

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 199
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

IN BRIEF

TEMPERATURES
EDGE TOWARDS 50°C

HM, FRENCH PRESIDENT DISCUSS FREEDOM OF MARITIME NAVIGATION

The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing one of its harshest early summer heat spells, with temperatures in several parts of the country soaring close to the 50°C mark.

The sharp rise in mercury levels has raised concerns over heat-related illnesses, particularly heat exhaustion, dehydration and sunstroke, prompting authorities to urge residents to take preventive measures.

Officials advise people to avoid unnecessary outdoor exposure during peak afternoon hours, stay hydrated, wear light clothing and avoid leaving children or pets inside parked vehicles even for short periods. **SEE ALSO P3 & 4**

HAJ PILGRIMS RETURN HOME



MUSCAT: Pilgrims have begun arriving home from the Holy Land after performing the Haj pilgrimage for the 1447 AH season. The rest of the pilgrims will continue to arrive via air and land ports. The Sultanate of Oman's total quota for this year's pilgrimage was 14,000 pilgrims, including 13,560 Omani citizens and 440 residents. **DETAILS ON P2**



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic discussed during a telephone call on Sunday the latest developments in the region, as well as ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring viewpoints closer in a manner that supports security and stability and helps ensure freedom of maritime navigation and international trade movement.

The call also addressed the existing cooperation and partnership relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the French Republic, and ways to enhance and develop them across various fields. — ONA



No deal until rights secured

IRAN'S CHIEF negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said on Sunday that Tehran will not agree to any deal with the United States that fails to secure the rights of Iranians.

"We will not approve any agreement until we are certain that the rights of the Iranian people have been upheld," Ghalibaf said in

a video broadcast on state television. He added that Iranian negotiators "neither trust the enemy's words nor its promises."

His remarks came as Iran and Washington continue to exchange proposals over a framework for a deal to end the war that broke out on February 28, engulfing the Middle East.

Ghalibaf's remarks came as reports emerged that US President Donald Trump had

sent a tougher peace proposal back to Iran, and underlined the rift that the parties still need to close.

Any further tweaks to the draft could further delay an agreement to formally end the Middle East war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz after weeks of fraught negotiations marked by sharp rhetoric and occasional flare-ups of violence.

Trump has said his priorities include stopping Iran from any

nuclear weapon development and re-opening the Hormuz shipping lane, over which Iran has sought to impose control since the war began.

"The one guarantee that I have to have is that there will be no nuclear weapons. They've agreed to that, and it was very interesting," he told his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, in an interview on her Fox News show. — AFP

SEE ALSO P6 and 7

Ministry of Information

May 31
June 07

الدختر طومس

The film arrives in cinemas, taking audiences on an inspiring human journey told through firsthand historical accounts and exclusive interviews that illuminate an extraordinary story that has left a lasting mark on Oman's collective memory

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MOH 4897029/2026

SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, signed the agreements.

MOHT SIGNS DEALS FOR AL HAMRA RESORT, MIRBAT HOTEL

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has signed two usufruct agreements to develop a 4-star resort in Al Hamra in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and a 5-star hotel in Mirbat in Dhofar Governorate, with a total investment exceeding RO 12 million.

The agreements were signed on behalf of the ministry by Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and by representatives of the investing companies.

The projects form part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to boost investment in the tourism sector, support economic diversification, and enhance the Sultanate of Oman's tourism infrastructure. They are also expected to generate employment opportunities and strengthen tourism services across the country.

Officials noted that the initiatives align with broader national goals to expand hotel capacity, improve visitor experiences, and promote sustainable tourism development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Amira bint Iqbal al Lawati, Director-General of Tourism Development at the ministry, said the agreements reflect a continued investment programme aimed at maximising the economic and social impact of tourism projects across Oman.

She added that the new developments will help showcase Oman's natural and tourism assets, particularly in Al Hamra and Mirbat, which are known for their mountains, valleys, and adventure tourism potential.

The first agreement, signed with Al Zahra Hospitality Services Company, covers the development of a 4-star resort in Al Hamra over an area of 25,000 square metres, with an investment of approximately RO 9.87 million. The project is expected to offer an integrated tourism experience combining adventure and relaxation, while promoting sustainable practices. The second agreement, signed with Zillal Tourism Company, will see the development of a 5-star hotel in Mirbat on a 55,000 square metre site, with an investment of around RO 3 million. The hotel will include 121 rooms, restaurants, cafés, conference facilities, swimming pools and recreational amenities.

The projects are expected to further strengthen Oman's tourism sector and diversify accommodation offerings across key destinations.

— ONA

SPINE SURGERIES HIGHLIGHT HEALTHCARE DECENTRALISATION

AL RUSTAQ: A specialised medical team from Khoula Hospital recently conducted two urgent and complex spinal column surgeries at Al Rustaq Hospital.

The surgeries were conducted as part of ongoing efforts to provide specialised healthcare to patients in their respective locations in different governorates of Oman, sparing them the need for transfer to referral hospitals in the Sultanate of Oman.

The first case was that of an Omani man who inadvertently fell down from a high place and suffered a severe fracture of the second lumbar vertebra that required



The surgeries were conducted as part of ongoing efforts to provide specialised healthcare to patients.

immediate surgical intervention.

Khoula Hospital team performed a spinal fusion to treat the injury, using advanced surgical techniques. The swift intervention contributed

to stabilising the condition and resulted in significant improvement in the patient's mobility.

The second case involved an expatriate patient who had suffered

a severe injury that resulted in a severe fracture of the cervical vertebrae, posing a direct threat to the patient's nerves and spinal cord. Dr Abdurrahman bin Ali al Subhi, Consultant Orthopaedic and Spine Surgeon at Khoula Hospital, said that dealing with such critical injuries require speed in diagnosis and prompt surgical intervention to avoid potential neurological complications. He added that the success of the two surgeries reflects the readiness of the national medical staff and highlighted the significance of integration among health institutions. — ONA

Pilgrims return to Oman after successful Haj season

NOURA AL ABRI
MUSCAT, MAY 31

PILGRIMS HAVE begun arriving home from the Holy Land after performing the Haj pilgrimage for the 1447 AH season. The rest of the pilgrims will continue to arrive via air and land ports.

The Sultanate of Oman's total quota for this year's pilgrimage was 14,000 pilgrims, including 13,560 Omani citizens and 440 residents.

Meanwhile, the Military Haj Mission (MHM) returned home from the Holy Land after completing their Hajj pilgrimage.

The mission was received upon arrival at Seeb Air Base by Maj Gen (Retd) Hassan Ihsan Naseeb and a number of senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security bodies.

The MHM arrived aboard several Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) transport aircraft. The mission included pilgrims and administrators from the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security bodies.

The return of the remaining Omani pilgrims to the homeland will continue in the coming days, amidst ongoing efforts to ensure the smooth flow of return procedures and the safety of the pilgrims.

The Omani Haj Mission (OHM) included an administrative team comprising various administrative, medical, media, and technical specialists who contributed to providing all necessary services and facilities for the pilgrims throughout



The return of the remaining Omani pilgrims to the homeland will continue in the coming days.

their stay in the Holy Land.

A number of Omani pilgrims praised the services provided and the efforts exerted by the Oman Haj Mission in providing services and establishing administrative facilities and systems for the pilgrims from the opening of the registration system until the pilgrims' safe return home.

The OHM confirmed that the Haj season proceeded according to the approved plan and timeline. The mission coordinated and cooperated with its partners in both the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. All Omani pilgrims performed the Haj rituals in a safe and healthy environment.

The OHM affirmed that it monitored the implementation of its field and service plans for the Haj season through its various working delegations, which enhanced its readiness to serve the pilgrims.

The Omani Haj Mission

was accompanied by several delegations, including the Fatwa and Religious Guidance delegation, the Administrative and Financial delegation, the Campaigns Supervision delegation, the Medical delegation, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) delegation, the State Administrative and Financial Apparatus delegation, the Media delegation, and the Scout delegation.

All members of the delegations carried out their tasks and duties to serve pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman while performing the Haj rituals in all the holy sites of Mecca, Medina, Mina and Muzdalifah.

The 1447 AH Haj season witnessed the implementation of several quality initiatives with the aim of enhancing the pilgrims' experience.

Among the most prominent were the Second Hajj and Umrah Conference and Exhibition and the Haj Lab Initiative.

MoH urges travellers to DRC, Uganda to adhere to Ebola protocols

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

The Ministry of Health on Sunday urged all travellers arriving in and departing from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda to adhere to preventive health controls to reduce the risk of contracting the Ebola virus. The ministry stressed that awareness and prevention are the first line of defence for maintaining health and safety while travelling.

The ministry recommended avoiding unnecessary travel to countries affected by the Ebola outbreak, staying informed about official health updates issued by health authorities and the World Health Organization and ensuring the validity of health insurance and medical evacuation insurance.

The ministry stressed the importance of adhering to preventive measures during travel and stay by avoiding contact with persons showing symptoms



Ebola virus is not airborne, but transmitted through direct contact with the bodily fluids.

like fever, bleeding, vomiting, or diarrhoea; avoiding contact with blood and other bodily fluids

in general, or with the personal belongings of infected individuals; washing hands regularly and using sanitisers; avoiding unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities in affected areas; refraining from handling wild animals or eating undercooked meat; and avoiding attending funerals or gatherings that may involve direct contact with infected or deceased individuals.

The ministry explained that passengers arriving in the Sultanate of Oman from countries affected

by the Ebola outbreak should monitor their health for 21 days from the date of departure. The ministry indicated that the Ebola virus is not airborne, but rather transmitted through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated objects. It emphasised that early detection and rapid reporting help reduce the spread of the disease and protect the community. Infection occurs through direct contact with the blood, secretions, or bodily fluids.

SHORT TAKES



Members examined proposals aimed at improving the urban landscape.

AL SHARQIYAH NORTH COUNCIL
REVIEWS PROJECTS

IBRA: The Municipal Council of Al Sharqiyah North Governorate held its fifth meeting for 2026 on Sunday, chaired by Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North and Chairman of the Council, along with members.

The council discussed a range of development, service and planning issues across various wilayats of the governorate. At the outset, the meeting approved the minutes of the previous session before reviewing updates on technical procedures related to building and construction within municipal departments.

Members also examined proposals aimed at improving the urban landscape, including initiatives to enhance the facades of commercial buildings to create a more cohesive and visually appealing city appearance.

The meeting further reviewed investment opportunities presented through the ‘Tatweer’ platform, including a proposed water purification and bottling plant project in the Al Dukaik area of Ibra.

A series of planning and service requests were also discussed, including the allocation of land plots with usufruct rights, relocation of sports facility sites, and the development of planning zones for residential and industrial use across several states. — ONA

YOUNG VOICES
SHINE AT ISGI
TED-ED EVENT



Young speakers took to the stage with confidence and shared ideas.

MUSCAT: ISG International hosted the second edition of its TED-Ed event under the theme ‘Unfold... The Power Within Ideas’, bringing together students, educators and guests for an inspiring evening of thought-provoking talks and youthful expression.

The much-anticipated event celebrated the power of student voice, as young speakers took to the stage with confidence, sharing ideas aimed at sparking conversations and creating meaningful change.

The event highlighted ISG International’s commitment to nurturing confident communicators, critical thinkers and future changemakers. Students impressed the audience with speeches that reflected originality, courage and thoughtful perspectives on issues relevant to their generation.

The evening’s chief guest, Bipin Kuriakose, a 2019 TEDx speaker, bestselling author and Distinguished Toastmaster, delivered an inspiring address encouraging students to trust the strength of their ideas. Widely recognised across the GCC for his excellence in public speaking, Bipin spoke about the importance of authentic expression and the impact of powerful communication.

The event was also graced by Nisham Rayees, broadcaster at Oman FM, public speaker and Patron of TED-Ed Students Talk at ISG International. A strong advocate for youth empowerment and meaningful dialogue, she commended the students for stepping forward with confidence and using their voices to inspire others.

Guided by mentors and supported by the school’s English Department faculty, participating students underwent training that extended beyond public speaking to include critical thinking, empathy and self-discovery.

OMAN JOINS INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON LARGE DAMS

MEXICO CITY: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman National Committee on Large Dams, has officially announced its accession to the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD).

The announcement took place during the 94th Annual Meeting of ICOLD, hosted by the city of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco, United Mexican States.

The meeting, which witnessed broad participation from dam sector experts and water

resources management specialists representing various countries worldwide, formally recognised the Sultanate of Oman’s admission to ICOLD. This milestone reflects Oman’s growing presence in international forums dedicated to water resources management and the advancement of dam sector development.

This recognition underscores the advanced standing the Sultanate of Oman has attained in the fields of dam engineering and water resources management, while

reinforcing the principles of safety and sustainability.

Membership in ICOLD provides Oman with a vital platform to benefit from specialised global expertise, foster innovation, adopt best international practices, and enhance the visibility of Omani expertise in relevant international technical forums and conferences.

It is anticipated that this accession will contribute to advancing Oman’s efforts in developing water infrastructure, improving the efficiency of

water resource management and supporting national strategies aimed at achieving sustainable development and strengthening water security.

It is worth noting that Oman National Committee on Large Dams is responsible for overseeing the Sultanate of Oman’s membership in ICOLD, promoting technical cooperation and facilitating knowledge and experience exchange with relevant international institutions and committees. — ONA

MoL enforces midday break
amid soaring temperatures

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 31

THE Ministry of Labour (MoL) has announced a ban on mid-day work for labourers who work at construction sites and other open-air areas exposed to high temperatures from today (June 1), as the temperatures rose nearly 50 degree Celsius and a heat wave is affecting many parts of the country.

The annual midday work ban is valid from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm during the months of June, July and August in view of occupational safety and to protect the workers from environmental hazards. Companies also advised to provide shaded rest areas, cold water, cooling devices, and first aid during the break.

Article 16 of the Oman Labour Law and Ministry of Labour Decision 286/2008 indicates that companies and individuals violating the rule shall face fines from RO 500 to RO 1,000 depending upon the nature of the violation and annulment of the project licence in case of repeated violation.

However, there are exemptions for essential services like airport, port operations and emergency utilities, but they need prior approval and strict safety measures like shade, water, and staff rotation, a representative from the Ministry



The annual midday work ban is valid from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm during the months of June, July and August.

The CAA also reported exceptionally high readings in Muscat, with Bausher experiencing temperatures of 46.9°C, while Al Amerat recorded 46.8°C

of Labour said.

“The mid-day break for outdoor workers comes into force on June 01 and companies are urged to adhere to the guidelines. Having said that, there are a few technical exceptions like asphalt/concrete work that can’t be postponed, or emergency repairs. But for most outdoor jobs, work must stop at 12.30 pm failing which, legal actions will be initiated against the offenders,” he said.

Mid-day work ban violations can

be reported on 80077000.

HARSH SUMMER

Meanwhile, the country is witnessing one of its harshest early summer heat spells, making outdoor expeditions near to impossible.

A data released by meteorological stations of Oman’s Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) indicates that Saham recorded the highest temperature in the country over the last 24 hours at a scorching 48.6°C, while several other regions crossed 46°C and 47°C, signalling the intensity of the ongoing heatwave.

Areas including Al Kamil W’al Wafi (47.9°C), Suhar (47.7°C), Fahud (47.4°C), Al Rustaq (47.3°C), and Dima W’attayeen (47.1°C) experienced severe daytime heat, highlighting how extreme temperatures are affecting both coastal and inland regions.

The CAA also reported exceptionally high readings in Muscat, with Bausher experiencing temperatures of 46.9°C, while Al Amerat recorded 46.8°C.

Temperatures in Al Awabi in Al Batinah South and Sunaynah in Al Buraimi both reached 46.6°C, with Nakhal, also in Al Batinah South, reporting 46.5°C.

The CAA has issued precautionary measures for those who venture out of their homes or offices to protect themselves during this severe early summer heatwave.

