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INBRIEF

HM CONDOLES WITH ALGERIAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria on the death of the former Algerian president, Liamine Zerual. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and the people of Algeria. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased soul in peace in paradise.

COUNCIL DISCUSSES DRAFT LAWS

The State Council held its 7th session of the third regular convening during the 8th Term on Monday. The Council discussed a draft Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, as well as draft laws amending certain provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law and the Penal Law. The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. He opened the session by mentioning several draft laws referred by the Council of Ministers, expressing hope for constructive discussions from members. The discussion on the “Draft Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances” was based on Article (50) of the Council of Oman Law. The meeting also addressed the “Draft Unified Scheme for International Land Transport Among GCC States,” in accordance with Article (49) of the Council of Oman Law. **DETAILS ON P3**

INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS



Reinforcing Oman's commitment to enhancing government performance and institutional efficiency, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, presided over the Institutional Excellence Awards 2025 ceremony. The event reflected a strategic push to embed a culture of excellence across the public sector, aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and broader sustainable development priorities. The ceremony honoured a number of government entities. **DETAILS ON P2**

Decree promulgates National Geospatial Data law

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued Royal Decree No 43/2026 on promulgating the National Geospatial Data and Information Law, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) states that the provisions of the National

Geospatial Data and Information Law, attached to this decree, shall be enforced.

Article (2) stipulates that the Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs shall issue the executive bylaw for the law attached to this decree, as well as the decisions necessary for the enforcement of

its provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to take effect, without prejudice to the provisions of the attached law.

Article (3) states that those subject to the provisions of the attached law shall adjust their status in accordance with its

provisions within six months from the date of its enforcement.

Article (4) cancels all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions. Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing. — ONA

Iran calls Trump peace proposals ‘unrealistic’

OMAN DENOUNCES ATTACKS ON KUWAITI FACILITIES

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN has expressed its strong condemnation and denunciation of the attack that targeted a camp and a plant for power production and water desalination in the State of Kuwait. A statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Monday affirmed the Sultanate of Oman's full solidarity and backing for the State of Kuwait in measures that it undertakes to safeguard its security and protect its territorial sovereignty and national assets.

The Sultanate of Oman reiterates its call upon all parties to put an end to hostilities, urging them to engage in immediate and full-scale cessation of the war and to terminate the escalation that targets civilian and vital facilities. In its statement, the Sultanate of Oman pointed out that the targeting of civilians and vital facilities constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

Oman also stressed the importance of giving priority to dialogue aimed at ensuring the region's security and stability.

ENERGY PLANTS President Donald Trump warned on Monday that Iran's energy plants and oil wells would be obliterated if it did not open the Strait of Hormuz, after Tehran described US peace proposals as “unrealistic” and fired waves of missiles at Israel.



A woman reacts inside her brother's home, which was damaged by a strike in Tehran, Iran, on Monday. — Reuters

Israel's military said two drones from Yemen had also been intercepted on Monday, two days after the Ansar Allah entered the war by firing missiles at Israel, and that Lebanon's Hezbollah had fired rockets at Israel.

Tehran remained defiant in the month-old war, which began with US-Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28 and has spread across the region, killing thousands, disrupting energy supplies and hitting the global economy.

The majority of those reported killed were in Iran

and Lebanon, and many were civilians. Iran has effectively blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway which normally carries about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies.

Iran said on Monday it had received US peace proposals via intermediaries, following talks on Sunday between the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye.

But Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said the proposals were “unrealistic, illogical and excessive”. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

GCC, Russia and Jordan call for end to war

The Sultanate of Oman participated in the consultative ministerial meeting of the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Russian Federation, and the Kingdom of Jordan, held on Monday via video conference. The Sultanate of Oman was represented at the meeting by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister. The ministers exchanged views on the regional and international developments related to the US-Israeli war on the Islamic Republic of Iran and its serious repercussions on the region, particularly the targeting of vital infrastructure across the region, as well as the increasing humanitarian impact of the war and its effect on the global economy due to disruptions in energy supplies and international shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. The ministers voiced their strong condemnation of all attacks and other repercussions resulting from the ongoing conflict. — ONA

Focus on initiatives to activate local community’s role

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, on Monday presided over a meeting of the Municipal Council for Muscat Governorate. The meeting examined the recommendations put forward by the Governorate Development and Enhancement Committee concerning a range of developmental and service-oriented matters. Among the key items was a discussion on the proposed Neighbourhood Management Committee, an initiative designed to activate the local community's role in overseeing residential

neighbourhood affairs and reinforcing social cohesion.

The proposal outlined strategic objectives, organisational structure, terms of reference and suggested initiatives, alongside deliberations on challenges tied to the geographical demarcation of neighbourhoods. Emphasis was placed on the need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as a well-delineated scope for the committee, taking into account the regulatory considerations that ensure seamless implementation and the realisation of the public good.

Underscoring the significance



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, on Monday presided over a meeting of the Municipal Council for Muscat Governorate.

of community-centred projects, the council reviewed the latest developments concerning the Natural Walkway Project in the village of Al Misfah in the Wilayat of Qurayat. This initiative encompasses health, tourism and environmental dimensions, contributing to the creation of an appealing natural destination that promotes a healthy lifestyle.

The council highlighted the essential role of community-led initiatives in supporting the project, affirming that implementation will proceed in line with the envisioned framework to ensure its success and

the fulfilment of its intended goals.

Members were briefed on the response from the Ministry of Social Development regarding the promotion of the ‘Ayadi’ platform through media channels, with a view to strengthening its community presence and advancing its volunteer-driven objectives. These matters are part of an integrated effort aimed at enhancing local services, fostering awareness and deepening community engagement, in alignment with the governorate's commitment to improving quality of life and supporting sustainable development initiatives. — ONA

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SHORT TAKES



The session reviewed a number of operational service investments being implemented in the governorate.

Al Sharqiyah South Council discusses development projects

SUR: The Municipal Council of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, during its session convened on Monday, deliberated on a range of developmental topics and projects within the agricultural wealth, fisheries and water sectors across the governorate's wilayats.

The session reviewed a number of operational service investments being implemented in the governorate, with the attendance of specialists from the Directorate-General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the governorate. Prominent among these were the smart agriculture project, the expansion of fig cultivation, and the integrated agriculture project in the Wilayat of Al Kamil W'al Wafi, in addition to the vegetable and field crop cultivation project, as well as agricultural tourism in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan.

The session, chaired by Juma bin Abdullah al Araimi, Deputy Chairman of the Council, further examined investment opportunities across the governorate's wilayats.

These included the rock oyster farming project in the Wilayat of Masirah and the shrimp farming project in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali.

The discussions also encompassed projects assigned to small and medium enterprises and partnerships with the private sector, such as the development project of Ras Al Hadd Marina and the community partnership project for local poultry farming targeting the rural women's sector in Wad village in the Wilayat of Sur, in addition to a number of initiatives being undertaken in this domain.

The Council additionally hosted officials of Nama Water and Wastewater Services Company in the governorate, during which the efforts exerted, strategic plans, and projects currently underway to enhance developmental services in the governorate's wilayats were presented. — ONA

A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY ANNUAL DAY ON WEDNESDAY

IBRA: A'Sharqiyah University marks its annual day on Wednesday under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

Celebrating its annual day reflects A'Sharqiyah University's commitment to showcasing its academic and research achievements, enhancing its role in serving the community, and honouring outstanding students, staff, and strategic partners.

The event will include a speech by the university vice-chancellor and a visual presentation highlighting the university's most significant accomplishments over the past year.

A'Sharqiyah University's annual day is an important annual occasion that reflects the development of the university and underscores its ongoing commitment to academic excellence and its active contribution to achieving sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Govt entities honoured at Excellence Awards 2025

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

REINFORCING Oman's commitment to enhancing government performance and institutional efficiency, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, presided over the Institutional Excellence Awards 2025 ceremony. The event reflected a strategic push to embed a culture of excellence across the public sector, aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and broader sustainable development priorities.

The ceremony honoured a number of government entities for outstanding implementation of the Institutional Excellence Framework, highlighting its comprehensive and integrated approach. The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones received recognition for excellence in human capital, while the Ministry of Health, the National Records and Archives Authority, the Tax Authority, and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) were awarded for customer satisfaction excellence.

In innovation support, Musandam Governorate secured top recognition, while Muscat Governorate was honoured for partnership and collaboration.

The Oman Investment



The event reflected a strategic push to embed a culture of excellence across the public sector.

Authority and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority were recognised for continuous improvement, and — alongside the Ministry of Economy — also received accolades for sustainable growth, reflecting a balanced focus on operational efficiency and long-term institutional sustainability.

Awards for best-performing teams were presented to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Ministry of Education, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, the Ministry of Labour, and Al Batinah North Governorate, in recognition of their measurable achievements and application of framework.

Said bin Abdullah al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development, noted that the framework has driven a transformative shift in government work methodologies by adopting a data - and indicators-based approach to decision-making.

This, he said, has enabled entities to prioritise initiatives more effectively, optimise resource allocation, and adopt best practices that foster innovation and enhance service quality. Mohammed bin Mubarak al Kalbani, Director-General of Development and Quality Assurance at the

Ministry of Labour, highlighted that the framework has strengthened a culture of institutional performance while stimulating healthy competition among government entities.

He added that strong engagement from administrative units since its launch has contributed to improved outcomes and a more mature institutional environment.

Launched in November 2022 under Royal Directives, the framework has seen extensive collaboration between government entities and a central implementation team to ensure alignment with international best practices.

NCEM: Institutional integration and effective response

MUSCAT: Various sectors of the National Committee for Emergency Management exerted substantial and coordinated efforts as the Sultanate of Oman was affected by the weather system known as 'Al Masarat'. Operating within a unified national framework, these efforts were directed towards safeguarding lives and property and ensuring the continuity of essential services. This was accomplished through the execution of response plans and the management of incident reports and emergencies across the affected governorates.

As part of early preparedness for the weather system, the National Committee for Emergency Management activated the National Response Plan through the National Centre



During the weather event, search and rescue teams responded to 269 incident reports. — ONA

for Emergency Management. This proactive measure was undertaken to monitor meteorological reports, analyse data pertaining to the weather system, enhance readiness across military, security, civil and service sectors, and verify the operational readiness of search and rescue teams. This facilitated a rapid response, effective handling

of various incident reports and the mitigation of potential impacts on lives and property.

During the weather event, search and rescue teams — represented by the Royal Oman Police and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority — responded to 269 incident reports, resulting in the rescue and evacuation of 504 individuals. The Royal Oman Police Air Wing



executed 58 rescue operations, medical evacuations and supply transport missions, in addition to conducting continuous aerial reconnaissance of areas directly affected by the weather system. Concurrently, the Royal Air Force of Oman carried out six rescue and medical evacuation sorties.

During the weather event, health facilities under the

Ministry of Health received 18 patients who were evacuated by air via the Royal Oman Police and the Royal Air Force of Oman. Furthermore, the Medical Response and Public Health Sector established alternative hospitals and health centres to replace facilities impacted by the weather system, thereby ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of medical services.

The Relief and Shelter Sector of the National Committee for Emergency Management demonstrated its crisis management capability by identifying 215 shelter centres across the governorates projected to be affected by the weather system, fully equipping 64 of these centres. A total of 539 individuals benefited from shelter services.

The Essential Services Sector prioritised the continuity of electricity, water, telecommunications and municipal services. This was achieved by addressing service disruptions, repairing faults, managing minor collapses, clearing roads of debris, closing roads affected by overflowing wadis, opening alternative routes and regulating traffic. Police were deployed to ensure the safety of road users. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Abdelaziz Medjahed with Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi.

Algerian delegation visits NDC and ASDS, sign MoU

MUSCAT: A delegation from the National Institute for Global Strategy Studies of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, headed by Abdelaziz Medjahed, Director-General of the Institute, on Monday visited the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS). Upon their arrival at the College in Bait Al Falaj, the delegation was received by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College.

Meanwhile, Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, received in his office at Bait Al Falaj a delegation from the National Institute for Global Strategy Studies of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria. The Algerian delegation is headed by Abdelaziz Medjahed, Director General of the National Institute for Global Strategy Studies.

Within the framework of the visit, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in the field of research, academic studies, and future forecasting between the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies at the Ministry of Defence and the National Institute for Global Strategy Studies of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria. The memorandum of understanding was signed on behalf of the Academy by Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, while it was signed on behalf of the Institute by Abdelaziz Medjahed, Director-General of the National Institute for Global Strategy Studies. — ONA



Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon and Abdelaziz Medjahed signing the MoU.

National Debating Championship begins on April 4



12 teams from schools and 88 teams from universities, colleges and sports clubs will take part.

MUSCAT: Preliminary rounds of the National Debating Championship will begin on April 4, 2026. The championship is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Directorate-General of Youth.

The championship will be contested by students from schools, universities, colleges and youth from sports clubs.

Contestants of the preliminary rounds include 12 teams from schools and 88 teams from universities, colleges and sports clubs. The winners will qualify for the final rounds.

The championship is an annual event that focuses on training Omani youth in the fields of logical analysis, debate and dialogue skills. It aims to groom a leading generation that contributes to the progress of society and develops logical thinking and critical analysis.

Interest in the art of debate in the Sultanate of Oman began more than 10 years ago, spearheaded by students of school and university students, but it took shape in 2016 upon the launch of the first national debate championship organised by the National Youth Committee (at that time).

Since then, the mission was undertaken by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, acting in partnership with the Oman Debate Centre. — ONA

SHURA
REVIEWS KEY
REPORTS,
FINALISES
SESSION
AGENDA

MUSCAT: The Office of the Majlis Ash’shura held a meeting on Monday under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura.

The Office reviewed several ministerial responses regarding the follow-up tools submitted by the members of the Council. It also reviewed a number of reports from standing committees concerning expressed desires and field visits.



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, led the meeting. — ONA

Furthermore, the Office reviewed the agenda for the Council’s upcoming regular sessions, scheduled to be held during the month of April. It also examined reports on the activities of the standing committees, which detailed the most prominent topics and draft laws under study, as well as the efforts exerted in monitoring national issues and files within the framework of follow-up. — ONA

State Council discusses draft laws on narcotics

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

THE State Council held its 7th session of the third regular convening during the 8th Term on Monday. The Council discussed a draft Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, as well as draft laws amending certain provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law and the Penal Law.

The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. He opened the session by mentioning several draft laws referred by the Council of Ministers, expressing hope for constructive discussions from members.

The discussion on the “Draft Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances” was based on Article (50) of the Council of Oman Law.

The meeting also addressed the “Draft Unified Scheme for International Land Transport Among GCC States,” in accordance with Article (49) of the Council of Oman Law. The amendment to the “Draft Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances” aims to implement the objectives of the National Strategy for Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances.

Majid bin Abdullah al Alawi commented on the issue, stating that the global drug issue is a serious concern, and the project aims to address it through legislation, institutions, and future preparedness. He added that the law introduces new aspects, including chemical precursors, to tackle current and emerging threats.

Shaikh Hilal bin Hamad al Kalbani emphasised the importance of the project in protecting personal data, noting that the amendments respond to practical needs and



The discussion on the ‘Draft Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances’ was based on Article (50) of the Council of Oman Law.

are largely organisational to keep up with developments.

