

OMAN

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HM’S MESSAGE
TO PHILIPPINE
PRESIDENT



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr of the Republic of the Philippines. The message pertains to the bilateral relations between the two nations. The message was handed over by Nasser bin Said al Manwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of the Philippines, when President Marcos Jr received him at the Presidential Palace in the capital Manila.

PRESIDENT OF
BOTSWANA
CONCLUDES VISIT

President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana and his accompanying delegation left Muscat on Wednesday, following a working visit to the Sultanate of Oman. He was seen off at the Royal Airport by some officials of the Oman Investment Authority. Earlier, Oman and Botswana signed agreements covering the fields of mineral exploration, the development and operation of two petroleum product storage facilities, and the development, construction, and financing of a solar photovoltaic power plant. These agreements open the doors to strengthening strategic relations, while contributing to attracting foreign investments into local sectors.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
POLLS CANDIDACY

The Ministry of Interior continues to receive applications for candidacy in the elections of the Municipal Councils for the fourth term (2026), with the deadline set for April 23 (Thursday). The ministry has called upon eligible Omani citizens who wish to run for the candidacy and meet the required criteria to submit their applications through the ‘Intikhab’ (Election) application or the official election website (elections.om). Any candidacy applications received after the specified deadline will not be accepted.

Education a supreme national priority in Oman

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman has affirmed the importance of strengthening multilateral action and supporting the role of Unesco in protecting education and safeguarding human heritage, during its participation in the 224th session of the Unesco Executive Board, held from April 8 to 23. Ambassador Amna bint Salim al Balushi, Permanent Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to Unesco, stated in her address at the opening of the



Ambassador
Amna bint Salim al Balushi

Executive Board’s plenary sessions that the Arab region faces escalating challenges due to conflicts and attacks on infrastructure, educational institutions and cultural assets — particularly in Palestine and Lebanon — resulting in disruptions to the educational process. She emphasised the need for a more coordinated and effective international response to ensure the continuity of education in times of crisis.

She reaffirmed Oman’s steadfast position, calling for the primacy of peaceful solutions, de-escalation, and a return to dialogue and diplomacy, in order to consolidate security and stability and ensure respect for international law. She further noted that education represents a supreme national priority in the Sultanate of Oman and a fundamental pillar for achieving Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

OMAN AND UN ENVOY DISCUSS EFFORTS TO END CONFLICT

TRUMP SAYS IRAN WAR
‘CLOSE TO OVER’

SAYYID

BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY, Foreign Minister, received here on Wednesday Jan Arno, Personal Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Middle East conflict. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the situation in the Middle East in general, and regional developments in particular, in light of the repercussions of the Israeli-American war on Iran and the ongoing ceasefire, as well as efforts to find solutions capable of bringing a definitive end to the conflict in the region across all political, security, economic, and humanitarian dimensions.

Sayyid Badr affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s support for UN-led efforts aimed at prioritising peaceful and diplomatic solutions and creating favourable conditions for regional dialogue among all parties, thereby contributing to de-escalation, confidence-building, and the restoration of security and stability to the region. For his part, the UN envoy expressed his deep appreciation for the constructive role undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman and its long-standing historical experience in supporting peace initiatives, mediation efforts, and the enhancement of regional stability. He commended Oman’s approach, which is rooted in dialogue and the reconciliation of divergent viewpoints.



A police officer stands guard on a street, amid a ceasefire between the US and Iran, at Tajrish Square in Tehran, Iran, on Wednesday. — Reuters

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said the war with Iran was close to over, telling the world to brace for an “amazing two days”, as the army chief of mediator Pakistan arrived in Tehran in a bid to prevent a renewed conflict. The diplomatic push came as US and Iranian officials weighed a return to Pakistan for further talks after negotiations there ended on Sunday without a breakthrough. Pakistan’s military confirmed Field Marshal Asim Munir had arrived in Tehran. A senior Iranian source said that Munir, who had mediated the last round of talks, was heading to Iran “to narrow gaps” between the two sides. “I think you’re going to be watching an amazing two days ahead,” Trump told ABC News reporter Jonathan Karl, according to a post by the reporter on X, adding he did not think it would be necessary to extend a two-week ceasefire that expires next week. “I think it’s close to over, yeah. I mean, I view it as very close to over,” Trump said in an interview on Fox Business Network conducted on Tuesday and broadcast on Wednesday. “We’ll see what happens. I think they want to make a deal very badly.” Officials from Pakistan, Iran and Gulf states also said both sides could return to Islamabad in the coming days. The talks last weekend broke down without an agreement to end the war, which Trump launched on February 28. SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Water security plan for one billion people in next 4 years

WASHINGTON: The World Bank announced a plan on Wednesday that aims to improve secure water access for a billion people within the next four years. The new “Water Forward” programme aims to “expand reliable water services and strengthen systems against droughts and floods.” The Bank said its own funds and technical advice would help improve water supplies to some 400 million people by 2030, with the balance coming from partners.

Some four billion people — half the world’s population — face water scarcity, due in part to “unclear policies, weak regulations, and financially unsustainable utilities that have deterred investments”

Regional development banks, Opec’s development fund, and the BRICS-aligned New Development Bank are among institutions that will participate, the World Bank said. The global lender did not specify how much capital it would commit to the initiative. Some four billion people — half the world’s population — face water scarcity, due in part to “unclear policies, weak regulations, and financially unsustainable utilities that have slowed progress and deterred investment,” the Bank said.

The global lender said that 14 countries had already voluntarily committed to reform and strengthen their water sectors under the new programme. The focus on governance issues — not simply physical water infrastructure — is promising, David Michel, senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said. “In many countries, the water sector fails to fully deploy the funds already allocated to it.” However, the Bank’s initiative “faces a long and difficult road ahead,” he

warned. The issue of access to safe drinking water, in particular, has been highlighted during the war in the Middle East, with desalination plants in Iran and across the region damaged in bombardments. Beyond conflicts and immediate drinking water needs, the World Bank said that better water security was needed to grow the global economy. “Strong water systems are foundational to healthy economies that can attract private investment and create jobs,” the Bank said. — AFP

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The two sides also exchanged views about regional and international issues. — ONA

Oman, France affirm commitment to enhance cooperation

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman and the French Republic began the first round of strategic dialogue in Paris.

The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the French side was headed by Martins Briens, Secretary-General of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The session laid emphasis on the depth of the two countries' strategic partnership in various fields and explored prospects for expanding cooperation in the fields of economy, investment, energy, security, culture, education and training.

The two sides also exchanged views about regional and international issues, notably the repercussions of the current crisis in the Gulf region. They underscored the significance of dialogue and diplomacy as the best way to overcome the challenges and reach sustainable solutions. They urged the concerned parties to resume negotiations.

On the sidelines of the session, the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the French Republic signed an agreement on the issuance of work permits for spouses of official employees. The agreement was inked by Shaikh Khalifa and Martins Briens. — ONA

Oman affirms support for UN-led ME peace efforts



The two sides discussed the situation in the Middle East in general. — ONA

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role undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman and its long-standing historical experience in supporting peace initiatives, mediation efforts and the enhancement of regional stability. He commended Oman's approach, which is rooted in dialogue and the reconciliation of divergent viewpoints.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry, along with a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

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TAMKEEN FORUM SEEKS TO ENHANCE READINESS OF OMANI WORKFORCE

NIZWA: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the National Employment Programme, organised the 'Tamkeen' forum on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Nizwa.

The forum is part of national efforts to enhance the readiness and competence of Omanis in the heritage and tourism sectors.

The forum targeted representatives from various tourism and heritage-related activities across the governorate, including travel



The forum targeted representatives from various tourism and heritage-related activities. — ONA

and tourism agencies, tour operators and the hospitality sector, as part of an integrated approach to workforce development.

The forum highlighted the development of the tourism education and training system and reviewed the training programmes. — ONA

MoE signs pact to include employment-linked scholarships

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) signed a cooperation agreement on Wednesday with the Omani Qatari Telecommunications Company (Ooredoo) to include scholarships within the Unified Admission Centre system, thereby strengthening the link between educational outcomes and labour market needs.

The agreement was signed by Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, and on behalf of Ooredoo by Saud bin Hamad al Riyami, CEO of the company, in the presence of several officials from both sides.

The agreement aims to launch a national programme that combines academic scholarships with an employment track, by providing fourteen scholarships in technical and digital disciplines of national priority, while making employment opportunities



The agreement aims to launch a programme that combines academic scholarships with employment track.

available to graduates after meeting the specified criteria.

The programme includes scholarships sponsored by Ooredoo within the unified admissions system, to be implemented in successive phases to ensure sustainability and quality outcomes.

The first phase includes job opportunities for beneficiaries after graduation.

This agreement underscores the Ministry of

Education's commitment to developing the education system to meet labour market demands by building effective partnerships with the private sector.

These partnerships contribute to preparing qualified national talent and enhancing their readiness to engage in vital sectors, particularly in technology and the digital economy.

The agreement also reflects the private sector's role in supporting human development efforts.

SHORT TAKES



The memorandum was signed by Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi and Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie.

MoC ON METEORITES, AND GEOPARK PROJECTS SIGNED

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) to support research and scientific collaboration in the fields of meteorites, geological heritage, and geopark projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

The memorandum was signed by Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, and Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of UTAS.

The memorandum aims to develop cooperation in studying and analysing meteorite samples, documenting geological heritage, and implementing joint research projects and applied studies in the fields of geological heritage, meteorites, geoparks, and related sciences. It also seeks to enhance educational and training programs and build national capacities in these specialised areas.

Furthermore, the memorandum includes the implementation of several specialised programmes designed to involve academic staff in scientific projects and national initiatives related to geological heritage and geoparks. This is intended to contribute to the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the enhancement of community awareness regarding the role of scientific research in supporting national development and diversifying the utilisation of natural resources, reflecting the history and natural diversity of the Sultanate of Oman.

The MoC also provides for the implementation of educational and knowledge-based programmes for university students in geological heritage, the organisation of awareness and educational visits to geoparks, and the establishment of a permanent exhibition at one of the university's branches dedicated to introducing meteorites in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

NEW AUTISM CENTRE TO COME UP IN AL DAKHILIYAH



The aim is to provide specialised and integrated services across the Sultanate of Oman.

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development and the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) signed a funding agreement to establish a rehabilitation centre for individuals with autism spectrum disorder in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate at a cost of RO 2.3 million.

This initiative comes in response to Royal Directives to study the needs of the governorates for autism spectrum disorder centres and to develop a timeline for their establishment based on the number of cases in each governorate.

The aim is to provide specialised and integrated services across the Sultanate of Oman and enhance national efforts in care and rehabilitation for individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

The centre will have a capacity of 120 individuals and will provide a range of specialised services, including comprehensive rehabilitation, temporary care, diagnosis and assessment, as well as recreational activities.

This will contribute to improving the quality of life for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and enabling their active integration into society.

On Tuesday evening, the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) hosted the third edition of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Art Exhibition, titled 'Mountain Rose: Vibrant Colours and Developing Skills'.

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarif al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Sihasak Phuangketkeow, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations, exchanged views and discussed several matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence. — ONA

Symposium highlights aspects of media law

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

THE Sultan Qaboos University and the Oman Journalists Association on Wednesday organised a symposium on the Media Law in the Sultanate of Oman. The symposium, which highlighted the legislative context of media and the system governing the work of media establishments, saw the participation of academics, media professionals and media students. It was held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family Affairs and Community Development.

The symposium aimed to reflect the ongoing partnership between academic institutions and professional establishments. It stressed the role of academic institutions and professional establishments in spreading the culture of law-abiding media action. It also sought to develop media awareness among students and young media professionals, in addition to promoting integration between academic institutions and civil society institutions in the field of media education.

The symposium included a presentation that outlined the key features of the Media Law in Oman. It included two sessions, the first of which provided insights into the principles governing freedom of expression and media licences.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis al Kindi, Head of the Department of Media at SQU, emphasised that the Media Law issued in November 2024, along with its executive regulations issued in early 2025, marks a significant legislative development. He noted that the law consolidates various aspects of media work



The symposium highlighted legislative context of the system governing media establishments.

into a unified legal framework, replacing previously fragmented legislation, thereby enhancing the coherence of the legal system and keeping pace with developments in both traditional and digital media.

Dr Khalid bin Rashid al Adawi, Chairman of the Freedom Committee at the Oman Journalists Association, stated that the law establishes key principles, including guaranteeing freedom of opinion and expression within a framework of responsibility, regulating media activities through clear professional standards, and defining the rights and duties of media practitioners to ensure a balance between freedom and accountability.

Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Hinai, Director-General of Publications and Artistic Works at the Ministry of Information, explained that the law integrates three previous laws into a unified framework covering all media activities, including digital media. He added

that the law is based on the Basic Law of the State and Oman Vision 2040, and was developed through extensive consultations with official and professional stakeholders.

While Dr Ahmed bin Said al Jahwari, a lawyer and legal consultant, addressed the principles governing freedom of expression, noting that it is exercised through a balance between individual rights and national interests, Dr Hosni Mohammed Nasr, Associate Professor in the Department of Media at at SQU, highlighted that the law adopts the concept of "responsible freedom" and replaces prior censorship with post-publication accountability, marking a qualitative shift in media regulation.

Dr Moza bint Abdullah al Rawahi, Professor of Journalism and Electronic Publishing at SQU, affirmed that the law aligns with rapid media transformations and applies to individuals, institutions, and digital platforms.

A master craftsman blends tradition, technology

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

Jamal bin Mohammed al Amri stands out as an inspiring figure in handicrafts. For over twenty years, he has transformed his passion for wood carving into a profession that blends skills and creativity.

Al Amri is a master craftsman of marquetry, a delicate art form that involves inlaying of Islamic and geometric patterns in natural wood. He claims that his workshop is one of the oldest specialising in this field, where he is keen to preserve the spirit of the traditional craft while incorporating modern techniques.

As a young man, Al Amri was captivated by the transformation of wood into works of art, before this hobby evolved into a profession supported by family and friends.

He honed his skills at a vocational training institute, along with continuous learning, research, and development via digital platforms and collaboration with specialists.



Jamal bin Mohammed al Amri is a master craftsman of marquetry, a delicate art form that involves inlaying of Islamic and geometric patterns in natural wood.



He utilises both local and international woods, focusing on precision and high quality.

Several challenges faced Al Amri at the beginning of his journey, most notably a lack of experience and a fear of risk, in addition to the absence of specialised support and adequate training. Proving the competitiveness of local handmade products

was also a major challenge, one he overcame through perseverance and hard work. Some challenges remain, such as the difficulty in sourcing rare woods, the high cost of modern tools, especially laser technology, and marketing challenges in the face of competition from low-cost commercial products.

But technology has also

come to his help. Al Amri relies primarily on social media platforms to market his products. He emphasises that digital platforms have contributed to expanding the reach of Omani craftsmanship to international markets.

Al Amri believes that the future of Omani crafts is promising, given the availability of modern tools and technologies that enhance production quality.

His project has indirectly supported those in related professions through training and collaboration, and he aspires to become a leading entrepreneur specialising in woodworking.

Al Amri advises young Omanis to be patient, master their craft and prioritise quality over profit, while also utilising modern technologies and digital marketing.

He also called on the community to support local products, stressing that every handcrafted piece carries a cultural identity and national heritage that must be preserved.

SPOTLIGHT



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

CHILDHOOD obesity in Oman is increasingly being recognised as a major public health concern, reflecting rapid lifestyle changes across the country. What could be the cause?

Health experts attribute the rise to a combination of sedentary behaviours, increased consumption of calorie-dense foods, and genetic susceptibility.

Beyond its well-known physical health risks, specialists warn that obesity in children is also linked to psychological and social challenges, including low self-esteem, social isolation, and reduced academic performance. These impacts often extend into adulthood, placing long-term pressure on both individuals and healthcare systems.