Group art exhibition reflects on memory, absence

MUSCAT: The group art exhibition ‘In the Presence of Absence’ opened last week at Stall Art Gallery in Sultan Qaboos City, Qurum, in collaboration with Mazar Studio, bringing together five artists whose works explore themes of memory, belonging and the enduring traces left behind by people, places and experiences.

Running until June 10, the exhibition features works by James Wagstaff, Khadija al Maamari, Bashayer al Balushi, Ali Waqar and Nouf al Jabri, each offering a distinct interpretation of absence — not as emptiness or rupture, but as a continuing presence shaped by memory and transformation.

The exhibition presents a visual dialogue on what remains after departure, examining the impact of time on material objects, the imprint of people on places, and the ways memory lingers within the body, language and everyday objects. Through discarded materials, personal belongings, sound, imagery and installation spaces, absence is transformed into something tangible and



The exhibition presents a visual dialogue on what remains after departure.

emotionally resonant.

Speaking about the concept behind the exhibition, Omani artist Ruqaya Mazar said the core message centres on the deep relationship people maintain with their earliest places, memories and formative experiences.

“The exhibition raises questions about belonging and what remains of a person in a place after they leave,” she said, adding that ordinary everyday

objects often become emotional and psychological archives carrying the traces of those who once passed through them.

Mazar explained that the exhibition also reflects on the idea that memory does not exist solely in the past, but continues to inhabit the body, consciousness and imagination — even in its quietest and most fragile forms.

The showcase includes a wide range of artistic media,

including installation works, video art, cyanotype prints, sound pieces, sculpture, textiles, embroidery and visual archiving practices using remnants and everyday materials.

According to Mazar, the exhibition highlights conceptual and installation art alongside contemporary artistic practices that employ materials as vessels of memory and meaning.

She noted that James Wagstaff’s work transforms wooden details into metaphors for relationships and experiences shaped by time, use and transformation. Nouf al Jabri’s work, Temporary House, revisits childhood memories through construction debris, presenting the home as a fragile space where play, presence and absence intersect.

Ali Waqar’s contribution explores nostalgia for earlier versions of the self through collected personal belongings carrying emotional resonance, while Bashayer al Balushi documents abandoned places and forgotten objects as archives of migration, transformation and loss. — ONA



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY

AT 7:03 AM, Salma al Habsi turns the bathroom tap to the blue “C” — cold. She waits. The pipe rattles, and then steaming water gushes out. Curious, she places a kitchen thermometer beneath the stream. The reading shocks her: 47°C.

“I can’t wash my face, and I can’t bathe my younger brother without mixing in chilled water from the fridge,” she says. “From May onward, the cold tap is hotter than my shower in January.”

Across Oman, the arrival of summer overturns one basic expectation — that cold water should flow from the tap. From Muscat to Sur, households are learning to adapt to a seasonal reality where “cold” often means hot, and sometimes dangerously so.

The reason sits silently atop thousands of homes: rooftop plastic water tanks, often holding between 1,000 and 2,000 litres, exposed to relentless desert heat. “Most homes store municipal water in rooftop tanks,” explains Tamjid Hassan, a plumber in Al Amerat with over a decade of summer repair experience. “When temperatures outside touch 48°C, the tank surface can reach nearly 70°C. The water inside absorbs heat for hours.”

By midday, water flowing into homes can range between 45°C and 55°C, often hotter than a regular shower setting. Pipes running along exterior walls and ceilings intensify the problem before the water reaches taps.

For many families, daily routines now revolve around beating the heat.

In Al Seeb, housewife Sawsan al Ajmi has learned to adjust. “I once tried washing lettuce and it wilted instantly,” she says with a laugh. “Now I fill containers early in the morning and keep them indoors. That becomes our cold water for the day.”

For 68-year-old Shamsa al Musallami, mornings are the only safe window for chores. “Laundry, dishes, bathing — everything happens before 8 am,” she says. “After 10 am, both taps feel hot.”

Health experts warn that the issue is more than an inconvenience. Water temperatures of around 50°C can cause burns, especially among children and older people who may not expect hot water from a tap marked cold.

Parents are advised to test water temperatures before bathing children and to avoid assuming the blue tap is safe during the summer months.

As Oman’s summer intensifies, adapting to hot taps has become less of an inconvenience and more of a seasonal survival skill — one measured not in degrees outside, but in the temperature of the water flowing at home.

HOW FAMILIES COPE

Store water early: Fill containers before 8 am when tanks are coolest.

Shade rooftop tanks: Reflective paint or simple coverings can reduce heat build-up.

Test before use: During afternoon hours, assume both taps may run hot.

Mark taps: Some households even place red tape over “cold” taps to remind children.

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SHORT TAKES



The project will become a major recreational and tourism destination.

AL ASHKHARAH WATERFRONT PROJECT 55% COMPLETE

JAALAN BANI BU ALI: The waterfront development project at Al Ashkharah Beach in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali has achieved more than 55 per cent completion, marking steady progress on one of the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate’s key sustainable tourism initiatives.

The project is being developed as a major recreational and tourism destination, aimed at enhancing the coastal appeal of the wilayat and supporting domestic tourism growth in line with Oman Vision 2040 objectives.

Maryam bint Abdullah al Alawi, a civil engineer at the Al Sharqiyah South Municipality, confirmed that the project is progressing according to schedule and in line with approved technical standards and modern specifications. It is being implemented over an area exceeding 100,000 square metres, with a built-up area of approximately 1,130 square metres.

She said the total cost of the project is estimated at RO 5.8 million and includes a range of integrated facilities such as a 1,800-metre cycling track, a parallel pedestrian walkway, landscaped green spaces, children’s play areas, seating zones, public amenities, restaurants and cafés, as well as a control room, watchtower and service facilities.

She added that the development represents a qualitative leap in upgrading the Al Ashkharah waterfront, introducing a modern urban vision that enhances visitor experience through well-planned recreational and service infrastructure. Once completed, the project is expected to add significant tourism and economic value to the governorate while improving public amenities and supporting coastal development.

Waterfront and tourism park projects across Al Sharqiyah South, including Sur, Al Haddah, Al Suwaih and Asilah in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, continue to form part of a broader strategy to strengthen tourism infrastructure and diversify visitor experiences across the governorate. — ONA

‘AL FANS NIGHTS’ ORGANISED IN WADI AL MAAWIL

WADI AL MAAWIL: The ‘Al Fans Nights’ heritage and entertainment activities were held in the town of Afi in the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil, organised by the office of the Wali of Wadi Al Maawil in cooperation with the office of the Governor of Al Batinah South and the municipal department, coinciding with Eid Al Adha celebrations.

The event aims to revitalise tourism and social activity in the wilayat while highlighting

Oman’s rich cultural and heritage assets through a contemporary community experience designed to appeal to all age groups.

The Shaikh’s Chamber Square witnessed strong public participation, with families and children engaging in a wide range of recreational and creative activities. These included face painting, colouring workshops, art and craft sessions, pottery and plaster-making, as well as Arabic calligraphy displays and a heritage

photography studio featuring traditional Omani attire.

The programme also featured performances of traditional Omani folk arts, including the Razha, alongside inflatable games and dedicated spaces for small enterprises and productive families, creating a vibrant festive atmosphere that blended entertainment with cultural expression. Organisers said the initiative reflects efforts to strengthen cohesion. — ONA

Al Batinah North students turn art into enterprise

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, MAY 31

THE GENERAL-DIRECTORATE of Education in Al Batinah North has concluded the ‘Creative Industries in Visual Arts’ project for 2025-2026 academic year, an initiative aimed at transforming students from art learners into creative producers capable of developing and marketing their own artistic products. Organised by the Visual Arts Unit, the project sought to bridge the gap between artistic talent and entrepreneurship by introducing students to the expanding role of creative industries in modern economies.

Through a year-long programme, participants explored how visual arts can evolve from a classroom subject into a platform for innovation, economic participation and community engagement.

Dr Awatif al Ghafri, from the organising team, described the initiative as a strategic investment in Oman’s future creative capital. “The project equips gifted students with the mindset and skills required for the economies of tomorrow. By connecting art, innovation, and entrepreneurship, we are helping students see their talents not only as a form of self-expression, but also as a pathway to future careers and economic participation,” she said.

She added that the long-term impact of such initiatives extends to

Through a year-long programme, participants explored how visual arts can evolve from a classroom subject into a platform for innovation, economic participation and community engagement



The initiative is a strategic investment in Oman’s future creative capital.

the wider community.

“They nurture a culture of creativity, encourage self-reliance, and inspire young people to become active contributors to national development. These students may one day lead creative enterprises, launch innovative projects, and help shape Oman’s knowledge-based economy,” she noted. The project included a series of stages such as awareness sessions, student registration, mentoring, field follow-ups, and final evaluations.

Majid al Maamari, an arts supervisor at the directorate, said, “The project was developed to help students realise that creativity can be transformed into real economic value. We wanted young artists to experience the full journey of innovation, from generating an idea and creating a product to presenting

and promoting it.”

He added that the initiative also aimed to strengthen the role of visual arts teachers as mentors who can nurture entrepreneurial thinking alongside artistic skills. “Our goal is not only to discover talented students, but also to equip them with the confidence, knowledge, and practical skills needed to contribute to Oman’s growing creative economy,” he said.

The project concluded with an awards ceremony honouring outstanding projects. In addition to category awards, special prizes were presented for Best Project Idea, Best Marketing Campaign and Best Presentation. According to organisers, the initiative serves as a practical example of how education can support economic diversification by investing in creativity.

GCC states enhance long-term sustainability of water resources



GCC states have recorded a 3 per cent annual decrease in groundwater extraction.

MUSCAT: The GCC states have recorded a 3 per cent annual decrease in groundwater extraction over the past nine years, concurrent with an increase in the share of renewable water resources to 25.5 per cent in 2024.

This indicator reflects the growing commitment to the implementation of sustainable water resource management policies.

Data issued by the GCC Statistical Center confirm that GCC member states continue to implement strategic directions aimed at enhancing the sustainability

of water resources and achieving water security for future generations. These efforts focus on reducing dependence on groundwater and increasing the share of renewable water within the overall water resource system.

The data further indicate that this transition is taking place within the framework of Gulf-wide efforts to address challenges related to water scarcity and climate change, while improving the efficiency of water resource utilisation.

This is being achieved

through the expansion of seawater desalination projects, the reuse of treated wastewater, and the adoption of modern technologies in water management and consumption rationalisation.

The growing contribution of renewable water to the water resource mix reflects the GCC states’ approach to diversifying water sources and alleviating pressure on groundwater reserves. This, in turn, supports sustainable development plans and reinforces regional water security in the upcoming phase. — ONA

TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Retender: -

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
457/2025/MAFWR/HQ-52 Recall-1	Construction of Protection Wall at Al-Tawliya Area (Wadi Al-Aq) Wilayat of Samayil, Dakhiliyah Governorate	Wednesday 20/5/2026	Thursday 4/6/2026	Sunday 14/6/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Second, Third, grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
326/2026/MAFWR/HQ-22	For Supply, Installation & Commissioning of DNA Analyzer-Capillary Electrophoresis System	Wednesday 20/5/2026	Monday 8/6/2026	Monday 29/6/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
334/2026/MAFWR/HQ-23	Implementation of (ISO 9001) Quality Management Systems at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources - Phase One	Thursday 21/5/2026	Monday 15/6/2026	Sunday 5/7/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First grades	(300/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
337/2026/MAFWR/HQ-24	Supply and Installation Antivirus System	Thursday 21/5/2026	Thursday 4/6/2026	Tuesday 9/6/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402244 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

IRAN DEMANDS RIGHTS AS TRUMP TOUGHENS TERMS

NO DEAL UNTIL IRANIAN RIGHTS SECURED

Iran's chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that Tehran will not agree to any deal with the United States that fails to secure the rights of Iranians.

ISRAEL PLANTS FLAG ON MEDIEVAL CASTLE

Israel's flag flew over the medieval fortress on Beaufort in Lebanon as it warned Lebanese civilians to evacuate a large area of the south of the country.

TRUMP SAYS IRAN HAS AGREED NUKES

US President Donald Trump said he had secured guarantees from Iran that it would not develop nuclear weapons, as he had sent a tougher peace proposal.

LEBANON PM DENOUNCES ISRAELI CAMPAIGN

Lebanon's PM accused Israel of pursuing a "scorched-earth policy" in his country's south, urging a halt to the fighting as Israel carried out fresh air strikes.

FRANCE REQUESTS UN EMERGENCY MEETING

France has requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council after Israeli forces seized the medieval Beaufort castle in Lebanon.

IRAN'S CHIEF NEGOTIATOR warned the United States is not to be trusted on Sunday, saying Tehran would not agree to any deal with Washington unless it fully secures Iranian rights. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf's remarks came as reports emerged that US President Donald Trump had sent a tougher peace proposal back to Iran, and underlined the rift that the parties still need to close. Any further tweaks to the draft could further delay an agreement to formally end the Middle East war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz after weeks of fraught negotiations marked by sharp rhetoric and occasional flare-ups of violence.

Iran was already in negotiations with the United States about the fate of its nuclear programme in February, when the US and Israel launched air and missile strikes that wiped out much of the Islamic republic's senior leadership. And, while Tehran has long insisted that its nuclear programme is for purely civilian ends, the United States and its Western allies have long suspected it aims to develop a weapon.

NUCLEAR GUARANTEES

The New York Times and Axios reported that Trump had sent back a "tougher" new framework to be considered by Iran, though details remain unclear. Trump has said his priorities include stopping Iran from any nuclear weapon development and re-opening the Hormuz shipping lane, over which Iran has sought to impose control since the war began.

"The one guarantee that I have to have is that there will be no nuclear weapons. They've agreed to that, and it was very interesting," he told his daughter-in-law Lara Trump in an interview on her Fox News show.

But Tehran has previously cast doubt on Trump's assertions and the sides remain far apart on key issues. "We will not approve any agreement until we are certain that the rights of the Iranian people have been upheld," Ghalibaf said, in a video broadcast on state television. According to the Tasnim news agency, "exchanges between Iran and the United States regarding the text of a possible memorandum of understanding are ongoing, with both parties regularly proposing amendments. "No agreement has yet been finalised, and it is possible that any agreement will be rejected," it said.

Iran has said it needs the release of \$12 billion in frozen assets before engaging in substantive talks on its nuclear programme, dismissing earlier Trump comments that its enriched uranium stockpile would be destroyed as "baseless", according to Iranian media. Tehran has also insisted that Lebanon be included in any deal, despite ongoing fighting, with Beirut accusing Israel of a "scorched-earth policy" as it expands operations against Hezbollah.

STRIKES FLARE-UP

Though daily strikes throughout Iran and the Gulf halted after Tehran and Washington struck a temporary ceasefire in April and talks mediated by Pakistan, sporadic fighting has continued. Iran's



Civil defence workers inspect the site of an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre. — AFP

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf's remarks came as reports emerged that US President Donald Trump had sent a tougher peace proposal back to Iran, and underlined the rift that the parties still need to close. Any further tweaks to the draft could further delay an agreement to formally end the Middle East war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz

Revolutionary Guards had shot down a US military drone "about to enter Iranian territorial waters", Iran's state broadcaster IRIB reported, though Washington has not confirmed the incident.

Earlier, the worst fighting since the ceasefire erupted when US forces struck the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, prompting retaliatory fire from Iran. Nevertheless diplomacy has continued with Trump under pressure to secure a deal that would lift competing US and Iranian blockades around the Strait of Hormuz that have strangled a vital route for global oil supplies.

After Trump said Iran would charge "no tolls" on ships passing through the strait under any deal, Iranian news agency Fars cited sources saying "no such clause" existed. Iran's ISNA news agency on Saturday quoted lawmaker Alireza Salimi as saying a plan "to implement Iran's management and sovereignty" over the strait — which includes imposing

"administrative fees" for navigation — would soon go before parliament.