Sariya bint Khalfan al Hadi mentioned that the amendments aim to criminalise bribery in the private sector, which will help protect fair competition and support commitments related to combating corruption.

Shaikh Sultan bin Mohammed al Mahrooqi described the law as “the first of its kind at the GCC level,” stating that it will unify procedures and specifications, facilitate cross-border movement, and contribute to enhancing trade and investment in the transport sector.

The draft amendment to provisions of the Penal Law complements Oman’s efforts to implement the requirements of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. It aims to upgrade Oman’s ranking in the

Index on Corruption Perceptions, through coordination with the country’s anti-corruption system, support corporate governance in the private sector, fulfil international obligations and protect economic interests.

The draft amendment to provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law includes a definition for ‘automated processing’ and specifies the law’s scope. The provisions deal with the processing of personal data of natural persons in Oman, both domestically and internationally.

Although the amendment requires data processors to delete personal data after processing is completed, personal data may be retained in case of a dispute between the data controller and the owner of personal data, or to fulfil a legal obligation imposed on the processing party under any law.

Theatre day highlights identity and cultural dialogue

MUSCAT: Oman joined the global community in celebrating World Theatre Day on March 27, reaffirming the vital role of theatre in enriching cultural life, fostering dialogue and nurturing artistic talent.

Recognised as a powerful platform for thought, criticism and creative expression, theatre continues to serve as a mirror of society — capturing its transformations, challenges and aspirations.

In Oman, the art form has steadily evolved into a dynamic cultural force, contributing to the development of generations of artists who have carried Omani narratives to regional and international stages.

Jalila bint Saif al Fahdi, Director of the Department of Theatre and Cinema at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, highlighted theatre’s role in strengthening the country’s cultural and artistic movement. She noted that theatrical productions often draw from history, customs and traditions, deepening society’s connection to its identity while also supporting cultural tourism and attracting enthusiasts of the performing arts.

“Theatre is an integrated artistic form that blends text, performance and direction to present social and human issues in compelling ways,”



EMAD
AL SHANFARI



JALILA AL FAHDI



MARYAM
AL JAAFARI

she said, adding that it plays a key role in discovering and nurturing young talent across acting, directing and playwrighting.

Al Fahdi pointed out that the ministry continues to implement a range of initiatives to support the sector, including local festivals such as the Omani Theatre Festival, hosting regional events and organising specialised training programmes. These efforts aim to enhance artistic capabilities and create opportunities for cultural exchange with Arab and international theatre groups.

Echoing these sentiments, Emad bin Mohsen al Shanfari said theatre has long transcended entertainment to become a “living voice of society.” He emphasised its ability to transform complex social, economic and political issues into relatable human experiences that inspire thought and change.

“Theatre strengthens cultural identity, transmits values and creates safe spaces for dialogue,” he said, adding that it also plays a role in reshaping reality rather than merely reflecting it.

Al Shanfari highlighted the association’s ongoing efforts to revitalise theatrical activity through competitions, workshops and

international participation. He stressed that sustaining theatre groups requires more than passion — it demands structured support systems, including continuous training, well-equipped venues, effective marketing and strong partnerships.

“When theatre groups evolve into sustainable cultural institutions, they become pillars of the creative economy,” he noted.

Meanwhile, playwright Maryam bint Abdullah al Jaafari, winner of first place in the Sharjah Award for Playwriting (Texts for Adults) 2025-2026, said theatre offered her a unique space where words transform into living experiences. She emphasised that young voices bring fresh perspectives and address issues relevant to their generation.

“The presence of youth reflects the vitality of Oman’s cultural scene,” she said, stressing the importance of nurturing these talents as they represent the future of the country’s theatre and cultural landscape.

As Oman marked World Theatre Day, the continued investment in youth, creativity and cultural dialogue underscores theatre’s enduring role — not only as an art form, but as a catalyst for awareness, identity and societal progress. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

NATURE
REAWAKENS
AFTER
AL MASARAT



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

HEAVY RAINFALL from the Al Masarat low-pressure system swept across Oman in recent days, leaving behind a mixed legacy of hardship and renewal.

The system triggered wadi floods, hail, and tragic incidents that resulted in 14 recorded deaths, attributed to both intentional and unintentional behaviours. Yet beyond these challenges, its environmental impact has been strikingly transformative.

Across Oman, landscapes long subdued by arid conditions have come back to life.

In Wadi Al Maawil, aflaj channels are flowing once again, their waters moving steadily through ancient irrigation systems. Similar scenes have unfolded in Al Rustaq, where traditional water networks have surged back, reflecting both the strength of the rainfall and the resilience of Oman's agricultural heritage.

In Nizwa, aflaj such as Falaj Karsha have replenished surrounding farms, while in Izki, wells and water sources that had previously weakened have shown clear signs of recovery. These developments have improved water availability and strengthened agricultural prospects in multiple regions.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources reported that Wadi Dayqah Dam reached full capacity, with reserves exceeding 100 million cubic metres.

Describing it as a 'sustainable bounty,' the ministry highlighted the long-term benefits of this water storage for both communities and the environment.

Experts emphasised the rarity of the system.

Amjad al Manji, a weather and

climate researcher, noted that Al Masarat delivered significantly higher rainfall than comparable systems that took place before in Oman such as Al Mateer low-pressure system, making it a standout climatic event.

Ayman al Farsi, a cartographer and watershed map designer, described it as unusual in both intensity and geographic reach, with widespread wadi flows and high precipitation levels.

The environmental gains are already visible. Vegetation has flourished, biodiversity improved, and cleaner air has followed as rain cleared dust and pollutants.

For farmers, the rainfall has enhanced soil quality, replenished nutrients, and reduced reliance on irrigation, lowering costs while boosting productivity.

In Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the effects are especially significant. With the land rejuvenated, preparations for the rose harvest are underway.

Ali al Maqbali, an Omani tourism and hiking enthusiast, noted that the post-rain conditions are ideal for the upcoming season, which runs from late March to mid-May.

Increased water supply has expanded cultivation areas and improved yields, supporting local livelihoods and related industries.

Tourism has also seen a boost. Waterfalls, flowing wadis, and green terraces have drawn residents and visitors, transforming familiar landscapes into seasonal attractions. Widely shared images capture a rare vibrancy, with greenery spreading across the terrain and waterways in motion.

Despite its dangers, Al Masarat highlights the dual nature of extreme weather in arid regions: disruptive and at times deadly, yet also capable of restoring ecosystems and reshaping the bond between people and the land.



Al Fara Village



Rose harvest season



Al Jabal Al Akhdhar



Waterfalls



Running wadi



Wadi Dayqah Dam



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QUIET
CONFIDENCE
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CAUTION

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

As one more weather system is set to bring in rains, what could be the mindset of commuters if they were to come across a running wadi?
“Despite repeated alerts and message notifications, people still choose to venture out unnecessarily. In doing so, they risk their lives, leaving their families to suffer the consequences,” said a concerned resident, Rita Samuel.
Mohammed al Riyami, another

concerned citizen, said he was overwhelmed with water on the street in front of his house. “I did not have to approach a wadi.”
According to senior psychiatrist, Dr Hamed al Sinawi, one of the most powerful forces at play, when it comes to the urge to cross a wadi, is what psychologists call optimism bias, the belief that negative outcomes are more likely to happen to others than to ourselves.
A driver may know that crossing flooded roads is dangerous, but still think, “It won’t happen to me.” This

quiet confidence often overrides caution. “Driving is an activity most of us perform daily, and this familiarity makes us feel confident. We trust our skills, our vehicles and our judgment. Yet water is deceptive. Even a small depth can lift a car or disrupt traction. What feels like control is often an illusion,” explained Dr Hamed.
Another explanation, he pointed out, is social influence. When drivers see others crossing successfully, the situation appears safer than it truly is. Psychologists refer to this as social proof. In uncertain situations, we look to others

to guide our behaviour. “If they made it, I probably will too” becomes an unspoken assumption.
“Some of the decision-making process is altered, possibly because the driver is tired or in a hurry to reach their destination. When he decides to cross, his mind begins to justify the decision. “It doesn’t look that deep.”
“I’ve done this before.” In psychology, this is called cognitive dissonance, our tendency to align our thinking with our intended actions to reduce internal conflict.

Batinah North launches rapid response for roads

SIHAM AL SAID
SUHAR, MARCH 30

AL BATINAH North has ramped up field operations to tackle the damage caused by recent weather conditions, launching an immediate response plan aimed at restoring road access and clearing affected areas.
Municipal teams across the governorate are working around the clock to remove debris, reopen key routes and clean wadi channels, ensuring public safety and the swift resumption of daily life.
Eng Waleed al Nabhani, Head of the Projects Department at Al Batinah North Municipalities, said the focus is currently on urgency and accessibility. “Our top priority is to reopen roads that were cut off and remove debris left by flowing wadis. This is essential to restore movement and reduce disruptions for residents,” he explained.
Al Nabhani noted that once immediate access is secured, teams will conduct a comprehensive technical assessment to evaluate the extent of damage and determine the financial



Suhar and Al Suwaiq are among the most affected areas.

and engineering requirements for full restoration.
“The damage varies,” he added. “Some roads were partially washed away, while protective structures along wadis were affected. Blockages in culverts and drainage channels caused by solid waste have also complicated water flow during peak runoff.”
He emphasised the need for long-term solutions. Future rehabilitation efforts will not only repair the damage, but also improve infrastructure resilience. “We are committed to rebuilding in a way that ensures our roads and assets can better withstand extreme weather conditions,” he said.
Al Nabhani highlighted that Saham and Al Suwaiq are among the most

affected areas, especially locations near wadi paths. He also pointed to rainwater accumulation in some coastal housing schemes along Al Batinah Highway, attributing it to land levels below sea level. Authorities are studying integrated drainage solutions to address this issue. He concluded by urging community awareness, reminding residents that dumping waste in wadi channels significantly worsens the impact of heavy rains.
Through these coordinated efforts, Al Batinah North continues to demonstrate a proactive approach, balancing rapid response with sustainable planning to safeguard both infrastructure and community well-being.

Gearing up for Investment Opportunities Forum 2026

BARKA: The Al Batinah South branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Al Batinah South, will organise the Investment Opportunities Forum 2026 on April 6 in the Wilayat of Barka.
Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, stated that the governorate is preparing for the launch of the Investment Opportunities Forum 2026 with the aim of strengthening partnerships, attracting qualitative investments and stimulating economic growth. This will be achieved by presenting investment opportunities in vital sectors, organising discussion sessions and holding an accompanying exhibition.
Furthermore, several agreements will be signed to help transform these opportunities into tangible projects, thereby supporting the business environment and enhancing the governorate’s competitiveness in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.
For his part, Eng Hamoud bin Salim al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Chamber’s branch in Al Batinah South, said that the Investment Opportunities



Forum embodies the Chamber’s orientation towards supporting the private sector and enhancing its role in development.
He noted that this is achieved by creating a stimulating investment environment, empowering investors, and connecting them directly with relevant authorities to attract qualitative investments, stimulate partnerships, raise the efficiency of the business environment, and reinforce the position of Al Batinah South as a promising economic hub.
The forum is held under the slogan ‘Sustainable Development and Comprehensive Economic Partnership,’ aiming to review promising investment opportunities in various economic sectors within the governorate and expand the base of local and international investors.
It serves as a strategic meeting point for decision-makers, government

agencies, and investors to broaden the scope of cooperation and economic partnerships in the service of sustainable development goals and the national vision to achieve Oman Vision 2040.
In the context of enhancing the investment environment and attracting economic partnerships, participating entities will showcase more than 100 investment opportunities and over 40 investment sites covering an area exceeding 6 million square metres.
These opportunities are distributed across several vital sectors, including the industrial and food processing sector (30 opportunities), the commercial sector (27 opportunities), the services sector (17 opportunities), eco, cultural and adventure tourism (15 opportunities), the real estate sector (7 opportunities), and the agricultural and food security sector (4 opportunities). — ONA

الشركة الدولية للصرافة ش.م.م GLOBAL MONEY EXCHANGE Co.LLC <i>Trust is our Tradition, Commitment is our Value</i> Managed By					
SUMMARY OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES - GLOBAL MONEY EXCHANGE CO. LLC AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2025 (In RO '000)					
ASSETS	31.12.2025	31.12.2024	LIABILITIES	31.12.2025	31.12.2024
1. Cash in hand	4,833	4,744	1. Capital & Reserves	11,013	10,768
2. Deposits with Central Bank of Oman	165	165	2. Borrowings from Banks		
3. Precious metals	-	-	3. Balances due to branches		
4. Balances due from Banks	7,602	7,058	4. Balances due to Money Changers	361	256
5. Balances due from branches			5. Loans and Advances payable		
6. Balances due from Money Changers	246	57	6. Cheques & Drafts issued and outstanding	107	59
7. Cheques and drafts purchased			7. Other Liabilities	3,984	3,545
8. Loans and Advances					
9. Investments					
10. Fixed Assets	1,578	1,436			
11. Other Assets	1,041	1,168			
TOTAL	15,465	14,628	TOTAL	15,465	14,628
SUMMARY OF INCOME STATEMENT- GLOBAL MONEY EXCHANGE CO LLC AS OF DECEMBER 31,2025 (In RO '000)					
	31.12.2025	31.12.2024			
Operating Income					
Interest on Deposits	11	11			
Commission On Remittance	3,903	4,153			
Exchange Earnings on Remittance	1,036	788			
Foreign Currency Earnings	1,566	1,888			
Other Income	51	70			
Total Operating Income	6,567	6,890			
Operating Expense					
Staff Costs	3,635	3,799			
Interest On Borrowings	0	0			
Occupancy Costs	414	419			
Bank Charges	333	285			
Administration Costs	1,232	1,297			
Depreciation	233	213			
Write-Off	0	10			
Other Expenses	81	101			
Total Operating Expense	5,928	6,124			
Net Profit or Loss (-)	639	766			
Income Tax	93	116			
Profit and Total Comprehensive Income of the year	546	648			
We certify that the above balances are in agreement with the books and records of the company as at 31 December 2025.					
GLOBAL MONEY EXCHANGE CO.LLC			PKF LLC CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS		



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Site Visit	Tender Price (ر.ع.م)
NESC/2026/008	Office Renovation, Interior Fit-Out, and Expansion Works.	08/04/2026	20/04/2026	Specialist	12/04/2026 at 9:00 AM	Free
The table below shows the instructions for participation: -						
Participation	• Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. • To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.					
Enquiries	• Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. • Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.					
Tender Submission	• Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.					
Terms and Conditions	• The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. • NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. • A certificate confirming Omanization achievement, bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. • Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization • NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. • Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.					
Incentives and exemptions	• Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.					



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
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records@supply.nama.om | www.supply.nama.om



1

IRAN BLAMES ISRAEL

Iran's military said Israel was behind a recent strike on Kuwait's desalination plant.

2

STRIKE ON IRAQ BASE

Rockets fired overnight targeted an Iraqi military base inside the Baghdad airport complex, which also houses a support centre for the US embassy.