Dr Hanan bint Said bin Abdullah al Azkawi, Senior Consultant Paediatric Endocrine, National Diabetes and Endocrine Center said parents should adopt healthy habits for children to follow.

“The change in lifestyle and change in the type of food children are consuming, which is unhealthy food, are some of the reasons. The availability of these types of food is not helping either. Another issue is the non-physical games. Most of the activities they are indulging in are technology-based, so mobility is limited in these children. Another worrying pattern is the unhealthy sleep and the stressful environment some of the children are living under at times.”

“Everybody should work together. A family should adopt a healthy lifestyle, which their children should follow. If the family is doing physical activity and practicing regular exercise, the children will also do that. If they consume healthy food and limit unhealthy food intake, the kids will follow as well.”

DR HANAN BINT SAID BIN ABDULLAH AL AZKAWI
Senior Consultant Paediatric Endocrine

When it comes to advice for parents, Dr Hanan said all of us must work together starting from family, school, health institutes, and the community.

“Everybody should work together. A family should adopt a healthy lifestyle, which their children should follow. If the family is doing physical activity and practicing regular exercise, the children will also do that. If they consume healthy food and limit unhealthy food intake, the kids will follow as well. We should also increase awareness of obesity being a disease,” she noted.

Once they know the severity of obesity and its relation to the core morbidities, people will begin to think and observe themselves regarding where they are exactly and at which stage of obesity?

She pointed out that adopting healthy food and physical activities at school and mobilisation of children at break times are all initiatives that can help. Screening children for early intervention will prevent further complications.

“Introducing pharmacological

therapy in adolescents for individuals who fit the criteria by starting the medication is very important because, as we know, obesity is a disease, so it needs to be treated and needs early intervention to prevent the consequences or expected complications from obesity,” noted Dr Hanan.

National efforts have gained momentum, as in response, Oman has intensified efforts to address the issue through a range of coordinated initiatives.

Awareness campaigns and public engagement activities have been expanded nationwide, focusing on educating families about prevention, early detection, and the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. Community events and professional training programmes are also helping to build capacity among healthcare providers.

At the same time, schools and community programmes are playing a central role. Initiatives promoting balanced nutrition and regular physical activity are being introduced, with a strong

emphasis on involving families in creating healthier environments for children. These efforts align closely with the national development framework of Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises health and well-being.

A coordinated national strategy is being looked at, and authorities are adopting a multi-sector approach, bringing together the healthcare, education, and community sectors to strengthen prevention strategies and enhance primary care services. Early identification of at-risk children and timely intervention remain key priorities.

Innovation is also shaping the national response, and the integration of artificial intelligence and digital health systems is helping predict risk factors, support early action, and improve long-term outcomes.

Experts agree that tackling childhood obesity requires sustained collaboration across all levels of society. Families, schools, healthcare providers, and policymakers each have a critical role to play.

MAKE CHILDREN HEALTHY

1. Encourage physical activities
2. Balance meal with less sugar, less fried items
3. Educating families about healthy lifestyle
4. Early intervention to tackle lifestyle diseases
5. Sleep on time and minimise screen time
6. Engage in extracurricular activities to reduce stress

Obese
KIDS A
HIGH
PUBLIC
HEALTH
RISK

SHORT TAKES



A total of 82 male and female students from various schools across the governorate are participating in the examinations.

QUALIFICATION TESTS FOR SCIENTIFIC OLYMPIADS BEGIN

LIWA: The implementation of the second qualification test for the National Scientific Olympiads in mathematics, nuclear science, chemistry, and physics began at the Liwa Science and Innovation Centre in Al Batinah North Governorate. Additionally, the first qualification test in science and mathematics for juniors was conducted as part of the programmes organised by the Ministry of Education, represented by the General Directorate of Scientific Innovation and Artificial Intelligence.

A total of 82 male and female students from various schools across the governorate are participating in these examinations. Students in the fields of physics, chemistry, mathematics, and nuclear science are undergoing the second qualification test after successfully passing the first stage and completing an advanced training programme. This programme was conducted under the supervision of national trainers and specialised experts with the aim of deepening the students’ scientific knowledge and developing their research and practical skills. Based on the results of this stage, a select group of students will be chosen to represent the Sultanate of Oman in regional and international scientific competitions.

Meanwhile, junior students in science and mathematics are sitting for the first qualification test. Those who qualify for the next stage will be selected based on standardised scores and a predetermined number of seats for each subject. The qualifiers will then proceed to an in-person training camp, which will conclude with a second qualification test to identify high-achieving students eligible to represent the Sultanate of Oman in international competitions.

These tests are part of the Ministry of Education’s efforts to enhance the environment for scientific innovation and discover student talents in scientific fields. Scientific Olympiads at the national, regional, and international levels are considered among the most prominent mechanisms. — ONA

BEWARE OF MAJOR ONLINE SCAMS: ROP

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has cautioned the public about a fake website similar to the official one and video call scams involving impersonation of police officials.

“We have noticed that scammers are using video apps to pose as police officers or government officials to steal personal information and threaten individuals with fake legal action,” a top ROP official said.

“One should always check ROP official channels to verify any messages or callers claiming to be from the police and avoid clicking on links found in social media or websites in unsolicited emails or SMS messages,” he said.

Also, one should never share personal details like OTP or PIN over phone calls or chats.

“Screen share or app download requests are new ways for online scammers to gain access to your personal and financial information

as fraudsters are on the lookout to defraud by convincing you to download a third-party application and get full control over your device,” bankers have warned.

“Always remember that the banker would never ask you to download any third-party remote access or screen sharing application, nor should you respond to any call, SMS, or email asking you to download any app in order to assist you online or to update documents,” warns a leading bank.

Ancient Oman’s burial rites reveal evolving life, identity

LIJU CHERIAN
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

THE German Embassy in Muscat recently hosted a talk titled ‘Life after Death in Ancient Oman’, featuring German archaeologist Prof Dr Stephanie Döpfer of Würzburg University. Moderated by German Ambassador to Oman, Dirk Lölke, the session examined how ancient communities in Oman treated their dead from the Stone Age to the Late Iron Age, drawing on archaeological evidence from sites across the country.

Prof Stephanie, who has been working in Oman since 2010, has excavated and studied key sites including Bat, Al Ayn, Al Khashbah and locations in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi. Her research focuses on burial traditions, settlement systems and cultural change in ancient Oman.

“Burials are one of the richest sources of archaeological information,” she said. “In Oman, the extraordinary preservation of tombs offers a rare opportunity to trace social and cultural change over thousands of years.”

Her presentation outlined how funerary practices evolved over more than 4,000 years, reflecting transformations in society, economy and identity.

Early Stone Age burials, such as those at Ras Al Hamra (4th millennium BCE), consisted of

A talk at the German Embassy in Muscat explored how burial practices in ancient Oman from simple Stone Age graves to elaborate Bronze Age tombs reflect shifting social structures, trade links and enduring cultural values of memory and community



Prof Dr Stephanie Döpfer

simple pit graves where the dead were placed in crouched positions, sometimes accompanied by ornaments or symbolic items such as sea turtle shells.

By the 3rd millennium BCE, during the Hafit period, circular stone tombs began appearing on hilltops. Sites such as Al Ayn, now a Unesco World Heritage Site, illustrate this shift towards more visible and monumental burial architecture linked to growing social complexity and trade networks.

During the Umm an Nar period, tombs became larger and collectively used over generations, containing multiple individuals and rich grave goods including pottery, stone vessels and metal objects. These

findings suggest a strong community identity and expanding long-distance trade connections.

Later, in the Wadi Suq and Iron Age periods, burial practices became more varied, with more individual graves and an increased presence of weapons and personal items. By the Samad Late Iron Age (300 BCE-300 CE), simpler stone-lined graves re-emerged, though some burials still contained imported goods and metal objects, indicating social differentiation.

“In the Iron Age, we again see more modest graves but richer and more individualised grave goods, especially weapons,” she said, linking this to changing social structures.

Prof Stephanie emphasised that grave goods provide insight into ancient life and Oman’s integration into wider trade networks. “The presence of imported items demonstrates that ancient Oman was far from isolated,” she said.

She added that burial traditions reflect both social identity and continuity of memory. “These practices suggest ancient Omanis saw life as deeply connected to family, community and continuity.”

Concluding the talk, she highlighted the enduring cultural significance of Oman’s heritage. “These tombs are among Oman’s most visible and enduring heritage monuments,” she said. “They show that organised, innovative and connected societies have existed here for millennia.”

‘EMPOWERING SCHOOL TEACHERS WITH AI’



AL MUSANNAH: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Al Musannah, through the PSC Continuing Education and Community Service Team (CECS), successfully held a two-day workshop designed to equip cycle one (Grades 1-4) English language school teachers with practical AI skills.

The programme centred around the theme ‘Empowering Educators with AI’. The workshop commenced with an inspiring address from Dr Bassam Khalil Hamdan Tabsh, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, who welcomed 45 teachers from various schools. He highlighted the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping modern education and helping young learners engage more deeply with knowledge.

The first session, delivered by Muhammad Babar Qureshi, introduced educators to AI tools

that function as a ‘copilot’ in teaching. Participants explored how these tools can support lesson planning, streamline routine tasks and enhance interactive learning.

After a brief networking break, Maryam al Futaisi led an engaging session on designing AI-enhanced lesson plans. Teachers collaborated actively, demonstrating strong enthusiasm and creativity throughout the activity.

The second day opened with Dr Sree Ammanamanchi, who presented ‘Teaching Vocabulary Smarter: AI Supported Strategies for Grades 1-4’. The session sparked high participation, reflecting teachers’ interest in applying AI to early literacy skills. The final presentation, led by Baraah al Mujaini, focused on “AI-Powered Writing: Boosting Student Engagement and Teacher Impact in the Classroom.”

SALE OF VEHICLE / EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Company in Oman intends to dispose off their used Vehicles, Equipment and Crusher / Asphalt Plant in “as is where is” condition. The items identified are presently located in their Barka Khazaen Yard and will be offered for inspection to the public on 20/04/2026, 21/04/2026 & 22/04/2026 between 08:00 am to 12:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

Last date for submission of closed tender is 23/04/2026 at 05:00 pm at their Barka Khazaen Office.

Interested parties may contact at
Tel: (+968) 26983777 / 26983767
Mobile: (+968) 91354151

The Egyptian School in Muscat (Al Ansab) is seeking a **licensed nurse** certified by the Omani Ministry of Health.

Requirements:
Valid professional license from the Ministry of Health in Oman

Application:
Submit applications in a sealed envelope no later than **May 3, 2026**

Tel: +968 24202221
Email: info@egyptianschool.edu.om

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the *Observer* classified page. It’s where buyers meet sellers.

The Egyptian School in Muscat (Al Ansab) is seeking to contract with a specialized company to supply cleaning staff for the **2026–2027 academic year**, under the following conditions:

- Workers must not exceed 35 years of age.
- Must be medically fit.
- Ability to perform various cleaning tasks and assigned duties.
- Ability to work under pressure.

Required staff:

- 3 Male workers.
- 8 Female workers.

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope at the school premises no later than **May 3, 2026**, clearly stating that the contract is **for staff supply only (excluding cleaning equipment)**.
Tel: +968 24202221
Email: info@egyptianschool.edu.om

The Egyptian School in Muscat announces the **rental of the school canteen** for the **2026–2027 academic year**, in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the tender documents.

Details:
Tender documents can be obtained from the school in Al Ansab

Deadline for document collection: April 23, 2026
Offers must be submitted in a sealed envelope with a copy of the commercial registration

Submission deadline: May 3, 2026
Tel: +968 24202221
Email: info@egyptianschool.edu.om

W O R L D A W A I T S R E S U M P T I O N O F P E A C E T A L K S

IRAN WELCOMES PAKISTANI DELEGATION

Iran FM welcomes Pakistani delegation led by army chief Munir, days after failed US-Iran talks in Islamabad to end the Middle East war.

THREE PARAMEDICS KILLED IN LEBANON

Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes targeted paramedic teams in south Lebanon on Wednesday, killing at least three of them.

US DENIES EXTENDING CEASEFIRE

The United States has not formally agreed to extend its two-week ceasefire with Iran, a senior official said on Wednesday.

IRAN FIRM ON URANIUM, KEEPS TALKING

Iran's foreign ministry said Tehran's right to enrich uranium was "indisputable" although the level of enrichment is "negotiable"

IRAN IN RED SEA WARNING

Iran's military warned it would block trade through the Red Sea, along with the Gulf and Sea of Oman, if the US naval blockade continues.

TRUMP'S CHINESE ARMS DEMAND

US President Donald Trump said in an interview on Fox Business he asked China's leader Xi Jinping not to supply weapons to Iran.

UN CALL FOR LEBANON SUPPORT

United Nations refugee chief Barham Salih urged the international community to provide urgent support to Lebanon.

HEZBOLLAH FIRES ON ISRAEL

Two Israeli strikes hit vehicles south of Beirut, state media reported, while Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel.

STOCK MARKETS STAYS STEADY

Markets largely steadied as traders waited to see if Mideast peace talks resume. World oil prices rebounded about one per cent.

PAKISTAN SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif embarked on a four-day diplomatic tour, ahead of potential new peace talks.

IRAN'S military threatened on Wednesday to shut down Red Sea trade unless the United States lifted its naval blockade on Tehran's ports, saying the ceasefire was at risk. The warning came after President Donald Trump indicated peace negotiations could resume this week, and as Iran confirmed the sides had kept talking via Pakistan after a first round of negotiations fell flat. US Vice-President JD Vance, who led the weekend talks, said the Islamic republic was being offered a "grand bargain" to end the six-week war and address the decades-old dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme. But for now, both sides seemed intent on keeping up the pressure.

Washington has sought to turn the screws on Tehran with a blockade of its ports, with US Central Command saying overnight that American forces "have completely halted economic trade going into and out of Iran by sea". The picture based on recent maritime tracking data in the Strait of Hormuz was less clear-cut, and Iran's Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday that shipping had continued from southern Iran. But the head of Iran's military central command centre warned a US failure to lift the blockade would constitute "a prelude" to violating the two-week ceasefire. Unless Washington relents, Iran's armed forces "will not allow any exports or imports to continue in the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman and the Red Sea," said Ali Abdollahi.

NEW ROUND OF TALKS
Speaking to the New York Post on Tuesday, Trump said a new round of talks with Iran could take place in Pakistan "over the next two days", while telling Fox Business the war was "very close to being over". On the Iranian side, a foreign ministry spokesman said "several messages" had been exchanged via Islamabad since the talks wrapped up on Sunday, and that Tehran would "very likely" receive a Pakistani delegation on Wednesday.

Stocks rose and crude dropped on hopes for a deal to get oil flowing again through the Strait of Hormuz — choked by Iranian forces since the US-Israeli offensive began in late February, and now the focus of the US blockade. Analysts say Trump is aiming not only to cut off Iranian revenue but also to pressure China, the biggest buyer of Iran's oil, to push it to reopen the strait. In a nod to China's potentially key role, Trump told Fox Business he had written to Xi Jinping asking him not to supply weapons to Tehran, and received the Chinese leader's assurances that he was not doing so.

GRAND BARGAIN
Trump has insisted any deal must permanently bar Iran from becoming nuclear-armed. He launched the war on February 28 arguing that Tehran was rushing to complete an atomic bomb, an assertion not backed by the UN nuclear

IRAN UPS THREATS OVER US NAVAL BLOCKADE



A man rides past a large billboard referring to the Strait of Hormuz in Tehran's Vanak Square. — AFP



A family mourns their relative at a temporary graveyard in Tyre, south Lebanon. — Reuters

watchdog. Reports said the United States had sought a 20-year suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment programme during the Islamabad talks, and that Iran, in turn, proposed suspending its nuclear activity for five years — an offer US officials rejected.

