-Johnson poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the world premiere of “28 Years Later” at Odeon Luxe Leicester Square, central London. — AFP



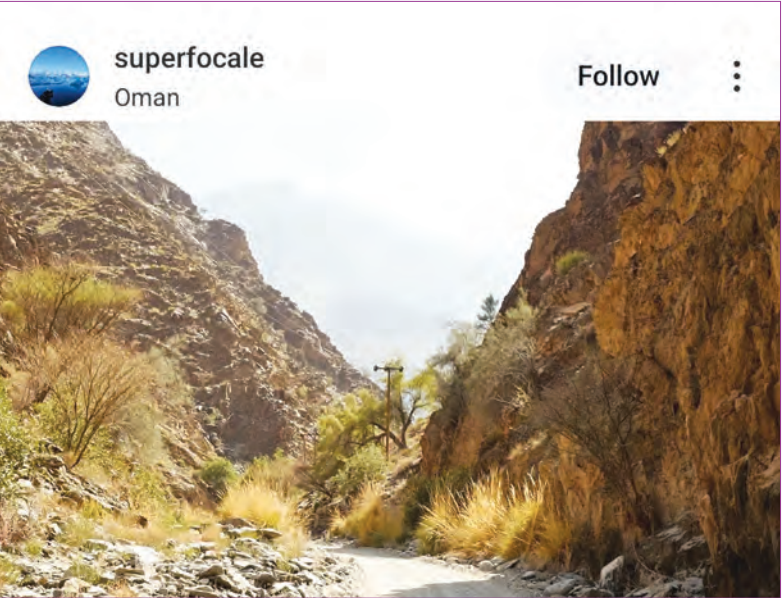
FASHION

A model walks the runway during the Prada collection show at Milan’s Fashion Week Menswear Spring / Summer 2026 in Milan. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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In New York, Vermeer show reveals art of the love letter



IN A SPECIAL exhibit featuring just three paintings, the Frick Collection in New York is inviting viewers to contemplate the age and the art of seduction by the written word.

The show brings together a trio of paintings by 17th century Dutch master Johannes Vermeer: the Frick's own "Mistress and Maid," "The Love Letter" on loan from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and "Woman Writing a Letter with her Maid" from the National Gallery of Ireland.

They are three of six paintings by Vermeer (1632-1675) that focus on the reading and writing of letters. They also depict interactions between women of different classes.

Each painting features a woman and a female servant who has likely become a confidante and an intermediary as her mistress conducts a romantic relationship, said exhibit curator Robert Fucci.

"While the contents of the

letters in Vermeer's paintings are not made clear, they are most likely amorous," he said.

"Courtship and love letters were an important part of the artist's social context and a prevalent artistic theme."

In Vermeer's era, women had increasing autonomy in choosing their life partners, Fucci noted.

"Servants played a crucial role. Employers entrusted them with delivery, especially when messages needed to be shared covertly," he added.

"Vermeer's Love Letters," on view until the end of August, is the first show on offer since the Frick reopened its doors in April following a top-to-bottom, \$330-million renovation.

The 20th century mansion filled with paintings, sculptures and decorative pieces dating from the Renaissance to the 19th century now has 10 new galleries on its second floor, in what used to be the Frick family's private quarters. — AFP



Mexican designer blends Chicano and Japan's Harajuku styles



IN A LEAFY park in Mexico City, beside colonial era fountains and food stands, Italia Segovia's designs are turning heads, as usual.

A pink ruffled dress with white lace and a big bow; a high-school vibe tartan dress tied with a pale yellow shawl imprinted with Mexico's patron saint the Virgin of Guadalupe, all accentuated with loud heavy makeup.

Segovia, known to her friends as Kumiko, calls her work Chicanjuku: a fusion of Mexican-American Chicano culture and Japanese Harajuku style, named after the Tokyo district renowned for its bright coloured accessories, outlandish makeup, and elaborate hairstyles.

"It's like a food blender of styles," Segovia said of her designs, which have also become a core part of her identity.

Chicano style was popularised by Mexican-Americans in the US who felt out of place in both countries because of their mixed backgrounds, said Segovia. Though she is not Mexican-American, she has several relatives in the US who inspired her deep love for the style she now draws from.

Segovia, who has almost 30 thousand followers on Instagram, mashes the oversized shirts, khakis and flat brim caps analogous to Chicano culture with the candy-floss fairy-tale pop of Harajuku. The makeup might include a dark lining around the lips and eyeliner that emulates Japanese Geisha style.

"You can always experiment with fashion and art as long as it's from a place of knowledge and respect," Segovia said.