3

ARMENIA UNIVERSITY

The American University of Armenia said it was moving all classes online over Iranian threats to target US universities in the region.

4

COMMANDER CONFIRMED DEAD

Iran confirmed that Revolutionary Guards commander Alireza Tangsiri had been killed, days after Israel said it targeted him in an air strike.

5

MISSILE SITES HIT

Israel's military said it had struck dozens of weapons production sites including a missiles manufacturing line in Iran's capital Tehran.

6

TEHRAN POWER RESTORED

Iran has restored electricity in parts of the capital and nearby areas after strikes damaged power grids and briefly disrupted supply.

7

BEIRUT SUBURB HIT

A strike hit Beirut's southern suburbs on Monday after Israel ordered people in the Hezbollah stronghold to leave.

TRUMP THREATENS TO DESTROY IRAN OIL ISLAND

US President Donald Trump pushed concerns about surging world prices aside on Monday and threatened to destroy Iran's oil wells, power plants and main export terminal if Tehran does not quickly accept a peace deal. An earlier Trump comment warning of a possible assault by US ground troops to seize Iran's Kharg Island oil facilities had already sent prices higher, but the US leader then doubled down in a combative social media post. Trump expressed confidence that a negotiated settlement would soon be reached but warned that if it was not — or if Iran continued to block the Strait of Hormuz to most sea traffic — US forces would “blow up” Kharg Island and all of Iran's oil wells and electricity generation.

Iran has previously threatened that if its key economic sites face further US and Israeli strikes it will target the energy infrastructure of its oil and gas-rich Arab neighbours on the Gulf, and the month-old war has already inflicted havoc on the global economy and plunged markets into turmoil. Market experts warned that any US ground operation or wider Iranian retaliation could send oil prices to levels not seen since the July 2008 commodity boom, when the cost of world benchmark crude Brent hit close to \$150 per barrel — and could rise far more.

OIL PRICES SURGE

Brent has already risen in price by nearly 60 per cent this month, and the US benchmark WTI by more than half. “If the US were to launch a ground invasion of Iran, possibly taking the Kharg Island, or if Tehran were to intensify retaliatory strikes on energy infrastructure or fully close the Strait, projections of \$200 (a barrel) oil will not be an otherworldly supposition anymore,” analyst Tamas Varga of PVM Energy said.

As Israel pressed its offensive against Hezbollah in south Lebanon — hitting, an official said, an army checkpoint and killing a Lebanese soldier — Indonesia confirmed on Monday that one of its peacekeepers was killed after the UN force said a projectile hit one of its positions. Separately, the Israeli military said one of its soldiers was killed on Sunday in combat in southern Lebanon, bringing to six the number of troops killed since fighting with Hezbollah began this month.

On the ground there appeared to be no let-up in hostilities. Israel said its air defence batteries responded to “missiles launched from Iran”, after earlier announcing it was striking “terror regime military infrastructure across Tehran”. Israel confirmed that in recent days it had hit the Imam Hossein University in Tehran, which it says is used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) for advanced weapons research. Tehran has warned it could strike US universities across the Middle East.

DIPLOMACY ROUTE

On the diplomatic front, Pakistan — acting as a go-between for Washington and Tehran — hosted foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt in Islamabad on Sunday for talks on the crisis. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said they had discussed how to “bring an early and permanent end to the war.” He said Iran and the United States had expressed “confidence in Pakistan to facilitate the talks” and that he had spoken to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi as well as



A woman talks on a phone while standing amid a damaged residential neighbourhood, in Tehran. — Reuters

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and other foreign ministers who also backed the idea.

Nevertheless, the speaker of Iran's parliament accused Washington of using diplomacy as a smoke screen. Despite making diplomatic overtures, including proposing a

15-point plan to end the war, the United States has also been sending more military assets into the region, including an amphibious assault ship carrying 3,500 Marines.

Israel's fire and rescue service said its crews were working to extinguish a large blaze at the Haifa oil refinery after it was hit

to avoid a wider regional war.

The war will trigger twin shocks of supply shortages and price rises, the full extent of which have yet to be felt, Sisi told the conference.

“I fear that targeting energy facilities, whether production or refineries, will have very serious repercussions for the global economy and fuel prices,” he said. Market watchers had warned “the price of a barrel of oil could reach more than \$200, and this is not an exaggeration,” he added. Sisi also warned of a looming crisis for global food supplies, noting that disruptions to fertiliser exports will have a massive impact on prices. — Reuters



An industrial building at Israel's Oil Refineries was hit by debris from an intercepted Iranian missile, in Haifa. — Reuters

by debris from the interception of a projectile on Monday. Television channels showed thick black smoke billowing into the sky from the site, while the fire service shared photos of a tank on fire. “The incident involves a fire at a tank containing 3,000 cubic metres of gasoline,” the service said, adding that the

gasoline was being pumped out of the tank.

Firefighters were operating at the scene “where debris from an interception was identified following the latest barrage”, the service said, adding there were no casualties. The incident occurred shortly after the Israeli military said it had detected new incoming

missiles from Iran.

It was not immediately clear whether the refinery had been hit by debris from a missile from Iran or Lebanon or from an intercepting Israeli projectile.

The weeks of strikes have also taken a heavy toll on ordinary people in Iran. — AFP

G7 MINISTERS TACKLE FALLOUT OF MIDEAST WAR

PARIS: G7 ministers and central bank officials gathered on Monday to tackle the economic consequences of the war in the Middle East that has sent energy prices soaring and has triggered fears for the world economy. The United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran in late February, and Tehran has hit back by targeting crude-exporting countries in the region and halting most shipments through the Gulf.

The squeeze on supply has pushed oil and natural gas prices higher, with drastic knock-on effects for supply chains in multiple industries.

French Finance Minister Roland



G7 representatives meet at the French Economy minister in Paris. — AFP

Lescure said the G7 was convening finance ministers, energy ministers, and central bank officials, the first gathering in that format since the G7

was established in 1975. “We know that what's happening now in the Gulf is having energy consequences, economic consequences, financial market consequences and potentially inflation consequences,” he told reporters ahead of the meeting. “The idea is to monitor developments, to exchange diagnoses especially on potential disruptions.”

Representatives of the International Energy Agency (IEA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were present at the meeting held by video link. — AFP

NUCLEAR MATERIALS



IAEA says heavy water plant ‘damaged’ after strike

VIENNA: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Sunday that Iran's heavy water production plant in Khondab was no longer operational after an Israeli military strike. The Israeli military said on Friday it carried out a strike against a heavy water plant in Arak, central Iran, describing the site as a “key plutonium production site for nuclear weapons”. On Sunday, IAEA said based on an independent analysis of satellite imagery the heavy water production plant at Khondab, which Iran reported had been attacked on 27 March, had “sustained severe damaged (sic) and is no longer operational”. It added the “installation contains no declared nuclear material”.

Iran said on Monday it was not seeking nuclear weapons but the issue of whether to remain part of the non-proliferation treaty was under review in parliament. “The Islamic Republic of Iran has never sought and does not seek nuclear weapons,” said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei in a weekly press briefing. “Regarding membership in this treaty, regardless of our clear position on the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction, this is genuinely a debate taking place within public opinion and at the parliamentary level.” — AFP

JETS RESTRICTIONS



Spain closes airspace to planes involved in war

MADRID: Spain has closed its airspace to US planes involved in attacks on Iran, a step beyond its previous denial of use of jointly-operated military bases, Defence Minister Margarita Robles said on Monday. “We don't authorise either the use of military bases or the use of airspace for actions related to the war in Iran,” she told reporters in Madrid. Spanish newspaper El Pais had first reported the news on Monday, citing military sources.

The closure of the airspace forces military planes to bypass Nato member Spain en route to their targets in the Middle East, but it does not include emergency situations, El Pais added. “This decision is part of the decision already made by the Spanish government not to participate in or contribute to a war which was initiated unilaterally and against international law,” Economy Minister Carlos Cuerdo said during an interview with radio Cadena Ser when asked if the decision to close Spain's airspace could worsen relations with the United States.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has been one of the most vocal opponents of the US and Israeli attacks on Iran, describing them as reckless and illegal. President Donald Trump has threatened to cut trade with Madrid for denying the US use of Spain's bases in the war. — Reuters

OPINION

Let us change how we behave during rains



THE recent spate of rain-related incidents claiming more than 15 lives, is a stark reminder of the dangers posed by natural events and, more critically, human behaviour. Rather than shifting focus, it's imperative we confront the uncomfortable truth: many of these tragedies were preventable, stemming from carelessness, risky actions and an underestimation of danger. Oman's landscape, with its arid climate and occasional intense rainfall, means flash floods are a known risk.

Yet, year after year, we witness similar tragedies. Authorities have issued warnings, implemented safety measures and conducted awareness campaigns, but to what avail? Clearly, more needs to be done to bridge the gap between knowledge and behaviour.

A cultural shift is needed, prioritising safety over thrill-seeking and recognising that some risks are not worth taking.

This involves engaging communities, schools, and media to promote responsible behaviour and highlight the consequences of reckless actions.

The role of social media can't be overlooked, also. Platforms that amplify risky behaviour contribute to normalising such actions. A collective responsibility exists to discourage dangerous stunts and promote safety.

Stricter penalties for reckless behaviour, such as driving through floodwaters, could serve as a deterrent. Authorities must be empowered to act decisively to protect citizens and residents alike.

Preventing such tragedies requires a

multifaceted approach. Awareness, education, community engagement, responsible media practices, and robust enforcement. The loss of more than 15 lives recently is a sombre reminder of what is at stake. It is time for Oman to reevaluate its approach to safety and risk perception.

The country could explore innovative solutions like smart signage, community-led initiatives, and incentivising safe behaviour.

The question remains: will we act before the next tragedy, or will we wait for another devastating event to spur change?

It is heartbreaking to see lives lost due to preventable actions. To bridge the gap between knowledge and behaviour, Oman could implement comprehensive safety education programmes in schools, focusing on risk assessment and responsible decision-making.

Community engagement is key. Local leaders and influencers can play a significant role in promoting safety awareness and encouraging responsible behaviour.

Social media campaigns can also be leveraged to spread safety messages and counter the normalization of risky behaviour.

While stricter enforcement of laws and regulations will help deter reckless actions, authorities should work with media outlets to highlight the consequences of such behaviour and share stories of those affected by these tragedies.

Kudos to Oman's security officers for their tireless efforts in responding to emergencies and keeping citizens safe! Their dedication and bravery are truly commendable.

Stricter penalties for reckless behaviour, such as driving through floodwaters, could serve as a deterrent. Authorities must be empowered to act decisively to protect citizens and residents alike.

From rescuing stranded motorists to providing critical support during natural disasters, your work is often behind the scenes, but never goes unnoticed and the recent rains and resulting incidents have showcased their professionalism and commitment to service.

Oman's security officers are a testament to the country's values of compassion, duty, and service but there is a need for a collective responsibility to prioritise safety and protect lives. Let's hope Oman's authorities and citizens come together to create a safer environment for all.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has confirmed that attempts to cross flowing wadis remain the leading cause of emergency incidents during the current weather conditions in Oman, despite repeated warnings. Attempts to cross wadis have led to several fatalities in recent days, drawing concern on social media.

In a renewed effort to enhance safety, the ROP has launched a public awareness campaign urging motorists not to risk crossing flooded wadis. The campaign carries the message, 'Do not test the strength of your vehicle... test your awareness, and do not risk your life.' Indeed, we all need to test our awareness in this regard.

Authorities reiterated that no vehicle can withstand the force of flowing wadis and urged road users to avoid low-lying roads during heavy rain. The Public Prosecution warned that anyone attempting to cross flowing wadis faces up to three months' imprisonment and a fine of RO 500.

‘THEY NEVER LEAVE’: SUDANESE FEEL HUNTED BY KILLER DRONES

In Sudan's Kordofan, now the fiercest battleground between the army and rival paramilitaries, 53-year-old trader Hamed Hamidan always keeps one eye on the sky, looking out for the drones that punctuate daily life.

“They never leave the city,” Hamidan said by text message from South Kordofan's Dilling, where the army in January broke a long-running siege by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). “They have caused constant fear,” he said.

Three years into war between Sudan's army and the RSF, near-daily drone strikes now kill dozens at a time, striking markets, homes and hospitals without warning.

Both sides have increasingly relied on advanced drone warfare in their battle for territory, drawing frequent condemnation from the United Nations and pointing to the steady flow of supplies from foreign backers.

The UN said this week drone strikes killed more than 500 civilians between January and mid-March, illustrating “the devastating impact of high-tech and relatively cheap weapons in populated areas.” In El Obeid, capital of North Kordofan, where the RSF has attempted to reimpose a siege for months, civilians say they can now distinguish the different types of drones overhead.

“Before Ramadhan, the drones never left the sky,” said Othman Abdel Karim, a 46-year-old civil servant.

“We can now tell them apart — the suicide drones, the strategic ones.”

The first are cheap and small, some hardly bigger than a camera, and sometimes assembled from commercially available parts fighters mount a bomb on.

They are known as “kamikaze” or suicide drones, because they explode on impact.

So-called “strategic” drones are advanced and costly, with ranges of up to hundreds of kilometres (miles) that can deliver heavy payloads before flying back to base.

“When these drones hit any site — a market, a hospital, a school, as we have seen recently -- the impact goes beyond immediate casualties,” said Grace Wairima Ndungu of Mercy Corps, one of the few aid groups still operating in Kordofan. — AFP

Are things getting better for Omanis with disabilities?

IN AN ARTICLE I recently wrote titled “Are Things Getting Better for Disabled People in the Middle East? The Case of Oman,” I explored the experiences of Omanis with physical impairments to understand how much progress has truly been made. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 19 participants from across the country, the study revealed a story of both promise and frustration — a landscape defined by progress on paper but persistent barriers in daily life.

Over the past few years, Oman has made notable strides toward inclusion. The 2025 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2023 Social Protection Law are landmark reforms that represent a growing recognition that disability is not simply a medical matter, but a social and rights-based issue.

Yet, this progress remains uneven. Physical accessibility continues to be one of the most pressing challenges. Many public buildings, schools, and even government offices are inaccessible to wheelchair users. In rural areas, the situation is even more difficult — there are no clear building codes, few adapted transportation options, and limited awareness of accessibility. One participant described feeling “trapped” in her own home because public facilities were impossible to navigate. Others recounted stories of airlines mishandling wheelchairs or refusing to transport them. These barriers hinder not only mobility but also education and employment opportunities.

Employment, in particular, still reflects symbolic inclusion rather



Many public buildings, schools and even government offices are inaccessible to wheelchair users.



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

Inclusion begins with law, but it ends with action. Omanis with disabilities do not want pity — they want access, autonomy and equality.

than genuine equality. Although Omani law requires companies to hire workers with disabilities, several interviewees described a practice in which some employers pay reduced salaries to employees who stay at home, simply to meet legal quotas. As one participant said, “That's not empowerment — it's dependency in disguise.” Many Omanis with disabilities want meaningful careers that build their skills and self-worth, not charity-based treatment that reinforces stereotypes.