Tehran has always insisted its nuclear programme is for civilian purposes and its foreign ministry spokesman said on Wednesday that Iran's right to enrich uranium was "indisputable", although the level of enrichment was "negotiable". At an event in the US state of Georgia on Tuesday, the US vice-president said Trump had pledged to "make Iran thrive" if it committed to "not having a nuclear weapon". "That's the kind of Trumpian grand bargain that the president has put on the table," Vance said, adding: "Man, we're going to keep on negotiating and try

to make it happen."

TWIN TRACK DIPLOMACY
The latest signals on US-Iran talks came as Israel and Lebanon also agreed to open direct negotiations after holding their first high-level face-to-face meeting since 1993 on Tuesday in Washington. Trump's administration is pressing hard for an end to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, fearing it could jeopardise a broader settlement. The US State Department said "all sides agreed to launch direct negotiations at a mutually agreed time and venue". But the diplomatic push remained fragile, with the Israeli military saying it had struck more than 200 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon in the past 24 hours, while the group, which is hostile to any talks, fired dozens of rockets at Israel. — AFP

PAKISTAN PM STARTS REGIONAL TOUR TO PUSH FOR PEACE TALKS



Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif appears ahead of a meeting, in Islamabad. — AFP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif set off on a four-day diplomatic blitz to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Türkiye on Wednesday, his office said, in a feverish round of diplomacy before a possible second round of US-Iran peace talks. "Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will undertake official visits to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the Republic of Türkiye from 15-18 April 2026," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement, using Türkiye's official name. The visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar will be conducted "in the bilateral context", while Sharif will participate in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum while in Türkiye. He will also hold bilateral

meetings with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other leaders on the sidelines of the Antalya forum, the statement said. Iran said on Wednesday that exchanges with the United States via Pakistan had continued following failed negotiations over the weekend. "Since Sunday, when the Iranian delegation returned to Tehran, several messages have been exchanged through Pakistan," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Bagaei in a weekly press briefing. "Today, we are very likely to receive a Pakistani delegation as a continuation of the discussions in Islamabad," he added. Iranian state TV said Tehran will

welcome a Pakistani delegation led by army chief Asim Munir on Wednesday, after the Islamic republic confirmed that exchanges with the US had continued via Pakistan after failed talks in Islamabad to end the war. State TV reported that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will welcome the delegation, which will bring a new message from Washington following the negotiations in the Pakistani capital over the weekend. The Islamabad talks ended without an agreement to end the conflict, but US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that negotiations could resume this week in the Pakistani capital. A fragile ceasefire remains in place until next week. — AFP

UNHCR chief calls for ‘urgent’ support to Lebanon during war

BEIRUT: United Nations refugee chief Barham Salih on Wednesday called on the international community to provide urgent support to Lebanon, with a fifth of the country's population displaced by the Israel-Hezbollah war. "I call upon the international community to provide urgent support and relief to Lebanon," he said after meeting Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. "The humanitarian consequences of this war are immense, and I emphasise the need to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure from the ravages of attack. Lebanon does not deserve to be trapped in a recurring cycle of violence, it deserves support and stability." He added that UNHCR has received "a portion" of the \$61 million it had appealed for during the war to support Lebanon in its "unprecedented" displacement crisis, as more than a million people, or a fifth of the Lebanese population, are displaced by the conflict.

Of them, more than 140,000 are in government shelters. The \$61 million is part of the Lebanon Flash Appeal, launched by UN chief Antonio Guterres last month to gather \$308 million to help the country. War-ravaged Lebanon has been dealing with an unprecedented financial crisis since 2019 and was still reeling from the 2024 Israel-Hezbollah war when the Iran-backed group drew it into the Middle East conflict last month. Two Israeli strikes on Wednesday hit vehicles south of Beirut, state media reported, while Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel, hours after Lebanon and Israel agreed to hold direct negotiations. The Israeli military also renewed its call for

“The humanitarian consequences of this war are immense, and I emphasise the need to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure from the ravages of attack. Lebanon does not deserve to be trapped in a recurring cycle of violence, it deserves support and stability.”

BARHAM SALIH



First responders inspect the site of an Israeli air strike, south of Beirut. — AFP

residents of a swathe of southern Lebanon to leave as it continues to bomb the area. Despite its ongoing attacks, Israel has not targeted the Lebanese capital since a series of attacks across the country on April 8 that killed more than 350 people. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported two separate Israeli strikes on two vehicles, both on the coastal highway around 20 kilometres south of Beirut and outside Hezbollah's traditional strongholds. A photographer saw a burned-out van with firefighters working to extinguish the blaze. Rescue workers were recovering human remains from the wreckage of the vehicle and its surroundings,

and the army has established a security perimeter, causing a massive traffic jam on this major thoroughfare, the photographer added. NNA also reported several other strikes across southern Lebanon. The Israeli military meanwhile said it had detected "approximately 30 launches" by Hezbollah fighters towards Israel since the early hours, a spokesman said. Hezbollah said it launched rockets at 10 northern Israeli areas. Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah on Wednesday said the group's fighters "are preventing enemy soldiers from seizing control" of the key southern town of Bint Jbeil, 5 kilometres north of

Israel. The Israeli army had said on Tuesday that 10 soldiers were wounded in the town, which it says it encircled. Wednesday's attacks come a day after Lebanon and Israel's ambassadors to the United States held their first direct talks in decades in Washington and agreed to hold further direct negotiations. The Lebanese envoy called for a ceasefire, but no truce was announced. Hezbollah strongly rejected the talks. Israeli attacks on Lebanon have killed more than 2,000 people and displaced more than a million since March 2, according to Lebanese authorities. — AFP

UK'S STARMER SAYS 'WON'T YIELD' TO TRUMP MIDEAST THREATS

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Wednesday said he would not "yield" to pressure to join the Iran war after US President Donald Trump threatened to scrap a UK trade deal. "We're not going to get dragged into this war. It is not our war," Starmer told parliament. "I'm not going to change my mind. I'm not going to yield. It is not in our national interest to join this war," the Labour leader added. In a phone interview with Sky News, Trump threatened to alter an agreement struck with Britain that limits the

impact of his US tariffs blitz. Trump, who has repeatedly slammed Starmer's policies, said strains in the relationship with the Nato ally would "not at all" negatively affect King Charles III's state visit to the United States this month. In reference to the royal trip, Starmer told parliament that the two nations' "long standing bonds... are far greater than anyone who occupies any particular office at any particular time". London and Washington concluded a trade agreement last year capping US



British PM Keir Starmer walks outside 10 Downing Street, in London. — Reuters

tariffs at 10 percent on most British manufactured goods. In return, the UK agreed to open its markets further to American ethanol and beef, sparking concerns in the country. At the time, it was an advantageous agreement for London, which benefited from the lowest tariffs granted by the US. This advantage has, however, been weakened since the US Supreme Court struck down some tariffs and Washington retaliated by imposing a temporary 10-percent tariff on almost all of its imports pending a new tariff

regime by July. While Trump praised his good relationship with Starmer at the time of the agreement, ties have since deteriorated, particularly over the war in the Middle East. Starmer angered Trump by refusing to allow British bases to be used for the US's initial strikes on Iran last month. He later agreed to a US request to use two British military bases for a "specific and limited defensive purpose". "It's a relationship where when we asked them for help, they were not there," Trump said. — AFP

RESCUED CREW

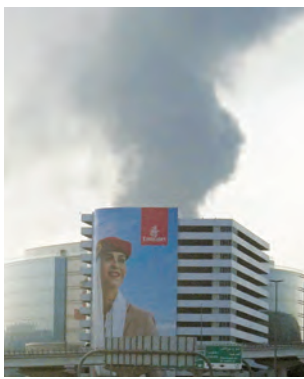
Sri Lanka repatriates 238 stranded sailors



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has repatriated 238 Iranian sailors stranded in the South Asian country after one of their warships was torpedoed by a US submarine, a minister on Wednesday. Deputy Defence Minister Aruna Jayasekara said that "a few sailors from the IRIS Bushehr are staying back to operate the vessel, but 206 joined those rescued from the IRIS Dena and returned home last night in a chartered aircraft". — AFP

EASING TENSIONS

Senior UAE, Iran officials discuss de-escalation



DUBAI: Senior UAE and Iranian officials held a call to discuss de-escalation, the first high-level call since ties deteriorated over the US-Iran war. UAE Vice President and Deputy Premier Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan "held a phone call with Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, during which they discussed regional developments and ways to de-escalate tension". — AFP

SIGNIFICANT SUPPLY

Norway crude oil exports hit record high



OSLO: Norway's crude oil exports hit a record high in March as the war in Iran and closure of the crucial Strait of Hormuz shipping lane drove up oil prices. Around a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) passes through the Strait of Hormuz in peacetime. "The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has caused a significant supply shock on the oil market, which contributed to the high oil prices in March," analysts said. — AFP

OPINION

Silent solutions in a loud world



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

COFFEE this week came with an unusual weight. The news had moved faster than the week itself, one development folding into the next before the previous one had time to settle. This triggered me to step outside yesterday morning, where the air carried vapour, dust and the faint smell of construction from across the road, and for a moment the distance between what was unfolding on my screen and what was unfolding in front of me felt wider than it had any right to be. The steadiness beyond the screen is what I find myself wanting to write about, something that exists alongside what is difficult and asks for its own attention.

Beneath the surface of the news and beneath the surface of the ground, mycorrhizal fungi are doing work that most climate conversations have yet to account for. These vast biological networks connect plant roots to soil ecosystems across entire landscapes, drawing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and locking it into stable organic compounds where it can remain for decades. The scale is significant, the infrastructure ancient, and the cost of enabling it a fraction

of what mechanical carbon capture demands. Mycorrhizal networks reframe the climate question around regeneration: soil health, food resilience, and carbon mitigation operating through a single living system that predates every technology we have ever designed, one that is waiting to be restored.

Above ground, a parallel logic is playing out in some of the most unexpected corners of the Global South. The current energy crisis, compounded by conflict and supply chain fractures, has triggered what analysts describe as a leapfrog effect. Communities in Sierra Leone, Pakistan, and Botswana that lacked reliable electricity are bypassing fossil fuel grids entirely, installing decentralised solar microgrids with battery storage to power rural clinics and emergency services on their own terms. These systems emerged where infrastructure had not yet arrived, and their resilience comes from the fact that they were built to meet immediate need.

Botswana's presence in that list carries a second layer this week. President Duma Boko's visit to Muscat produced a 500-megawatt solar agreement with battery storage in Maun, the first project under a broader cooperation framework between

Diplomatic ties between Botswana and Oman were only established in July 2025, and the speed at which those ties have translated into energy infrastructure points to a world where countries that share arid landscapes and resource transition pressures are finding each other faster than the traditional multilateral calendar would allow

the two countries. Diplomatic ties between Botswana and Oman were only established in July 2025, and the speed at which those ties have translated into energy infrastructure points to a world where countries that share arid landscapes and resource transition pressures are finding each other faster than the traditional multilateral calendar would allow.

What connects the fungal networks beneath the soil and the solar microgrids above it is worth sitting with. Both are decentralised, and both solve more than one problem at once. They did not emerge from a grand strategy or a single coordinating hand. They grew because the conditions around them allowed it, and they scaled through proximity and repetition, one root system at a time, one rooftop at a time.

There is a tension in holding both realities at once: the weight of what the region is carrying and the mending happening in soils and villages and freshly built partnerships between countries the world had not yet noticed were aligned. I do not think that tension resolves. I think it is the actual condition of the work, and the sooner we stop waiting for one reality to cancel out the other, the more clearly we can look at where we are.

PERU’S BIGGEST POLITICAL LOSER NEARS VICTORY

ANDREW BEATTY, LUIS JAIME CISNEROS

Peru's Keiko Fujimori has run for the presidency three times and lost three times — in a country that has had eight presidents in the last decade alone.

But on this, her fourth attempt, the daughter of disgraced former president Alberto Fujimori may have a last best chance at power, riding a right-wing wave sweeping Latin America.

Ballots are still being counted from Sunday's poll, which was marred by a series of logistical foul-ups, but the 50-year-old is ahead and the only candidate virtually assured of reaching the runoff.

Poised and polished, with a sharp pantsuit and a perfect smile, Fujimori looks like someone raised for politics.

The divorced mother of two has been a congresswoman and party leader. She became first lady at 19, after her mother denounced her father for corruption. While her rivals stumble through speeches, Fujimori speaks with ease. She looks every inch the political operative.

Educated in the United States, she has dealt with emperors, queens and presidents, most notably her father.

Alberto Fujimori ruled Peru through the turbulent 1990s and became one of its most consequential and polarising leaders.

The son of Japanese migrants, he won praise for crushing hyperinflation and defeating the Maoist Shining Path insurgency. He was later disgraced, exiled and jailed for running death squads and embezzling millions of dollars from state funds.

For decades, the Fujimori name has helped and haunted Keiko, a political inheritance comparable to the Bushes, Bhuttos or Sukarnos.

It gave her an identity, a loyal support base, vast resources and instant recognition. She may be the only one of 35 candidates known by every Peruvian.

Alberto died in September 2024, making this Keiko's first campaign without her father. But that does not mean he is absent.

Millions of Peruvians hold darker memories of Alberto and refuse to vote for a Fujimori.

Keiko has also been jailed multiple times in relation to corruption allegations.

Keiko believes that opposition to her family has been an organising principle of a series of presidents who beat her at the ballot box.

Fujimori has also changed her tone. Once openly confrontational, she says she now favours consensus and debate.

If she wins, consensus and coalition-building will matter. Several Peruvian presidents have been impeached, ousted or jailed after clashing with Congress. — AFP

The Hormuz robbery

MUSANDAM

is one of the most unique places on our planet. It overlooks the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, and their scenic fjords. It is a living heritage of civilisations. In Khasab, Bukha, Madha, and villages like Kumzar, languages blend effortlessly, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and echoes of English, Portuguese and Dutch.

Nearly 5,000 years ago, the Sumerians referred to this passage as Khor Majan, linking it to Oman's ancient identity as a hub of copper and rare mineral trade. For centuries, it has been a corridor of empires, Greek, Arab, Persian, Portuguese, Dutch, and British, each recognising its strategic gravity.

Today, that same corridor sits at the centre of a modern geopolitical and economic paradigm shift. Since March 2026, the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating war by the US, the Israeli occupation, against Iran has triggered one of the most disruptive supply shocks in recent history. While global narratives frame the closure as a security reaction, the economic consequences reveal a more calculated outcome, one that disproportionately benefits multinational energy and insurance corporations.

Analysts estimate that global energy giants, including companies like ExxonMobil and Shell plc, could collectively realise windfall gains exceeding RO 115 to 150 billion in 2026 due to monopolistic price inflation and volatility-driven trading margins.

Parallel to this, the insurance industry has experienced an unprecedented surge based on unverified ships data. War-risk premiums for tankers transiting near the Gulf have risen by more than 300 per cent since the start of the crisis. Daily insurance costs for a single large crude carrier have jumped from approximately RO 11,500 to over RO 60,000 per



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The real question is whether we will remain passive observers of a global "Hormuz robbery," or become architects of a new model that secures our long-term prosperity.

voyage. Major insurers such as Lloyd's of London are reporting record underwriting profits, with sector-wide gains projected to exceed RO 40 billion globally by the end of 2026. When combined with derivatives trading and freight rate spikes, the total economic extraction linked to this crisis is approaching, and could plausibly exceed, RO 1 trillion in redistributed global value.

Yet, while multinational actors accumulate extraordinary gains, the GCC economies are absorbing the shock.