Israeli said on Sunday that troops had also crossed the Litani river and raised the Israeli flag over the strategic medieval fortress of Beaufort in southern Lebanon. Smoke billowed from the surrounding area as the invading army's banner was seen by reporters above the castle, which Israel famously used as a base during their previous two-decade-long occupation.

The push to Beaufort came as the Israeli military issued a sweeping evacuation order to areas south of the Zaharani River, north of the Litani and around 40 kilometres from the border, warning that it was targeting Hezbollah. "The capture of Beaufort is a dramatic stage and a dramatic shift in the policy we are leading. We have broken the barrier of fear. We are taking the initiative, we are operating on all fronts — in Syria, in Gaza, in Lebanon," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

The Israeli military said on Sunday that one soldier was killed the previous day in a Hezbollah drone strike. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has accused Israel of pursuing a "scorched-earth policy and collective punishment", and called for "a swift and real ceasefire" Israel confirmed it was expanding its ground offensive in a statement released early on Sunday, saying "a significant number" of its forces were operating against Hezbollah beyond the Litani river. A truce between Israel and Hezbollah formally began on April 17 but it has never been observed, with both sides accusing each other of violating it. — AFP

KYIV SAYS STRUCK RUSSIAN PIPELINE AND OIL DEPOT

KYIV: Ukrainian drones on Sunday struck an oil depot in southern Russia and a pumping station hundreds of kilometres from the front, Kyiv said, with Russian officials confirming strikes in the areas. Kyiv has stepped up strikes on Moscow's infrastructure in the fifth year of war, hitting targets as far as the Urals in recent weeks. Its army said drones hit a "dispatch station of a major oil pipeline" in Russia's Kirov region and an oil depot in the Rostov region, near occupied Ukraine. It said the pipeline transported oil from Siberia to western Russia and Belarus.

The governor of the Kirov region, Alexander Sokolov, only said that Ukrainian drones had hit a "facility" and caused a fire, claiming no casualties and calling for calm. In the town of Matveyev-Kurgan in



Rescuers work at a site of apartment buildings hit by a drone strike in Dnipro. — Reuters

the southern Rostov region, regularly hit by Kyiv, local officials introduced a state of emergency over a huge blaze at an oil depot hit by a drone. The town's head Dina Alborova said the fire spread over 3,600

square meters, publishing images of plumes of black smoke. She said residential houses and several shops were affected. In Ukraine, authorities were clearing the aftermath of a Russian strike on a

warehouse in Dnipro, belonging to popular postal company Nova Poshta. Nova Poshta, a private courier company widely used in and outside Ukraine, said its Dnipro branch was hit by a drone and that "the building burned down completely". It added that no employees were injured. "All these attacks must be stopped," President Volodymyr Zelensky said online, posting images of the blaze. "All that's needed is sufficient support for our defence and continued pressure on Russia," he said.

Earlier this week, Zelensky urged the United States to provide more ammunition for its Patriot air defence systems to counter Russian strikes. Talks to end more than four years of war between Russia and Ukraine have been deadlocked, sidelined by the Iran conflict. — AFP

Israeli strike near hospital in Lebanon wounds 13

BEIRUT: An Israeli strike near a hospital in Tyre, south Lebanon wounded 13 staffers, the Lebanese health ministry said, as Israel pushes forward its offensive deeper into the country. "The Israeli enemy launched an air strike in the vicinity of Hiram Hospital in Tyre, injuring 13 hospital staff members and causing significant damage," the ministry said in a statement, urging "the international community to put an end to the escalating and expanding Israeli attacks".

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to push deeper into Lebanon after his military took over the medieval castle of Beaufort on Sunday, calling it a "dramatic shift" in the campaign against Hezbollah.

Hezbollah said on Sunday it targeted Israeli army positions and infrastructure in Shlomi and Nahariya in northern Israel, while air raid sirens blared in the Acre area.

Lebanon was dragged into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hezbollah fired rockets towards Israel in retaliation for the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader. A truce to halt the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah began on April 17, but has never been observed. Both sides accuse each other daily of violating the ceasefire and justify their attacks by the other's alleged breaches.

As fighting escalated in Lebanon, France said on Sunday it requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, alarmed by Israel's "ever-deeper occupation of Lebanese territory". Israeli forces used the Beaufort castle, also known as Qalaat al Chakik, as a base during their previous two-decade occupation of southern Lebanon that ended in 2000.

In a video statement released hours after the military took Beaufort, Netanyahu said "we have returned united, determined and stronger than ever". "Now my directive is to deepen and expand our hold in places that were under Hezbollah's control. The capture of Beaufort is a dramatic stage and a dramatic shift in the policy we are leading."

Shelling was audible and smoke rose from the surrounding area as reporters saw the Israeli flag above the castle. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said troops had captured the historic strong point, which commands sweeping views of south



Smoke billows from southern Lebanon, following Israeli strikes, as seen from Nabatieh. — Reuters

Lebanon, as they expanded their ground operations. "Forty-four years after the heroic Battle of Beaufort, and on this day commemorating the soldiers who fell in the First Lebanon War (1982), our troops have returned to the summit of Beaufort and once again raised the Israeli flag there," Katz said in a social media post.

In a shelter for the displaced in Sidon, southern Lebanon's largest city, Zeinab Fakihi, from Nabatieh, said "of course we are afraid". "It is impossible for us to return to our home, because the city is in great destruction," she said, adding that the arrival of Israeli forces at the castle was "tragic". Issa Tfaily, also displaced from Nabatieh, said: "We will return... if not today, then tomorrow, as long as there is resistance."

The push to Beaufort came as the Israeli military issued a sweeping evacuation order to areas south of the Zaharani River, north of the Litani and around 40 kilometres from the border. It said it was targeting "Hezbollah infrastructure in Tyre and several

additional areas in southern Lebanon" as Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported a series of strikes on the area.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam had accused Israel on Saturday of pursuing a "scorched-earth policy and collective punishment" in the south, urging a halt to the fighting. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on Sunday that "nothing can justify the continuation of Israeli military operations in Lebanon and its ever-deeper occupation of Lebanese territory".

Military delegations from Lebanon and Israel held security talks in Washington on Friday, with more US-brokered negotiations planned next week. The Israeli army said on Sunday that one of its soldiers had been killed a day earlier by a Hezbollah explosive drone, bringing to 25 the number of Israeli military deaths in Lebanon since early March. The Lebanese health ministry says Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,371 people since early March. — AFP

UK FM due to visit China and India over global issues

LONDON: British foreign minister Yvette Cooper will travel to China, and then onwards to India later in the week, with the visits to focus on global issues from the Strait of Hormuz and the Russia-Ukraine war to the recent Ebola outbreak. Cooper will meet her Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng on June 2, before travelling to the southern

tech hub of Shenzhen for a programme focussed on science and technology a day later, the government said. The plans, announced on Sunday, come after Reuters reported last month on the visit, citing three sources. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Chinese leader Xi Jinping hailed a reset in ties during the British leader's visit to China in January, pledging greater cooperation on trade,



YVETTE COOPER

investment and technology to the mutual benefit of both countries. Starmer was the first British prime minister to visit China in eight years, with his centre-left Labour government making improving relations with China a priority. Cooper's trip comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, soaring oil prices following the US-Israeli war on Iran, and as Britain struggles with

sluggish economic growth. She is expected to be in India on June 4 where she is due to meet External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar as well as entrepreneurs, academics and government partners. The British government said Cooper's upcoming engagements "with these two major powers are expected to be focused on tackling the most significant global challenges". — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



US MILITARY FIRES ON SHIP VIOLATING IRAN BLOCKADE

WASHINGTON: The US military said that it had disabled a Gambia-flagged cargo vessel attempting to sail to an Iranian port by launching a missile into its engine room. US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees forces in the Middle East region, said the strike occurred on May 29 after the M/V Lian Star failed to respond to more than 20 warnings.

"A US aircraft disabled the vessel by firing a Hellfire missile into the ship's engine room after Lian Star's crew failed to comply. The ship is no longer transiting to Iran," CENTCOM said on X. The statement did not mention if there were any injuries aboard the Lian Star following the strike. "US forces have disabled five commercial vessels and redirected 116 to fully enforce the blockade as a ceasefire with Iran remains in effect," CENTCOM said.

The United States has been enforcing a blockade of Iranian ports as Tehran effectively halts all traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a key transit point for global oil and gas. Talks on a long-term end to the war and reopening the waterway have yet to reach a final agreement. — AFP

EUROPE'S GREEN JET FUELS SEE UPSIDE IN WAR



BRUSSELS: At a plant near Frankfurt, in Germany, hydrogen and CO2 sourced from a chlorine factory and a biogas facility nearby are piped into a reactor and turned into jet fuel. Interest in such synthetic propellants is growing as the Iran war pushes Europe to reassess its dependencies, raising hopes of a turnaround for the struggling sector, according to industry experts.

The conflict "made the business case for e-SAF much stronger," Mariano Berkenwald, head of strategy at Ineratec, the firm operating the Frankfurt facility, said. Before the war squeezed Europe's jet fuel supplies, electro-Sustainable Aviation Fuel (e-SAF), was largely touted for its climate friendly credentials. Doing away with oil, it can reduce by 90 per cent planet warming emissions from aviation — itself responsible for up to four per cent of all greenhouse gases released in the European Union — proponents say. Brussels has made it a key component of a push to green up transport, mandating fuel suppliers to blend at least 1.2 per cent of the stuff into the kerosene made available at EU airports by 2030 and 35 per cent by 2050. — AFP

OPINION

Growing AI scepticism reflects rising ethical, social concerns



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

THERE HAVE been some major headlines around the world that suggest that AI has reached a moment of reckoning. For example, graduating students in major universities in the United States, such as the University of Central Florida and the University of Arizona, showed their disapproval over the graduation keynote speaker’s enthusiastic recounting of the potential of AI. They were clearly speaking to the wrong crowd. Fresh graduates are statistically most prone to facing an economy aided by AI, resulting in the loss of entry-level jobs. This puts the question of Artificial Intelligence and its role in society front and centre. To be sure, there have been AI sceptics right from the emergence of ChatGPT in 2022, but most have embraced these advances without looking into the wider social, cultural, or educational implications. That these studies are coming up now is a comment on how urgent it is. A study in New Zealand found that only 2 out of every 5 respondents believed that AI

would provide positive outcomes for society. The same study found that 68 per cent of users of services preferred to have a human to speak to in case of complaints and follow up – a number many of us would believe. Interestingly, attitudes to the use of AI have been split geographically. While western countries report higher levels of scepticism about AI usage and prefer partial human intervention, South-East Asian countries have been documented to express higher levels of enthusiasm, aligning AI usage with efficiency while dealing with larger populations. Japan, with its aging population and stagflation, however, is already pushing back on increased use of AI. As always, India shows a mixed picture with 16 per cent of respondents in a survey sharing concerns of ethics and copyright. This stands alongside data that employees trained in AI can boast of a 30-per cent increase in salaries. Such data shows what is now considered to be an almost universal phenomena: what started out as a curiosity and willingness to try something new has now evolved

A few years of public use of AI has brought to the fore a host of social, cultural and ethical dilemmas, and it will take many more years for them to be sorted

into a faceless, nameless entity that has encroached every possible human activity, from accounting and medicine to painting and literature. Most people did not bargain for this wholesale control of our lives and creative pursuits. Nor have the important questions propped up by AI been answered: ultimately, who controls this data? How are questions like bias, fairness and access addressed? Who owns the generated creative output like paintings, sculptures, or even novels, when co-written with AI? The obvious advantages of AI have been documented early on: advances in medicine that makes it possible to perform a surgery in conflict zones from far away, building bridges with limited resources or even coding DNA to predict and prevent diseases. But, like with every other invention and advancement, it comes at a cost. A few years of public use of AI has brought to the fore a host of social, cultural and ethical dilemmas. It will take many more years for them to be sorted. Meanwhile, conversations surrounding its usage need to be entertained and even encouraged.

France’s intellectual ‘grandfather’, 104, dies

CLARE BYRNE

France’s favourite intellectual Edgar Morin, a World War II Resistance member who dedicated his life to promoting critical thinking and combatting intolerance, has died at the age of 104, his wife said. “He is the grandfather of all French people and the memory of the last (20th) century,” the left-wing Liberation newspaper wrote in a 2021 profile of the dapper philosopher who had a fondness for hats and silk cravats. The son of a secular immigrant, he trained as a sociologist but preferred to think of himself as a ‘humanologist’ who fused elements of philosophy, psychology, ethnography and biology to try to understand the nature of humanity. Outside of France, he was best known as the inventor of ‘cinema verite’ for his 1961 documentary with film-maker Jean Rouch, ‘Chronique d’un ete’ (‘Chronicle of a Summer’), about the lives of ordinary young Parisians. The unscripted discussions about class, race, colonialism and other weighty topics elicited by the simple question “Are you happy?” revolutionised documentary-making. “It’s one of the greatest, most audacious, most original documentaries ever made,” a rapt New Yorker magazine declared in 2013. For the French, Morin was above all an intellectual guide who developed a holistic transdisciplinary approach to the big questions of our time. “What does it mean to be human? What is globalisation? What is life? These questions require us to connect knowledge that is currently scattered across fields of research,” he said. Well past his hundredth birthday, he continued to weigh in on current events, regaling his 220,000 followers on X with his thoughts on issues ranging from the 2022 heatwaves when he posted “Paris, 6pm, 40 degrees Celsius: Rise up, longed-for storm!” to the war in Ukraine when he wrote, “war is a lesson in hatred”. “Until his final days, Edgar Morin remained attentive to the world, to others, and to the great human issues that nourished his thinking,” his wife, Sabah Abouessalam Morin, said in a statement. “Today, the void he leaves behind is immense. But his courage, his loyalty to people and to ideas, his moral rigor and his hope continue to accompany us.” Morin was born Edgar Nahoum on July 8, 1921, in Paris who had immigrated from Greece. He always resisted being defined by his Jewishness, stressing that he was also “French, Mediterranean and a citizen of the world”. When he was 10, his mother, whom he adored, died - an event that his family tried to hide from her only child for weeks and which he described decades later as his “personal Hiroshima”. — AFP

How much crow will Trump have to eat on Iran?

ONLY TWO questions remain regarding the US war with Iran. One, how big a plate of crow will President Donald Trump have to eat to end this conflict with at least some achievements? And two, will he tell us the crow he’s eating is lobster or filet mignon? Personally, I am fine if Trump has to eat a pile of crow — for instance, the “unconditional surrender” of Iran that he promised will not be coming his way — if it results in Iran relinquishing its roughly 1,000 pounds of near weapons-grade uranium. It would take the immediate threat of an Iranian bomb off the table, and that would be a very good thing. But please spare me the nonsense that Trump has secured a perfect and delicious deal.

For starters, Trump, Vice-President JD Vance, Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio will all be remembered as the team that gave the republic a second lease on life just when it was more on the ropes than ever with its own people. That’s because the only way Iran will relinquish that near-bomb-grade uranium will be as part of a deal that over time lifts the US blockade on Iran’s oil exports and the whole web of US economic sanctions on Tehran. “Trump launched this war of choice with the transformational goal of regime change,” Robert Litwak, an arms control expert and the author of “Rogue States and US Foreign Policy,” told me. “He is on the verge of ending it through a transactional deal that will be a variant of the agreement Obama negotiated in 2015, and Trump recklessly jettisoned in 2018, that constrained Iran’s nuclear ambitions.” Because Trump and his national security team did no apparent scenario planning before the war — relying only on promises by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel that the Iranian rule would



The ‘unconditional surrender’ of Iran that Trump promised will not be coming his way.