Representation is another area where much remains to be done. Despite a growing presence of advocates with disabilities in civil society, almost no persons with disabilities hold high-level government or leadership roles in Oman. The few disability associations that exist are often under-resourced and tightly controlled, limiting their capacity to influence policy. Participants repeatedly argued that real inclusion begins when people

with disabilities themselves are trusted with decision-making power — when they move from being spoken for to speaking for themselves.

Social media, however, has become a crucial space for visibility and voice. Influencers, who collaborated in this study, use platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram to share experiences, raise concerns, and advocate for accessibility.

There is one important issue I did not address in the original article but plan to write more about: marriage and disability, especially for women. Several participants hinted at it indirectly, revealing how women with physical impairments face deeper social stigma than men. While men with disabilities often marry or discuss marriage openly, women with similar conditions are frequently discouraged, overprotected, or viewed as “unfit” for partnership.

Oman's journey toward inclusion reflects a broader Middle Eastern trend: Many countries have ratified international disability conventions but still struggle with implementation. Real progress will depend on shifting from symbolic inclusion to structural change — through stronger laws, better enforcement, inclusive infrastructure, and leadership opportunities for citizens with disabilities.

The message from the study's participants is clear: inclusion begins with law, but it ends with action. Omanis with disabilities do not want pity — they want access, autonomy and equality.

If Oman acts on the solid foundation it has already built, it has the potential to become a regional leader in disability inclusion.

An unforgettable March...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

PHEW! March has been an incredible month of testing challenges. The month began with the region being tossed into a conflict that seems to continue aimlessly, triggering military and diplomatic crises. The fasting was going on as the conflict continued to take lives while uncertainties mounted. Logistics went berserk, and oil prices surged. The Strait of Hormuz closure led to almost a 96 per cent decrease in maritime traffic. The region went into a state of high alert especially at ports. Hyperinflation in the logistics sector and delays in the supply chain have been noted. We might even have to see new overland ‘food corridors’ in the region. The Sultanate of Oman continues the diplomatic channels. The normal conversations have also been about how the ‘War Risk’ insurance surcharges could make everything from electronics to basic goods more expensive. Everyone waited for Eid, and just when the celebratory mood was in the air, in came the low-pressure Al Masarat trough with rains followed by roaring wadis. The desert turned into sea, and wadis became rivers. The transformation of the landscape manifested right in front of our eyes. Vehicles were lost, lives were risked, and then the learning of the legal consequences of crossing the wadis began. Emerged from it were the heroes. March is when I go around taking pictures of wild flowers in Oman. To me, that is the arrival of spring. The wildflowers announce it quietly. This time around we saw, thanks to social

media and people equipped with mobile phones, officers, citizens, and residents who leaped into action to save lives. Officers from Civil Defence and Ambulance Services and the Royal Oman Police managed widespread wadi rescues. Vehicles were swept away. The search for the missing and the constant alerts from the ROP kept everyone on edge. The professional calm these teams maintained while the rest of the country watched anxiously is something nobody will forget. They are the reason ‘An Unforgettable March’ isn’t remembered solely for its destruction but for the lives that were pulled back from the brink. ROP aviators performed daring winch rescues in Al Batinah South, hovering mere meters above raging water to lift families from the roofs of submerged vehicles. CDAA divers had to dive in the dark as they operated in near-zero visibility in flooded basements and stagnant pools to ensure no one was trapped, often tackling powerful undercurrents. And not to forget navigating ‘electrified’ waters due to downed power lines and maneuvering hidden debris while tackling sewage contamination. Officers had to supervise wadi crossing areas, and we have to think about this. They have to be there because we continue to attempt crossing running wadis. We saw humanitarian initiatives being launched, such as the one by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs titled ‘We Will Strengthen You with Your Brother’ to aid flood-affected families. Restoration efforts have seen electricity and major road networks nearly fully restored.

Everyone waited for Eid, and just when the celebratory mood was in the air, in came the low-pressure Al Masarat trough with rains followed by roaring wadis. The desert turned into sea, and wadis became rivers. The transformation of the landscape manifested right in front of our eyes

Moving onto the world there was this shipment in Europe that went missing while in transit between Italy and Poland. No, it was not priceless paintings or precious metals. This was the high-profile ‘chocolate heist’ in Europe. The tonnes of chocolates could be traced if they begin to be circulated because the company says they can trace the stolen goods through the scanning of the unique batch codes found on each bar. They would have to move before the expiry date. But of course there could always be unofficial sales channels. But this is not all — a new, weaker weather trough is forecast to impact Oman between March 31 and April 2, though with significantly reduced intensity compared to Al Masarat. Meanwhile, get ready for some space talk in April, as Nasa is currently preparing for the Artemis II moon mission launch scheduled for early fourth month of the year. Then there were good moments too in March — a historic moment occurred as Autumn Durald Arkapaw became the first woman to win the Oscar for Best Cinematography for the film Sinners. This month also belonged to Shahzad Khan, the 25-year-old Pakistani resident of Oman from Peshawar who became a hero in Oman. He rescued two Indian residents who were stranded in their vehicle, stuck in the flowing wadi in Barka. He did not hesitate to jump onto the vehicle to open it and pull the people out. And Shahzad does not know swimming. Bravery is an asset. So the month might have been relentless, but we found heroes to celebrate. Wish you a good April.

BEIRUT RESCUERS RISK THEIR LIVES TO SAVE ANIMALS

RICHARD SALAME

Armed with thick gloves and small plastic crates Kamal, Khalil and Reem jump on two mopeds and head into Beirut’s southern suburbs, which see almost daily strikes by Israeli aircraft. Hands scarred by a thousand bites and scratches, the small rescue team from Lebanese NGO Animals Lebanon uses two-wheelers to navigate streets made narrow by piles of rubble as they search for trapped animals. In drizzling rain, the team is responding to two calls, passing from crammed central districts filled with people seeking safety into increasingly abandoned streets where Israeli air strikes are concentrated. They are seeking a pet cat they’ve been trying to trap for a week since it jumped through a bombed-out ground-floor window, and another showing signs of paralysis, they think from a recent Israeli bombing. “We never lose hope that the cat we can’t find is still around, because it will come back. This is its refuge,” says volunteer Khalil Hamieh, 45. Lebanon was pulled into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hezbollah fired rockets towards Israel to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Israel has responded with large-scale strikes on Lebanon and a ground offensive in the country’s south. On the edge of Haret Hreik in Beirut’s southern suburbs, Hamieh’s colleague Issam Attar stops the jeep that will bring the rescued cats to hospital. The mopeds can navigate onwards on two wheels, and escape quickly if an Israeli strike is announced. Between Israeli air raids and Hezbollah saying filming in the southern suburbs is “strictly prohibited”, media access has become more complicated lately, and AFP journalists remained outside with Attar. “It’s a living being,” Attar said of why he rescues animals. “It’s not guilty of wars or anything else.” “Besides the fact that we feel for animals, there’s also the owners who can’t get their animals - we can, and we want to help them.” Animals Lebanon said its teams had rescued 241 animals from south Lebanon and Beirut’s southern suburbs, areas under heavy bombardment since the start of the war. In addition to killing over 1,100 people, the war has displaced over a million, according to Lebanese authorities. In this city without air-raid sirens, gunshots into the air warn people of incoming Israeli air strikes. The shooting and the ensuing explosions terrify cats especially, Animals Lebanon Operation Manager Reem Sadek said, and many families can’t find their pets as they rush to evacuate. — AFP

Tehran residents on edge after month of war

FOR Tehran resident Fatemeh, the highlight of her day in a city beset by deadly daily US-Israeli strikes in the now month-long war is to make the short journey to her local cafe. “When I make it to a cafe table, even for a few minutes, I can almost believe the world hasn’t ended,” said Fatemeh, 27, a dental assistant. “It feels like stepping out of this damn war and into an ordinary day, or at least imagining a world that isn’t filled with the constant fear of losing your life, or where you stay alive but lose a loved one or everything you have,” she said. If a lull in the bombing allows a better night’s sleep, Fatemeh said she will put on make-up and dress up to make her visit to the cafe extra special. “And then I go back home, back to the reality of living through war, with all its darkness and weight,” she said. Residents of Tehran who spoke to AFP’s team covering the war in Paris painted a picture of a city that is still clinging to some routine, with cafes and restaurants open, no shortages reported in supermarkets or petrol stations, and people trying to keep up some vestige of a social life. But they know that life is anything but normal with the US and Israel maintaining a relentless pace of bombardment on the capital since the war started on February 28 with the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other top officials. There are security checkpoints on what were peaceful streets, the internet has been blocked or drastically slowed for everything except domestic services, and windows are taped up to prevent them from shattering in case of attack. As well as fear of being killed or losing a loved one in an attack, people are gripped by anxiety over the future, over what kind of country they will live in and how



A couple stands at a park in northern Tehran overlooking the Iranian capital’s skyline with Milad Tower. — AFP



STUART WILLIAMS

The writer is a Paris-based correspondent for AFP. Reported from postings in Tehran, Moscow, Istanbul and always watching Iran, Russia, Türkiye & Ukraine

they will make ends meet amid a collapsing economy. The people who agreed to share messages gave only their first names for fear of the consequences if they were to be identified by authorities. “These days, I mostly stay at home and only go out if I absolutely have to. The only thing left from my life routine before the war that helps me keep my spirit up is cooking,” said Shahrzad, 39, a housewife. But she added, “Sometimes I find myself crying in the middle of it. I miss ordinary days... A life where I didn’t have to constantly think about explosions, death, or losing my loved ones. “I try to stay strong for my daughter... But when I think about the future, I can’t form any clear picture in my mind that I can hold on to with hope.” People in Tehran have, over the last week, been trying to make the best they can out of the main traditional Persian holiday of Nowruz, a festival that normally sees people leave the city or celebrate at home with family. “There is no famine, everything is available. Cafes are open, and we still go out to cafes,” said Shayan, 40, a photographer. “There is gasoline, water, and electricity.”

“But there is a sense of helplessness in all of us. We don’t know what to do and there’s really nothing we can do. “There was no real Nowruz atmosphere at all, but we tried to force ourselves,” he said. While shops and restaurants are open until 9:00 pm, “many people don’t go out after the afternoon”, he added. In a continuation of a trend that began months before the war, more women are openly not wearing the headscarf that is obligatory under the Islamic republic’s dress rules, residents say. State television has at rallies even interviewed bare-headed women, so long as they express pro-government sentiments. Elnaz, 32, a Tehran-based painter, said when attacks did relent and she had time to think, she remembered how much she missed “living a simple life”. “We miss the simplest things, going out at night, or just being able to go to another part of the city. “I miss something as ordinary as shopping somewhere other than the small grocery store or bakery on my street. “I miss reading in a cafe, going to the park... all those very, very simple things.” She added: “And more than anything, I miss a peaceful night’s sleep.” Elnaz said that on some nights the attacks are so intense it feels like “all of Tehran is shaking”. “Everything goes back to one state - survival. Thinking only about staying alive with all the people I love. My friends, my family, and the people of my city, who look kinder than ever in this difficult time,” she said. Kaveh, 38, a visual artist, said a piece of a missile struck about 50 metres from his house a few days ago. “I brought it home with me. I want to make something out of it when I get the chance,” he said.

SPORTS

ANNUAL MEETING



The meeting will discuss and approve the association's annual budget for 2026.

OBA GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO DISCUSS PLANS, BUDGET TODAY

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

The Oman Basketball Association's (OBA) Ordinary General Assembly will hold its annual meeting at 11 am on Tuesday, in the presence of the federation's vice-chairman, board members, and the presidents and representatives of affiliated clubs, at the hall of the Oman Olympic Committee and Sports Association's building in Al Ghubra.

The agenda includes the approval of the meeting agenda, followed by an address by the Association's board of directors.

Three members will be appointed to review the minutes of the meeting, and the minutes of the previous Ordinary General Assembly meeting will be approved.

The assembly will then review the technical report, as well as the administrative and financial activities for the year ending 2025. It will also examine the annual audited balance sheet and the statement of surplus and liabilities for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025.

In addition, the meeting will discuss and approve the association's annual budget for 2026, vote on the appointment of an external auditor for the financial year, determine financial allowances, and review proposals submitted by members, alongside proposals put forward by the board of directors in accordance with the governing regulations.



OFA UNVEILS SEKTIQUI AS NEW HEAD COACH

THE OMAN Football Association officially unveiled Moroccan coach Tarik Sektioui as the new head coach of the senior national team during a press conference held on Monday.

The event at the Hormuz Grand Hotel in Muscat was attended by officials, media representatives, and club delegates.

The appointment comes as part of the association's efforts to strengthen the technical staff and benefit from Sektioui's extensive coaching experience. He is considered one of the prominent names in Arab football, having achieved notable success at both club level and with youth national teams.

Sektioui brings a strong coaching resume, having managed several Moroccan clubs with solid results. He also made a significant impact in youth football, contributing to the development of emerging talents and guiding them to positive performances in continental competitions, making him a suitable choice to lead Oman in the upcoming phase. During the press conference, Sektioui said that he had closely followed Omani football in recent months, explaining that he had carefully studied the domestic leagues. "I have a clear understanding of the Omani league and a vision to develop the national team from a tactical perspective. There are new ideas regarding playing style and strategy that we will work to implement in the coming period," he said.

The Moroccan coach also expressed his ambition to achieve major success with the national team, sending a message to Omani fans: "I dream of winning the AFC Asian Cup with the Oman national team. We will work together as one unit to achieve this goal and make the fans proud."

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
He added that he will place strong emphasis on youth development, noting that the next phase will include opportunities for new players. "We will closely monitor the Under-23 league and select new talents capable of strengthening the team. Building a strong national side starts with investing in



Tarik Sektioui brings a strong coaching resume, having managed several Moroccan clubs with solid results.



The appointment comes as part of the association's efforts to strengthen the technical staff.

young players," he explained.

Sektioui further stressed his familiarity with Omani football, saying: "I have full knowledge of the Omani league, its clubs, and players. I chose to coach the national team out of conviction, as I believe in its potential to achieve positive results."

Sektioui is expected to officially begin his duties in the coming period, focusing on preparing the team for upcoming competitions, aiming to improve performance and meet the aspirations of Omani fans at both regional and continental levels.

Clubs voice concerns over VAR implementation at OFA GA

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

Key issues related to fairness, scheduling and development dominated the Oman Football Association (OFA) Ordinary General Assembly held in Muscat on Monday, with strong discussions among clubs and officials on the future of domestic football.

Clubs voiced concerns over the unequal implementation of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system, stressing that its inconsistent use across matches affects sporting fairness. They also expressed dissatisfaction over match postponements due to national team training camps, calling for better coordination in scheduling.

The meeting, attended by 46 clubs out of 50 clubs, reviewed the federation's recent achievements and future plans.

Sayyid Sulaiman bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Chairman of Oman Football Association (OFA), highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance governance, improve



The meeting, attended by 46 clubs out of 50 clubs, reviewed the federation's recent achievements and future plans.

technical performance and strengthen institutional work across the football system.

The meeting also saw seven clubs barred from participating in the voting process — Dhank, Madha, Nakhal, Al Wusta, Al Ittifaq, Bukha and Al Hamra — due to their

non-participation in federation activities for two years, while some of these clubs attended the meeting without having the right to vote.