The most immediate impact is logistical and trade disruption. GCC countries rely heavily on maritime routes for both exports and imports. With shipping delays, rerouting costs, and insurance premiums, regional supply chains have seen cost increases of 15 to 25 per cent. For import-dependent sectors such as food, where Gulf countries import over 80 per cent of their needs, this has translated into food price inflation of 5 to 10 per cent in just a few months.

More critically, the closure risks accelerating long-term demand destruction for Gulf hydrocarbons. Major energy consumers in Europe and Asia have responded by fast-tracking diversification strategies, increasing investments in renewables, nuclear energy, and even coal as a short-term hedge.

The International Energy Agency has already projected that sustained disruptions could reduce long-term oil demand growth by up to 2 million barrels per day by 2030. This is not a temporary fluctuation; it is a structural shift. Once customers reconfigure their energy systems, demand rarely returns to previous patterns.

A second, less quantifiable but equally damaging consequence is the erosion of GCC soft power. Over the past decade, Gulf nations have carefully positioned themselves as global hubs for diplomacy, tourism, and investment.

From mega sporting events to world-class infrastructure and

neutral mediation roles, the region built a reputation for stability. Today, that perception is under strain. Capital flows are becoming more cautious, tourism bookings have softened in key markets, and regional diplomatic influence is increasingly contested by emerging actors and malignant forces such as the Israeli occupation.

Estimates suggest that non-oil sectors across the GCC, particularly tourism, logistics, and aviation, could face combined losses exceeding RO 20 to 70 billion in 2026 if instability persists. The region, once seen as a bridge between East and West, risks being reframed as a chokepoint.

This moment, however, must not be viewed only through the lens of loss. It is a strategic paradigm shift.

The same forces exposing vulnerabilities are also revealing the urgency of transformation. The Gulf cannot rely indefinitely on geography as an advantage if that geography can be weaponised. Instead, the region must double down on building resilience through diversified energy corridors, advanced manufacturing, In-Country Value or ICV, digital economies, and localised supply chains. Investments in green hydrogen, AI-driven logistics, and sovereign industrial capabilities are no longer optional, they are existential.

History offers perspective. Musandam and the Strait of Hormuz have witnessed cycles of conflict and reinvention for millennia. Each disruption reshaped trade routes, power structures, and economic models. Those who adapted emerged stronger.

The question before the GCC today is not whether the system is changing, it already is. The real question is whether we will remain passive observers of a global "Hormuz robbery," or become architects of a new model that secures our long-term prosperity.

Because in moments like this, resilience is not just survival, it is strategy.

Cohon’s tactical lessons for Trump



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

A GLIMPSE into Trump's scholarly and cultural impact on society is essential to understanding the global chaos. For example, United States President Donald Trump warned Iran that he would bomb the country “back to the stone ages” and that “the whole civilisation will die tonight”. Such extreme statements from the leader of the world’s most powerful military nation highlight the bizarre situation - and his flaws. ‘Bombing to the Stone Age’ refers to carpet bombing, meaning the destruction of infrastructure to force society into a primitive state. Specifically, this threat implies an intent to destroy core structures, including energy and telecommunications, educational, cultural, and medical facilities. We could not expect anything less from a leader who declared a love for poorly educated people and has taken an adversarial approach to traditional academia, weakening existing accreditation bodies and cancelling or withdrawing research grant funding. The book Trump: The Art of the Deal offers insights into his negotiation tactics and business philosophy. According to journalist and ghostwriter Tony Schwartz, Trump did not write the book but chose only to remove critical mentions of business colleagues. The stories behind the choice of Schwartz as a writer go back to a 1985 article published in New York Magazine, ‘A Different Kind of Donald Trump Story’, which concerned Trump's decision to evict tenants from a building he had bought on

Central Park South in 1982. In the media, The Apprentice series transformed Trump's public image from a regional developer to a national, tough-talking businessman, providing a template for media-driven populist politics. A biographical drama film, directed by Ali Abbasi — a Iranian-Swedish-Danish film-maker — and written by Gabriel Sherman, titled The Apprentice (2024), examines Trump's career as a real estate entrepreneur, characterised by raw ambition, a hunger for success, and a willingness to do whatever it takes to win. Drawing from his mentor Roy Cohn’s teachings, Trump utilises strategies focused on three rules: always attack, never admit wrongdoing, and always claim victory, even if defeated. The core strategies Cohon taught Trump were media warfare, narrative shaping, and perception manipulation. Cohon advocated for the use of lawsuits as a tool for intimidation, always attacking first, never admitting fault, and forceful retaliation for any perceived offence. Trump is resolute in his rhetoric and style. He relies on bombastic expressions and a ‘carnival framework’, which permits him to break traditional political norms. Donald Trump frequently makes indecent remarks in public forums. Recently, he used vulgar language in a social media post targeting Iran, demanding the opening of the Straits of Hormuz. He used a foul-mouthed message posted on Easter Sunday,

Trump utilises strategies focused on three rules: always attack, never admit wrongdoing, and always claim victory, even if defeated

threatening to turn Iranian power plants and bridges into targets. Trump has repeatedly used offensive language to describe journalists and media outlets. While Trump campaigned on an ‘America First’ platform, his presidency has been characterised by a belligerent and unconventional approach to both foreign and domestic policy. Sixteen months into his second term, Trump deployed military forces in Somalia, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, the Caribbean Sea, Iranian nuclear sites, and Yemen and Venezuela. The ego is a dangerous force. It creates a false self-image, blinding people to reality. Actually, the president of the United States has a fragile ego that sees criticism or failure as a narcissistic injury, triggering vengeful replies. His actions have prompted scholarly debate regarding populism, nativism, and authoritarianism. Trump remains a central figure in Internet meme culture, with current trends focusing on international conflicts and AI-generated satire. Ironically, Trump frequently highlights that the US moved from being a ‘laughingstock’ to being respected worldwide. Studying Trump's personality is both legitimate and important. His behaviour is best explained by a combination of pathological narcissism, a monarchic mindset, and a deliberate madman strategy - acting erratically to keep others off balance. He is always on stage!

INDIA’S GREEN FUEL PLANS COLLIDE WITH FARMERS’ WATER FEARS

BHASKER TRIPATHI

Protests are rippling across rural India against proposed ethanol plants that could ease the country’s dependence on oil and gas imports, but many in the countryside worry the sites put pressure on their water supply, land and health. India, which imports 80 per cent of its oil and gas, has made ethanol central to its clean energy plans and, as war in the Middle East impacts the price and supply of oil, its energy security. Delhi increased the ethanol in petrol from 1 per cent in 2014 to 20 per cent last year. But most ethanol is made from maize and sugarcane, crops requiring significant amounts of land and water and that has triggered resistance in several rural regions. One example is the small town of Tibbi in the northwestern state of Rajasthan where hundreds of farmers marched against a proposed ethanol plant late last month. “This factory will take away our water. No one asked us before starting the work,” said Madan Dugesar, a farmer involved in a series of protests against the plant. The unrest had been building for months. Residents said police arrested protest leaders in dawn raids in November and cleared a demonstration near the plant, actions that backfired and drew more angry people out onto the streets. Tibbi villagers said they only realised a large ethanol plant was being built when heavy machinery arrived and deep drilling began last year. Some of the farmers travelled to the neighbouring state of Punjab to learn about the impact of a similar plant there and how protests had led to the state government closing down an ethanol distillery. “Underground water got polluted. People started falling sick, and that is when protests began,” said Roman Brar, a farm leader in the town of Zira, the focus of the Punjab protests. Residents there staged sit-ins, blocked roads and appealed to the National Green Tribunal, India’s top environmental protection body, which is now considering the case. “We are not against industry,” Brar said. “We are against industries that pollute our water and land.” In Tibbi, villagers oppose what they say is a water-intensive project in a region dependent on canals and groundwater for irrigation. Tibbi resident Mahangu Singh Sidhu said the water-table was rapidly falling and an ethanol plant would deplete it further, competing with crops for water and polluting supplies. Residents formed a protest group and petitioned local government April last year, but said they received no response, leading to a permanent protest at the site by August. In December, thousands gathered and marched towards the plant. — Reuters

From culture to capital... a 3-part model for Oman

THE Sultanate of Oman does not suffer from a lack of heritage or cultural assets. It suffers, at times, from lack of structured conversion. If we want our cultural and heritage assets to become productive forms of national capital, we need a clearer method: creation, valuation and sustainability. Oman has reached a point at which heritage and culture can no longer be treated as a beautiful side note to development. It must be treated as part of development itself. This is not a call to commercialise everything sacred, old or local. Nor is it an invitation to reduce heritage to ticket sales and souvenir shops. It is a call to think more seriously, and more strategically, about how inherited cultural assets become living assets: assets that generate value, deepen identity, create livelihoods and strengthen place. The starting point is simple. Heritage becomes capital not by existing, but by being activated. That activation, I would argue, requires a three-part paradigm: creation, valuation and sustainability. Creation comes first because not every heritage asset is automatically capital. A site, practice, landscape or institution may have historical significance, but still remain economically and socially dormant. Creation, in this context, does not mean inventing heritage or culture. It means creating the pathways through which heritage or culture begins to produce value. That may include interpretation, adaptive reuse, design development, educational programming, cultural events, craft revival, digital access, branded experiences, scholarly production and place-based entrepreneurship. This matters greatly in Oman, where the raw material is exceptionally strong. The Sultanate of Oman has five Unesco World Heritage properties, including Bahla Fort and the Aflaj Irrigation Systems of Oman, while the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism’s open-data



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

Creation comes first because not every heritage asset is automatically capital. A site, practice, landscape or institution may have historical significance, but still remain economically and socially dormant

platform lists large inventories of heritage and tourism assets across the country. In other words, Oman already possesses a substantial stock of cultural assets. The question is whether those assets are being turned into structured and renewable value. The second part is valuation. This is where many heritage discussions in our region remain weak. We either praise heritage sentimentally or fund it defensively, without a robust account of what value it actually generates. Yet international practice is moving in a different direction. The United Kingdom’s Culture and Heritage Capital programme explicitly seeks methods for valuing the wider benefits of culture and heritage, including social and non-use values, rather than limiting assessment to narrow market returns. Historic England’s work similarly shows that the heritage sector contributes materially to the economy and employment. That shift is important. Once valuation becomes more intelligent, heritage stops appearing as a cost centre and starts being seen as an asset class. One does not need to copy foreign models wholesale to understand the lesson. If a restored historic quarter raises nearby business activity, strengthens local identity, increases length of stay, supports craftspeople, enriches education and improves the image of a city, then its value is clearly larger than the entrance fee at its gate. The third part is sustainability. This is the decisive test. A heritage asset may be activated and even valued, but still fail if its model is extractive, shallow or socially alienating. There are instructive examples elsewhere. In England, the High Streets Heritage Action Zones programme worked across 67 historic high streets and, according to Historic England’s evaluation, repaired 723 historic buildings, reinstated 462 shopfronts and helped create or bring back into use

224 homes. The wider programme benefits were valued at more than £245 million. AlUla offers another lesson from the region. Its official long-term targets link heritage with employment, GDP contribution and sectoral diversification, including arts and crafts, agriculture, film, research and education. Whatever one thinks of scale or style, the strategic insight is sound: heritage becomes capital when it is connected to multiple sectors, not isolated in a preservation silo. Oman should now apply this three-part lens to its own assets with confidence and discipline. Take the aflaj. They are not merely historic irrigation channels, but fully formed heritage economies in waiting: systems of engineering, ecology, customary governance, agricultural practice, seasonal rhythm and landscape meaning. If approached through the lens of creation, the aflaj could become revenue-earning yet culturally grounded assets by generating value around the water system rather than extracting value from it directly. Oman could develop curated visitor experiences, agro-heritage trails, field schools, interpretation hubs, educational programmes, branded farm products, digital storytelling platforms and community-led enterprises linked to the aflaj. In this way, the falaj would cease to be treated as a static monument and instead become the centre of a wider productive ecosystem that creates income, knowledge, employment and territorial identity while preserving its integrity. Through valuation, it could begin measuring not only visitor interest but educational, agricultural and territorial value. Through sustainability, it could ensure that conservation, local farming and cultural continuity reinforce one another rather than compete. Unesco already recognises the aflaj as World Heritage; Oman should now build a more ambitious national model around them.

SPORTS

INCLUSIVE SETTING



The first side hall of SQSC hosted goalball for students with visual impairments and boccia for students with physical disabilities.

200 STUDENTS JOIN DISABILITIES SPORTS DAY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

The activities of the School Sports and Cultural Day for Students with Disabilities concluded at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, bringing together 200 male and female students in an event that combined sporting challenge and cultural creativity in an inclusive and interactive setting. The event was organised by the Oman School Sports Association in Muscat Governorate with support from Oman LNG LLC, and was held under the auspices of Ali bin Mohammed al Shukaili, Assistant Director-General for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Participants represented Al Amal School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind, Al Amal Centre in Al Khoudh, and inclusive education students from schools across the governorates, with 50 participants from each entity.

The programme was designed to deliver an integrated and innovative sports and cultural experience aimed at strengthening the social inclusion of students with disabilities through sport and culture, while boosting self-confidence, discovering sporting and creative talents, supporting community partnerships, and providing a safe and encouraging environment.

Activities were spread across three halls to ensure variety and suitability for the participating groups. The main hall staged football for male students with hearing impairments, basketball for female students with hearing impairments, and an athletics skills package for students with Down syndrome, before all groups came together for the 50-metre sprint challenge, one of the day's main highlights.

Meanwhile, the first side hall hosted goalball for students with visual impairments and boccia for students with physical disabilities, while the second side hall was dedicated to the cultural station, featuring drawing, electronic games, robot games, chess and table tennis.

The event followed a phased timetable that began with welcoming participants and distributing shirts and groups, before the start of competitions in the different halls, followed by the central gathering for the sprint challenge and the closing recognition ceremony.

Maryam bint Saif al Hosni, school activities supervisor at the School Sports Committee in Muscat Governorate, said involving students from different disability categories in sports and cultural events is not merely recreational, but a genuine educational and humanitarian right that reinforces equal opportunities.

POSITIVE INTERACTION

She added that such initiatives create a real environment for inclusion through positive interaction built on respect and appreciation, helping break psychological and social barriers while also promoting a wider culture of acceptance and diversity in society.

Asaad bin Mohammed al Qarni, a physical education teacher, said the event is held annually and targets students with physical, visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities. "The programme included six athletics stations for children, basketball and football for students with hearing impairments, boccia for students with physical disabilities, as well as cultural and recreational activities including virtual reality, drawing, chess and children's games."

He stressed that the importance of such events goes beyond recreation, as they allow students with disabilities to practise sport with their peers.

Dawood clinches world junior taekwondo silver

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

OMANI national taekwondo team athlete Dawood bin Fahad al Yousfi claimed the silver medal at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Tashkent 2026, following an impressive showing in the under-48 kg division at the championships being hosted by Uzbekistan from April 12 to 17.

Al Yousfi's achievement came after a strong campaign in the world event, which drew a record 986 male and female athletes from 115 countries. The Omani athlete advanced to the final after a series of standout performances that underlined his readiness and ability to compete with the world's top athletes in his age category.

The Omani athlete delivered a commendable performance that reflected both his technical and physical preparedness, as well as the high competitive spirit he displayed throughout his bouts, confirming his status as one of the promising talents capable of competing on major stages, especially in a championship regarded as one of the most important global events at age-group level in taekwondo.

This achievement reflects the efforts being made to prepare and develop young sporting talents, as well as the continuous support provided to promising athletes, helping strengthen Oman's presence in international competitions and raise the level of achievement in individual sports.

Coach Fahad al Yousfi confirmed to Oman Observer that the result came as the product of integrated technical work and an early preparation plan, explaining that the athlete possesses several strategies inside the bouts, which gave him the ability to control and dictate the course of the matches, in addition to his physique, which greatly helped him produce this level.