THOMAS L FRIEDMAN

The author is reporter, and NYT columnist

fall like a house of cards after a few weeks of heavy bombing — they failed to anticipate what Iran might do with its back against the wall. The first was to close the Strait of Hormuz, the vital oil shipping lane through which roughly 20 per cent of the world’s crude oil has to pass, a move that sent the price you pay at the pump soaring. With just some drones, cruise missiles, and Revolutionary Guard in speedboats firing machine guns, Iran discovered it could put the US economy and many others in a chokehold. To put it another way, Trump and Netanyahu assumed their multibillion-dollar giant weapons systems could be used to bomb Iran into relinquishing its ingredients for a weapon of mass destruction. Accidentally, though, they enabled Iran to discover it had a weapon of ‘mass disruption’ — cheap drones that could close the Strait of Hormuz. Now, and forever, Iranians will know that we know that Tehran can shut off the world’s most important oil tap anytime it wants. This new source of leverage for the Iranians is priceless. Trump’s failure to anticipate this

is no accident. It is because he thinks he knows everything — when he doesn’t at all. Remember when Trump and Vance lectured Ukraine’s President, Volodymyr Zelensky, in the Oval Office last year, telling him that he had no “cards” and essentially had to submit to the will of Trump’s man-crush, Vladimir Putin? Imagine if Trump and Vance had instead been curious and humble and asked Zelensky: “Volodymyr, your ability to resist the Russian superpower has been amazing. What cards have you been able to play to do that?” Maybe then Trump might have asked Hegseth before he started this war with huge strikes, “Hey, Pete, but what if Iran pulls a Ukraine and just tosses a few \$30,000 drones into the Strait of Hormuz and shuts it down? Then what do we do?” Because Trump apparently never asked that question, and Hegseth was too ignorant or afraid to, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard “has achieved the functional equivalent of a nuclear weapon through its ability to strangle the global economy by closing the Strait of Hormuz and to hold hostage the oil and civil infrastructure of the Gulf States,” Litwak said. Among other things, with drone and cruise missile attacks in March, Reuters reported, Iran “knocked out 17 per cent of Qatar’s LNG export capacity, causing an estimated \$20 billion in lost annual revenue and threatening supplies to Europe and Asia.” It added, “The repairs will sideline 12.8 million tonnes per year of LNG for three to five years.” Here’s what else both Iran and our allies can also see. Trump is not a mentally stable person, and therefore he — and his America — cannot be counted on. Trump said in a Truth Social post that, in light of “all the work done by the US to try and pull this very complex puzzle together,” he was “mandatorily requesting that all Countries immediately sign the Abraham Accords.” — The New York Times

A journey where humanity stands equal



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and a
communications
professional

THERE ARE journeys taken for adventure, journeys taken for ambition, and journeys taken in search of opportunity. However, the pilgrimage to Mecca is unlike any other journey on earth. It is a journey where the body travels, but the soul awakens.

Every year, millions of Muslims undertake Haj, a sacred pilgrimage representing one of the foundational pillars of Islam. Yet to understand Haj only as a religious obligation is to recognise its deeper significance. The pilgrimage is not just a geographical movement; it is an intentional battle with the human condition itself – with ego, humanity, desire and faith.

The journey to Mecca brings life down to its essentials. Pilgrims leave behind familiar routines, belongings and symbols of identity. The white garments of Ihram erase visible distinctions of class, profession, nationality and social status. In a world increasingly defined by hierarchy and self-glory, Haj creates a rare environment where equality is not theoretical but visibly practiced.

Human beings spend much of life constructing identities around wealth, achievement, appearance and influence. Yet in Mecca, those identities lose relevance. The pilgrimage forces individuals to challenge a difficult but rescuing truth: beneath all worldly labels, every person remains breakable and dependent upon the Almighty Allah.

This explains why pilgrimage leaves such a lasting emotional impact on Muslims. Haj interrupts the illusion of control that modern

life often encourages. It places millions in physically demanding conditions where patience, endurance and humility become necessary qualities rather than abstract principles.

The rituals themselves carry profound psychological and spiritual meaning. The circling of the sacred Kaaba symbolises more than commitment; it reflects the human search for a moral and spiritual centre in a confused world. At a time when many societies struggle with division, anxiety and loss of purpose, the act of collectively moving around one sacred focal point becomes deeply symbolic of unity, direction and perfection.

Similarly, the act of walking between Safa and Marwah mountains speaks to a universal human experience: the struggle for hope during uncertainty. The story behind it is not remembered because it was easy, but because it reflects the resilience required in moments when faith is tested. In many ways, Haj teaches that spirituality is not detached from hardship; it is often born through it.

Perhaps the most reflective dimension of the pilgrimage emerges at Mount Arafat, where millions gather in prayer and observation. Religious scholars frequently describe this gathering as a symbolic reminder of humanity standing before Allah on the Day of Judgment.

In this context, the pilgrimage serves almost as a corrective experience as it reorders priorities. Likewise, it reminds Muslims that spiritual fulfilment cannot be replaced by consumption, productivity, or modern life.

The pilgrimage
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worldly labels

Equally significant is the pilgrimage's social dimension. Haj remains one of the largest annual gatherings of humanity, bringing together Muslims from different cultures, languages and economic backgrounds. At a time when global divisions continue to expand, the pilgrimage demonstrates the possibility of unity grounded not in politics or society, but in shared spiritual purpose.

This collective experience challenges modern assumptions about independence. Pilgrims move, pray and worship together, reinforcing the idea that faith is not just private, but communal and interconnected.

However, perhaps the greatest significance of Haj lies in what happens after the pilgrimage ends. The true measure of the journey is not simply completing rituals, but whether the experience transforms character. Pilgrims are expected to return home more conscious of their responsibilities, more compassionate towards others, and more disciplined in their moral conduct.

In this sense, Haj is not an escape from the world, but preparation to re-enter it differently. The pilgrimage to Mecca endures because it addresses questions that remain timeless. What gives life meaning? What purifies the heart? What unites humanity beyond status and division? What remains when identities fade?

This sacred journey offers an answer not through theory alone, but through lived experience. In Mecca, Muslims do not only visit a holy place. They encounter the possibility of becoming spiritually renewed human beings.

MALTA’S PM FIGHTS FOR RE-ELECTION IN SHADOW OF CRISIS

ELLA IDE

Voters in Malta cast their ballots in a general election likely to secure a record-setting fourth term for the Labour government, despite concerns about over-construction and corruption in the tiny Mediterranean nation.

Opinion polls point to a win for Prime Minister Robert Abela, 48, who is campaigning on Labour’s economic record and a promise to shield import-heavy Malta from geopolitical crises.

His main rival is Nationalist Party (PN) candidate Alex Borg, a 30-year-old lawyer and former ‘Mr World Malta’ beauty pageant winner, who would be the country’s youngest leader.

At festive final rallies, Abela told flare-waving supporters that he would be “a captain as strong as steel”, while Borg slammed a country “in chaos”, from a beleaguered health service to blackouts in sweltering summers.

Located off the coast of Sicily, Malta is the smallest and most densely populated country in the European Union, with around 550,000 people living in 316 square kilometres.

The island has a thriving economy based largely on tourism, online gaming and financial services, and many voters say its economic performance trumps all other concerns.

“We were poor and under Labour we are rich!” said 72-year-old Conny Pace, proudly wearing a sequined hat in Labour’s red.

As a steady stream of people arrived at a polling station in the capital, Valletta, 33-year-old Charmaine Kitcher said she was voting “for stability, not change” and expected a high turnout.

“Maltese are fanatics. Politics is second only to religion,” she quipped.

The population has grown nearly 30 per cent over a decade, driven largely by foreigners.

That, in turn, has fuelled a construction boom, filling the skyline with cranes, creating traffic bottlenecks and putting a strain on key services.

Heritage groups have denounced environmental degradation and risks to Unesco World Heritage Sites in the former British colony. But in a country that imports nearly all its energy, bills are the hottest campaign topic.

The government says it has earmarked an extra \$290 million for subsidies as a cushion against fallout from the Middle East conflict, on top of the €150 million already budgeted for 2026.

The country, which has few natural resources, is on the front line of climate change and at risk of desertification and drought but neither main party has made the issue its priority.

There is a green party, the ADPD, but no third party has held even a seat in Malta’s parliament since before independence in 1964. — AFP

Survivors aid search for two missing in Laos cave

FROM

THEIR shared hospital room, several survivors freed from a semi-submerged cave in Laos after more than a week underground are advising rescuers on how to find the last two missing men believed to be trapped even deeper inside.

Rescuers, including foreign cave divers, said they were devising a risky search for the two men and gaining insights about the narrow, flooded passageways from the survivors - one of whom spoke of ‘waiting to die’ in the depths of the cave.

A Laotian rescue group said the information on the cave system from the hospitalised men was “considered substantial” and “being used to prepare the search plan for the remaining two people”.

“The hope is that today’s mission will locate both remaining victims,” the group wrote on social media.

Five men were found alive on Wednesday, huddling in a tight shaft around 300 metres from the mouth of the cave in a remote mountainous area of central Xaysomboun province.

They were among seven stranded in the cave by flash floods nearly two weeks ago as they searched for gold, state media reports said.

Rescue divers extracted the first man on Friday, and four more found their own way out on Saturday, after teams delivered them food and medicine and had for days pumped water from the cave, providing them with an easier exit.

Their emergence prompted emotional scenes as tearful relatives and rescuers ran to embrace them just before they were helped to tents for medical checks, videos from rescue groups showed.

In their shared hospital room, the five survivors rested on simple metal cots with thin mattresses, lined side by side, footage aired on state television showed.



BEATRICE
SIVIERO

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Managing Editor,
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About seven were
stranded in the
cave by flash floods
nearly two weeks
ago as they searched
for gold, state media
reports said



Cave divers, joining the operation to rescue people trapped in a cave, pose for a picture in Xaisomboun Province, Laos. — Reuters

They were receiving medical treatment and “in good condition”, Malaysian diver Lee Kian Lie said on Sunday.

Rescuers had interviewed the men about how the deeper part of the cave looked, he said in a message.

“We will continue to search based on the info we have and perhaps we (will be) able to get to the other two,” said Lee, who joined the rescue operation on Friday.

The four who left the cave on Saturday, he added, had “walked out themselves because the water (level had) been lowered”.

One of the four, a man identified by Laotian state media as Laen, confirmed that they had managed to escape through areas “where water was already pumped out”.

But before the rescue divers found them, despair was setting in, he said in an interview with Lao National Radio from the hospital on Sunday. “We spent three days searching for a way out, but we couldn’t find it. And it was hopeless,” Laen said.

“I said if there is no diving team

coming to help, there would be zero percent chance of survival. We were just waiting to die.”

The man rescued on Friday - identified only as Meud - said in a video shared by a rescue group that the two missing men had entered the cave several days before the others and had descended much further.

The search for the last two on Sunday was focused on a tight, inundated passage believed to lie beyond the area where the five survivors were found, according to Japanese diver Yoshitaka Isaji.

“This submerged passageway is extremely narrow and practically unpassable unless you change your posture. Imagine the space as narrow as a dresser drawer,” Isaji wrote on social media, adding that the muddy water meant “visibility is zero”.

Rescuers were still pumping water from the cave and trying to block more from flowing in, he added. “Given the enormous risk, diving would only be a last resort.”

— AFP

SPORTS

OMAN BEGIN DAILY TRAINING IN JAKARTA CAMP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 31

OMAN NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM have started their daily training programme in Jakarta as part of their overseas camp in Indonesia, which runs from May 29 to June 9.

The Reds held their first training session on Saturday evening under the supervision of head coach Tarik Sektioui and his technical staff, as preparations continue for a busy period of Gulf and continental assignments. The camp is part of Oman's build-up for the Gulf Cup "Khaleeji 27", scheduled to take place in Saudi Arabia in September, as well as the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027, which will be held early next year.

The opening session included physical drills, technical exercises and tactical work, with the coaching staff focusing on improving the players' readiness and strengthening team cohesion. Sektioui is also looking to assess the condition of all players called up for the camp before the two friendly matches against Indonesia and Mozambique.

Oman will face Indonesia on June 5 before meeting Mozambique on June 9, with both matches providing the technical staff with an important opportunity to test different tactical options and evaluate the squad's progress ahead of the official competitions.

The squad in Jakarta includes 28 players: Ibrahim al



Oman players during a training session in Jakarta as part of their Indonesia camp.

Mukhaini, Ahmed al Rawahi, Fayez al Rushaidi, Ibrahim al Rajhi, Harib al Saadi, Mohsin al Ghassani, Khalid al Buraiki, Khalid al Ghatrifi, Abdullah Fawaz, Ahed al Mashaihi, Abdulsalam al Shukaili, Hatim al Roushdi, Hussain al Shahri, Musaab al Maamari, al Mundhir al Alawi, Ghanim al Habshi, Ahmed al Khamisi, Zahir al Aghbari, Yousef al Malki, Esam al Subhi, Ahmed al Kaabi, Mohammed al Ghafri, Musaab al Shaqsi, Nasser al Rawahi, Jameel al Yahmadi, Amjad al Harthy, Issa al Naabi and Sultan al Marzouq. The Jakarta camp represents an important opportunity for Sektioui to work closely with the full squad, particularly as he continues to shape the team under his technical project.

The Moroccan coach is aiming to build a competitive group that combines experience with young talents capable of serving the national team in the medium and long-term.

The current stage will also be important for players seeking to strengthen their positions in the squad, with daily training sessions and friendly matches expected to give the coaching staff a clearer picture of the available options across different positions.

Oman will begin their Gulf Cup campaign against Iraq on September 23, before taking on hosts Saudi Arabia on September 26 and Kuwait on September 29.

The team will then turn attention to the AFC Asian Cup, where the Reds have been drawn in Group A alongside Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Palestine.

Oman beach handball team ready for tough world championship test



Focus and determination define Oman's preparations for the global challenge in Croatia.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

Oman's national beach handball team is gearing up for another global challenge as it prepares to compete in the 12th IHF Men's Beach Handball World Championship, scheduled to take place in Croatia from June 23 to 28.

The International Handball Federation (IHF) has confirmed the tournament schedule, with Oman drawn in Group D alongside host nation Croatia, France and Australia in what is expected to be one of the most competitive groups of the championship.

Oman will begin its campaign against Croatia on June 23 at 3:00 pm Muscat time before facing France later the same day at 8:00 pm. The team will conclude its preliminary-round matches against Australia on June 24 at 3:00 pm.

Group A features Spain, Portugal, Iran and the United States, while Group B consists of Hungary,



Daily training sessions continue at the sand courts of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Denmark, Tunisia and Puerto Rico. Group C includes Germany, Brazil, Argentina and Italy.

The tournament will begin with a single round-robin preliminary stage, with the top three teams from each group advancing to the main round before the competition moves into the knockout stages starting from the quarterfinals.

As part of its preparations, Oman continues intensive training sessions at the sand courts of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher under the guidance of national head coach Hamood bin Salim al Hassani and assistant coach Jaber bin Yaqoub al Balushi.

The team is also scheduled to hold a training

camp in Croatia ahead of the championship, including participation in an international friendly tournament from June 18 to 21 featuring eight national teams. The event will provide valuable match practice and an opportunity for the technical staff to evaluate tactical options before the start of the World Championship.

Oman will be making its ninth appearance at the Beach Handball World Championship and is aiming to deliver another strong performance on the international stage. The team hopes to build on its extensive experience and the growing reputation of Omani beach handball in continental and global competitions.

The squad includes Mehdi al Suleimani, Yasser al Harthy, Saeed al Hassani, Hudhaifa al Siyabi, Hamad al Hassani, Ahmed al Ghailani, Abdulhakim al Siyabi, al Yazan al Busaidy, Saeed al Hassani, Muhannad al Zarafi and Asaad al Hassani.

SHORTTAKES



Torque GC’s Joaquin Niemann celebrates with the trophy after winning LIV Golf. — Reuters

NIEMANN BEATS GOOCH TO WIN LIV GOLF KOREA

BUSAN: South Korea Chile’s Joaquin Niemann outlasted American Talor Gooch in a playoff to win LIV Golf Korea on Sunday, as Bryson DeChambeau fell just short with a final-day charge.

Niemann birdied the par-4 first extra hole at Asiad Country Club in Busan after a sublime approach shot to claim his first win of the season on the troubled breakaway circuit.

Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced last month that it would cease bank-rolling LIV after the 2026 season.