GOVERNORATES TOURNAMENT
Among the key announcements was the launch of a new

Governorates tournament set for next summer, alongside plans to establish four high-quality football academies aimed at developing young talent and supporting national teams.

On the technical side, the federation continues to expand

its analytical capabilities through a dedicated sports analysis centre designed to improve data-driven decision-making. The current season has also seen the introduction of the Olympic League to nurture emerging players.

Financially, the assembly approved the audited 2025 accounts and the 2026 budget, reaffirming the federation's commitment to transparency and sustainability.

It also announced that 250 job opportunities will be created across clubs in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, supporting administrative and technical stability. The meeting further addressed investment initiatives, including the operation of the OFA's hotel, aimed at diversifying revenue streams.

Discussions concluded with calls from clubs to enhance competition structures, ensure fairness in officiating technologies and strengthen grassroots development as part of the federation's long-term strategy.

SHARPENING SKILLS



The programme provides Ahmed bin Salim Ambusaidi, handball coach of Nizwa Club, with the opportunity to engage directly with high-level players and coaches.

AMBUSAIDI JOINS TRAINING WITH GERMANY’S OSNABRUCK CLUB

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

Omani handball coach Ahmed bin Salim Ambusaidi, has begun a training attachment with Germany’s Osnabruck Club from March 28 to April 16, in a step aimed at enhancing his technical and physical expertise while gaining insight into the latest training methods adopted by European clubs.

The programme provides Ambusaidi, handball coach of Nizwa Club, with the opportunity to engage directly with high-level players and coaches, contributing to the development of his tactical knowledge and coaching approach, as well as improving his ability to manage matches and team dynamics in line with modern training methodologies.

During the attachment, the coach will take part in daily training sessions, attend official and friendly matches and gain exposure to the professional sports environment within German clubs, who are widely regarded as among the leading systems in the development of handball worldwide.

This initiative comes as part of the Oman Handball Association’s efforts to support and develop national coaching talent. The federation is keen to provide opportunities for coaches to participate in international training programmes and attachments, enabling them to gain valuable experience and enhance their capabilities to lead national teams and club sides more effectively.

Ambusaidi is considered one of the leading national coaches in Omani handball. He recently served as assistant coach of the national indoor handball team during the 22nd Asian Men’s Handball Championship held in Kuwait last January. He currently continues his role with Nizwa Club, where he has achieved notable results, including guiding the first team to a fourth-place finish in the Oman First Division Handball League, in addition to strong performances with youth teams.

Volleyball clubs call for youth development centre at GA

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

The Oman Volleyball Association’s (OVA) Ordinary General Assembly outlined key priorities for the next phase of the sport during its annual meeting held on Monday at the Oman Olympic Committee and Sports Federations headquarters, with the attendance of board members and representatives of 22 clubs.

The meeting reviewed a range of issues related to the current state of volleyball in Oman, including national team plans, domestic competitions and club-related challenges, while also highlighting proposals aimed at strengthening the game’s long-term development.

In his opening remarks, Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Maqbali, OVA Chairman, stressed the importance of the next stage and



The Oman Volleyball Association held its annual General Assembly with the participation of 22 clubs. — Shamsa al Harthy

called on more clubs to return to the federation’s competitions, noting that broader participation remains essential to expanding the game’s base and raising the level of local competition. He also underlined the need for closer cooperation between the federation and clubs to support volleyball development. The assembly approved the agenda

after confirming the legal quorum and endorsed the minutes of the previous meeting, in addition to approving the administrative and financial activity report for the year ending 2025. Members also approved the audited 2025 annual financial statements, endorsed the 2026 budget and appointed independent auditors for the new financial year.

ASIAN CUP

On the technical side, the meeting reviewed the national teams’ upcoming external programme, including the indoor team’s participation in the games in Qatar and its first-ever appearance at the Asian Cup in India next June. The agenda also included Oman’s hosting of the West Asia Championship, participation in the Asian Challenge Cup in China and a further appearance in the games in Japan.

The federation also announced that it will issue a circular to regulate clubs’ foreign participation, limiting each club to one external tournament to maintain balance and protect teams from technical and administrative strain. Official correspondence will also remain a basic requirement for external participation requests.

Clubs, meanwhile, called for

stronger attention to age-group competitions and proposed the establishment of a specialised youth development centre to prepare the next generation of players, especially in light of the ageing profile of several current national team members. They also demanded more overseas exposure for clubs, better media coverage, live broadcasts of league matches, fewer sudden fixture changes, and a review of the Ministry Shield draw mechanism.

The meeting also addressed concerns raised by Dhofar clubs over the need for a clear plan to invest in local talent, particularly amid limited financial support. The federation said any future funding would be directed toward the technical needs of clubs.

The meeting concluded with reference to a coaching development plan scheduled for implementation next November.

Bahja, Al Baher, Mashoosh shine at HM’s Cup Festival

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

BAHJA, owned by Abdullah al Zuraei, delivered a strong performance with 7 minutes 35.78 seconds, while Al Baher, owned by Salim al Madhoushi, recorded the fastest time of 7:32.20 on the second day at His Majesty Cup Festival 2026 camel racing in the Wilayat of Barka on Monday. Mashoosh, owned by Hamed al Wahaibi, also stood out with 7:36.92, as the top three winners won cars as prizes.

Maraseem, Ghazar, Bayh and Talaid also claimed victories in their respective rounds, completing the list of seven car-winning camels in a highly competitive contests.

These races were part of His Majesty Cup Festival 2026, supported by The Royal Court Affairs and represented by the Royal Camel Corps (RCC), in cooperation with Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF).

The event is being held from March 29 to April 2 at Al Felaij Track in the Wilayat of Barka.

The opening day on Sunday included 32 races for the Hagayeg category, two years old, over a distance of 4 km.

The second day, March 30, featured 22 races for the Laqaya category, three years old, over a distance of 5 km, divided into 15 morning races with cash prizes for the top ten.

Seven main races were hold in the afternoon, offering seven cars and four icons for winners, along with cash prizes.

The third day, March 31, will witness 11 races for the Yathaa category, four years old, over 6 km, including seven morning races with cash prizes.

The four evening races will award four cars and four icons, in addition to cash prizes for top finishers.



The festival village features a range of cultural and heritage activities, with participation from 47 entities.

FESTIVAL VILLAGE OPENS

As part of the accompanying activities of HM’s Cup Festival, the Royal Camel Corps inaugurated the festival village at Al Felaij, under the auspices of Eng Hilal bin Mohammed al Wahaibi, Head of Royal Horses, Camels, Farms and Gardens Affairs.

The village features a range of cultural and heritage activities, with participation from 47 entities, including government units, SMEs and productive families, offering diverse experiences for visitors throughout the festival period until April 2.

RESULTS ON MONDAY
MORNING RACES OVER 5 KM
(Read as round, camel, owner)

1. Mardhiya, Asaad bin Amer al Amri
2. Humaam, Royal Camel Corps
3. Berlin, Nasser bin Ghadeer al Wahaibi
4. Muwaffaq, Ahmed bin Hamed al Jahafi
5. Suyouf, Suhail bin Mohammed al Amri

6. Muaalij, Ali bin Mohammed al Jahafi
7. Al Azoum, Badr bin Salim al Junaibi
8. Al Reem, Mohammed bin Hamed al Saadi
9. Ghaith, Rashid bin Hamed al Zuraei
10. Wahaja, Badr bin Nasser al Wahaibi
11. Takreem, Hamoud bin Al Ghowaisi al Harsousi
12. Shaheen, Mohammed bin Hamed al Hashmi
13. Al Shiyaiba, Mohammed bin Juma al Kasbi

AFTERNOON RACES OVER 5 KM
(Read as round, camel, owner, time)

1. Bahja, Abdullah bin Said al Zuraei, 7:35.78
2. Al Baher, Salim bin Amer al Madhoushi, 7:32.20
3. Maraseem, Salim bin Mohammed al Wahaibi, 7:38.20
4. Mashoosh, Hamed bin Shateet al Wahaibi, 7:36.92
5. Ghazar, Manea bin Qubaili al Muharbi, 7:37.00
6. Bayh, Humaid bin Hamed al Zuraei, 7:38.76
7. Talaid, Zaher bin Salim al Jahafi, 7:38.32



Bahja, Al Baher and Mashoosh finished as the top three camels on the second day at His Majesty Cup Festival 2026 camel racing in Barka on Monday.

SPORTS

WINNING START



Mumbai Indians’ Ryan Rickelton celebrates after scoring fifty runs during the Indian Premier League match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai. — Reuters

ROHIT, RICKELTON
POWER MUMBAI TO IPL
WIN OVER KOLKATA

MUMBAI, India: Openers Rohit Sharma and Ryan Rickelton hit blistering half-centuries to lead Mumbai Indians to a six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders as they opened their IPL campaign in style on Sunday.

Chasing 221 for victory, five-time champions Mumbai rode a commanding 148-run opening stand from Rohit (78) and Rickelton (81) to reach their target with five balls to spare at the Wankhede Stadium.

Mumbai — the most successful team in the IPL along with fellow five-time winners Chennai Super Kings — won their opening match in the league for the first time since 2012.

“It’s been a long wait — 13 years is a long time,” skipper Hardik Pandya said on breaking the opening game jinx. “Very glad, the whole team is very glad that we were finally able to do it.”

The 38-year-old Rohit, who plays just the 50-over format for India after retiring from Test and T20 internationals, hit six fours and six sixes in his 38-ball knock.

His batting blitz came a day after long-time international teammate Virat Kohli steered Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a big win in the tournament opener. It needed a special effort to dismiss Rohit and Anukul Roy pulled off a stunning catch while running back from mid-on to finally dislodge the star batter.

South African wicketkeeper-batter Rickelton kept up the attack as he hit his eighth six after Rohit’s departure, continuing the pummelling of the Kolkata attack.

He was finally run out after a direct throw from Roy hit the stumps at the non-striker’s end.

Mumbai’s chase slowed down before Pandya, unbeaten on 18, and Tilak Varma, who made 20, helped the team get over the line.

“I thought 220-225 was a good total. We batted really well, but again, the inexperienced bowling attack,” Kolkata skipper Ajinkya Rahane said.

“Playing against Mumbai Indians, strong batting line-up, it’s really a learning curve for us.”

Pandya won the toss and invited three-time winners Kolkata to bat first amid a loud roar from the home Mumbai crowd.

BLAZING START

Rahane and New Zealand’s Finn Allen handed Kolkata a blazing start and the team finished on 220-4. Rahane went on to hit 67 off 40 balls after Allen fell for 37. Australia all-rounder Cameron Green, the most expensive overseas buy in IPL history, contributed 18.

Rinku Singh’s unbeaten 33 off 21 balls gave Kolkata a late lift, but it wasn’t enough to challenge Mumbai.

Mumbai medium-pace bowler Shardul Thakur returned figures of 3-39 to be named player of the match, while Jasprit Bumrah finished wicketless but played a role in checking Kolkata’s scoring in the middle overs. — AFP



Mumbai Indians’ Rohit Sharma plays a shot against Kolkata Knight Riders in Mumbai. — Reuters



Jannik Sinner of Italy poses with the Butch Buchholz Championship Trophy after beating Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic in the Miami Open final. — Imagn Images

Implacable Sinner eases
to Miami Open triumph

WORLD NUMBER two Jannik Sinner powered past Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 6-4 to win the ATP Miami Masters 1000 for a second time on Sunday, adding the title to his Indian Wells crown.

Sinner had to wait out rain delays before and during the match to complete his ‘Sunshine Double’, becoming the first man to sweep the elite hard court tournaments in California and Florida since Roger Federer in 2017 and the first to do so without dropping a set. In fact, Sinner — who won Miami in 2024 but missed last year as he served a three-month doping ban — has now won three straight Masters 1000 events, starting with a victory in Paris last year.

“It’s a very, very special moment,” Sinner said. “Coming here, performing again in a very good way after Indian Wells means a lot to me. It’s something I never would’ve thought (I’d win) because it’s difficult to achieve.”

Sinner’s victory, coupled with Aryna Sabalenka’s triumph over Coco Gauff on Saturday, mark the first time the Indian Wells-Miami sweep was achieved on both the men’s and women’s sides since Novak Djokovic and

Victoria Azarenka both did it in 2016. It also saw the Italian gain a bit on Spain’s Carlos Alcaraz — who was upset in the third round — in the race for world number one as the clay court season beckons. Early showers saw the match delayed for more than an hour. Sinner had just pocketed the first set when the rain hit again, halting the match for 90 minutes.

It wasn’t enough to unsettle Sinner, who fired 10 aces and won 33 of 36 points when he put his first serve in play. His return game was also spot on as he handed 22nd-ranked Czech Lehecka his first service break of the tournament for a 2-1 lead in the opening frame. Sinner trailed 0-40 in the following game but fired three service winners and a pair of aces to hold. “I tried to be focused,” Sinner said. “I tried to understand why I missed the first serves before. In the beginning, the conditions were very different ... very, very heavy balls. I missed a couple of first serves in the net because they were quite heavy.”

‘VERY PRECISE’

He said Lehecka’s aggressive return game also gave him pause. “You have to hit very precise.

If not, he has it on the racquet,” Sinner said. But he made the advantage stand up and gave himself a first set point in the ninth game with a blistering cross-court forehand service return winner.

Lehecka saved that one with a service winner and saved another set point with a volley, going on to seal the hold on his sixth game point before Sinner pocketed the set with a love game. Lehecka fought off five more break points before Sinner pounced for the lone break of the second set and a 5-4 lead, the Czech gifting Sinner a break chance with a loose forehand.

Sinner didn’t face a break point in the second set and gave himself a match point with a forehand volley winner, thought he had it on a serve that was called a let, and polished it off with another winner at the net. While Lehecka, playing in his first Masters 1000 final, couldn’t follow compatriot Jakub Mensik into the Miami winner’s circle, he will reach a career-high 14th in the world rankings on Monday.

“I came here with not good form and I was able to come back to the tennis that I want to play,” Lehecka said. — AFP

Jetour Cup semis promise high-stakes battle

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

The Jetour Cup returns to the spotlight on Tuesday as four teams move to within one step of the final when the semifinals are played across two venues.

In the first tie, Al Nahda will meet Sur at Al Buraimi Sports Complex at 5:50 pm, while Seeb take on Sohar at Al Seeb Stadium at 8:10 pm. The winners will progress to the final.

Al Nahda booked their place in the last four after finishing top of Group Two with a consistent run that underlined their balance and discipline throughout the preliminary stage. Their campaign included a 1-1 draw with Saham, a 3-0 win over Ibri, a 2-0 victory against Al Shabab, a 2-2 draw with Al Khabourah, a goalless draw against Al Rustaq and an emphatic 5-2 victory over Sohar in the final round. That run ensured Al Nahda progressed unbeaten. Sur, meanwhile, reached



Players from Seeb and Sohar battle for an aerial ball during a Jindal League match, won 1-0 by Seeb.

the semifinals after finishing runners-up in Group One with a strong recovery following an opening defeat. After losing

2-0 to Bahla, Sur responded impressively by beating Dhofar 1-0, then registering a valuable 2-1 victory over Seeb, followed by another 2-1 win over Oman Club, before sealing qualification with a 2-0 result against Samayil.