He said the athlete's preparation followed an early plan that included a variety of training programmes, among them physical and tactical preparation, as well as a nutritional programme supervised by specialists, all of which helped prepare him properly for a world championship of this scale.



Oman's Dawood bin Fahad al Yousfi (R) with his coach Fahad al Yousfi.

TOUGH START

Fahad al Yousfi pointed out that the most difficult moment during the competition came in the opening match, explaining that getting through it was a key factor in continuing the campaign successfully. He noted that many athletes do not fully settle into the atmosphere of the tournament until after the first bout, and that facing a strong, fully focused opponent from the outset can cost a player the entire championship.

He added that Dawood stood out in the 48 kg category through his defensive solidity, his ability to seize opportunities and score points, as well as the calm and confidence with which he handled the course of the contest, all of which played an important role in his progress to the final and eventual silver medal.

He further explained that this achievement means a great deal for Omani taekwondo, especially as the athlete had previously won silver at the World Cadet Championships, reflecting his continued presence on the global podium and

helping enhance the sport's standing locally. He also noted that this progress has received attention and support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Oman Olympic Committee.

Regarding the next stage, Fahad al Yousfi said the ambition is now focused on winning world gold in 2028, in addition to pursuing an Olympic medal in the same year. He explained that the importance of this achievement for the athlete lies in the fact that he has now found his place among world champions and identified where he belongs, allowing him to move forward with confidence toward his bigger target of reaching the podium at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

The coach also revealed that Dawood had originally been expected to compete in the under-45 kg category, but technical and health considerations led the coaching staff to enter him in the under-48 kg division instead, meaning his chances could be even greater in the future when competing in his most suitable weight category.

ORSC to hold Oman Open badminton in April, May

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

The Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) is all set to organise two events in badminton for senior categories in April and May. The first event, for Omani players only, will take place during April 30 to May 2 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex providing a focused platform for local talents to compete and showcase their skills. This event will be followed by the Oman Open Badminton Championship, scheduled from May 7 to 9 at the same venue, which will be open to Omani, expatriate and professional players.

The three days championships for both events will be under supervision of the national badminton head coach, Waseem Nasr al Khateeb, who took charge as head coach since September 2025. Nasr al Khuzairi, who was appointed recently as



In the doubles category, Oman Club had dominated the competition.

assistant head coach, will also be available to assess and evaluate the performance of the domestic players. The championships will act as golden opportunity for the coaching staff in identifying the top-performing athletes, with selected players expected to represent Oman in future

regional and continental events, including the West Asian and Arab badminton championships.

The ORSC emphasised that organising two separate events including: one exclusively for Omani players and another open to a wider pool of participants will aim to provide the ideal competitive environment for local athletes. The approach will allow Omani players to first compete among themselves before testing their abilities against experienced expatriate and professional players, thereby gaining valuable exposure and improving their technical performance.

The initiative reflects ORSC's broader strategy to strengthen the development pathway for badminton in Oman by increasing the number of high-level competitions and enhancing player readiness for international participation. The committee has already demonstrated its commitment

to the sport through successful organisation of domestic events.

In December last year, ORSC had hosted the Oman Badminton Clubs Championship, which witnessed a high level of competition among clubs from across the country. During that tournament, Salim al Maqbali of Masirah Club retained his men's singles title after defeating Sultan al Shibani of Al Amerat Club in straight sets. Khalil al Darmaki of Bausher Club and Nasser al Jabri of Sohar Club finished third.

In doubles, Oman Club teams reached the final to secure first and second places. Taqah and Al Amerat ended joint third. The event had attracted participation from 15 clubs from various governorates, including Salalah, Al Bashayer, Al Musannah, Seeb, Al Shabab, Oman Club, Saham, Sohar, Fanja, Taqah, Bausher, Ibri, Al Amerat, Qurayat and Masirah.

INJURYEXIT



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz reacts during his final against Italy's Jannik Sinner in the Monte Carlo Masters. — Reuters

ALCARAZ PULLS OUT OF BARCELONA OPEN WITH WRIST INJURY

BARCELONA: Carlos Alcaraz withdrew on Wednesday from the Barcelona Open because of a wrist injury that troubled him in his first-round match, potentially casting doubt over his Roland Garros defence.

“I won’t be able to continue in the tournament,” Alcaraz told reporters a day after his win over Finnish qualifier Otto Virtanen.

“I felt my wrist give out on a return during the match. After the tests, we saw that it’s a more serious injury than any of us expected, and I have to listen to my body so it doesn’t affect me in the future.”

It is the second time in three years injury has forced Alcaraz to withdraw from the Barcelona tournament. He won it 2022 and 2023, and finished runner-up to Holger Rune 12 months ago.

Alcaraz had been scheduled to face Tomas Machac on Thursday for a place in the quarterfinals.

“I have to go home to start my recovery as soon as possible with my team, the doctors, and the physical therapist, and get — or try to get — as healthy as possible as soon as possible for the tournaments I have coming up,” the Spaniard said.

“I hope you’ll be able to see me on the court again as soon as possible.”

Alcaraz lost his world number one ranking this week following his defeat by Jannik Sinner in the Monte Carlo Masters final on Sunday. He would have had a chance to regain it by winning the title in Barcelona.

MEDJEDOVIC OUSTS DE MINAUR

Earlier on Wednesday, Serbian Hamed Medjedovic stunned world number seven Alex de Minaur with a 6-3, 6-4 victory in the round of 16.

Medjedovic, ranked 88th in the world, broke for a 5-3 lead in the first set which he served out to love.

De Minaur broke and consolidated for a 3-0 advantage in the second set but the 22-year-old qualifier battled his way back, winning the last five games to secure two breaks and triumph.

The Australian committed five double faults on a difficult afternoon and converted only one of nine break points.

The 2023 Next Gen Finals champion will next face Nuno Borges after the Portuguese defeated Tomas Martin Etcheverry 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) to progress to the last eight. — AFP



Chennai Super Kings' Noor Ahmad celebrates the wicket of Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh with Ruturaj Gaikwad. — Reuters

Noor shines as Chennai keep Kolkata winless

AFGHAN

spinner Noor Ahmad returned impressive figures of 3-21 as Chennai Super Kings beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 32 runs for their second straight IPL win on Tuesday.

Five-time winners Chennai posted 192-5, riding on knocks from Sanju Samson, who hit 48, and Dewald Brevis (41) after being invited to bat first at their home MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Noor then turned on the heat with his left-arm wrist spin to keep Kolkata down to 160-7 in reply as they remain winless in their five outings.

“It gives a lot of confidence,” player of the match Noor said of his performance. “Will keep putting a lot of effort to keep contributing to my team.”

Kolkata sit last in the standings with one point, which came courtesy of a washed-out game.

Chennai kept up their momentum after starting the season with three consecutive defeats, and now with back-to-back victories move up to eighth place.

One of the most successful franchises in the T20 tournament, Chennai are still waiting for the return of MS Dhoni, who is recovering from a calf injury and is yet to play a game in this edition.

Three-time champions Kolkata lost three early wickets in their chase, including Finn Allen (one) and Sunil Narine (24), but were in the hunt before Noor struck.



Chennai Super Kings' Sanju Samson and Dewald Brevis interact during the IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders. — Reuters

Noor took down skipper Ajinkya Rahane for 28 and Australia's Cameron Green for a golden duck on successive balls but the hat-trick was avoided by Rinku Singh in his next over.

But Rinku did not last long and was caught out at long-on for six as Kolkata slipped to 90-6.

Rovman Powell, who hit an unbeaten 31, and Ramandeep Singh (35) attempted to revive the chase but could never keep up with the asking rate.

“We just have to keep that head up and just be positive and have that self-belief,” said Rahane.

Earlier, Samson, who hit a century in the previous match, kept up his form to hand the team a quick start in his 32-ball knock laced with four fours and three sixes.

Ayush Mhatre's 17-ball 38 and crucial runs by Brevis and Sarfaraz Khan (23) allowed Chennai to post a challenging total despite tidy bowling by Kolkata at the backend.

— AFP

Ball hero and villain as Hornets sting Heat, Blazers eclipse Suns

LOS ANGELES: LaMelo Ball was hero and villain as the Charlotte Hornets sent the Miami Heat tumbling out of the NBA play-in tournament with a thrilling 127-126 overtime victory on Tuesday.

Charlotte had never won a win-or-go-home postseason game in 12 previous attempts and looked in danger of extending that record after blowing a 125-120 lead with 26 seconds remaining to allow Miami to edge ahead 126-125.

After Miami star Tyler Herro sank a superb corner three-pointer to make it 125-123, Ball carelessly turned over possession and then gave away three free-throws with a rash lunge on Herro. Herro drained all three shots to give Miami the lead with just nine seconds left.

Ball though made amends with a determined driving layup to make it 127-126 before an athletic block from Miles Bridges snuffed out Miami's last-gasp attempt to win it.

“We stuck with it and ground it out,” Ball said. “We wasn’t hitting our threes, all the shots weren’t hitting, but we stuck with it.”

Ball was at the centre of controversy over an incident in the second quarter which led to Miami star Bam Adebayo hobbling out of the game.

After being blocked during a drive to the basket, Ball reached out and tripped Adebayo with a tug on his standing leg, sending the Miami star crashing to the hardwood. He played no further part in the game.

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra was



Charlotte Hornets' LaMelo Ball (1) moves the ball against Miami Heat's Davion Mitchell (45) during the play-in rounds of the 2026 NBA Playoffs. — Imagn Images

furious that Ball escaped an ejection.

“The referees are there for what? How did they not see that? I don't want this to be an excuse, Charlotte was incredible at the end,” Spoelstra fumed.

“I don't think that's cute. I don't think it's funny. I think it's a stupid play. It's a dangerous play. Our best player is out. (LaMelo) should be penalised for that. I don't think that belongs in the game, tripping guys, shenanigans. Someone has got to see that. And he should have been thrown out of the game for that.”

The victory means Charlotte, beaten in their two previous appearances in the play-in tournament in 2021 and 2022, remain alive in the postseason while Miami are eliminated.

Charlotte will face the loser of Wednesday's Eastern Conference play-in game between the eighth-seeded Orlando Magic and seventh-seeded Philadelphia 76ers. The reward for the winner of that game on Friday is a first-round playoff series against top seeds Detroit.

In Tuesday's Western Conference play-in game a sensational 41-point display from Israeli forward Deni Avdija inspired the Portland Trail Blazers to a 114-110 upset of the seventh-seeded Phoenix Suns.

A dazzling late burst of scoring from Portland, who went on a 17-5 run to close the game, means the Suns must now play either the Golden State Warriors or LA Clippers in the final round of the play-in to advance to the playoffs. — AFP

SPORTS

BRAVINGPRESSURE



Paris Saint-Germain's Ousmane Dembele celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the Uefa Champions League quarterfinal, second-leg match against Liverpool at Anfield in Liverpool. — AFP

DEMBELE HAILS PSG’S ABILITY TO ‘SUFFER’ IN WIN OVER LIVERPOOL

LIVERPOOL: Double goal hero Ousmane Dembele hailed his Paris Saint-Germain teammates for holding on under pressure and in difficult conditions to beat Liverpool 2-0 at Anfield on Tuesday in the second leg of their Champions League quarterfinal and reach the last four with a 4-0 aggregate triumph.

“It is the quarterfinals of the Champions League, in a stadium like this, and even though we won 2-0 in the first leg we knew it was going to be difficult,” Dembele told broadcaster Canal Plus.

“In any case there are no easy matches in the Champions League. You have to suffer if you are going to go all the way in this competition.”

Reigning champions PSG had a 2-0 advantage from last week’s first leg and had to withstand long spells of pressure in the second half in particular, with Liverpool having a total of 21 attempts on goal on a wet and windy night.

Dembele opened the scoring in the 72nd minute before wrapping up PSG’s win on the night, and passage to the semis, in stoppage time.

They will play either Real Madrid or Bayern Munich in the last four, with a first leg in Paris on April 28 and the second leg a week later.

“We had chances in the first half. I thought we controlled the game in the first half but it was more complicated in the second half, albeit that’s normal because this is the Champions League,” said last year’s Ballon d’Or winner Dembele.

“There are only good teams in this competition but we have come away from this tie with two wins so that’s great.”

THIRD YEAR RUNNING Dembele missed much of the first half of the season due to injury but his double against Liverpool leaves him on 16 goals for the campaign in all competitions, including 12 in 2026. “I want to help the team in every match, whether that be by scoring a goal, setting up a goal or just pressing the goalkeeper,” added the 28-year-old France forward.

“I try to give my maximum for Paris Saint-Germain and I hope to have a very, very good end to the season because there are big games to come.”

PSG have now reached the Champions League semifinals three years in a row since Luis Enrique became coach in 2023, having got that far just three times in their history before his arrival.

“Today I am very proud because especially in the first half we controlled the match, playing the game in the opposition half which is very difficult to do in a stadium like this and in this atmosphere,” said the Spaniard.

“We did have to suffer in the second half as we knew we would, but we did what we had to do without the ball. We knew that sooner rather than later we would have chances on the break and we would score. I think over the two games we deserve to be through.”

Meanwhile, Luis Enrique said he was not yet aware of the extent of the injuries suffered by left-back Nuno Mendes and forward Desire Doue, both of whom had to come off.

“I am not a doctor, but it is normal in a game of this intensity to have some problems. We will wait until tomorrow to see exactly what they have,” Enrique said. — AFP



Atletico Madrid’s English forward #22 Ademola Lookman scores his team’s first goal during the Uefa Champions League quarterfinal second leg match against FC Barcelona at Metropolitano Stadium in Madrid. — AFP

Atletico resist Barcelona comeback to reach semis

ATLETICO MADRID sent 10-man Barcelona crashing out of the Champions League and reached the final four with a 3-2 aggregate victory despite Tuesday’s 2-1 quarterfinal second leg defeat.

Lamine Yamal and Ferran Torres fired visitors Barca ahead inside 24 minutes but Ademola Lookman’s strike gave Atletico the edge in the gripping all-Spanish tie once again after their 2-0 win in the first leg.

Diego Simeone’s side returned to the semifinals for the first time since 2017 by holding on against the La Liga champions in a compelling and bloody battle.

Barcelona defender Eric Garcia was sent off for bringing down Alexander Sorloth as he ran in on goal in the final stages, hampering their chances of finding a third goal to force extra-time.

Atletico, who have never won the competition and lost the 2014 and 2016 finals with Simeone at the helm, will face Arsenal or Sporting Lisbon in the semifinals.

“(We’re) very happy, knocking out a great Barca side. We had a great game away... it was really hard for us at the start (of this one), but the team knew how to get back on its feet,” Atletico midfielder Koke told Movistar.

Barcelona last won the Champions League in 2015 and their wait for a sixth crown continues, but midfielder Frenkie de Jong said that the club was on the right path despite their elimination.

“I think we had a very good game, we gave our lives out there, we tried everything,” said the Dutchman. “I feel like luck was not on our side. We have to continue — we’re on a good path, we’re growing every year.”

Barca coach Hansi Flick benched forwards Marcus Rashford and Robert Lewandowski for workhorses Torres and Gavi, looking to press Atletico relentlessly in the sixth match between these sides this season.

Goalkeeper Juan Musso tipped a Yamal effort around his post after just 32 seconds, with Barca roaring out of the blocks in a fiery atmosphere at the Metropolitano stadium. The teenage winger fired the visitors ahead after just four



Atletico Madrid’s Ademola Lookman celebrates scoring their first goal against Barcelona with Marcos Llorente and Giuliano Simeone. — Reuters

minutes when he harried Clement Lenglet into giving the ball away.