PIF had reportedly ploughed more than \$5 billion dollars into the breakaway circuit since it was founded in 2021.

Niemann claimed his eighth career victory on the circuit and admitted he was “pretty nervous” going into the playoff.

“I think my heart rate is a little bit up,” the 27-year-old said.

“I feel like it’s just part of it. I just love this game. I love being in these moments.”

Two-time major champion DeChambeau finished one stroke behind Niemann and Gooch after a 5-under-par final round.

DeChambeau, last season’s LIV Golf Korea champion, had six birdies and a bogey after starting the day three shots off the pace.

“There was times where it felt amazing and times where it just leaked on me a little bit,” the American said.

“I gave myself some chances, just wasn’t my day today.”

Spain’s Jon Rahm finished eight shots behind the leaders.

DeChambeau told reporters this week that he was “surprised” that LIV’s Saudi backers had pulled their funding.

PIF’s abrupt withdrawal, announced on April 30, plunged LIV into uncertainty, with executives scrambling to create a new business plan to attract investors and sponsors.

CEO Scott O’Neil is reportedly seeking \$250 million to keep the league afloat. — AFP



Torque GC’s Joaquin Niemann in action during the fourth round. — Reuters



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) celebrates with the MVP trophy after defeating the Oklahoma City Thunder in game seven of the western conference finals. — Imagn Images

Spurs dethrone Thunder to reach NBA finals

VICTOR WEMBANYAMA is within sight of realising a lifelong dream after helping the San Antonio Spurs battle past the Oklahoma City Thunder to set up an NBA Finals showdown with the New York Knicks on Saturday. Wembanyama’s 22-point haul was the cornerstone of a superb display as San Antonio stunned the reigning NBA champions 111-103 on the road to clinch a 4-3 Western Conference Finals series triumph.

The win marked another dazzling milestone on Wembanyama’s rise as the new face of the NBA, just three years after he was chosen by San Antonio with the No.1 pick in the 2023 draft. The 7ft 4in (2.24m) Frenchman was hailed as a once in a generation talent when he landed in the NBA, with LeBron James famously saluting the towering youngster as more like an “alien” rather than a “unicorn.”

As the dust settled on Saturday’s momentous win, Wembanyama wasted no time in turning his attention to the looming challenge posed by the Knicks, with game one of the best-of-seven series set for San Antonio on Wednesday.

“Winning the Larry O’Brien (NBA championship trophy) is a childhood dream, and having a real shot at it, having a tangible chance at winning it it’s a lifetime chance,” Wembanyama told a post-game press conference.

“You never know when it’s gonna happen again. But the day we win it, speaking for myself, it’s going to be an amazing day the realisation of a dream,” the 22-year old said.

“It’s hard to put into words. It’s almost like



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama and Oklahoma City Thunder center Chet Holmgren reach for a rebound in the second quarter during game seven of the western conference finals. — Imagn Images

the meaning of my life.”

Wembanyama was swift to pay tribute to the contribution of his team-mates in Saturday’s win.

No fewer than seven San Antonio players finished with double-digit points totals, reflecting an all-round offensive potency that helped the Spurs to a 62-20 record during the regular season, second only to Oklahoma City.

AN UNREAL CHANCE

“So many big-time plays, so many guys stepping up,” Wembanyama said. “Oh my god, it’s an unreal chance. My life is amazing and being with these guys that I love so, so, so much — it’s amazing.

“I want to have this feeling plenty, plenty

more times in my life.

“You work all these hours that we put in, for these type of emotions. I want to win so bad — it’s like my life depends on it.”

Wembanyama had started the season targeting a place in the playoffs, but said the Spurs had gradually built towards their passage to the NBA Finals over the course of the campaign.

“When you step into a game in the regular season, you don’t even look at the big picture,” Wembanyama said.

“You look at what you need to do tonight, what you need to do in the first half. You try and lay a brick whenever you get a chance. And at the end of the day you get a big castle, a beautiful house. This is just like the entry hall of our castle right now.”

Wembanyama reflected on his own personal growth through what was a gruelling seven-game series against Oklahoma City. The Frenchman opened with a 41-point, 24-rebound masterpiece in game one, and then helped square the series at 2-2 in a 33-point display in game four.

After a lacklustre performance in game five, which Oklahoma City won to take a 3-2 lead, Wembanyama roared back in game six with 28 points to set up Saturday’s decider.

“What I’ve learned is that I can go through hurdles that I didn’t know could get so high,” Wembanyama.

“I found resources inside of me. Relentlessness. I already knew that, but doing it at this level, this is the best basketball being played on the planet right now. And the crazy thing is I want to do that 15 or 20 more times. — AFP

Cirstea overpowers Wang to reach French Open quarters

PARIS: Romanian veteran Sorana Cirstea proved that dreams have no expiry as she beat China’s Wang Xinyu 6-3 7-6(4) at the French Open on Sunday to reach her first Roland Garros quarterfinal in 17 years.

The 36-year-old, who is retiring at the end of the season, advanced to the quarterfinal of a Grand Slam for just the third time in her career.

It will be her first quarterfinal in the French capital since 2009 - the longest gap between the first two quarterfinals at a women’s singles major in the Open Era.

“I always thought there is no expiry date for ambition and for dreams. I have so much passion for this sport,” Cirstea said after her victory.

“I absolutely love tennis and to be able to still play at this level - have my

family, my team, the closest people watching me - it’s an absolute joy.

“I think sometimes society puts us in certain groups because of the age. But I think in life, you are free to do whatever you want and I want to play. And here I am, thank you everyone for all the support.” She could sense an opening for a shot at glory, with the bottom half of the women’s draw devoid of a Grand Slam finalist after a string of upsets including the exit of four-time champion Iga Swiatek earlier in the day.

FORM OF HER LIFE

Cirstea is in the form of her life after becoming the oldest player to break into the top 20 earlier this month. She reached two semi-finals during The Romanian also became the oldest



Romania’s Sorana Cirstea plays a backhand return to China’s Wang Xiyu during their women’s singles match. — AFP

CIRSTEA REACHES FIRST FRENCH OPEN QUARTERFINAL SINCE 2009

36-YEAR-OLD BROKE INTO TOP 20 EARLIER THIS MONTH

ROMANIAN SURVIVES SECOND-SET FIGHT-BACK FROM WANG

player in the Open Era to claim a 6-0 6-0 win in a Grand Slam main draw with her third-round victory over Solana Sierra.

Against Wang, Cirstea dominated the opening set, breaking twice to surge into a 5-1 lead.

With the finish line in sight in the second set for Cirstea at 5-2, Wang fought back to force a tiebreak where the Romanian found a second wind to win in 84 minutes before the pair embraced at the net.

“I think the older I got, the less pressure I put on myself. I’m trying to just play the points, not play the score and this is what’s helping me,”

Cirstea will next play the winner of the match between eighth seed Mirra Andreeva and Jil Teichmann.

— Reuters



Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian defender #05 Marquinhos lifts the trophy as he celebrates with team-mates winning the UEFA Champions League final football match — AFP

PSG edge Arsenal on penalties to retain CL title



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #10 Ousmane Dembele looks at the trophy after winning the UEFA Champions League final football match. — AFP



Arsenal's Declan Rice looks dejected after the match. — Reuters

PARIS St Germain equalled the Champions League record for goals scored in one season in the competition as they retained the trophy by edging out Arsenal in a penalty shootout but their triumph was as much about grit as their renowned flair.

A year after demolishing Inter Milan 5-0 in Munich with an attacking master class, this time they found another way to win despite bashing into a solid red wall in the Puskas Arena.

The PSG of old might have been spooked after falling behind to a Kai Havertz goal after six minutes on Saturday against an Arsenal team that had conceded only six goals and kept a record-equalling nine clean sheets on the way to the final.

Especially as the silky interplay and bewildering movement PSG have become known for under Luis Enrique was lacking throughout a frustrating first half in which they barely tested Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya despite overwhelming possession.

With the likes of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Desire Doue shackled by an oppressive Arsenal side who were content to smother the game, things looked grim for PSG.

They showed patience though, and refused to panic. PSG ended the game with 837 completed passes to Arsenal's 199 and more than 70% possession.

Yet until Kvaratskhelia burst into the box midway through the second half and drew a foul from Cristhian Mosquera to earn a penalty, which Ousmane Dembele converted, it looked as though the puzzle set by Mikel Arteta's side would go unsolved.

That was PSG's 45th goal in this season's competition, equalling the record of Barcelona in 1999-2000, but this was not a night for expansive flair.

The Parisians probed for openings in a scrappy period of extra time without any joy but, after the game finished 1-1, they stayed calm to prevail 4-3 in the penalty shootout after Arsenal defender Gabriel blazed his kick over.

MORE SATISFYING TRIUMPH

While it lacked the swagger of last year's thrashing of Inter, PSG's triumph against a clinical Arsenal side on a high after claiming their first English title for 22 years was perhaps even more satisfying.

It was further proof that Luis Enrique has built a team with resilience at its core and one that finds ways to win as Real Madrid have so often done in Europe's elite club competition.



Paris St Germain coach Luis Enrique lifts the trophy as he celebrates winning the UEFA Champions League. — Reuters

PSG have become only the second club, after Real, to retain the European Cup in the Champions League era and, worrying for their rivals, this young squad will get even better.

"We have to stay humble," winger Desire Doue said "It's not over yet — the second (star on the jersey) is here — so we're going to keep working hard and go for the third one."

His words would have been music to the ears of Luis Enrique who has instilled a tenacious work ethic into a gifted team that has dispensed with the big egos who always used to fall short.

"(The feeling) is stronger than last year because we knew before the match how difficult it would be to play against Arsenal," said Spaniard Luis Enrique, who has now won the trophy three times as a coach having also taken Barcelona to the title in 2015. "The final was a real battle."

For Arsenal, their dream of lifting the European Cup proved a step too far after a marathon 63-game season in which they won the Premier League title for the first time in 22 years. They will still celebrate with a parade around the streets of North London on Sunday and, once the dust has settled and the smoke has cleared, they will be back next season as the team most likely to knock PSG off their perch.

— Reuters



Paris St Germain's Ousmane Dembele celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters



Paris Saint-Germain's Moroccan defender #02 Achraf Hakimi (L) and Arsenal's Belgian midfielder #19 Leandro Trossard fight for the ball during the UEFA Champions League final football match. — AFP



Paris St Germain's Warren Zaire-Emery in action with Arsenal's Viktor Gyokeres. — Reuters

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,757.213

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



15 licences are operational, including 14 for building materials and one for chromium ore extraction.

AL BATINAH SOUTH MINING SECTOR EXPANDS

AL RUSTAQ: Al Batinah South Governorate recorded 35 mining licences by the end of 2025, highlighting the growing importance of the minerals sector in supporting economic diversification and industrial development.

According to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, 15 licences are currently operational, including 14 for building materials and one for chromium ore extraction.

Juma bin Khamis al Bakari, Director of the Minerals Department in Al Batinah North and South Governorates, said quarries and crushers are distributed across several wilayats based on geological formations and the availability of mineral resources. He noted that Nakhal has the largest concentration of quarries within the governorate.

Al Bakari said investment in quarries and crushers ranges from RO 500,000 to RO 20 million, depending on project size, resource type and operational requirements. He added that the minerals sector contributes approximately 0.7 per cent to the governorate’s gross domestic product, while ongoing exploration programmes continue to identify promising mineral deposits, particularly copper and chromium.

According to Al Bakari, the governorate offers attractive investment opportunities that align with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals’ strategy to develop an integrated mining industry capable of competing regionally and internationally while adopting global best practices.

Of the 35 licences issued, 16 are currently in the process of closure following the depletion of mineral resources at the licensed sites. A further four licences have yet to commence operations and are located in the Wilayats of Al Rustaq and Nakhal.

He revealed that an exploration licence for copper ore was issued during 2026, while efforts are under way to complete procedures and coordinate with relevant authorities regarding 13 public sites designated to supply building materials across the governorate.

Al Batinah South Governorate is regarded as one of Oman’s promising mining regions, with geological studies indicating the presence of commercially viable deposits of copper, chromium and other minerals.

— ONA

India issues rules of origin for Oman CEPA

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 31

INDIA has formally notified the rules that will govern the determination of origin of goods traded under the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), paving the way for the implementation of preferential tariff benefits from June 1, 2026.

The new framework, issued by India’s Ministry of Finance through Notification No 48/2026-Customs (NT), establishes the Customs Tariff (Determination of Origin of Goods under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between India and Oman) Rules, 2026.

The regulations are designed to ensure that only products genuinely originating in either country qualify for reduced customs duties under the landmark trade pact signed on December 18, 2025.

The rules represent a critical operational component of the CEPA, providing customs authorities, exporters, manufacturers and importers with detailed guidelines for determining whether goods meet origin requirements and are therefore eligible for preferential tariff treatment.

Under the framework, products will qualify for tariff concessions if they are either wholly obtained or produced within India or Oman, or if they have undergone sufficient manufacturing or processing in accordance with product-specific rules set out under the agreement.

A key feature of the regulations is the introduction of value-addition requirements. Manufacturers may calculate local value addition using either a “build-down” or “build-up” methodology. The build-down method measures the proportion of non-originating materials used in a product, while the build-up approach assesses the contribution of originating materials, labour and production



Under the framework, products will qualify for tariff concessions if they are either wholly obtained or produced within India or Oman.

The new framework, issued by India’s Ministry of Finance through Notification No 48/2026-Customs (NT), establishes the Customs Tariff (Determination of Origin of Goods under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between India and Oman) Rules, 2026.

overheads.

Trade experts view rules of origin as one of the most important elements of modern free trade agreements because they prevent goods from third countries from being routed through a partner country solely to gain tariff advantages. The newly issued rules contain extensive verification and compliance mechanisms intended to safeguard the integrity of preferential trade between the two countries.

The regulations also establish a bilateral cumulation system, allowing originating materials from one partner country to be treated as originating materials in the other when used in further manufacturing. This provision is expected to encourage deeper industrial integration and cross-border supply chains between India and Oman.

Another significant provision relates to direct consignment requirements. Goods must either be transported directly between the two countries or remain under customs control while transiting through third countries. Importers may be required to provide documentary evidence, including bills of lading and customs certifications from transit countries, to demonstrate

compliance.

To support implementation, exporters seeking preferential tariff treatment must obtain a Certificate of Origin issued by designated authorities.

The certificate may be issued electronically or in physical form and will remain valid for 12 months from the date of issuance.

The rules also envision the future adoption of fully digitised certificates and self-certification mechanisms.

The framework includes detailed procedures for record-keeping, verification, audits and compliance. Exporters, producers and issuing authorities will be required to maintain supporting documentation for at least five years. Customs authorities in both countries will have the power to verify claims, request additional information and conduct investigations where doubts arise regarding the origin status of products.

The rules further establish a Subcommittee on Rules of Origin, comprising representatives of customs administrations, competent authorities and issuing agencies from both countries. The body will oversee implementation, facilitate cooperation and review product-specific rules as trade patterns evolve.

Oman’s O-Green to develop 58 MW wind power pilot in Duqm

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 31

Omani state-backed integrated clean energy platform O-Green is developing a pilot wind farm in the Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZ) featuring a small cluster of wind turbines, each with a capacity of 9.6 MW — currently the largest individual turbines of their kind in the Middle East.

Formally known as the Duqm North and South Wind Project (DNSWP), the pilot farm will comprise six wind turbine generators with a total installed capacity of 58 MW.

Planned for deployment across two sites within the SEZ, the project is expected to generate around 190 gigawatt-hours of electricity annually, contributing to the decarbonisation of a wind turbine manufacturing plant

currently being developed by O-Green in Duqm.

Significantly, the pilot wind farm forms part of a broader portfolio of clean energy projects exceeding 11 GW of solar and wind generation capacity, as well as 4.5 gigawatt-hours of battery energy storage capacity, in various stages of planning and development across Oman, the GCC, Africa and Europe.