The two teams also carry recent league familiarity into the tie. Al Nahda have drawn their last two Jindal League matches, including a 1-1 result against Sur, while Sur have also shared the points in their last two, including a goalless draw in their previous outing. That recent encounter underlines how little may separate the two sides heading into this knockout clash.

SEEB CARRY MOMENTUM

The second semifinal places Seeb, one of the strongest sides this season, against a Sohar team seeking to rediscover its sharpness at the right time.

Seeb advanced to the semifinals after topping Group One with a strong return of results. Their run included a 3-1

victory over Samayil, a 2-1 win against Oman Club, a 1-1 draw with Bahla, a narrow 2-1 defeat to Sur, and then successive wins over Al Nasr (2-0) and Dhofar (2-1).

Sohar reached the semifinals by finishing runners-up in Group Two. Their campaign began with a 2-2 draw against Saham, followed by a 2-1 win over Al Khabourah, a 1-0 victory against Al Rustaq, and a 1-1 draw with Ibri. Sohar then secured a crucial 1-0 win over Al Shabab before suffering a 5-2 defeat to Al Nahda.

Recent league form, however, suggests Al Seeb enter the match with the stronger momentum. They have continued to build confidence through important victories, while Sohar have struggled for rhythm in their last two league matches. That does not rule them out, but it does place extra pressure on them to produce a more clinical display against one of the competition’s most consistent teams.



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
8,132.544

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$104.84
BRENT \$115.77
LIGHT \$101.51



SHORT TAKES



Oil, miniatures of oil barrels, oil pump jack and US dollar banknote are seen in this illustration.

— Reuters

BRENT HEADS FOR RECORD MONTHLY LEAP

LONDON: Oil prices extended gains on Monday, with Brent heading for a record monthly rise, after Ansar Allah launched their first attacks on Israel, widening the US-Israel war against Iran.

Brent crude futures jumped by \$3.20, or 2.8%, to \$115.77 a barrel by 09:33 GMT after settling 4.2% higher on Friday. US West Texas Intermediate was up \$1.87, or 1.9%, at \$101.51 after a 5.5% gain in the previous session.

“The market has all but discounted the prospect of a negotiated end to the war, Trump’s claims of ongoing ‘direct and indirect’ talks with Iran notwithstanding and is bracing for a sharp escalation in military hostilities”, said Vandana Hari of oil market analysis provider Vanda Insights.

As more US troops arrived in the Middle East, US President Donald Trump said that the US and Iran have been meeting “directly and indirectly” and that Iran’s new leaders have been “very reasonable”.

However, the Israeli military said on Monday that it was attacking the Iranian government’s infrastructure throughout Tehran.

Oil price rises were dampened only temporarily by Trump saying he would pause attacks on Iran’s energy network until April 6.

“Trump’s extended deadline of April 6 — when the US could potentially resume attacks on Iranian energy infrastructure — has had no reassuring effect. The market is now asking for concrete signs of de-escalation, not just rhetoric”, SEB Research said in a note.

Brent has soared about 60% this month, the steepest monthly jump in LSEG data going back to 1988, exceeding gains made during the 1990 Gulf War. US crude, meanwhile, has climbed by 52% for its biggest monthly gain since May 2020. The huge gains have been propelled by Iran’s effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for a fifth of the world’s oil and gas supplies. The conflict launched on February 28 with US and Israeli strikes on Iran has spread across the Middle East, raising concern about shipping lanes around the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea. — Reuters

Oman’s non-oil GDP hits RO 28.7 billion in 2025

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

OMAN’S economy posted steady gains at the end of 2025, with non-oil sectors emerging as the principal driver of growth, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman’s diversification agenda despite softer oil prices and mixed external indicators.

Real gross domestic product (GDP) stood at RO 39.30 billion, reflecting an overall expansion of 2.4 per cent at constant prices by the end of the fourth quarter of 2025. The performance was largely underpinned by stronger activity outside the hydrocarbons sector.

According to a monthly bulletin by the Ministry of Economy, non-petroleum activities continued to outpace oil-driven growth, highlighting structural progress in broadening the economic base.

Non-oil GDP rose to RO 28.70 billion, marking a robust increase of 3.1 per cent, compared with petroleum activities, which grew at a slower pace of 1.1 per cent to reach RO 12.02 billion. The data reflects sustained expansion across sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, tourism and services.

Inflation remained contained at an average of 1.69 per cent during January–February 2025/2026, indicating stable price levels and supporting household consumption and business planning.



Non-petroleum activities continued to outpace oil-driven growth, highlighting structural progress in broadening the economic base.

Real gross domestic product (GDP) stood at RO 39.30 billion, reflecting an overall expansion of 2.4 per cent at constant prices by the end of the fourth quarter of 2025. The performance was largely underpinned by stronger activity outside the hydrocarbons sector.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks increased to RO 31.38 billion by the end of Q4 2025, up 8.1 per cent year-on-year, signalling continued investor confidence in Oman’s long-term economic trajectory.

However, FDI inflows declined sharply by 33.7 per cent to RO 2.36 billion, suggesting short-term caution amidst global economic uncertainty and tighter financial conditions.

Oil market trends weighed on the broader outlook, with the average crude price falling by 13.1 per cent to \$63.3 per barrel by the end of February 2026, reflecting softer global demand and increased supply.

Foreign trade indicators presented a mixed picture. The trade balance recorded a surplus

of RO 255.9 million at the end of January 2026, although this marked a significant contraction of 51.5 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Imports rose by 10.9 per cent to RO 1.58 billion, driven by higher domestic demand and ongoing project activity, while non-oil Omani exports increased by 15.3 per cent to RO 613 million, underscoring improving export diversification.

Overall, the data points to a resilient economic trajectory led by non-oil growth, although external pressures — including weaker oil prices and reduced investment inflows — continue to pose challenges. Sustaining momentum in non-oil sectors will remain central to Oman’s medium-term growth outlook.

WAR FORCES ASIAN ECONOMIES TO CONFRONT SLIDING CURRENCIES

SINGAPORE: Policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region are facing their toughest test since the Covid-19 pandemic, with few easy options, as they race to cushion their economies from an energy shock that is hitting harder and sooner than elsewhere.

Asia buys about 80% of the oil that is shipped through the Strait of Hormuz and, according to analysts, it faces shortages that will worsen through April and May.

India’s rupee, Indonesia’s rupiah and the Philippine peso have been



A man walks past an installation of the Rupee logo and Indian currency coins outside the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) headquarters in Mumbai, India. — Reuters

pulled to record lows against the dollar this month, along with major troughs for the yen and South Korean won.

“The key problem is Asian currencies were too weak before. The central banks have no instrument. Economies are going to plummet and... they cannot cut anymore, not only because of the inflationary pressure, but because they had already cut too many times,” said Alicia Herrero, chief economist for Natixis in Hong Kong. — Reuters

New initiative integrates solar energy into agricultural projects

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

With the aim of reducing electricity costs for farmers and investors, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in cooperation with Nafath Energy Company and the Development Bank, announced the ‘Solar Energy — Sustainable Harvest’ initiative, focusing on integrating solar energy into agricultural projects.

The initiative supports the use of renewable energy on farms with financing of up to RO 15,000, offering interest-free loans for full-time farmers and 3 per cent interest for part-time farmers. A grace period of up to one year is provided, along with a flexible repayment period of up to seven years.

Mohsin al Mufargi, Renewable Energy Engineer at MoAFWR, spoke to Observer: “The Ministry



MOHSIN
AL MUFARGI
Renewable energy engineer at MoAFWR.

investors to install solar energy systems.

The initiative aims to reduce electricity costs by up to 30% while enhancing the sustainability of agricultural production in the Sultanate of Oman”.

According to the Ministry, it enables farmers to adopt solar energy technologies to increase production efficiency and reduce operating expenses, aligning with the Sultanate of Oman’s vision for sustainable development

has launched this pioneering initiative to integrate renewable energy into the agricultural sector by enabling farmers and



The initiative enables farmers to adopt solar energy technologies to increase production efficiency and reduce operating expenses.

that supports innovation in the agricultural sector and contributes to the sustainability of natural resources for a more sustainable future based on clean energy.

The Ministry has urged farmers to register and benefit from the services and support offered

within this initiative, emphasising that the transition to renewable energy is a crucial step towards enhancing agricultural production and achieving economic and environmental gains for farmers.

Applications are available through the “Tharawat” platform

for farmers who meet the required criteria, including having a registered agricultural land, an official electricity metre and high electricity consumption during the summer months.

The conditions for providing services stipulate that the land must be registered as agricultural land with a valid ownership or usufruct contract and have an official agricultural metre.

The ownership document and survey map must be attached. The applicant must have a valid agricultural holding registered with the agricultural association.

An open area of at least 100 square metres, free from shade, must be available for installing solar panels. Priority will be given to farms that produce vegetables and fruits targeted in food security projects, include greenhouses, use modern irrigation systems and contribute directly to enhancing food security.

BUSINESS FEATURE

QASIM AL MAASHANI

OMAN'S DECISION to complete the acquisition of SalamAir is about more than ownership. It points to a broader reset of the Sultanate's aviation sector around a clearer dual-carrier structure: Oman Air as the full-service national airline and SalamAir as the low-cost operator. The government has moved quickly to stress that the transaction does not amount to a merger. Both airlines will continue to operate as separate commercial entities, with SalamAir retaining its budget identity and Oman Air its full-service role.

But the message behind the deal is clear: Oman wants a more coordinated aviation system, not two carriers pulling in overlapping directions. That shift matters because the central issue is no longer simply who owns SalamAir. The bigger question is how Oman wants its aviation sector to serve the economy in the years ahead. The answer emerging from official messaging is selective coordination rather than full consolidation.

That means route networks are likely to be reviewed to reduce unnecessary overlap, especially where duplication adds cost without materially improving consumer choice. The aim appears to be better use of fleets, more rational scheduling and stronger connectivity, while preserving each airline's separate market role.

In effect, Oman is moving towards a more disciplined aviation model. The two carriers may remain distinct in the market, but there is obvious room for cooperation in areas such as maintenance, training, operations and administrative support. That kind of back-end coordination could help lower costs and improve efficiency without removing the commercial distinction visible to passengers.

Internationally, this is not an unusual model. Many aviation markets operate with one full-service airline and one low-cost carrier serving different segments of demand under a broader national framework. For Oman, the logic is straightforward: preserve consumer choice, maintain SalamAir's role in affordable travel and reduce waste in a sector where efficiency matters.

For passengers, the promise is a better-functioning system rather than a narrower one. A more coherent network could support improved scheduling, stronger domestic and regional links and better aircraft deployment.

If managed properly, that would reinforce tourism, business travel and wider economic mobility.

But pricing will remain the real test. Officials have said fare structures will be reviewed in a way that supports sustainability while preserving competitive and fair pricing.

That is the correct public position, but travellers will judge the outcome in the market, not the wording of the policy. Whenever route overlap is reduced, concern naturally follows over whether efficiency gains will benefit passengers or weaken competitive pressure.

That makes SalamAir's identity central to the success of the model. The government has been careful to say the airline will continue as a low-cost carrier focused on budget travel and accessible fares.

That reassurance is commercially significant.

SalamAir's market value lies not only in its aircraft and route map, but in its role as a carrier for price-sensitive travellers and in widening access to air travel. Employment is another closely watched area. Official signals so far suggest there will be no immediate changes to the workforce, while any future adjustments would be tied to efficiency and the development of national capabilities.

That may calm short-term concerns, but any longer-term restructuring will be judged by how well it balances commercial discipline with stability and skills development. Viewed more broadly, the deal fits into a wider economic strategy. Aviation is not an isolated sector. It underpins tourism, trade, investment and business connectivity. In Oman's case, where diversification, tourism growth and stronger regional and international links are central to Oman Vision 2040, the performance of the aviation sector has strategic value well beyond the airport.

This is why the SalamAir acquisition should be read as a structural move, not a routine transaction. Oman is not simply buying an airline. It is trying to shape a more efficient national aviation system while keeping the advantages of a two-carrier market. Whether that model succeeds will depend on execution. If the state can protect SalamAir's low-cost role, preserve service quality and use coordination to improve efficiency, the aviation sector could become a stronger economic enabler.

If coordination becomes too heavy-handed, however, the risk is that the market loses some of the competition and flexibility it is trying to retain.

For now, the direction is clear: Oman wants two airlines, but one more coherent aviation strategy.

State acquisition signals a wider push to streamline the aviation sector, protect low-cost travel and align national connectivity with economic priorities.

RESET
IN
OMAN'S
AVIATION
SECTOR

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE CO LLC PO BOX NO.41 MUSCAT -100 SULTANATE OF OMAN					
SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2025 (In RO '000)					
ASSETS	31.12.2025	31.12.2024	LIABILITIES	31.12.2025	31.12.2024
1. Cash in hand	1,739	2,366	1. Capital and Reserves	4,216	4,582
2. Deposits with Central Bank of Oman	190	190	2. Borrowings from Banks	829	-
3. Precious Metals	294	58	3. Balances due to Branches	-	-
4. Balances due from Banks	3,096	1,823	4. Balances due to Money changers	544	421
5. Balances due from Branches	-	-	5. Loans and Advances payable	1,000	1,750
6. Balance due from money changers	-	-	6. Cheques and Drafts Issued and outstanding	-	-
7. Cheques and drafts purchased	-	-	7. Other Liabilities	792	793
8. Loans and Advances	-	-			
9. Investments	-	-			
10. Fixed Assets	344	445			
11. Other Assets	1,719	2,664			
TOTAL	7,381	7,546	TOTAL	7,381	7,546
SUMMARY OF INCOME AND EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025					
EXPENSES	31.12.2025	31.12.2024	REVENUE	31.12.2025	31.12.2024
1. Operational, General & administrative expenses	2,752	2,533	1. Commission, foreign exchange and bullion trading income	2,730	2,152
2. Finance cost	131	196			
3. Depreciation and Amortization	224	199			
4. Management fee	4	5	2. Other Income	15	31
5. Income tax	-	-			
Net Profit/(Loss) for the year	(366)	(750)			
Total	2,745	2,183	Total	2,745	2,183
BDO LLC			PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE CO LLC		

SHORTTAKES



The Japanese national flag waves at the Bank of Japan building in Tokyo. — Reuters

BOJ HIGHLIGHTS INFLATIONARY PRESSURE FROM OIL AND WEAK YEN

TOKYO: Japan’s underlying inflation rate may face stronger upward pressure from rising oil prices and the yen’s declines than in the past as firms have become more active in hiking prices, the Bank of Japan (BoJ) said on Monday.

The observation was part of the BoJ’s staff paper analysing factors defining underlying inflation, or price rises driven by domestic demand rather than cost-push factors, a key concept it has used in explaining the pace and timing of interest rate hikes.

While the recent increase in crude oil prices could hurt the economy, it could heighten the public’s inflation expectations and push up underlying inflation, the BoJ said.

“Attention is warranted to the possibility that upward pressure on prices through this channel may have strengthened compared with the past”, as firms have become more proactive in raising prices and wages, it said.