Torres nudged it back to Yamal who slipped a low shot through Musso’s legs to hush the home fans and ignite Barca’s attempted comeback bid.

Dani Olmo nearly grabbed a second but Musso was able to reach his attempted lob as Barca continued to dominate.

Antoine Griezmann had a shot deflected wide as Atletico showed enterprising winger Lookman, who gave Jules Kounde a difficult night.

Barcelona doubled their lead in the 24th minute to level the tie on aggregate when Torres left Lenglet trailing, reached Olmo’s pass and fired across Musso into the top corner. Fermin Lopez could have notched Barca’s third but Musso clawed out his header and left the midfielder bleeding after his boot caught the Spaniard in the face.

Atletico pulled their way back into the game in the 31st minute after Barca switched off defensively for the first time.

Marcos Llorente charged in down the right behind the Catalans’ high defensive line and crossed for Lookman to convert.

ANOTHER RED CARD Barcelona were frustrated early in the second half when Torres volleyed home but the goal was disallowed for offside.

Flick sent on Rashford and Lewandowski with around 20 minutes remaining to find the goal that last season’s semi-finalists needed.

Barca stopper Joan Garcia made a fine save with his leg to thwart Robin Le Normand from close range as Atletico almost pulled level on the night.

Matteo Ruggieri was left with blood streaming down his face after Gavi caught him with an elbow, with tensions rising.

The game spun away from Barca when Eric Garcia was sent off for clipping Sorloth’s heels as he ran through on goal, similar to Pau Cubarsi’s red card in the first leg.

Flick threw centre-back Ronald Araujo up front for the final stages but there was no way back. — AFP

- 1Barcelona dominate possession but fail to overturn deficit
- 2Lookman scores for Atletico after Barcelona’s early blitz
- 3Barca finish with 10 men following Garcia’s late red card



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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$100.99
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SHORT TAKES



The total cultivated area reached around 169 acres, with output projected to exceed 220 tonnes by the end of the season.

AL BURAIMI WHEAT HARVEST GATHERS PACE: OFFICIAL DATA

BUSINESS REPORTER
AL BURAIMI, APRIL 15

Wheat harvesting has commenced across Al Buraimi Governorate for the current agricultural season, supported by ongoing field monitoring to ensure smooth and efficient operations.

According to official data, the total cultivated area reached around 169 acres, with output projected to exceed 220 tonnes by the end of the season. The figures point to a notable improvement in local productivity, underpinned by enhanced farming practices and input support.

Dr Ahmed bin Saif al Amri, Director General of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Buraimi Governorate, said the Directorate had distributed more than 5,500 kilogrammes of high-quality wheat seeds to farmers and investors.

The initiative forms part of broader efforts to expand the cultivation of Omani and improved wheat varieties known for higher yields and resilience to local climatic conditions.

He added that the Directorate continues to provide technical and logistical assistance throughout the growing cycle, including advisory services and field supervision. These measures aim to optimise production efficiency while encouraging greater adoption of modern agricultural techniques.

Al Amri underscored that expanding wheat cultivation remains a strategic priority, contributing to the Sultanate of Oman's wider food security objectives.

At the governorate level, increased output is expected to strengthen local supply chains and reduce reliance on imports.

On the marketing front, he noted that harvested wheat is being channelled into local markets, alongside established cooperation with Oman Flour Mills Company. The partnership supports the purchase and absorption of farmers' produce, helping to sustain the crop's commercial viability and providing a stable outlet for growers.

Green aluminium projects planned in Duqm SEZ

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

AS many as three major low-carbon aluminium projects are envisaged for implementation at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in the Sultanate of Oman, underscoring the industrial hub's growing appeal beyond green iron and steel ventures.

According to Duqm Economist, the quarterly newsletter of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the proposed projects — currently in the early stages of development — will seek to leverage green hydrogen and other low-carbon energy sources slated to come on stream in the SEZ from around 2030.

Most notable is a world-scale 530,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) capacity smelter backed by CMOC Group Limited of China, with investments estimated at RO 2.4 billion.

Using low-carbon technologies, the integrated complex at Duqm will also target the production of 620,000 tpa of aluminium billets and pre-cast slabs, the newsletter noted.

Luoyang-headquartered CMOC Group Limited, formerly known as China Molybdenum Company, is a globally diversified mining and metals company with a strong presence across Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Listed on the Shanghai and Hong Kong stock exchanges, the company is a leading producer of critical minerals including copper, cobalt, molybdenum, tungsten and niobium — materials essential to electrification, renewable energy systems and battery technologies.

Also in the pipeline for implementation at Duqm SEZ are the Geely Green Aluminium Project and the Pearl Green Iron and Aluminium Project,

According to Duqm Economist, the quarterly newsletter of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the proposed projects — currently in the early stages of development — will seek to leverage green hydrogen and other low-carbon energy sources slated to come on stream in the SEZ from around 2030.



The proposed smelters seek to leverage green hydrogen and other low-carbon energy sources set to come on stream in SEZAD in the coming years.

in partnership with regional investors, according to the newsletter.

The Special Economic Zone says it is increasingly prioritising the development of green industries and low-carbon metals, particularly iron and aluminium, leveraging the country's expanding green hydrogen ecosystem.

Oman has set an ambitious target to produce around 30 million tonnes of steel annually by 2050, positioning itself among the world's top ten producers, with a quarter of output serving domestic demand.

Central to this vision are hydrogen-intensive technologies such as direct reduced iron (DRI) and hot briquetted iron (HBI), which underpin green steel production.

SEZAD offers a strategic platform for integrating energy and industrial activities, helping reduce costs and attract global investment, the newsletter

pointed out.

A flagship initiative is the Jindal Steel Duqm project, currently under construction with an initial capacity of 5 million tonnes per year, scalable to 10 million tonnes, alongside a major marine jetty extending 1,400 metres with a depth of 18 metres.

Since agreements took effect in mid-2024, construction has progressed steadily, reaching over one-third completion by late 2025, despite ongoing technical work related to energy supply and engineering design.

Complementing this is the Meranti Green Steel project, focused on producing around 2.5 million tpa of low-carbon hot briquetted iron (HBI) for export markets.

Additional initiatives involving players such as Kobe Steel — Mitsui and Vale further reinforce SEZAD's emergence as an integrated hub for green iron and steel, supported by expanding port and hydrogen infrastructure.

Spent EV batteries can be reused for clean energy generation: Study

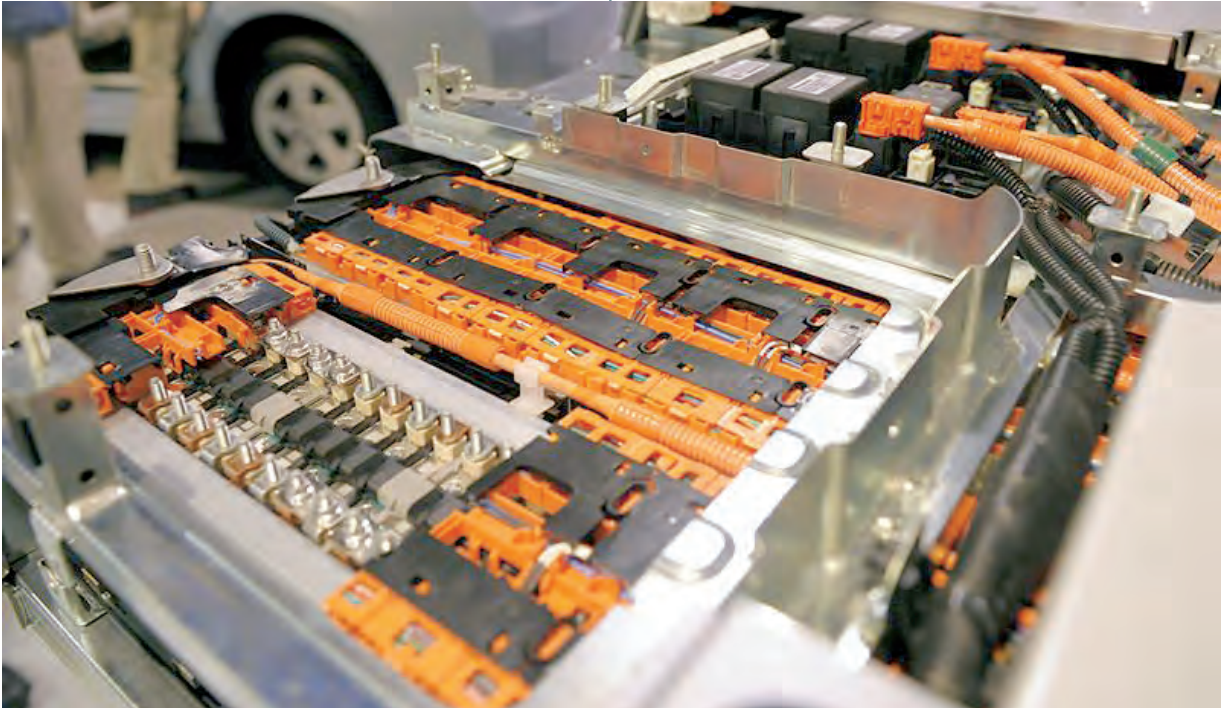
AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

With the global shift towards clean energy, the challenges of managing spent electric vehicle (EV) batteries are emerging, alongside promising opportunities for utilising them in sustainable energy storage solutions. In this context, a recent study conducted in the Sultanate of Oman revealed the high technical and economic feasibility of reusing these batteries within renewable energy systems.

The study was carried out by a research team comprised of Sarah al Zajali, Haya al Ghabshi, Zalkha al Akhzami, and Dr Mohammed al Alawi from the College of Engineering and Technology at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Muscat.

Sarah al Zajali, one of the study's team, stated: "The study's findings aimed to support the integration of renewable energy, improve energy efficiency and promote sustainable energy solutions in the region. The research demonstrated that integrating reused batteries with photovoltaic solar energy systems can provide reliable, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable energy".

The study's results indicated that integrating reused batteries with photovoltaic solar energy systems can



The results indicated that integrating reused batteries with PV solar energy systems can provide reliable and cost-effective energy.

provide reliable and cost-effective energy, while also delivering tangible environmental benefits. The study also demonstrated that the charging and discharging efficiency of these batteries exceeds 91%, enhancing their technical reliability.

Three sites in the Sultanate of Oman were included in the study representing diverse environments: Al Dhafrat (residential), Al Duqm (industrial) and the Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands (remote coastal). Four 25-year power system scenarios were analysed,

involving the use of new and used batteries within solar and hybrid (solar-wind) systems. The results showed that systems utilising batteries with a second lifespan achieved significant economic savings compared to new batteries.

The hybrid (solar-wind-used batteries) system recorded the lowest adjusted cost of energy in Al Duqm: 8.29 cents/kWh and the lowest in the Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands: 6.94 cents/kWh. In Al Dhafrat, the solar system with used batteries achieved competitive performance at a cost of 16.14 cents/kWh, registering a positive net present value, reflecting its investment viability.

The study confirms that reusing electric vehicle batteries represents a practical path to supporting the circular economy, especially since these batteries retain 70–80% of their original capacity after use in vehicles.

This aligns with Oman's efforts to strengthen its position as a regional hub for clean energy, supported by investments in the battery sector and related materials projects. This contributes to optimising the use of solar energy and reducing waste.

These efforts are consistent with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on economic diversification, rationalising resource use and transitioning to a circular economy model based on reuse and recycling.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



As part of its 10-year celebrations, the hotel has curated a series of exclusive experiences.

GRAND MILLENNIUM MUSCAT: A DECADE OF DISTINCTION

MUSCAT: Marking a significant milestone in its journey of refined hospitality, Grand Millennium Muscat proudly celebrates its 10th anniversary, commemorating a decade of exceptional service, elevated experiences and a steadfast commitment to excellence in the Sultanate of Oman.

As part of its 10-year celebrations, the hotel has curated a series of exclusive experiences. On April 16, 2026, guests can enjoy a special Street Food Night at Taybat, featuring a curated dining experience with exclusive anniversary offers.

In addition, guests booking a staycation between April 16 -30, 2026 will have the opportunity to win one of ten complimentary staycations, each including a one-night stay with breakfast and dinner for two adults and two children.

Since opening its doors in 2016, the hotel has established itself as a leading five-star destination, blending contemporary elegance with warm Omani hospitality.

With 323 stylishly appointed rooms, suites and apartments, guests can unwind in comfort, complemented by modern amenities and seamless connectivity.

The hotel’s diverse culinary offerings span five distinctive dining venues, each delivering curated experiences tailored to a variety of tastes and occasions.

A hallmark of Grand Millennium Muscat’s success lies in its reputation as a premier destination for events and celebrations. At the heart of this offering is the magnificent Crystal Ballroom, an elegant space capable of hosting up to 700 guests in a banquet setting or over 1,000 in a theatre-style arrangement.

Supported by seven fully equipped meeting rooms, bespoke catering and expert planning services, the hotel continues to be a preferred venue for conferences, weddings and social gatherings of every scale.

Further setting it apart is its exclusive collection of pool villas — making it the only city hotel in Muscat to offer such a distinctive premium experience. Featuring private terraces and swimming pools, these villas provide an elevated level of privacy and indulgence for discerning travellers.

At the core of its success are its people. Grand Millennium Muscat remains committed to Omanisation, developing local talent while fostering a diverse, multicultural team.

The hotel also actively supports Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, contributing to community development and sustainability.

Bank Muscat posts net profit of **﷼63.95 million**

BANK Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the three months period ended March 31, 2026. The Bank posted a net profit of RO 63.95 million for the period compared to RO 58.56 million reported during the same period in 2025, an increase of 9.2 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows:

1) Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at RO 104.14 million for the three months period ended March 31, 2026 compared to RO 102.00 million for the same period in 2025, an increase of 2.1 per cent.

2) Non-interest income was RO 41.13 million for the three months period ended March 31, 2026 as compared to RO 38.67 million for the same period in 2025, an increase of 6.4 per cent.

3) Operating expenses for the three months period ended March 31, 2026 was RO 57.78 million as compared to RO 55.03 million for the same period in 2025, an increase of 5.0 per cent.

4) Net impairment losses on financial assets for the three months period ended March 31, 2026 was RO 11.24 million as against RO 15.04 million for the same period in 2025.

5) Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 6.3 per cent to RO 11,209 million as against RO 10,541 million as at March 31, 2025.

6) Customer deposits including Islamic customer deposits increased by 4.9 per cent to RO 10,492 million as against RO 10,003 million as at March 31, 2025.

The full results for the three months period ended March 31, 2026 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during April 2026.

Key highlights of preliminary unaudited results

Particulars (RO million) For the period ended	31 Mar 2026	31 Mar 2025	Change (%)
Net interest income & Islamic financing income	104.14	102.00	2.1%
Other operating income	41.13	38.67	6.4%
Operating expenses	57.78	55.03	5.0%
Operating profit	87.49	85.64	2.2%
Net profit	63.95	58.56	9.2%
Particulars (RO million) As at period ended	31 Mar 2026	31 Mar 2025	Change (%)
Total Assets	15,379	14,364	7.1%
Net loans and Islamic financing	11,209	10,541	6.3%
- Conventional loans and advances	9,494	8,897	6.7%
- Islamic financing receivables	1,715	1,644	4.3%
Customer deposits and Islamic deposits	10,492	10,003	4.9%
- Conventional customer deposits	8,821	8,433	4.6%
- Islamic customer deposits	1,671	1,570	6.4%
Total Equity*	2,562	2,381	7.6%

*Total Equity includes Perpetual Tier I capital of RO 505 million (2025: RO 505 million).



Bank Muscat announces its preliminary unaudited results for the three months period ended March 31, 2026.