To date, the company has secured more than 3.3 GW of generation capacity and 2.4 gigawatt-hours of storage capacity.

Among the company’s most notable projects currently under implementation is a 2.7 GW round-the-clock renewable energy project combining solar, wind and battery energy storage systems for deployment in Al Duqm and Mahout in the Sultanate of Oman.

A long-term Power Purchase



Formally known as the Duqm North and South Wind Project (DNSWP), the pilot farm will comprise six wind turbine generators with a total installed capacity of 58 MW.

Agreement (PPA) for the project was signed recently with Nama Power and Water Procurement

Company (PWP), Oman’s sole buyer of power and water output.

The company is also implementing a 93 MW solar power plant in Suhar Industrial City in strategic partnership with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The project will provide clean energy to more than 200 industrial facilities, with commercial operations expected to commence in September.

Also in Oman, O-Green is developing a first-of-its-kind wind turbine manufacturing plant at the Duqm SEZ. Phase 1 of the facility, currently in the early stages of development, will focus on the production of multi-megawatt-class turbines based on technology licensed from Shanghai Electric Group, a major player in China’s clean energy equipment manufacturing sector.

In Botswana, a partnership between O-Green and Botswana Power Corporation is developing a 500 MW solar PV plant in Maun as part of a broader bilateral cooperation initiative targeting the development of projects with a combined capacity of up to 3,000 MW.

As part of its broader business portfolio, O-Green is also focused on the development of next-generation sustainable digital infrastructure, including AI-enabled, cloud and hyperscale data centres powered by dependable, competitively priced renewable energy in Oman and Europe.

Founded in 2025, O-Green represents a partnership between OQ Alternative Energy — part of OQ Group — and Naqaa Sustainable Energy, a state-owned energy company.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



These new timepieces are inspired by timeless architecture that distinguishes Oman’s capital city.

RADO UNVEILS
DIASTAR ORIGINAL
OMAN EDITION

MUSCAT: The skyline of Muscat embodies a vision of cultural pride, precision and lasting craftsmanship — values deeply rooted in Omani identity and profoundly aligned with Rado’s design philosophy and expressed exquisitely in the new Rado DiaStar Original Oman Edition watches.

PURITY, BALANCE AND TIMELESSNESS
These new timepieces are inspired by timeless architecture that distinguishes Oman’s capital city. At the heart of their design is a refined balance between classical Middle Eastern geometry and the Sultanate of Oman’s contemporary sense of elegance and harmony.

Clean lines, symmetry and carefully measured surfaces create an atmosphere of calm confidence, where form and ornament exist in perfect equilibrium.

This disciplined approach to design mirrors the principles of Rado, where attention to detail long ago established itself as the brand’s foundation of enduring beauty.

Monumental yet serene, the design elements intersect at a point where Swiss precision meets the golden heritage of Oman. These watches command attention through purity of form: their precise lines and harmonious proportions create a sense of continuity and balance, while the play of light across every surface brings subtle depth and variation throughout the day.

Like the land that inspired them, each timepiece is an expression of control, clarity and timeless elegance — values that have always been essential parts of Rado’s design language.

WATCHES WORTHY OF A UNIQUE LANDSCAPE
The Rado DiaStar Original Oman Edition watches take their design inspiration from Oman’s architectural heritage. Produced in four distinct models, the collection is available in silver or golden tones, each offered in two sizes: 30mm, designed for slimmer wrists and 38mm, expressing a bolder character.

The dial continues the celebration of Oman’s artistry, cultural heritage and topography. Curves, proportions and refined detailing translate architectural grandeur into a wearable expression.

The warm sandstone tone reflects the overall aesthetic of local architecture, while the lower dial level features a subtle copper-to-gold gradient, adding depth and sophistication to the composition.

The larger size is fitted with applied indices, whereas the smaller size uses crystals to mark the hours, offering two different interpretations of the design.

SBA launches ‘Turn up the Freshness’ campaign

SAUD Bahwan Automotive (SBA) has launched its highly anticipated summer promotion, “Turn up the Freshness with Toyota”, designed to bring a new level of excitement to car buyers across the Sultanate of Oman. Running from May 10 until July 8, 2026, the campaign prioritises value and peace of mind, offering a suite of benefits that make the summer driving experience even more rewarding.

At the heart of this campaign is a trade-in bonus that simplifies the process of upgrading to a Toyota. Customers can exchange their current vehicles and receive a fixed incentive of RO 250 or RO 500, depending on the model, applied as a discount on the purchase price of the vehicle.

This is complemented by extensive service packages ranging from 3 years/30,000 km up to 5 years/50,000 km, ensuring every journey is smooth and worry-free.

Additionally, the offer includes one year of comprehensive insurance and one year of registration on a wide range of models (Terms & Conditions Apply).

The campaign highlights a diverse and impressive vehicle lineup that continues to set benchmarks across the Sultanate of Oman. For those who value a refined and responsive drive, the Toyota Camry offers a sophisticated experience built on the TNGA-K platform.

Drivers can choose between the 201 HP 2.5-litre engine and the 226 HP electrified hybrid system, both of which deliver the agility and efficiency that have made the Camry a long-standing icon of reliability.

Daily commutes in the Sultanate of Oman are made more enjoyable with the Yaris and Corolla. The Yaris makes a sleek impression with its aerodynamic profile and is



Running from May 10 until July 8, 2026, the campaign prioritises value and peace of mind.

powered by a 1.5-litre Dual VVT-i engine that balances energy with fuel economy. Similarly, the Corolla remains a household name, providing a choice between the spirited 2.0-litre dynamic force engine and the fuel-efficient 1.6-litre option, ensuring there is a sedan to fit every lifestyle.

Innovation is at the forefront with the Toyota Crown, which provides a premium driving experience through its powerful 340 HP 2.4-litre turbo hybrid. Drivers can also use multiple driving modes to customise every journey.

For those requiring more strength, the Fortuner stands as an SUV icon, featuring a 2.7-litre engine for versatility and a 4.0-litre V6 engine that produces 235 HP for those

who enjoy off-road exhilaration.

The line-up is further strengthened by the Toyota Prado, a vehicle that seamlessly blends rugged capability with urban comfort.

At the heart of the Land Cruiser Prado is a choice of two cutting-edge powertrains: the 2.4-litre turbo petrol engine and the 2.8-litre turbo diesel. Paired with a new 8-speed automatic transmission, these engines provide a smooth, responsive and exhilarating drive.

Customers are encouraged to visit their nearest Toyota showroom to explore the full range of models and take advantage of these seasonal rewards before the campaign concludes on July 8, 2026.

Modern Exchange supports children with disabilities

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, Modern Exchange recently visited the Association for Early Intervention, a centre dedicated to supporting children with disabilities and their families in Oman.

The Association for Early Intervention plays an important role in empowering children with developmental challenges by offering assessment and rehabilitation services, special education classes, home visits and family counselling.

The organisation also works to promote the rights of children with disabilities and support their inclusion in society.

The visit reflected Modern Exchange’s commitment to giving back to the community and supporting organisations



The association plays an important role in empowering children with developmental challenges.

that create meaningful social impact. Through this initiative, Modern Exchange reaffirmed its belief in the importance of inclusive development and

collective responsibility towards building a more supportive society.

Speaking on the occasion, Samson Samuel — Acting

General Manager said, “At Modern Exchange, we believe that meaningful progress is built on compassion, inclusion and shared responsibility.

We are honoured to support the Association for Early Intervention and contribute to its noble work in helping children with disabilities reach their full potential”.

Dr Sabah bint Mohammed al Bahlani, CEO of the Association for Early Intervention, expressed her sincere gratitude to Modern Exchange for its generous contribution and support towards the organisation’s initiatives.

Modern Exchange remains committed to strengthening its CSR efforts by supporting causes that uplift communities and improve lives across Oman.

Madinat Al Irfan wins at the Real Estate Asia Awards 2026

MUSCAT: Madinat Al Irfan has been named “Mixed-Use Development of the Year — Oman” at the Real Estate Asia Awards 2026, in recognition of its integrated mixed-use masterplan, long-term urban vision and contribution to shaping a connected and sustainable destination for Muscat.

The award marks the first international recognition received by the development as it continues to advance into a new stage of growth, with key headquarters already operational, additional districts progressing; and new partnerships and investments continuing to accelerate the development’s growth. Developed by Madinat Al Irfan, the area’s master developer and a destination of Omran Group, Madinat Al Irfan



The award marks the first international recognition received by Madinat Al Irfan.

spans more than 7.0 million square metres and has been planned as a connected urban destination. Structured around distinct districts, the development has organically evolved into one of the capital’s largest urban projects, anchored by national institutions, business activity, hospitality assets and public spaces designed to support long-term growth.

Eng Mohammed bin Abdullah al Salmi, General Manager of Madinat Al Irfan, said: “What gives Madinat Al Irfan its strength is the way the masterplan brings together scale, connectivity, sustainability and purpose within one destination. Each district has a role to play, whether through business, hospitality, public spaces or future residential communities and

together they create the conditions for long-term value. This recognition comes as more of that vision is moving into delivery, giving clearer shape to a city designed to grow with Muscat and contribute to Oman’s wider economic ambitions”. Among the developments taking shape within Madinat Al Irfan is the upcoming International Financial Centre of Oman (IFCO), which is positioned to attract global financial and business institutions into the city as part of Oman’s wider efforts to strengthen its investment and financial landscape. Alongside it, Oman’s first fully LEED-certified Business Park continues to grow through the presence of national entities, including Omantel, OQ, OQEP, with further commercial developments underway.

SHORTTAKES

SEZAD, SQU LAUNCH DUQM SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31



QAIS AL YOUSEF
Chairman, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones & Free Zones (OPAZ)

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will launch a two-week summer internship programme on June 7, giving 18 undergraduate students exposure to companies operating inside one of Oman's fastest-growing industrial and logistics hubs. The programme

is designed to help students see Duqm not only as a national development project but as a working economy, with companies, teams, operational demands and career paths already in place.

Students will be placed with OQ8, ASYAD Drydock, Oman Tank Terminal Company, SIMAK, Port of Duqm, ASYAD Container Terminal, Crowne Plaza Duqm and Renaissance Services. Rather than observing operations from the sidelines, they will work on assignments connected to day-to-day activity across the zone.

Participants from SQU's colleges of Engineering, Agricultural & Marine Sciences, Science, Arts & Social Sciences and Economics & Political Science will work alongside company teams under the supervision of industry mentors and university faculty.

The programme also includes evening talks from professionals across the SEZAD tenant community and a weekend challenge focused on attracting young professionals to Duqm.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones said: "Duqm's development depends not just on infrastructure and investment but on young Omanis seeing a future for themselves in the industries taking shape here. This year's summer internship programme gives students direct exposure to those industries and gives companies an earlier connection with future talent. Stronger links between universities and employers are essential to Oman's long-term competitiveness".

Oman boosts Belarus trade links at Belagro 2026

THE Sultanate of Oman is set to participate in the international agricultural and industrial exhibition Belagro 2026, which opens in Minsk, Belarus, on Tuesday, as part of efforts to deepen economic cooperation and promote investment opportunities in key productive sectors.

Oman's pavilion will showcase a range of national projects and initiatives in agriculture, fisheries and water sustainability, alongside investment opportunities across these strategic sectors.

The participation will feature representatives from both the public and private sectors, highlighting the country's drive to strengthen food security and sustainable resource management.

The Omani delegation will be led by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and will include ministry officials and representatives of government-owned companies involved in food security-related activities.

A parallel trade delegation, headed by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), will comprise board members and representatives of Omani companies operating in the industrial, technology and food security sectors.

The participation reflects Oman's broader strategy to expand its international economic footprint and foster stronger investment and trade



Oman's pavilion will showcase a range of national projects and initiatives in agriculture, fisheries and water sustainability.

partnerships in agriculture, fisheries, water resources and food security. On the sidelines of the exhibition, the Omani-Belarusian Business Forum will bring together business leaders and officials from both countries to explore opportunities for collaboration and investment.

Discussions will focus on enhancing bilateral trade relations, identifying joint ventures in strategic sectors and facilitating direct business-to-business engagements between companies operating in food production, manufacturing and technology.

The programme also includes a series of meetings with Belarusian officials aimed at exploring avenues for



DR SAUD BIN HAMOUD AL HABSI
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Delegates will undertake field visits to agricultural and industrial facilities to gain insights into advanced

technologies and best practices in agricultural production and food processing.

In addition, the trade delegation will visit technology and communications companies, as well as factories specialising in food security solutions, machinery and industrial equipment.

Belagro is one of Belarus's leading agricultural and industrial exhibitions, attracting extensive participation from international companies and institutions involved in agriculture, food processing and advanced technologies.

The event serves as an important platform for promoting trade, investment and cross-border partnerships among participating countries.

Al Sharqiyah South sees surge in business activity

SUR: Al Sharqiyah South Governorate continued to strengthen its position as one of Oman's most dynamic economic hubs during the first quarter of 2026, recording robust growth in commercial registrations, industrial activity and foreign investment.

According to data released by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the governorate registered 451 new commercial registrations during the first three months of the year, bringing the cumulative total to 20,933.

The Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali led the governorate with 208 new registrations, followed by Sur with 114, Masirah with 56, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan with 48 and Al Kamil W'al Wafi with 25.

Khalid bin Hamad al Saadi, Director of the Department of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, said the governorate



The governorate registered 451 new commercial registrations, bringing the total to 20,933.

enjoys significant competitive advantages that support its economic growth. These include its strategic location, extensive coastline and strong potential in fisheries, maritime activities, the blue economy and the emerging green economy. He noted that the governorate's diverse geography, ranging from mountains to fertile

plains, supports a wide range of economic activities. Fertile agricultural land offers favourable conditions for crop cultivation, including tropical produce, while abundant mineral resources provide further investment opportunities.

Al Saadi added that Al Sharqiyah South's rich cultural heritage and historical attractions

enhance its appeal as a tourism destination. Together with traditional industries and handicrafts, these assets contribute to sustainable economic growth and strengthen the governorate's attractiveness to investors.

The ministry's data showed that 2,563 commercial licences were issued during the first quarter, raising the cumulative total to 27,174. Meanwhile, 3,205 automatic licences were issued, bringing the total number of such licences to 45,938. The figures reflect growing investor confidence in digital government services and streamlined business procedures.

Construction contracting emerged as the leading licensed activity, with a cumulative total of 1,432 licences and a growth rate of 177.3 per cent, underlining the strong recovery and expansion of the construction sector across the governorate.

Industrial activity also recorded steady growth. A total of 454

industrial licences were issued during the quarter, increasing the cumulative total to 8,647. Jaalan Bani Bu Ali accounted for 159 licences, followed closely by Sur with 151, while the remaining licences were distributed across other wilayats.

The figures highlight the growing diversity of industrial activities and their contribution to local value creation and employment generation.

Foreign investment activity remained positive, with 23 new foreign investment registrations recorded during the quarter, bringing the cumulative total to 1,700. Export activity also strengthened significantly.

Certificates of origin issued in the governorate rose by 195.1 per cent compared with the first quarter of 2025, reaching 6,478 certificates by the end of March 2026, reflecting increased trade activity and deeper integration among the governorate's economic sectors. — ONA

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

China factory activity weakens



China's manufacturing activity contracted in May, highlighting ongoing pressure from weak domestic demand and rising production costs. Official data showed the Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 50.0 from 50.3 in April.

The reading signals a slowdown in factory activity and underscores challenges facing manufacturers as policymakers seek to support economic growth. — Reuters

ENERGY TRADE

India lowers fuel export duties



India has reduced export duties on petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel for the first half of June.

The duty on petrol exports was set at 1.5 rupees per litre, while diesel and aviation fuel duties were fixed at 13.5 rupees and 9.5 rupees per litre, respectively.

The rates are reviewed every two weeks based on international fuel and crude oil prices. — Reuters

TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

US, Mexico advance trade talks



The United States and Mexico have completed the first round of negotiations to revise the US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, focusing on automotive rules, steel and aluminium trade and economic security.