Changing corporate price-setting behaviour may also mean inflation could be more susceptible to yen falls, the BoJ said, warning of the inflationary pressure that comes from a weak yen pushing up import costs.

“Even temporary supply-side factors may affect inflation expectations”, the paper said, warning that recent rises in food prices, if they persist, could put sustained upward pressure on overall consumer inflation.

The BoJ ended a decade-long, massive stimulus programme in 2024 and raised short-term rates on the view that Japan was on the cusp of durably hitting its 2% inflation target.

The central bank has said it will continue to raise rates if it becomes more convinced that underlying inflation will be stable at 2%.

— Reuters

Conflict poses no risk to HBI project timeline

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 30

A project delivery timeline envisioned for the implementation of the first module of Meranti Green Steel’s low-carbon iron production project at Duqm SEZ is unlikely to be disrupted by the ongoing war involving Iran—an assertion that underscores international investor confidence in Oman’s relative insulation from its impacts.

“No — not based on how we currently assess the situation”, Meranti CEO Dr Sebastian Langendorf said in response to an Observer query on the likelihood of the conflict affecting the project timeline.

“As announced earlier, we are planning commissioning for mid-2029 and commercial operations for early 2030. These timelines are also aligned with our arrangements with offtakers”.

Singapore-based Meranti Green Steel is advancing plans for a major low-carbon iron production facility in Oman, centred on a 2.5 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) hot briquetted iron (HBI) plant in the Duqm Special Economic Zone.

The project forms part of a broader cross-border model that separates ironmaking and steelmaking, with Oman producing low-carbon HBI for export to global markets and for downstream steel production in Thailand.

A Final Investment Decision (FID), originally expected around mid-2026, is now likely in the third quarter of this year — a deliberate move designed to give Meranti’s international partners enough time to fully understand the current situation



Meranti’s green iron complex will be developed within an ambitious low-carbon steel mega hub planned by Vale in Duqm.

on the ground, said the CEO.

“From my perspective, Oman — and Muscat in particular — remains a stable, orderly and peaceful business environment. However, this needs to be clearly communicated to international stakeholders, especially larger organisations with investment or credit committees.

That process takes time. So, I would expect FID likely Q3 2026, which would still be a strong outcome”, he stated.

Meranti’s green iron complex is proposed to be developed on a 150-hectare site within an ambitious low-carbon steel mega hub planned by Brazilian mining giant Vale in Duqm. The complex will produce green iron in the form of HBI for regional and export markets.

“We are already in discussions to formalise the land lease”, said Dr Langendorf.

“It’s important to note that we are part of the Duqm SEZ, so the land is already designated. We are working with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), as well as the Port of Duqm, to ensure all formal documentation is in place. Our plot is within the Vale mega hub and we already have a layout prepared. We are currently integrating our engineering plans with that layout”.

As an integral part of the mega hub, the Meranti project will initially source much of its feedstock requirements from Vale’s pelletising plant in Sohar, supplemented by other external pelletising partners if needed.

Located about 2-3 kilometres from the Port of Duqm, the plant will utilise the existing commercial port to transport feedstock and finished materials via electric trucks in partnership with logistics providers.

The CEO also attributed Meranti’s success in securing offtake pledges for the first phase of its output to Oman’s inherent strengths. “There are several factors”, he said.

“First, Oman is widely seen as a stable and neutral production environment with strong infrastructure and we do not expect that perception to change due to current geopolitical tensions.

Second, Oman’s combination of renewable energy and gas — supported by a pragmatic energy transition strategy — creates a flexible and competitive production framework, especially for gradually increasing hydrogen use.

Third, Oman’s geographic position supports efficient global transport, making it a well-located production hub”. Complementing these factors is Meranti’s own track record.

“Our people have successfully delivered large and complex projects in challenging environments and we bring deep industry expertise and strong relationships.

Combined with competitive and pragmatic commercial terms, this has helped generate strong interest in our product”, he added.

Airlines face fare dilemma as fuel spike threatens travel demand

WASHINGTON: Global airlines have begun to hike fares and cut capacity to cope with the sudden surge in the oil price, but the industry’s ability to remain profitable may depend on whether consumers pull back on flying as gasoline costs threaten household budgets.

Before the US-Israeli conflict with Iran began last month, the airline industry had forecast record profits of \$41 billion in 2026, but a doubling in jet fuel prices has placed that at risk and forced carriers to rethink their networks and strategies.

Carriers ranging from United Airlines to Air New Zealand and Scandinavia’s SAS have announced capacity cuts and fare hikes, while others have imposed fuel surcharges.

“Airlines face an existential challenge”, said Rigas Doganis, who once headed Greece’s former national carrier, Olympic Airways.

“They will need to cut fares to stimulate weakening demand while higher fuel costs will be pushing them to increase fares.

A perfect storm”, said Doganis, who now chairs London-based consultancy firm Airline Management Group.

Last year, the industry reported record global passenger traffic that rebounded to about 9% above pre-pandemic levels even in the face of persistent supply-chain challenges that affected deliveries of new planes.

Record post-pandemic demand for travel and persistent supply-



Passengers walk to board flights at Chicago O’Hare International Airport in Chicago, Illinois. — Reuters

chain challenges had constrained capacity growth and given airlines significant pricing power as they filled more seats on each plane.

But the scale of the increases needed to make up for the jet fuel price surge is huge at a time when consumers are under pressure from higher gasoline prices that could curb discretionary spending.

“The only way to get prices up is to reduce capacity”, said Barclays’ head of European transport equity research Andrew Lobbenberg.

“That is what I would expect to see happen this time and it’s what we saw in the previous occasions when we had other crises; people just have to start trimming capacity”.

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said last week that fares would need to rise 20% for the airline to cover the higher fuel costs.

Hong Kong’s Cathay Pacific Airways has lifted fuel surcharges twice in the last month and from Wednesday a return trip from Sydney to London will attract an \$800 fuel surcharge. Before the Iran conflict, a normal round-trip economy-class fare on the route was roughly \$1,369.60.

Low-cost carriers and airlines could struggle the most given their passengers are more price-sensitive than the corporate customers and wealthy consumers who have been increasingly targeted by premium rivals like Delta Air Lines and United Airlines, analysts say.

— Reuters

TARIFF IMPACT

US consumers bear tariff burden



Consumers and importers in the United States shoulder most of the cost of tariffs, according to a European Central Bank study. Exporters absorb only a limited share, while trade volumes decline, affecting global flows.

The ECB noted that consumers currently bear about a third of the burden, with the share likely to exceed half as firms lose capacity to absorb rising costs. — Reuters

DOLLAR STABILITY

Dollar steady amidst war concerns



The US dollar held firm, heading for its strongest monthly gain since July, as markets weighed the impact of a prolonged Middle East conflict. Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz pushed oil prices higher and unsettled rate expectations.

The yen weakened past key levels, while the euro edged up slightly but remained on track for a monthly decline. — ONA

GOLD MOVEMENT

Gold edges up as dollar eases



Gold prices rose modestly on Monday as the US dollar weakened, making the metal more attractive to global buyers. Spot gold gained 0.3 per cent, supported by currency movements and oil price hike, though rising energy prices capped further gains.

Despite the uptick, gold remains down sharply this month, marking its steepest decline since 2008 amidst earlier dollar strength. — ONA

OPINION

Should Oman ban social media for children?



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

OVER a year ago, I had a lengthy discussion with my father about the negative impact that social media can have on our children. I shared my opinion that parents should have some level of control and visibility over their children’s use of social media networks.

Today, I am very pleased to see that similar conversations are taking place around the world — this time with the support of higher authorities. Governments are now stepping in with a bold question: should children even be on social media in the first place? In my humble opinion, yes, to some extent and I believe a balanced approach should be considered here in Oman as well.

A few days ago, Meta (the company that owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, among others) and YouTube were found liable in cases related to social media addiction. In the United States, a Los Angeles jury awarded \$6 million in damages to a 20-year-old woman in a landmark lawsuit against Meta (Instagram) and Google (YouTube) for mental health harms.

Furthermore, a New Mexico jury found Meta liable for failing to protect children from sexual predators on its platforms (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp).

The court ordered Meta to pay a \$375 million penalty for thousands of violations related to child exploitation and endangering children’s mental health. Countries such as Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Portugal,

France, Brazil and parts of the United States are actively following suit and exploring ways to address this issue. Some are proposing strict age verification laws, while others are pushing for a complete ban for younger users.

There are many reasons why countries are taking action now. First is the impact on mental health. Studies have shown that higher exposure to social media at a young age is linked to anxiety, low self-esteem and even depression.

Children begin comparing themselves to unrealistic standards before they even understand who they are. Second, these platforms are designed to be addictive — they are engineered to keep users scrolling. Try it yourself; you will find it difficult to stop once you open a social media app’s feed.

Third is exposure to inappropriate content. No matter how strong the filters are, the reality is simple: social media is not a controlled environment. Children can be exposed to harmful ideas, cyberbullying, or content they are not ready to process. Lastly, focus and productivity are significantly affected.

I see this firsthand through numerous complaints from working professionals — not to mention parents — about how social media is impacting their daily lives. With these reasons in mind, don’t you think our children (and the future generation) are at serious risk? Isn’t it time to take stronger action before it becomes too late?I recently

Countries such as Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Portugal, France, Brazil and parts of the United States are actively following suit and exploring ways to address this issue. Some are proposing strict age verification laws, while others are pushing for a complete ban for younger users.

had a candid discussion with my children who made an interesting point. They believe that banning social media may not be a fully workable solution, because where there is a will, there is always a way.

For example, blocking websites or services often leads people to find ways around restrictions through VPNs or alternative platforms.

Children are naturally curious. When something is completely restricted, it often becomes more attractive. They will find ways to access it — through friends, secondary accounts, or new platforms.

Nevertheless, the fact that governments are now openly addressing this issue sends a powerful and clear message about the risks social media poses to our children.

Rather than asking whether we should completely ban social media for children, perhaps the better question is how we can create a safer and more responsible digital environment for them. I trust that a balanced approach, combining regulation, parental involvement, education and platform accountability, may be more effective than a complete ban.

Oman has a unique opportunity to learn from global experiences and implement thoughtful measures that protect children without completely disconnecting them from the digital world.

After all, the goal is not to isolate the next generation but to empower them to use technology wisely, safely and with purpose.

CHIP BIDDING WAR EXPOSES JAPAN’S COMPETITIVE ANGST

KATRINA HAMLIN

The gloves are coming off in Japan’s fight for industrial consolidation. Three weeks after Toyota Motor supplier Denso approached \$8.2 billion power semiconductor specialist Rohm about a potential takeover, the target on Friday confirmed it is in talks to integrate with the chip and power device businesses of Toshiba and Mitsubishi Electric.

The three-way tie-up would best fortify the fragmented industry against Chinese rivals.

Rohm’s shares are up 18% since Denso’s unsolicited approach was disclosed on March 6. No financial details were shared, but Toshiba and Rohm have a close relationship too, having detailed a plan in 2023 to jointly scale up manufacturing.

Rohm also owns 14% of the now-privatised Toshiba and that stake may be worth some \$4 billion in net asset value.

Indeed, Rohm’s major motive may be maximising scale. While these Japanese companies boast technology vital for electric cars and data centres, Rohm had just a 2.8% global market share for both power devices and discrete — semiconductor components — last year.

Mitsubishi Electric held 3%, while Toshiba and Denso claimed 1.7% and 1%, according to TechInsights.

Denso’s power semiconductor business is by far the smallest of the four. By contrast, the trio could be the world’s second-largest player in power chips and related components by sales.

A larger entity would be in a better position to compete with global leader Infineon: the \$56 billion German company will generate a 20% operating margin this year, versus Rohm’s 5.8%, per estimates compiled by Visible Alpha.

It helps too that Japan’s antitrust authorities have signalled to bankers that it will lean towards vetting M&A deals on the basis of global rather than domestic market share.

Joining forces also offers protection against Chinese upstarts. They already hold as large a share of the global market as their Japanese counterparts, per TechInsights and are looking for new ways to grow.

Anxiety over Japan’s dimming industrial prowess goes far beyond semiconductors. Its seven major cars jostle for shrinking domestic sales, while Chinese rivals squeeze exports.

Toyota Motor owns 21% of Denso’s voting rights, but unless it firms up a commanding offer, the auto supplier looks like the weakest link in this round of industrial consolidation. — Reuters

The new Oman demands a paradigm shift

OMAN’S development story over the past five decades is, by any reasonable measure, a remarkable one. A country that in 1970 had fewer than ten kilometres of paved road has built a modern state with world-class ports, a national airport network, expanding universities and a human development trajectory that has outpaced most of its income peers. Oil revenues funded the transformation; government expenditure provided the stimulus; and a culture of stability and diplomatic balance gave the Sultanate of Oman a distinctive position in a volatile region.

Yet the model that delivered this progress is now exhausted. Hydrocarbons still account for roughly 65 per cent of export receipts, 74 per cent of government revenue and about 30 per cent of GDP. Real growth between 2021 and 2024 averaged approximately 3.4 per cent — well below the 5 per cent annual target set by Oman Vision 2040.

The private sector remains heavily reliant on government contracts, with SMEs constituting less than 20 per cent of the country’s economic units.

Exports stand at only one-third of their estimated potential and foreign direct investment has significant room for expansion.

These are not failures of ambition. Oman Vision 2040, articulated under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, is among the most clearly structured national strategies in the Gulf. Its four pillars encompass twelve national priorities with measurable KPIs.

The targets are explicit: non-oil activities contributing more than 90 per cent of GDP, FDI reaching 10 per cent of GDP and sustained 5 per cent annual growth.

The gap between these ambitions and current reality is precisely where the opportunity lies — and why this particular decade, 2026 to 2035, matters more than any period since the Omani Renaissance began. Three forces are converging to create what I believe is an



Hydrocarbons still account for roughly 65 per cent of export receipts, 74 per cent of government revenue and about 30 per cent of GDP.



DR YOUSUF
HAMED AL
BALUSHI
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The writer is founder and CEO, Smart Investment Gateway, economist, board adviser & business transformation mentor

The old economic model is exhausted. Oman Vision 2040 and the 11th Development Plan open a rare execution window — but only for those willing to abandon comfort zones and think beyond borders.

unprecedented window.

First, the global landscape is being redrawn. Geopolitical realignment, friend-shoring pressures and the continuing disruption of established trade corridors are forcing multinational firms to rethink where they manufacture, store and route goods.

The recent regional tensions have only accelerated this calculus. Oman’s Arabian Sea ports — Duqm, Salalah and Sohar — sit outside the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint.

Its diplomatic neutrality, tested repeatedly and held firm, makes it one of the few jurisdictions in the region where political usability and operational continuity converge.

When combined with a free trade agreement with the United States, a comprehensive economic partnership with India and GCC common market access, Oman offers duty-free reach to more than two billion consumers. That is not a talking point. It is a structural competitive advantage that did not exist a decade ago.

Second, the 11th Five-Year Development Plan, launching in 2026, marks the transition from planning to execution.