Segovia's distinctive aesthetic has even caught the eye of admirers in Japan. In June, she made special outfits for three Japanese E-Queens, a subculture of electronic music dancers, who she connected with months earlier online. The group met up in Mexico City for a photo shoot and street dance, dressed in Segovia's outfits.

"I love how she uses texture," said Shirendev Oyun-Erdenen, a Japanese E-Queen who dances under the name Maaya the Bee.

"Helping people feel free to experiment and not be afraid. That's what it's all about," Segovia said. — Reuters

FEATURES



HOW A NEW MUSCAT ZOO-LIKE EXHIBITION IS HELPING CHILDREN GROW MORE CONFIDENT AND CALM

BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

“I’VE NEVER seen my son this calm and focused,” said Amal al Hashami, a mum of three, as she watched her five-year-old gently feed a rabbit. “He usually gets anxious in new places, but here, he’s really at ease.” That moment captures exactly why so many parents are heading to Fins & Tails, a new animal exhibition in Muscat that’s quickly getting noticed — not just for the animals, but for what it’s doing for children’s mental health.

Fins & Tails is a special kind of place. It’s a well-thought-out space created by brothers Ayman and Mousa Awlad Ahmed. It’s full of animals – some common pets, others a bit more exotic like snakes, iguanas, raccoons and colourful parrots. Kids get to get up close and personal with them under the watchful eyes of experienced staff. But what really sets it apart is the real impact on children’s emotional and psychological well-being.

Ayman Awlad Ahmed explains, “We’ve always believed animals can bring out something good in children. When a kid touches or feeds them, you see their expression change — they become curious, happy and surprisingly peaceful. Parents often tell us, ‘My child is usually restless, but here, they were patient and focused’, and that’s what matters.”

There’s plenty of science to back this up. Renowned research shows that interacting with animals can lower stress levels, boost mood and even help children with behavioural challenges. The American Psychological Association has highlighted how contact with animals can improve emotional regulation. Children who care for pets tend to feel less anxious and lonely, and studies from universities in the UK and the US have repeatedly demonstrated how animals help children develop empathy and social skills.

Many parents have been surprised by the change they see in their kids. “My daughter struggles with confidence at school,” said Ali al Saidi, whose seven-year-old had never held a snake before. After the visit, she kept saying she felt brave. “It was a real confidence boost for her,” he added.

The experience isn’t just for kids. Adults are also daring to get involved — sometimes for the first time. Maryam Issa told us she never thought she’d touch a scorpion or snake, but she did it with the supervision of the expert team. “It gave me confidence, taught me self-control, and helped me manage my emotions better,” she said.

What’s impressive about Fins & Tails is how well it combines fun, safety and education. Many parents mentioned they wish the place could be available in more regions. They see it as more than a visit — they see it as a way to teach children empathy, responsibility and resilience.

In today’s fast-paced, screen-heavy world, places like Fins & Tails offer a welcome break. It’s a chance to disconnect from technology and reconnect with nature — and yourself. For children, a simple moment spent with a rabbit or a colourful bird may be the start of a lifelong appreciation for animals, and even lead to a calmer, more confident attitude.

Science and studies support what many parents are witnessing. The CDC in the United States reports that children who interact with animals frequently experience lower levels of anxiety and stress. Experts say that the act of caring and touching animals stimulates a part of the brain linked to emotional

regulation and social bonding. It’s not just about fun — these moments can be truly healing.

Research from the University of Cambridge even suggests that children who grow up around animals tend to develop better social skills and feelings of empathy. Animals act as non-judgemental companions, teaching kids patience, kindness and responsibility — qualities that help in school and in social situations.

And for many children, those moments might be the first step in developing a lifelong love of nature, fostering their confidence and helping them manage their emotions better. It’s about more than just petting animals; it’s about building connections, nurturing empathy, and creating memories that can shape their emotional well-being for years to come.

Ultimately, places like Fins & Tails prove that sometimes, the simplest interactions — feeding a rabbit or holding a colourful bird — can have a powerful impact. They remind us all that caring for animals isn’t just enjoyable; it’s a gateway to personal growth and happiness for children. As science supports, these experiences are valuable tools in helping children become more resilient, compassionate and peaceful individuals.

With parents openly sharing their children’s positive changes, more kids are getting the chance to experience the calming, confidence-boosting effects of close contact with animals. As the interest continues to grow, hopefully, similar centres will spring up in other regions, spreading the good that comes from caring, touching and respecting the animals around us. Because at the end of the day, those simple moments of connection can make a big difference.