US officials said the talks aim to strengthen supply chains and reduce the trade deficit with Mexico. Further discussions are scheduled in Washington this month. — Reuters

OPINION

What does extending trading hours at the MSX mean?



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

THE decision by the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) to extend trading hours at the Omani capital market is not merely about increasing the time available for investors to buy and sell securities. Rather, it is linked to broader objectives aimed at improving market efficiency and enhancing its attractiveness to investors. According to the Exchange's statement, the extension is intended to boost liquidity, improve price discovery and increase market depth in line with international best practices.

Several benefits are expected from extending trading hours at the MSX. First, it is likely to increase market liquidity by providing investors and institutions with a longer period to place and execute orders, potentially leading to a higher number of transactions and greater daily trading volumes.

The extension is also expected to improve the price discovery process through enhanced interaction between supply and demand.

Investors will have more time to absorb news, financial results and corporate disclosures, enabling them to make more informed decisions.

This, in turn, can help market prices more accurately reflect the true value of listed companies. In addition, the move may attract institutional investors such as

investment funds and asset managers by providing greater flexibility in executing large orders without causing significant price fluctuations. As a result, the market may become more appealing to this important category of investors.

The decision also aims to align the MSX more closely with regional and global markets by narrowing the time gap with other Gulf and international exchanges. This alignment can make it easier for foreign investors to monitor and participate in multiple markets within the same trading day.

Despite the importance of this step for the Omani stock market, extending trading hours alone may not be sufficient to increase the number of investors unless other supporting factors are present.

These include the availability of strong, profitable companies, attractive investment opportunities, a greater number of new listings, enhanced investor confidence and improved electronic trading and brokerage services.

Experience from international markets suggests that extending trading hours has led to higher trading volumes in some exchanges, while in others the impact has been limited because the underlying challenge was not the duration of trading sessions but rather a lack of liquidity or a limited investor base.

Investors who follow corporate news or

According to the Exchange's statement, the extension is intended to boost liquidity, improve price discovery and increase market depth in line with international best practices.

financial results during working hours may find it difficult to make quick decisions when trading sessions are short. With longer trading hours, they have additional time to analyse information and monitor market movements before placing orders.

However, some experts argue that extended trading sessions could encourage short-term speculation and make certain investors more hesitant in their decision-making. Major stock exchanges around the world operate with varying trading schedules and some provide additional pre-market and after-hours trading sessions.

Therefore, extending trading by one hour or more is not uncommon internationally and is often used as a tool to enhance market efficiency when exchange management believes it supports strategic objectives.

Assessing the success of extended trading hours will require several months of observation, focusing on indicators such as daily trading volume, the number of executed transactions, the number of new investors and other results.

The Muscat Stock Exchange has announced that the extended trading hours will take effect at the beginning of June. The initiative is intended to increase liquidity, strengthen competitiveness and deepen the market.

However, its actual impact and effectiveness will become clearer only after several months of implementation.

Shockwaves beyond conflict: War, supply chains and the future of green industrialisation

ABDULRAHMAN BABORAIK

What is unfolding today is far more than a regional conflict — it is exposing the structural fragility of the global economic and industrial system.

The Gulf is no longer only an energy hub; it has become a critical artery of global industrial flows. Disruptions in the region now ripple across global supply chains, affecting industries far beyond energy itself, from manufacturing and logistics to food systems and clean technologies.

This reality highlights a broader shift: the energy transition is no longer isolated from geopolitics — it is increasingly shaped by it.

For years, global green industries were built around efficiency.

Manufacturing became highly concentrated, supply chains optimised and costs steadily reduced through economies of scale. China emerged as the dominant manufacturing centre for clean technologies, particularly in solar PV, batteries, wind components and electrolyzers.

While this model enabled rapid deployment and declining costs, it also created structural vulnerabilities.

Recent disruptions to energy flows, shipping routes and logistics networks have demonstrated how quickly industrial systems can come under pressure.

Rising freight costs, delayed deliveries and supply uncertainty are already affecting renewable energy projects and increasing pressure on developers and investors worldwide.

What is emerging is not simply temporary market volatility, but a broader recognition that systems designed primarily for efficiency can become increasingly fragile under geopolitical stress.

The challenge extends beyond energy prices themselves. Industrial systems remain deeply dependent on secure energy flows and reliable access to critical industrial materials. The Gulf region continues to play a central role in supplying both.

At the same time, global renewable energy deployment continues to accelerate rapidly.

However, this expansion is occurring against the backdrop of increasingly strained supply systems, where even short-term disruptions can create cascading delays across industrial and energy projects.

In this environment, resilience is becoming as important as efficiency.

The current landscape is also accelerating a wider industrial realignment, characterised by:

- Diversification of supply chains
- Regionalisation of manufacturing
- More assertive industrial policy
- Greater emphasis on strategic autonomy and industrial resilience.

Tech revolutions create fear before opportunity

TODAY, the world is familiar with the sweeping wave of AI-related innovations across various sectors. While its impacts are multilayered, its potential for large-scale change in the near future cannot be denied.

The rapid advancement of AI has triggered speculation about potential risks and rewards, introduced chaos in financial markets and renewed concerns about job layoffs. This has occupied the time and attention of all kinds of professionals and almost all sectors of the economy. For those who experienced the Internet's popularisation in the late 1990s, much of this will seem familiar.

AI has the potential to change the world in the same way the Internet did. Businesses rushed to become Internet companies. Internet-based companies were able to secure funding and achieve enormous market valuations within days.

Once the Internet started to provide consumers with online businesses, people began to speculate that traditional businesses and retail would collapse. The media began to worry about online journalism.

The banking sector began to fear online banking. Traditional retail began to fear online shopping.

Once the Internet bubble began to burst in 2000, many Internet-based companies collapsed and the market lost confidence in Internet companies and technology. Even amidst unfounded speculation in the financial markets, the Internet continued to change the world.

It has become one of the most disruptive and transformative technologies of all time.

Artificial intelligence seems to be heading in the same direction. For example, businesses are pouring money into the infrastructure of AI, which includes advanced data centres, specialised cloud computing and semiconductors.

Within a decade, analysts suggest that global investments in AI infrastructure could be over trillions of dollars. Investments in AI are reshaping organisations'



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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



K V CH MADHU SUDHANA RAO

The writer is AI researcher based in the USA

The internet changed work, but did not remove it. Professions such as digital marketing and cloud engineering did not exist before the internet age, but after the internet's maturation, they flourished.



AI has the potential to change the world in the same way the Internet did.

priorities and budgets, especially in automation, research and AI integration.

As a result, many organisations have restructured their workforce and slowed hiring for traditional roles.

Many workers have come to believe that AI will replace their jobs, but it is similar to the internet's rise in the dot-com era. When the focus becomes value creation, work may change, but it is not destroyed.

The internet changed work, but did not remove it. Professions such as digital marketing and cloud engineering did not exist before the internet age, but after the internet's maturation, they flourished.

Entire industries were built around technologies once considered speculative. Artificial intelligence is starting to do the same thing. This results in rising demand for AI specialists, AI ethics, Data Scientists, Prompt Engineering and AI product management.

AI is also extending beyond technology and improving traditional professions like healthcare, finance and education. Physicians are using AI-assisted diagnosis, financial analysts are using AI to forecast financial trends and educators are using AI in their teaching and learning. AI can augment human expertise, improve productivity and support decision-making in the future.

The important winners of the dot-com era showed us that the best performers were those who adapted well to the changing environment, rather than the early innovators.

The winners of the upcoming era of artificial intelligence (AI) will most certainly be organisations with continuous-learning workers, that incorporate AI in a balanced and fair manner; and that have governments that value the technology and their people.

Although most of us have a healthy fear of rapidly changing technology, history shows that most new technology inspires opportunities that were previously unanticipated.

Like the internet revolution of the past, the AI revolution will most assuredly not be a perfectly linear process. While the AI market may experience a downturn, some AI companies may not survive the initial boom and the early enthusiasm may fade, the long-term effects of AI will go far beyond the inevitable market cycles.

The concern of most societies today may not be whether AI will alter the world as it already has, but rather the manner in which people and institutions & governments adapt to the use of AI.

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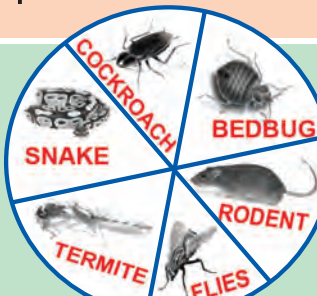
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INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

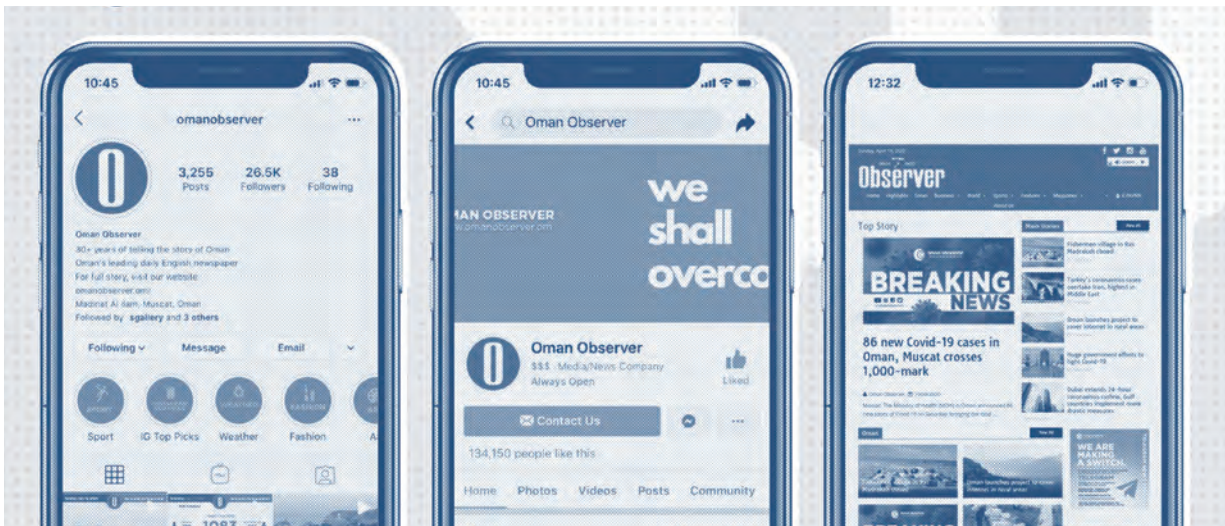
PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

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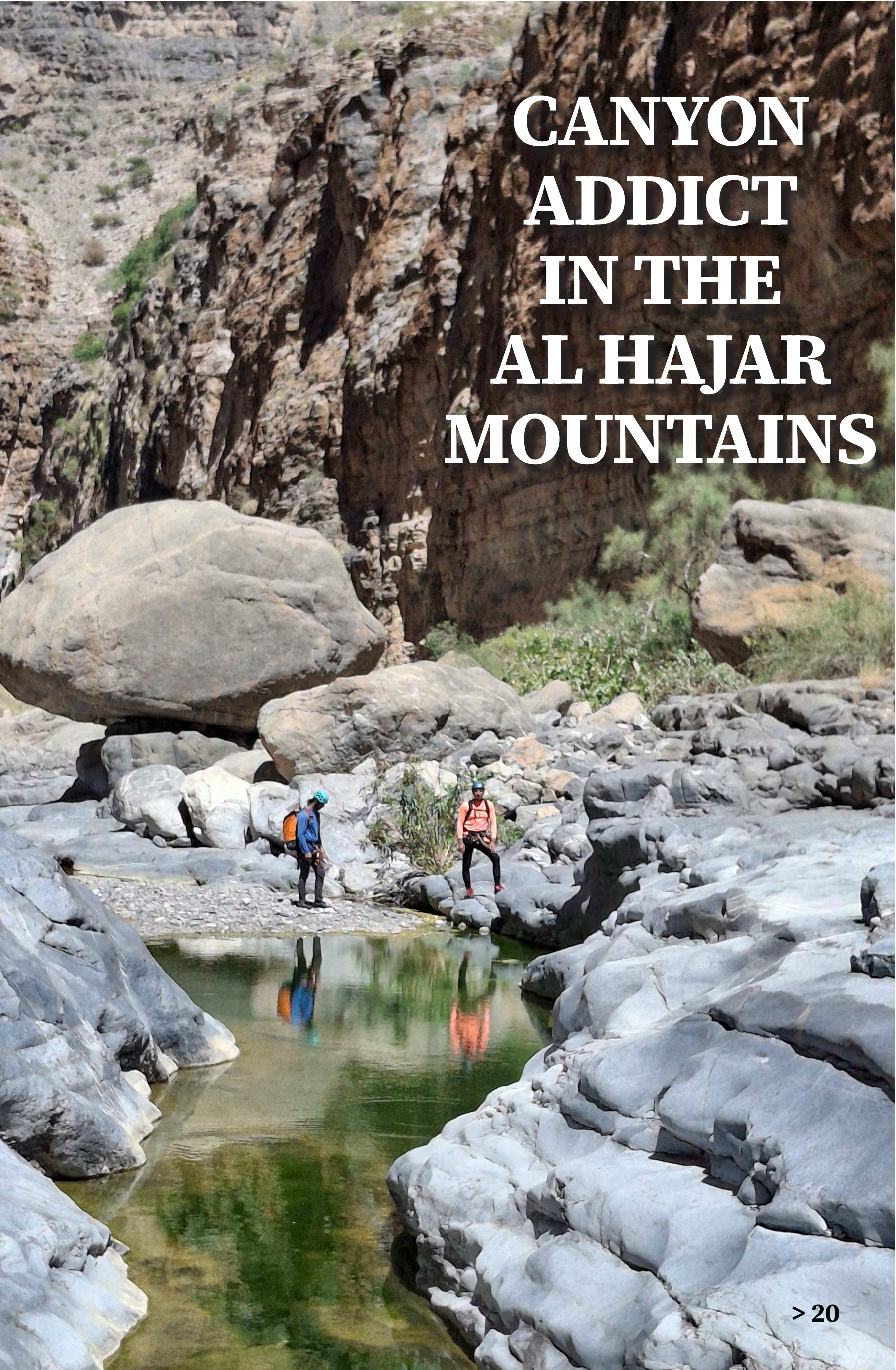
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HISTORIC **HOME**COMING

INCA CHILD MUMMY RETURNED TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN ARGENTINA



People participate in a ceremony following the return of the so-called “Child of Chani”, an Inca-era child mummy found frozen in 1905 at nearly 5,900 metres on a mountain, after being returned to a local indigenous community following about 120 years in a Buenos Aires museum. — Reuters

The mummy of a child from the Inca period, discovered frozen in 1905 on a mountain in northwestern Argentina, has been returned to an indigenous community after spending 119 years in a Buenos Aires museum.

The so-called “Child of Chañi”, a reference to the mountain in the province of Jujuy where he was found accidentally by members of the military and mountaineers — almost 5,900 metres (19,357 ft) above sea level — was between 5 and 7 years old when he was sacrificed as part of a sacred Inca ritual known as “capacocha”.

The so-called “Child of Chañi”, a reference to the mountain in the province of Jujuy where he was found accidentally by members of the military and mountaineers — almost 5,900 metres (19,357 ft) above sea level — was between 5 and 7 years old when he was sacrificed as part of a sacred Inca ritual known as “capacocha”.

Since the finding, the child’s remains have been stored in the Juan B Ambrosetti Ethnographic Museum, overseen by the University of Buenos Aires (UBA).

For decades, the indigenous communities of the Puna region in northern Argentina have demanded the mummy’s restitution.

The mummy was transported on Thursday from the museum in bustling downtown Buenos Aires to the town of El Moreno in Jujuy province, where the Kolla indigenous community celebrated with ceremonies and rituals.

“This little boy has much to tell us about our identity”, said Clemente Flores, a Kolla leader. “He is a beloved being, a grandfather of ours who fell asleep to show us the history of our culture and ways of life, some of which still endure”.