FOO, OMPAY TO ADVANCE OMAN’S DIGITAL PAYMENTS ECOSYSTEM

MUSCAT: FOO, an award-winning B2B fintech solutions provider headquartered in the UAE, has announced its partnership with OMPAY, a subsidiary of Omantel, to power its next-generation digital wallet and support the evolution of digital financial services in Oman.

The partnership supports Oman’s national digital transformation agenda by expanding access to secure, cashless payment solutions and strengthening the country’s fintech infrastructure for consumers and businesses.

Through this long-term collaboration, FOO serves as the technology partner behind the OMPAY wallet, delivering a fully scalable, secure and modular



The partnership supports Oman’s national digital transformation agenda.

platform that enables seamless digital payments, virtual card issuance and advanced financial services for both consumers and businesses.

The OMPAY wallet provides users with a comprehensive suite of digital payment capabilities, including peer to peer (P2P) and merchant (P2M) payments, QR based and contactless transactions, instant virtual card issuance for both online and in store use, international remittances to over 200 countries, as well as wallet top ups and real time transaction management.

Together, these features enable faster everyday payments, more affordable international transfers for residents and improved access

to secure financial services for underbanked segments across Oman. These capabilities support faster everyday payments, more affordable international transfers for residents and improved financial access for under banked segments across Oman.

Built on FOO’s digital wallet platform and microservices architecture, the solution ensures rapid scalability, high performance and the flexibility to continuously introduce new financial use cases.

OMPAY also leverages FOO’s digital onboarding and security framework, enabling a fully automated user journey supported by advanced authentication, encryption and fraud prevention capabilities.

2026 Kia K4 and EV9 earn IIHS Top Safety Pick+ awards

MUSCAT: The 2026 Kia K4 and 2026 Kia EV9 electric three-row SUV have each earned the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety’s (IIHS) highest safety rating, the 2026 TOP SAFETY PICK+ (TSP+) designation. With these latest recognitions, Kia now has four models with the 2026 TSP+ rating, joining the previously recognised 2026 Kia Sorento (built after Sept 2025) and Sportage (built after May 2025). Awards apply to US models only.

- 2026 Kia K4
- 2026 EV9
- 2026 Sorento (models built after September 2025)
- 2026 Sportage (models built after May 2025)

“Safety isn’t a single feature. It’s a core focus across our vehicles”, said SeungKyu (Sean) Yoon, President



With these latest recognitions, Kia now has four models with the 2026 TSP+ rating.

and CEO of Kia North America and Kia America. “Expanding our IIHS recognition across more models reflects how we’re prioritising

protection as the agency’s standards in safety continue to evolve”. For 2026, IIHS has further strengthened its testing criteria

to emphasise rear-seat passenger protection and enhanced crash avoidance performance.

The updated testing protocols include more rigorous requirements for rear passenger safety in moderate overlap front crashes, as well as improved performance standards for pedestrian crash prevention and higher-speed vehicle-to-vehicle crash avoidance systems.

With a starting MSRP of \$22,290, the Kia K4 combines advanced safety features with strong value, offering a compelling entry point into Kia’s lineup.

Standard advanced driver assistance systems include Lane Keeping Assist (LKA) and Forward Collision Avoidance (FCA), which is designed to help detect and prevent

collisions from occurring in certain circumstances and detect vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in front of the vehicle while driving (FCA-CPC), as well as oncoming vehicles while turning left at an intersection (FCA-JT).

The award-winning EV9 three-row all-electric SUV continues to impress with its host of modern amenities and advanced driver assistance systems, including standard Highway Driving Assist 2 (HDA-2), which can help maintain a predetermined distance from other vehicles detected ahead and can keep the car centred within detected lane markers on certain highways.

Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor for Kia in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience.

SHORTTAKES

BLUEFIVE LEASING APPOINTS KEY OMANI EXECUTIVES



AIMEN AL HOSNI
Chairman
BlueFive Leasing



KHALID MOHAMMED ZAMAN
Vice Chairman
BlueFive Leasing

MUSCAT: BlueFive Capital, one of the world’s fastest growing investment managers, announced the appointment of Aimen al Hosni as Chairman and Khalid Mohammed Zaman as Vice Chairman of BlueFive Leasing, its specialised aircraft leasing and asset backed lending platform.

Aimen al Hosni brings more than two decades of experience spanning the aviation, infrastructure, investment and financial services sectors.

From 2015 to 2025, he was the CEO of Oman Airports, where he led the organisation’s transformation into a high-performing, customer-centric airport operator, developing and executing strategies

that enhanced route development, increased non-aeronautical revenues and attracted international partnerships. Al Hosni also served as Chairman of Airports Council International, actively shaping global policy, supporting cross-border investment in airport infrastructure and championing innovation and digitalisation to improve the industry’s commercial viability and resilience.

Khalid Zaman is an Omani businessman experienced in leading and growing key sectors of businesses to make them dynamic and progressive organisations and has a proven ability to develop and strengthen management teams in order to maximise company profitability and efficiency.

He is the managing director of Al Zaman Group, a diversified conglomerate that owns and operates businesses and investments in Oman and globally.

BlueFive Leasing, launched earlier this year, is one of the first dedicated aircraft leasing asset management platforms in the GCC region.

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

Exploration and Production (OQEP) has signed an Asset Sale and Purchase Agreement (ASPA) to acquire a 35 per cent non-operated participating interest in Block 27, further strengthening its upstream oil and gas portfolio in the Sultanate of Oman, according to a filing with the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The agreement, signed on April 14, 2026, is with Mitsui E&P Middle East B.V. (MEPME), a wholly owned subsidiary of Japan’s Mitsui & Co, marking a strategic consolidation of domestic energy assets under OQEP.

The transaction carries a headline consideration of \$28.8 million, with an economic effective date of January 1, 2025, subject to customary approvals including those from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the issuance of a Royal Decree.

Block 27 is a producing asset operated by Occidental Petroleum, which holds a 65 per cent participating interest.

The concession agreement for the block remains valid until 2035, offering long-term production visibility. OQEP expects net additional production of around 3.5 thousand barrels of oil equivalent per day (kboepd) in 2026 from its newly acquired stake.



OQEP expects net additional production of around 3.5 thousand barrels of oil equivalent per day (kboepd) in 2026 from its newly acquired stake.

In a statement, OQEP said the acquisition reflects its continued focus on value-accretive opportunities within Oman, reinforcing its position as a key contributor to the country’s upstream sector. “This accretive transaction reflects OQEP’s continued commitment to strengthening its domestic portfolio and enhancing value through strategic acquisitions”, the company noted.

Chief Executive Officer Mahmoud al Hashmi underscored the company’s broader mandate, stating that

OQEP “remains committed to delivering sustainable value for the Sultanate of Oman and its shareholders through efficient resource development and responsible energy production”.

The deal aligns with a wider trend of portfolio rebalancing among international energy firms operating in Oman.

Earlier this year, Mitsui & Co announced its decision to divest its onshore oil and gas interests in the Sultanate of Oman, including holdings in Block 3&4 and Block 9, as part of a broader portfolio

reconfiguration strategy. The Japanese conglomerate has been reshaping its upstream exposure while maintaining energy as a core business domain.

Mitsui, which entered Oman’s upstream sector in 2002 through MEPME, had progressively expanded its footprint across multiple concession areas, including Block 27. Its exit from select assets reflects a strategic shift aimed at reinforcing earnings and reallocating capital, while continuing to support stable energy supply and sustainable development objectives globally.

For OQEP, the acquisition represents a calculated move to deepen its domestic asset base amidst a stable regulatory environment and sustained demand for hydrocarbons. The addition of a producing asset with established operatorship and long-term concession validity is expected to enhance cash flow resilience and operational scale.

The transaction also underscores Oman’s continued attractiveness as an investment destination in the upstream sector, supported by clear regulatory frameworks and ongoing efforts to optimise resource development.

With completion subject to regulatory approvals, the Block 27 deal is poised to further consolidate OQEP’s role in driving growth and value creation within Oman’s oil and gas industry.

AeroVecto advances vertipad testing for Oman’s AAM push

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

AeroVecto Aviation Services has signed a letter of intent with Australia-based Skyportz to introduce and test AeroBerm vertipad technology in Oman, as part of early efforts to assess advanced air mobility (AAM) infrastructure in Oman.

The move targets one of the sector’s core challenges — managing airflow generated by electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft — while exploring cost-efficient deployment models.

In an interview with the Observer, Fahad al Riyami, CEO of AeroVecto, said the evaluation will prioritise real-world operational performance under Oman’s environmental conditions. AeroBerm, a patented vertipad system developed by Skyportz, is designed to control downwash and outwash, reducing turbulence impact on people, equipment and surrounding assets. This enables safer operations and expands the range of potential

sites, including rooftops, logistics hubs and industrial zones where conventional helipad designs may be impractical. Al Riyami said the testing phase will focus on generating localised, data-driven insights. “The plan is to focus on safety and operational performance indicators that matter for real-world AAM operations in Oman.

This includes understanding how downwash and outwash behave under local wind patterns in both coastal and desert environments, how the vertipad structure performs under high temperatures and how effectively the technology manages dust and debris during take-off and landing”, he explained.

“We will also assess whether controlled turbulence enables safe operations in more confined sites, as well as the durability and maintenance profile of the system when exposed to Oman’s heat, sand and humidity over time”.

He added that the objective is to support regulators and planners with credible local data. “The goal is to understand how the technology



AeroVecto will prioritise real-world operational performance under Oman’s environmental conditions.

behaves in Oman’s environment so that regulators have reliable, localised inputs when evaluating AAM infrastructure options”, he said.

From a commercial perspective, AeroBerm could strengthen the business case for early-stage AAM deployment. By reducing the

turbulence footprint, the system allows for smaller, more flexible landing sites, lowering land acquisition and preparation costs in high-value urban areas.

“It opens up practical site options across rooftops, logistics hubs, industrial zones and even tourist destinations without compromising safety”, Al Riyami noted.

He added that improved airflow control could also reduce operational risks. “The enhanced safety margin can potentially lower insurance costs, while the modular design allows infrastructure to scale gradually instead of requiring large upfront investment”, he said.

“While major multi-pad vertiports will be needed as the ecosystem matures, reducing initial cost and complexity is the more practical approach at this stage”.

The partnership will involve technical exchange, site assessments and controlled testing, with findings expected to inform how AAM infrastructure can be adapted to Oman’s climate and urban landscape. Skyportz said ongoing

research indicates measurable gains in airflow management and noise reduction, both critical for urban integration.

On timelines, Al Riyami stressed that deployment will follow regulatory readiness. “At this stage, our focus is on preparing the technology so it can be evaluated once the national AAM regulatory framework is in place”, he said. “We are not pre-empting timelines or locations, as these depend on government policy and ecosystem readiness”.

He added that while early discussions with stakeholders have taken place, no pilot sites have been formally designated. “Our partnership with Skyportz ensures that when Oman is ready to begin structured assessments, AeroBerm will be available as a credible option for testing”, he said.

The initiative positions Oman within a growing cohort of markets assessing AAM infrastructure, with an emphasis on safety validation, cost efficiency and alignment with future regulatory frameworks.

MARKET PAUSE

Oil steady amidst Iran talk prospects



Oil prices were largely unchanged as markets weighed prospects for renewed US-Iran talks against ongoing supply constraints from the Strait of Hormuz closure.

Brent traded near \$95.22 per barrel, while WTI hovered around \$91.11. Despite recent declines, supply disruptions in the Gulf continue to underpin market uncertainty and limit downside. — Reuters

TECH TENSIONS

China weighs solar export curbs



China is considering restrictions on exports of advanced solar manufacturing equipment to the US, with early consultations underway. No formal policy has been finalised.

Potential curbs could disrupt global supply chains, as China dominates solar component production. The move may also affect US investments and intensify competition in clean energy technology development. — Reuters

RETAIL PRESSURE

Luxury sales hit by travel slump



Luxury and duty-free retailers are facing declining sales as Middle East conflict disrupts air travel and airport shopping. Store operators and major brands reliant on Gulf transit hubs are seeing reduced footfall.

Analysts warn prolonged disruption could weigh on quarterly earnings, adding pressure to a sector already challenged by softer demand in key global markets. — Reuters

OPINION

Intensive measures to reduce electronic fraud activities



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

THERE is increasing global and local attention to combating electronic and financial fraud, which has become a major challenge for financial and banking institutions as well as individuals.

Accordingly, concerned authorities around the world, including in the Sultanate of Oman, are implementing awareness campaigns and regulatory measures to limit these crimes. Their impact extends beyond financial losses and may, in some cases, affect economic security and stability.

Financial fraud today appears in several forms, most notably through certain investment companies or electronic platforms that raise concerns among the public.

Unlicensed entities often offer fake trading or investment services through illegal online platforms and fictitious companies operating from outside the country.

For these reasons, regulatory authorities warn individuals and institutions against dealing with any entities offering investment services via the internet or electronic messages without verifying that they hold official licences. Awareness campaigns have also been launched to encourage the public to confirm the legal status of institutions before engaging with them.

Although there is no clear evidence of widespread organised theft carried out by licensed financial companies within the Sultanate of Oman, statistics indicate

a noticeable increase in electronic fraud crimes in recent periods. Security authorities reported a rise of about 35% in such crimes due to fake websites and fraudulent messages targeting bank account information.

This reflects the presence of a real threat; however, its source is often external or internet-based rather than originating from locally licensed financial institutions operating under regulatory supervision. In response to this growing challenge, the relevant authorities in Oman have taken several important steps to address electronic fraud.

Among the most significant measures is the publication of lists of unlicensed companies to warn investors about them. Official electronic platforms have also been launched to protect investors by providing guidance and alerts related to fraudulent activities.

In addition, continuous awareness campaigns emphasise the importance of verifying the credibility of investment entities before dealing with them. Security agencies also receive reports related to electronic fraud and financial extortion through dedicated communication channels.

Furthermore, the banking sector, including the Central Bank of Oman and local commercial banks, continues to educate customers about fraud risks and warns them against engaging in unregulated cryptocurrency activities or investment opportunities that promise unrealistic profits.

Financial fraud today appears in several forms, most notably through certain investment companies or electronic platforms that raise concerns among the public. Unlicensed entities often offer fake trading or investment services through illegal online platforms, fictitious companies operating from outside the country.

Modern financial fraud methods in Oman vary, but one of the most common involves fake investment platforms claiming to represent international companies and promising quick profits without risk. These entities often request money transfers to foreign or personal accounts and falsely claim to hold official licences.

They may also impersonate government institutions or well-known companies to convince victims of their legitimacy. Fraud methods also include sending links that resemble official banking websites to steal account details and one-time verification codes (OTP), after which funds are withdrawn immediately.

In addition, suspicious investment offers frequently appear through social media applications such as WhatsApp and Instagram, promoting cryptocurrency trading, forex trading, or quick-profit opportunities within a few days — most of which turn out to be fraudulent schemes.

Therefore, it is essential for individuals and institutions to take preventive measures to protect themselves. These include verifying the licensing status of investment entities before dealing with them, avoiding transferring money to personal accounts, never sharing OTP verification codes with others and not trusting offers that promise quick and unrealistic returns.

Such precautions play an important role in reducing the risks of electronic fraud and strengthening financial security within society.

OMAN’S RESILIENCE
AMIDST GLOBAL
STAGFLATION RISKS

ALI AL RIYAMI

As the global economy grapples with the specter of stagflation — the dual challenge of slowing growth and rising inflation — Oman stands out for the relative advantages conferred by higher oil prices.

The resulting revenue gains provide the Sultanate of Oman with economic flexibility in managing fiscal surpluses, enabling policymakers to reinforce financial stability while channelling resources into strategic initiatives.

This flexibility allows Oman to deploy additional revenues across both economic priorities, such as investment in renewable energy, infrastructure and diversification projects; and social priorities, including enhanced public services and welfare programmes. By striking this balance, Oman demonstrates that oil windfalls can serve not merely as cyclical gains but as catalysts for sustainable development.