If the 10th Plan was about effective management of development, the 11th is explicitly about sustainable economic development — the phase where diversification targets must translate into factory floors, export manifests and quality jobs.

National programmes such as Tanfeedh for economic diversification and Nazdaher for investment promotion provide the institutional architecture. The sectors targeted — manufacturing,

logistics, mining, green energy, tourism and technology — are grounded in Oman’s demonstrated comparative advantages:

competitive gas pricing among the lowest in the region, vast mineral resources, a Net Zero 2050 commitment with a 60 per cent renewable target by 2034 and industrial land at Duqm and Salalah priced well below equivalent sites in the UAE or Saudi Arabia.

Third and most critically, the competition is not waiting. Saudi Arabia is deploying over a trillion dollars across megaprojects and industrial cities. The UAE continues to accelerate FDI attraction with aggressive AI and innovation strategies. Qatar and Bahrain are carving out specialised niches. For Oman, the window of advantage — geographic, diplomatic and cost-based — is open, but it will not stay open indefinitely. The speed and consistency of execution will now matter as much as the quality of strategy.

What does all of this demand from Omani entrepreneurs and business leaders? In a word: a paradigm shift — a fundamental change in thinking and acting that results from challenging one’s underlying assumptions.

The old paradigm of government-dependent, domestically oriented, import-and-distribute enterprise cannot deliver the growth that Oman Vision 2040 requires. The new paradigm demands that Omani businesses think globally, anchor technology, attract foreign investment as strategic partners, build and produce rather than merely trade, diversify across sectors, develop skilled national talent and move up the value chain from raw materials to finished goods exported to regional and global markets.

This is not a comfortable message. It requires abandoning familiar patterns and accepting short-term discomfort for long-term prosperity. A business in Muscat must ask not only how to serve the domestic market, but how to manufacture in Oman and sell to India, Africa and the GCC.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

INDIAN male, 10
year experience
in Oman as
Coordinator have
Driving licence.
90789282

INDIAN B.Pharm
Graduate(Female,
born in Oman)
currently
available in
Muscat for
suitable jobs.
Languages:
English, Hindi &
Malayalam.
Contact:
79027661 , E-mail:
saleemcontract@
gmail.com

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

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

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

LOOKING for
SUPPLY CHAIN /
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years. Commerce
graduate,
Experience
in logistics,
procurement and
sales in reputed
company in
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NOC & driving
license available.
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LOGISTICS
Documentation
Executive. Indian
male, 25 years,
BBA, PG Diploma
in Logistics & SCM
and have 2 years
of experience in
this field.
Seeking a position
in Logistics field
Mob: +968 7506
9882
Mail:
shafazhussain18@
gmail.com

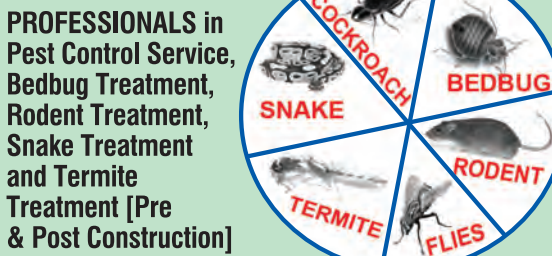
INDIAN electrical
engineer more
than 20 years
experience
in “MEP”
construction
field in Oman
seeks suitable
job.
Contact:
92919281

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

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ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male
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experience in Oman accounts & finance
looking for suitable placement, NOC
available and can join immediately.
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ART/LIFE



INSIDE SAFA AL FAHDI 'S CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

> 20

STAGEREVIVAL

ICONIC ‘PHANTOM OF THE OPERA’ RETURNS TO GERMANY AFTER 10 YEARS



One of the world’s most iconic stage productions, *The Phantom of the Opera*, is set to make a highly anticipated return to Germany after an absence of more than a decade. The beloved musical will be staged at Cologne’s Musical Dome this autumn, with its official premiere scheduled for 15 November. Organisers have confirmed that the production is expected to run in the western German city until early 2028, with the possibility of an extended engagement depending on demand.

The Phantom of the Opera, is set to make a highly anticipated return to Germany after an absence of more than a decade. Created by renowned composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, the musical first premiered in London’s West End in 1986.

Created by renowned composer Andrew Lloyd Webber, the musical first premiered in London’s West End in 1986. Since then, it has grown into one of the most successful and enduring theatrical productions in history, captivating audiences across continents. According to promoter ATG Entertainment, the show has been seen by more than 160 million people worldwide, a testament to its lasting global appeal. Audiences can expect to experience some of the

production’s most celebrated musical numbers, including the haunting title song and the romantic ballad “Think of Me”, both of which have become synonymous with the show’s identity. The Cologne staging will be based on a 2012 production by acclaimed British theatre producer Cameron Mackintosh, promising a visually rich and emotionally engaging interpretation of the classic tale.

The story itself is rooted in a 1911 French novel, following the life of a mysterious and disfigured man who lives hidden beneath the Paris Opera House, where his obsession with a young soprano unfolds into a dramatic and tragic narrative.

Currently, Cologne’s Musical Dome is hosting *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*, which is scheduled to run until July. However, the venue faces an uncertain future, as there are plans in the medium term to demolish the building to make way for an extension of Cologne’s main railway station. Until then, the return of “*The Phantom of the Opera*” offers theatre lovers a rare opportunity to experience a timeless masterpiece once again on the German stage. — *dpa*

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



BIRD MIGRATION

A red-and-green macaw is seen flying along the rocky walls of the Buraco das Araras sinkhole in Jardim, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. — **AFP**



PARADE PERFORMANCE

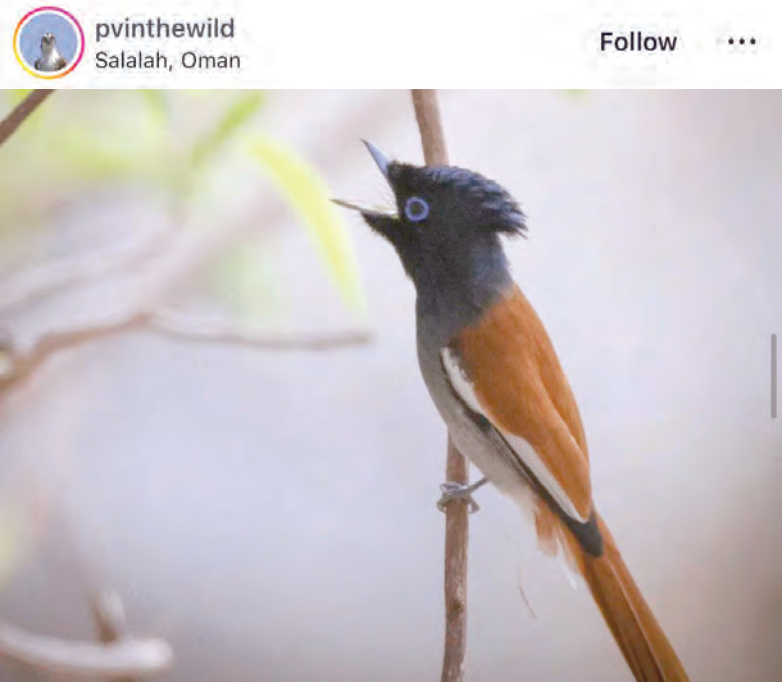
Chinese performer dances during the Macau International Parade in Macau. — **AFP**



TRIBUTE

A portrait of French actress and director Isabelle Mergault is shown during her funeral ceremony at the Pere-Lachaise cemetery in Paris. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



Paradise flycatcher in Dhofar



Mountainous beauty in Al Wadi Al Kabir

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BOOK EXPLORES PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN FINE ART

The ‘Image of Women in Fine Art’, authored by Dr Abdel Rahman Boulakroun and Dr Ahmed Ben Azza and published by Alpha Doc Publishing in Algeria, offers a comprehensive study of how women have been represented in visual art, with a special focus on Algerian artists.

Through three meticulously crafted chapters — The Problem of the Artistic Image, The Image of Women in International and Algerian Fine Art, and The Image of Women in the Works of Algerian Artists — the book examines women’s presence in art from ancient times to the present.

The authors highlight how women, whether as central figures or peripheral subjects, are portrayed with depth, symbolism, and dignity, reflecting their vital role beyond mere aesthetics.

The study underscores that the depiction of women in art is shaped by historical, cultural, and spatial contexts, with artists using the female form and presence as a gateway to express broader human qualities, ideas, and emotions.

According to the authors, women in art are not only sources of inspiration but also active participants in shaping the artistic narrative, bridging authenticity with modernity.

“The portrayal of women carries rich symbolism and a vibrant presence that transcends stereotypical views,” the authors note. “It reflects the dynamic role women play in



The authors highlight how women, whether as central figures or peripheral subjects, are portrayed with depth, symbolism, and dignity, reflecting their vital role beyond mere aesthetics

society, and their artistic representation continues to evolve, reflecting their aspirations, struggles, and contributions.”

By analyzing the works of Algerian artists, the book emphasizes how female subjects have enriched the creative process, contributing to the dialogue between tradition and contemporary expression. It highlights women’s significance as both subjects and creators, illustrating their influence on art and culture in Algeria and beyond.

The publication is a timely addition to the discourse on gender, creativity, and cultural representation, offering scholars, art enthusiasts, and the public a nuanced understanding of women’s place in the world of fine arts. — ONA

SCIENTISTS have managed to film a spectacular event rarely witnessed by humans: a sperm whale giving birth while other females worked together to support the mother and her newborn.

A team from Project CETI, an international effort seeking to understand how whales communicate, were in a boat near a pod of 11 whales off the coast of the Caribbean island of Dominica on July 8, 2023.

A 19-year-old female named Rounder was surrounded by family members and others as she was about to give birth to her second calf.

Over nearly five and a half hours, the scientists documented the group’s behaviour, watching them from the boat, filming them with drones and recording the sounds underneath the waves.

The data they collected, which was published in the journals Scientific Reports and Science on Thursday, represent an exceptional rarity in the history of science.

Out of 93 species of cetaceans — a group that includes whales, dolphins and porpoises — only nine have ever been observed giving birth in the wild.

Rarer still was that whales not related to the mother were helping out.

“This is the first evidence of birth assistance in non-primates”, Project CETI team member Shane Gero told the New Scientist.

“It is fascinating to see the intergenerational support from the grandmother to her labouring daughter and the support from the other, unrelated females”.

Lifting up the newborn The birth lasted 34 minutes, from their tails emerging from the water to the calf being born.

During labour, other adult females dove under

A 19-year-old female whale named Rounder was surrounded by family members and others as she was about to give birth to her second calf. Over nearly five and a half hours, the scientists documented the group’s behaviour, watching them from the boat, filming them with drones and recording the sounds underneath the waves.

WHALE

filmed giving birth, with a little help from her friends



Rounder’s dorsal fin, often on their backs with the heads facing her genital slit.

Immediately after the birth, the pod’s behaviour “rapidly changed” as every member became active, according to the study in Scientific Reports.

All the adults were “squeezing the newborn’s body between theirs, touching it with their heads”, the researchers wrote.

The whales pointed their noses towards the newborn, “pushing it around, under the water and onto and across their bodies above the surface”.

The remarkable behaviour dates back more than 36 million years and is believed to be due to the unique history of cetaceans.

After their distant ancestors left the water and adapted to life on land,

cetaceans are the only mammals that returned to the ocean.

This dive back into the water required some evolutionary tricks to prevent newborns from drowning.

For example, whale calves are born tail-first, rather than head-first like other mammals.

However, while newborn sperm whales become talented swimmers within a few hours, they still sink right after birth.

So other whales have to lift the calf up “to prevent the newborn from sinking while also facilitating its first breaths”, the researchers suggested.

Primates — including humans — are the only other mammals known to help assist each other out during birth. — AFP

FEATURES

F R O M C L A Y T O
C O M M U N I T Y

INSIDE SAFA AL FAHDI 'S CREATIVE WORKSHOPS



BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

SAFA is not just molding clay; she creates a narrative within each of her works. To her, clay is more than just a form; it is a world where stories breathe, offering experience, connection and self-discovery.

Holding a master's degree in visual arts, Al Fahdi's journey into sculpture was a deeply personal exploration. "It felt like a journey of self-discovery", she reflects. "Although drawing was my first passion, I was always drawn to forms and structures, allowing me to express ideas and emotions I couldn't fully translate onto paper", she says, describing her relationship with sculpture.

Her first sculpture, which is modest in scale yet deep in impact, inspired her with what she calls "the power of material in expression". That first sculpture was the starting point, when clay, wood and recycled materials became more than mediums; they became expressive languages.

From Individual Practice to Shared Experience

After years of working independently, Al Fahdi felt a shift in purpose. She realised that art could be more powerful as a means of communication and that it reaches its full meaning when it is shared. This realisation led her to organise sculptural workshops, initially among friends and family.

What began as intimate gatherings soon evolved into meaningful spaces of interaction. "Individual work gives you creative freedom", she explains, "but it can be limited in its social and human impact. Sharing art adds a dimension you cannot achieve alone".

She even picks the materials carefully to align with the shared experience. She often chooses clay, which she sees differently from others. She believes that clay is more alive and flexible, "allowing participants to experiment freely without fear of failure", Safa justifies her preference for clay as her artistic medium.

CRAFTING THE WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

Each session is carefully designed, guaranteeing that participants have a full experience rather than a purely instructional lesson. The process begins with a central question: What is the purpose? Is it to learn a technique, or to simply enjoy the act of creation?

Al Fahdi puts effort and intention into



cultivating a space and atmosphere that is both focused and relaxed. Sculpture, she notes, requires openness as much as concentration and she asserts that any tension can disrupt the creative flow.

Interestingly, she designed her workshops to be neither strictly academic nor purely recreational; they exist in a thoughtful balance between the two. While participants are introduced to foundational techniques and proportions, they are equally encouraged to explore freely, allowing enjoyment to guide their hands.

THE HUMAN CONNECTION IN ART

What truly distinguishes these workshops is their social dimension. These workshops have become a space where friends and family gather; a place they leave, but that leaves on them an unforgettable experience.

Workshops usually feature conversations that flow, ideas are exchanged and moments of shared laughter become embedded in the creative process. "Sometimes, the workshop becomes a space to reconnect or even celebrate one another", Al Fahdi reflects on the social dimension she witnesses in her workshops.

Sculpture, in this context, transforms into a tool for deeper human connection, where participants collaborate, share resources and respect each other's creative expressions, fostering honest dialogue, mutual appreciation and a sense of collective achievement.

One moment, in particular, remains vivid in her memory. A participant, hesitant and convinced that he had no artistic talent, surprised himself. Within an hour, he had created a unique and striking sculpture. "His joy was indescribable", she recalls. "Everyone celebrated him. It was a reminder of the courage it takes to try and the power of that moment".

CHALLENGES AND EXPANDING VISION

Like any creative initiative, there are always challenges and obstacles. Securing suitable spaces, ensuring access to materials and coordinating schedules are all obstacles faced by Al Fahdi. Yet, she views these challenges as part of the process rather than barriers.

Looking ahead, her vision extends beyond small groups. She hopes to bring these workshops into schools and cultural centres across Oman, offering children and young people an opportunity to discover their creative potential.