During the official restitution at the museum on Wednesday, university authorities apologised to the Kolla community for the delay.

“Not everything is in pursuit of science”, said Ricardo Manetti, dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the UBA.

The final destination of the mummy has not yet been determined. — Reuters

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



ENTERTAINMENT

US actress Michelle Pfeiffer attends the official Emmy FYC event for Paramount+’s “The Madison” at Television Academy Saban Centre, in North Hollywood, California. — AFP



CARNIVAL

Participants take part in the 14th edition of the ‘Zinneke Parade’ in Brussels. The multicultural carnival and community-led parade weaves through Brussels with towering costumes, street theatre and live music. — AFP



OCEAN LIFE

People watch the carcass of a female whale, weighing over 12 tonnes and measuring 10 metres in length, lying on the beach at Rivedoux, off France’s western Atlantic coast. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Scenes from Eid Al Adha Habta 2026



Summer Chameleon in Dhofar

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‘SPIDER-NOIR’ BRINGS A MATURE SUPERHERO TO THE SMALL SCREEN



Stars of the Spider-Man franchise have trended younger over the years — from Tobey Maguire to Andrew Garfield to Tom Holland — the new series “Spider-Noir” starring Nicolas Cage explores a more mature version of the web-slinging superhero.

Premiering on Amazon’s streaming platform this week, the series follows Ben Reilly (Cage), a private investigator struggling to make ends meet in New York during the Great Depression.

This marks the first time the superhero, whom Cage voiced in the first Spider-Verse film, has appeared on screen in live-action. Karen Rodriguez, who plays Janet, Riley’s loyal secretary, said that what sets “Spider-Noir” apart from other versions of the superhero is the era in which it is set.

“Normally, it’s a coming-of-age story and we’re meeting Peter Parker in a youthful setting”, she said. “But what happens when you’ve done it and life has happened to you

and you suffered loss?”

Reilly, a World War I veteran who can’t even afford to pay his secretary, is burdened by personal tragedy.

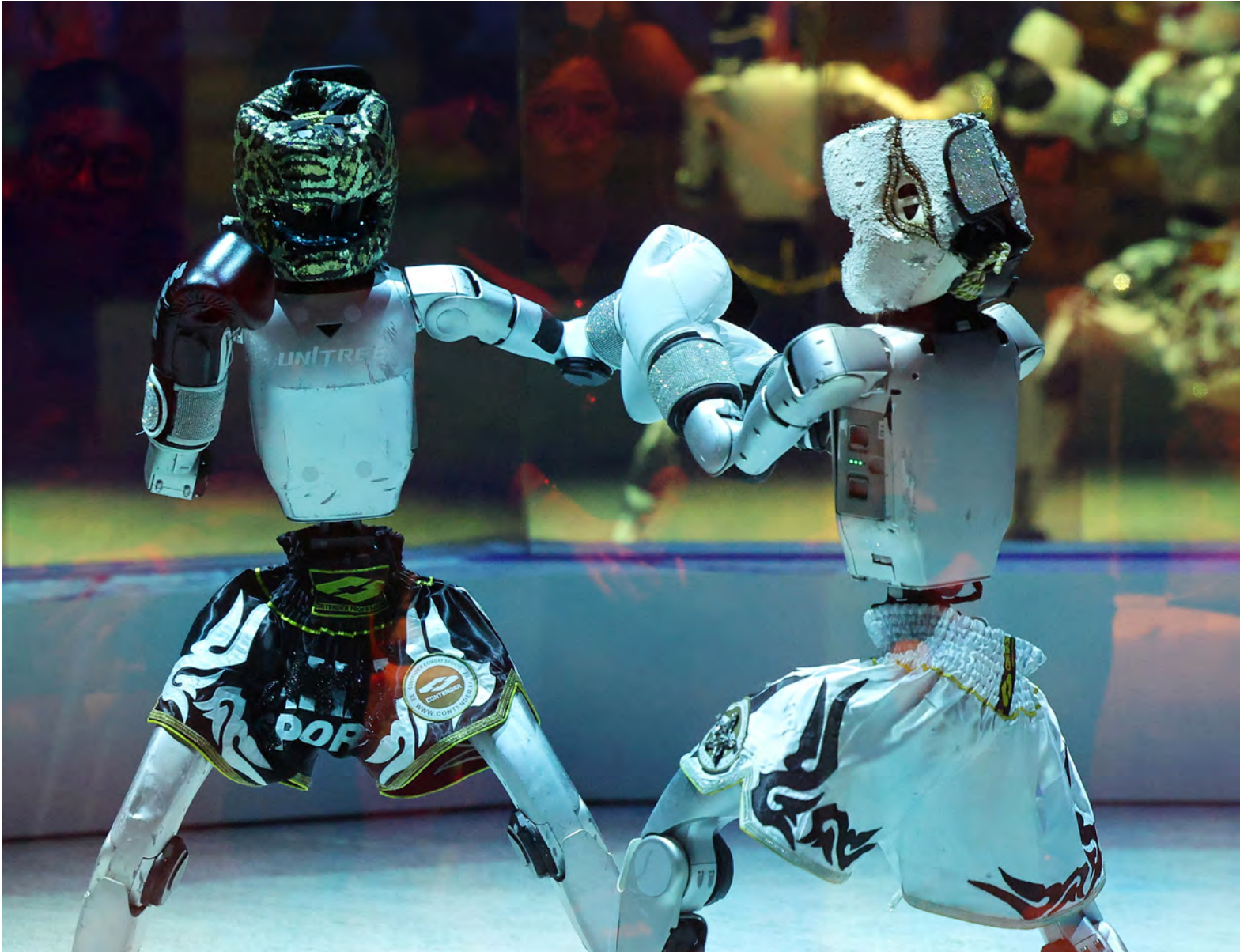
“He’s lost the love of his life. He’s smack dab in the middle of the Great Depression. There’s a lot of suffering”, Rodriguez added.

For the actress, whose character maintains a constant push and pull with Reilly, working with Cage “was like a dream come true”.

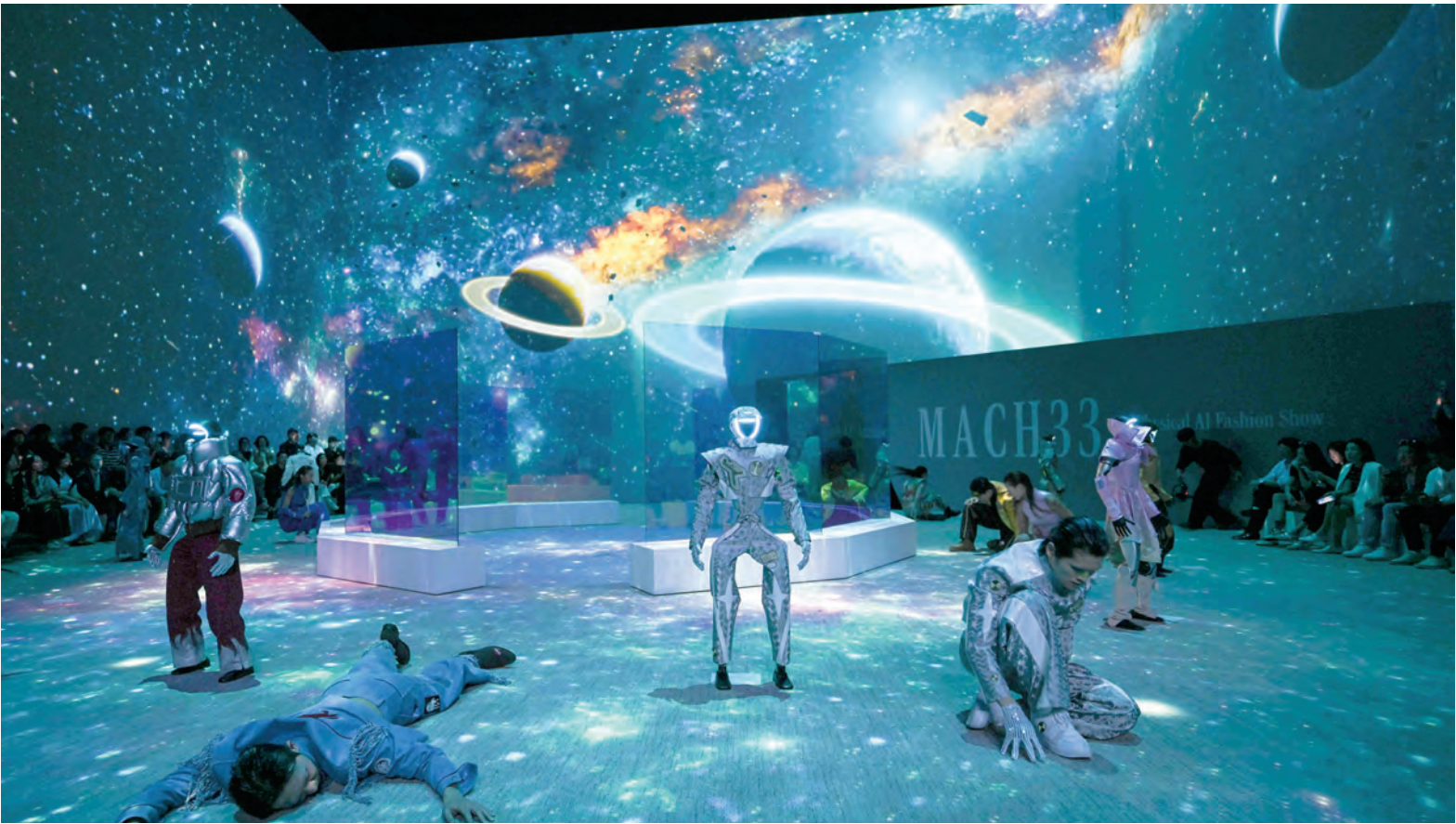
Rodriguez said she learned a lot from the 62-year-old Oscar-winning actor, who has over a hundred films to his credit.

“It’s the type of job that you dream about because you want jobs that are going to make you better”, said Rodriguez, who describes her character as a strong-willed woman who doesn’t mince words.

“Spider-Noir”, produced by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, among others, can be seen in colour or black and white, in a nod to the film noir genre of the 1940s. — AFP



Humanoid robots walk the catwalk in Seoul fashion show



THERE were no exposed robots in sight at a fashion show held in Seoul with a high-tech twist, where pairs of people and humanoids hit the catwalk in matching outfits.

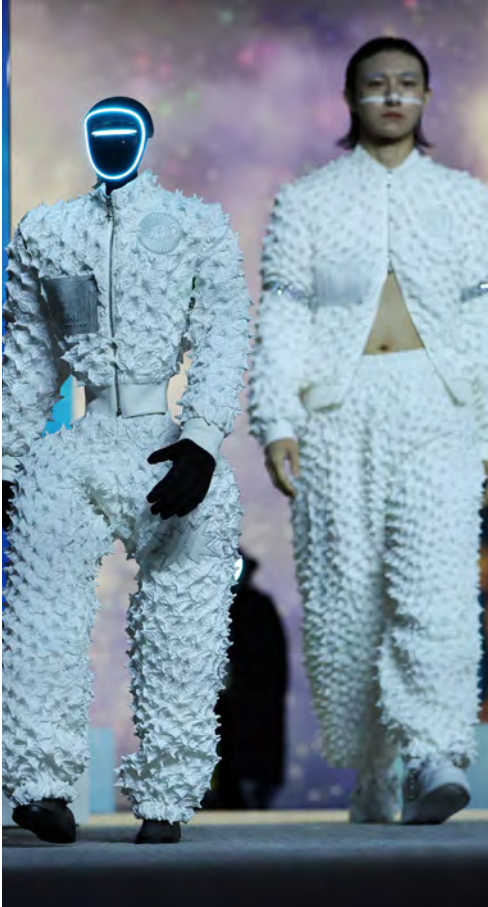
A tasselled blue Texan-style ensemble — complete with a cowboy hat for the robot — and a retro silver puffer jacket were among the looks showcased at the event on Thursday.

Each human model and their shorter android companion took turns to strut their stuff in unison on stage.

The designs, including silky dresses and billowing space-age black trousers like those worn by rock star David Bowie in the 1970s, were carefully fitted to the robots’ skeletal frames.

Galaxy Corporation, the entertainment company behind the display, said it was meant to ask: “How can humans and robots coexist?”

“We realised that robots, too, need



to wear clothes”, CEO Choi Yong-ho said.

“Just as every human being is unique, we believe that every single robot should also be distinct”.

The clothes were designed by the company, whose spokesperson said it hopes to launch them under the brand name “MACH 33” at the end of the year. The robot models at the Seoul fashion show appeared to be humanoids made by Chinese startup Unitree, which are popular due to their relatively low cost.

Increasingly dexterous robots have proven themselves capable of performing choreographed dances, participating in races and even able to land backflips.

Financial services firm Morgan Stanley predicts the world could have more than a billion humanoids by 2050.

But fully automated robots — using emerging physical AI technology — are still rare, with most impressive displays remotely operated or pre-programmed. — AFP

FEATURES



DR KHALID ABDUL MALAK

EXPLORING the fantastic wadis of Oman with my climbing mentors, Patrick and Nathalie Cabiro, more than 20 years ago sparked an addiction within me.

Since then, I have ventured into over 40 canyons with my family and friends, constantly seeking new terrain to explore. Just last week, my canyoning companions, Rami, Hamoud and I decided to tackle five uncharted tributaries of Wadi Qasheh, a main branch of Wadi Tanuf.

I pinpointed the start and end points of these tributaries on Google Earth and on Wednesday, May 13, we set out to open the first one, beginning at the old village of Qasheh.

Rami arrived at my place at 6:30 am and we drove in Hamoud's car to Al Faraa, the last accessible village in Wadi Tanuf.

On the way, we stopped at a coffee shop for parata bread with cheese, eggs and karak tea. By 9 am, we were equipped with all the necessary gear (drill, anchors, ropes, harnesses, etc), along with snacks and water ready for our new adventure. Our journey commenced in Al Faraa, traversing beautiful terraces adorned with date trees, bananas, limes and sweet potatoes.

On our way we met Rashid a young man I met around 16 years ago while I was exploring along with Gergory, a friend of mine who was living in Oman, Wadi Qasheh in order to cross it starting from the village of Al Khoof in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Descending into the wadi bed, we followed the falaj upstream, passing through narrow sections that eventually widened. The canyon journey involved walking, bouldering and swimming through pools until we reached the spot I had identified from satellite images.

Here, we left the wadi bed, climbed the mountain and connected with the trail leading to the tributary near the old village of Qasheh.

After about two hours, we reached our starting point, descending into the tributary from the gardens of Qasheh, which were still well-maintained by the people of Al Faraa. Our adventure began in a stunning couloir that led to a pool fed by a falaj originating from five springs upstream.

As we descended further into the wadi, we encountered our first drop, utilising a tree as a natural anchor for a 7-metre abseil. We then fixed a metallic anchor for two successive drops totalling around 30 metres.

The most breathtaking part awaited us — a massive 70-metre drop split into two equal parts of 35 metres each. The first one is consisting of abseiling a superb green wall of a waterfall ending in a small pond where we had to fix a second anchor to reach the bed of Wadi Qasheh by abseiling another magnificent 35 metres green waterfall. We named this drop 'Rami's drop' as he was the first person to do it.

Hamoud was the last to descend the final drop.

After retrieving our ropes, we packed our bags and trekked back to Al Faraa, stopping to refresh at a small pond along the way. By



4:30 pm, we reached our vehicle and drove 15 minutes to snack on the famous 'Mandoos' boulder under a massive Sidr tree in wadi Tanuf.

Returning to Muscat by 7:30 pm, we were already planning our next adventure to explore the four remaining tributaries of Wadi Qasheh in the near future.

For me, canyoning is the most complete outdoor activity that involves trekking, bouldering, climbing, abseiling and swimming.

Nevertheless one has to do it in the right way to avoid having accidents by ignoring the rules of this superb activity.