In doing so, the Sultanate of Oman underscores its capacity to transform short-term fiscal advantages into long-term resilience, positioning the national economy to withstand global market volatility while advancing a vision of inclusive and diversified growth.

US OIL EXPORT BAN:
A BAD IDEA WHOSE
TIME IS COMING

ROBERT CYRAN

For every problem, there’s a ready-made easy solution that is also just plain wrong. A ban on US oil exports fits into the category. Prices for crude and the products made from it are rising because of disruption in the Strait of Hormuz. Asian and European buyers, desperate for replacements, are therefore looking elsewhere. The United States happens to be a large producer.

President Donald Trump, he of the “drill, baby, drill” school of thought, is proud of the supply. He bragged on social media of many empty and inbound oil tankers.

The country he leads already exports 4 million barrels per day and is the biggest gasoline exporter, to boot. Selling more overseas would naturally raise prices at home.

Diesel on the US Gulf Coast already costs 50% more now than at the start of March. A tripling of large tankers on their way to those ports, according to cargo tracker Vortexa, will accelerate the trend.

High energy prices are political Kryptonite and the Trump administration likes to project a populist image. — Reuters

Business confidence at
record low amid Iran war

BUSINESS confidence in the future of UK economy has plunged to a record low as company directors fear the war will have damaged investment plans and increase costs, a leading survey has found.

Research by the Institute of Directors (IoD) recorded business confidence dropping to a net figure of -76 in March, compared to -63 in the previous month. Cost expectations rose to the second highest level on record after last September at the height of pre-Budget tax speculation while revenue expectations for the year dipped.

Business leaders’ confidence in their own organisations, which has typically been in positive territory, dropped to minus two. The figures are set to add pressure on the government as it faces calls not to ignore businesses when chancellor Rachel Reeves announces further “targeted” support in the coming weeks.

Anna Leach, chief economist at the IoD, said manufacturers were at the “sharp end of results” as many had reported an immediate negative impact.

“Impacts being reported include sharp increases in fuel and shipping costs, rising material prices — such as petrochemicals — and delivery delays”, Leach said.

Apart from business confidence, consumer confidence has also plunged. Confidence in the state of the economy has plummeted since the outbreak of the Iran war, as shoppers tighten their purse strings amidst fears of sharp price rises.

Consumer sentiment over the UK’s economy has fallen to its lowest level on record, from -30 per cent to -53 per cent, according to trade body British Retail Consortium (BRC).

Retailers and food manufacturers have been bracing for the Iran war to push up their energy costs, with bosses calling for government intervention to help them avoid having to put up prices.

In March, 64 per cent of Brits



Workers walk through the Canary Wharf financial district in London, Britain. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

said they expect the economy to get worse over the next three months, while 21 per cent were neutral and only 11 per cent thought it would improve.

This leaves the BRC’s consumer sentiment rating for the economy at -53 per cent, marking the lowest level and biggest drop this year so far.

Consumers’ assessment of their own personal finances has fallen to its most pessimistic point this year too, with 34 per cent saying they expect their cashflow to worsen while only 18 per cent think their wallets will be fuller in three months’ time.

Chief executive of the BRC, Helen Dickenson, said the prospect of higher inflation has pushed confidence in the economy and personal finances to tumble to record lows.

“Consumer confidence collapsed as the Middle East conflict raised the prospect of higher inflation in the months ahead. As stock markets tumbled, confidence in both the economy and personal finances dropped to their lowest levels on record”.

Dickenson added: “The drop in confidence was most pronounced

among the Boomer generation (People born between 1946 and 1964, following World War 2, characterised by a massive surge in birth rates) who are most reliant on investment and pension funds”.

There is also concern among small businesses as ‘costs crunch’ threatens to crush a revival in small business confidence, the government has warned.

Figures from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) show that confidence improved in the first quarter of this year, having hit a record low at the end of 2025.

But it has still been negative for eight quarters, the FSB said.

Now, cost increases including business rates and energy charge increases, as well as a rise in the minimum wage and the expansion of sick pay rules threaten to drag them back. The FSB’s poll found 87 per cent are seeing their costs rise compared to a year ago.

Taxes remain the top driver of costs increases, followed by labour and utility costs. As a result, more than twice as many small firms (21 per cent) plan to cut staff than hire (8 per cent). FSB policy chair, Tina McKenzie said: “The numbers tell a brutal story”.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

BUSINESS development & project management professional with 20+ years of experience in Oil & Gas trading, operational systemization, tendering, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Please contact 91799438

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

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

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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 / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman.Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

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

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. Contact: 94158080

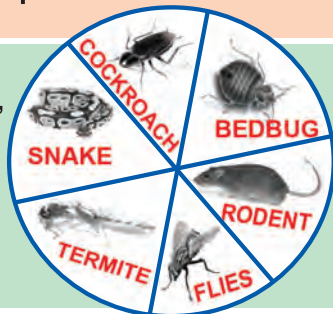
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ART/LIFE



VOICES OF THE SPECTRUM

AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT



> 20

CHANGING WORLD

WAR DOMINATES NEWS HEADLINES, PAUSES SPENDING



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
The writer is a Senior Editor at Oman Daily Observer

I caught myself last week. My thumb was hovering over the 'Buy Now' button for an espresso machine — the one that froths milk while playing jazz — when a news alert buzzed: another shipping lane disrupted, oil up, flights rerouted. My thumb froze. Suddenly the jazz-frothing felt less like a life upgrade and more like a very shiny mistake.

That's what war in the Middle East does, even from thousands of kilometres away. It doesn't just redraw maps. It redraws budgets.

For years, many of us across the Gulf lived on comfortable autopilot. Oil was steady, malls were cool and 'future-proofing' meant buying the 85-inch TV instead of the 55-inch.

Extravagance wasn't vice; it was habit. A new phone every year, a weekend trip because there was a sale, a cart full of things we'd use 'eventually'. Regional stability made it easy to forget that stability itself is a luxury.

Then the headlines changed. Sea routes snarled. Insurance premiums climbed. A friend in logistics casually dropped 'war-risk surcharge' into conversation. And something clicked.

If a drone in a shipping lane can move the price of everything from wheat to Wi-Fi routers, maybe I don't need a fourth pair of noise-cancelling headphones.

This isn't panic. It's perspective. I call it my 'Strait of Hormuz Discount'. Before I tap my card, I ask: would I buy this if the Strait closed tomorrow? If the answer is no, it goes back on the shelf.

My kitchen still has one espresso machine and it's holding up fine. So, I will use it instead of buying coffee from outside.

The funny thing is, cautious spending doesn't feel like deprivation. It feels like control. My sister swapped her weekly brunch buffet for home-cooked majboos and started hosting friends. She says she's saving money and losing waistlines. My cousin cancelled his 'just because' car upgrade and used the down payment to patch his roof before the rains. We're all discovering that 'enough' was already in the room; we'd just piled too many packages on top of it.

War is devastating and its human cost is not a budgeting tool. But crisis strips the varnish off our wants. It reminds us that energy, food and safety aren't abstract. They move on ships. They depend on peace. When peace wobbles, the smart move is to keep some dry powder — financial and emotional. I'm not swearing off joy. I still want the enjoyment, the family trips, the occasional splurge that makes a memory.

I've just become allergic to the mindless kind. The 'add to cart' reflex that used to be my cardio now gets a 24-hour cooling period. Most of the time, the urge passes. When it doesn't, I know I actually want it.

So the jazz-frothing espresso machine stays in the wishlist, not the kitchen. For now, the regular one — and a calmer bank balance — taste better. If peace returns and shipping lanes clear and oil settles, I'll reconsider.

But I suspect 'future me' will thank 'present me' for learning that 'cautious' and 'miserable' aren't synonyms. One just means you've been paying attention. Until next time, let us hope the regional tensions end sooner than later.

QUICK FEATURES



OPERA

Singers of the choir get ready before a rehearsal of a new production of comic opera "The Bartered Bride" in Madrid. — AFP



CULTURE

Dancers perform during Khmer New Year celebrations at Wat Phnom in Phnom Penh. — AFP



FILM

Various motion pictures from The Walt Disney Company stored in a fireproof nitrate film vault at the Library of Congress. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Jabal Samhan, between the sea of clouds and cosmos



Stillness speaks in golden bill

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OASIS, PHIL COLLINS AMONG
ROCK HALL INDUCTEES



Liam Gallagher of British pop band Oasis. — AFP

Dad rocker Phil Collins and reformed Britpop princes Oasis led the 2026 class of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, announced live on US television on Monday.

Joining them in this year’s lineup are punk icon Billy Idol, soulful chanteuse Sade and heavy metal legends Iron Maiden. Influential Manchester acts Joy Division and New Order were also honoured, alongside groundbreaking hip hop collective Wu-Tang Clan and velvet-voiced R&B crooner Luther Vandross.

The announcement came during a live episode of the long-running TV competition American Idol, helmed for the occasion by rock duo Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo, adding a celebratory and high-profile platform to reveal this year’s honourees and amplify excitement among global audiences.

“Induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame is music’s highest honour”, said John Sykes, chairman of the organisation. “We look forward to celebrating these remarkable artists at this year’s ceremony —

it’s going to be an unforgettable night”.

The induction ceremony, which doubles as a star-studded concert gala filled with tributes to the honourees, will take place on November 14 in Los Angeles, bringing together industry figures, collaborators and fans to celebrate decades of musical influence and cultural impact across genres, from rock and metal to soul and hip hop.

To be eligible for nomination, artists must have released their first commercial recording at least 25 years prior to consideration. This year marks the first nomination for Phil Collins, Luther Vandross and Wu-Tang Clan, making their eventual induction especially significant milestones in their careers and long-awaited recognition from the industry.

Meanwhile, Billy Idol, Iron Maiden, Joy Division, New Order, Oasis and Sade had all been nominated in previous years but were not selected until now, underscoring the competitive nature of the process and the breadth of talent considered each year across generations. — AFP



Karol G honours
Latinos in Coachella
performance

COLOMBIAN reggaeton star Karol G delivered rhythm, dance, charisma and Latin empowerment in her headlining performance at Coachella on Sunday.

The first Latina to headline the festival held annually in Indio, California, said she felt “very proud” of a milestone she noted was a long time coming.

“There has been 27 years about this festival going on and it’s the first time a Latina girl is headlining Coachella”, she said, thanking the artists who paved the way before her.

With a slight delay that appeared to be due to technical difficulties, the 35-year-old opened with a song centred on a woman challenged to find her place of belonging.

She then brought energy to the stage with “Latina Foreva”, the hit from her most recent album “Tropicocoqueta”, released last year.

She danced in the style of her fellow countrywoman Shakira. Accompanied by a large group of dancers, she used every inch of a stage built to resemble a stone cave.

Karol G revisited her catalog, including hits such as “TQG”, “Gatubela” and “Amargura”.

She invited Mariah Angeliq to the stage to sing “El Makinon”, Becky G for her empowering anthem “Mamiii” and Greg Gonzalez, guitarist of band CAS, to debut a ballad.

She also brought along an all-female mariachi ensemble, as well as reggaeton artist Wisin, who ignited the crowd with a medley of classics from the genre, including “Noche de Entierro” and “Rakata”.

The Medellin-born singer delivered a dazzling performance filled with fireworks, dancing and sensuality, while also showing empathy and a strong connection to her fans.

“This is for my Latinos that have been struggling in this country lately. We stand for them”, she said, urging Latinos not to “feel fear” but to “feel proud of where you come from”.

Then, dressed in the colours of her national flag, she invited the audience to “sing from the heart” the emblematic “Mi Tierra” by Gloria Estefan, which honours roots and speaks of the pain of migration.

Some of her fans started the day by visiting the flea market near the



Festivalgoers are seen during the first weekend of Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. — AFP



The Medellin-born singer was the first Latina to headline the festival. — AFP

festival that the singer promoted on her social media to support Latino brands in the United States.

“I’m so excited”, said Cristina Medina, bursting into tears.

“Latina Foreva’ means strength and pride in being Latino and in supporting each other. Look at this opportunity she gave to Latinos. She is very special”, she said.

Medina went to the flea market organised by Bichota Records to get a taste of the reggaeton star’s look. She saw the Colombian singer’s makeup artist, Duvan Foronda, who came to the event to do makeup for fans and promote his clothing line.

Foronda took requests and applied “lots of glitter, lots of sparkle” to several fans.

The first weekend of Coachella, kicked off on Friday with pop star Sabrina Carpenter headlining with her “Sabrinawood” show.

Canadian superstar Justin Bieber reconnected with his audience on Saturday after nearly four years away from major stages. That followed electrifying performances by Nine Inch Nails and The Strokes. Coachella will return next weekend with a nearly identical lineup.



VOICES OF THE SPECTRUM

AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

ON an evening where art spoke louder than words, the halls of the Royal Opera House Muscat transformed into a canvas of emotion, colour and untold stories. On April 14, the Ministry of Social Development, represented by the Oman National Autism Centre, unveiled the third edition of its Autism Spectrum Art Exhibition, titled “Mountain Rose, Colours Bloom... Abilities Grow”, under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, in the presence of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

Held in conjunction with the global observance of World Autism Awareness, the exhibition brought together art, music and storytelling in a space that felt both intimate and powerful. Twenty artworks, created by children with autism spectrum disorder, lined the gallery walls, each one reflecting a unique way of seeing the world. Inspired by the landscapes of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the pieces carried elements of roses, pomegranates, aflaj waterways and Omani identity, transformed into vivid visual language.

Some paintings echoed calm and stillness, while others revealed repetition and rhythm, mirroring the sensory and perceptual experiences often associated with autism. Together, they formed a collective narrative, one rooted in belonging and shaped by individuality.

The exhibition was not only about showcasing talent, it was about reshaping perception. By offering a professional platform, the initiative aimed to highlight the abilities of individuals with autism while encouraging society to understand them through their creativity rather than their challenges. Art, here, became a bridge, connecting perspectives and opening space for empathy.

Beyond the canvases, the evening unfolded through moments that resonated deeply with the audience. A musical performance by talented individuals with autism filled the hall, proving that expression knows no single form. The notes, much like the paintings,

carried emotion directly to the heart.

A particularly moving highlight was the launch of the storybook “Jassim’s Swing”, written by Fatima al Zaabi and illustrated by Athari al Shaibani, in collaboration with Omantel.

The story, part of a growing series inspired by real-life experiences, follows the quiet journey of understanding a child who communicates differently. It speaks of patience, of small breakthroughs and of the profound realisation that connection is not always immediate, but always possible.

Through the narrative, audiences were reminded that understanding someone with autism requires time and compassion. The story emphasises that every individual carries a unique strength, one that can flourish through support, love and perseverance. Notably, the book was produced using a specially developed Arabic font designed to support readers with dyslexia, reinforcing the exhibition’s commitment to accessibility.

While the evening celebrated artistic expression, it also marked a significant step forward in support and inclusion. In a parallel announcement, the Ministry of Social Development and the Oman Investment Authority signed an agreement to fund the construction of a new autism rehabilitation centre in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

With an investment exceeding 2.3 million Rials Omani and a capacity to support 120 individuals, the centre will offer integrated services, from diagnosis and therapy to education and recreational care. Officials emphasised that the project reflects a broader national commitment to empowering individuals with autism and ensuring their active participation in society. It also stands as a model of collaboration between public institutions and private sector partners, united by a shared vision of social responsibility.

As the evening drew to a close, what lingered was not just admiration for the artwork, but a deeper awareness. This was not merely an exhibition, it was an invitation, to see differently, to listen more closely and to recognise that within every individual lies a world of colours waiting to be understood.

In that space, art became more than expression, it became understanding.



PHOTOS BY HUSSAIN AL MAQBALI