

OMAN OMAN DAILY Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 173
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

2010000387405

SPOTLIGHT

COFFEE MOOD

4

INBRIEF

REGISTRATION FOR MEDIA COMPETITION

The Ministry of Information has announced that nominations for participation in the 2026 Media Excellence Competition will open on Wednesday and continue until May 31. The competition aims to stimulate the national cadre towards media creativity and innovation, while raising professional quality standards within media institutions. The competition also seeks to highlight national media talents and recognise their achievements, foster a spirit of positive competition among media institutions and individuals, support digital media and electronic content creation, and contribute to the documentation of winning works. The competition encompasses a range of main fields. **DETAILS ON P2**

OIA ANNOUNCES EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) announced the winners of the third edition of its Excellence Award, which comprises eight categories. The award serves as a strategic tool aimed at stimulating competitiveness among companies through a rigorous scientific approach based on measurement and close alignment with national objectives. OQ Group won the Investment and Job Creation category; Omantel won the Financial Performance and Sustainability category; Omran Group won the Private Sector Engagement category; Muscat International School project, under Oman Brunei Investment Company, won the Distinguished Project category; and Nama Holding Group, represented by Water Services Company and Nama Distribution Company, won the Local Content and Innovation category. **DETAILS ON P15**

KILLING INNOCENTS



Mourners react during the funeral of Palestinian boy Mahmoud Sahweil, who was killed in an Israeli strike on a police post, according to medics, at Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, on Tuesday. — Reuters

US says Iran ceasefire holds despite attacks

SAYYID BADR DISCUSSES THE SITUATION WITH BRITISH, KUWAITI MINISTERS

SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY, Foreign Minister, and Yvette Cooper, British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, discussed in a telephone call the latest developments in the region, as well as the means to defuse escalation and advance political and diplomatic solutions to restore safe maritime navigation in the Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz, in support of global economic stability.

The two ministers underscored the importance of sustaining efforts to contain tensions and strengthen dialogue mechanisms, thereby contributing to the consolidation of regional and international security and stability.

Sayyid Badr also held a telephone conversation with Shaikh Jarah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait. The discussion focused on the latest regional developments, particularly efforts aimed at de-escalation, consolidating political approaches, prioritising the logic of dialogue and mutual understanding, and preserving the gains of regional security and stability.

Meanwhile, the US said a shaky ceasefire was intact



An Iranian woman walks next to a mural on a street in Tehran, Iran, on Tuesday. — Reuters

despite an exchange of fire the previous day as US forces attempted to force open the Strait of Hormuz. The US military said it had destroyed six Iranian small boats, as well as cruise missiles and drones, after President Donald Trump

sent the navy to escort stranded tankers through the strait in a campaign he called “Project Freedom”.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the operation to protect commercial ships was temporary and the four-week-

old truce was not over. “We’re not looking for a fight,” he told a press conference.

“Right now the ceasefire certainly holds, but we’re going to be watching very, very closely.”

Iran fired missiles at US ships on Monday and attacked the UAE with missiles and drones. Shortly after Hegseth spoke on Tuesday, the UAE’s defence ministry said its air defences were again dealing with missile and drone attacks coming from Iran.

Earlier Iran’s parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, had said breaches of the ceasefire by the US and its allies endangered shipping through the strait, which carries a large share of the world’s oil and fertiliser supplies.

“We know well that the continuation of the current situation is unbearable for the United States, while we have not even begun yet,” he said in a social media post.

The narrow strait has been virtually shut since the United States and Israel began attacks on Iran on February 28, triggering disruptions that have pushed up commodity prices around the world. Hegseth said the US had successfully secured a path through the critical waterway and that hundreds of commercial ships were lining up to pass through.

SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Muscat most stable and safest city in Arab world

Muscat has further strengthened its global standing as one of the most stable and safest cities in the world, securing the first place in the Arab world and 11th globally in the 2024/2025 Safe Cities Index issued by Numbeo.

The achievement reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s continued progress in enhancing community stability and improving quality of life indicators.

The index is widely regarded as a key international benchmark for measuring perceived safety and crime levels across cities worldwide. It is based primarily on residents’ assessments,



covering crime rates, personal safety perceptions at different times of the day, and the prevalence of various types of crime, in addition to broader quality-of-life and social stability indicators.

Muscat’s advancement in the ranking highlights growing international confidence in Oman as a secure destination for living, working, investing and tourism.

This comes amid continuous development in infrastructure and public services, alongside the country’s long-standing political and social stability, which remains one of its most distinctive strengths. **DETAILS ON P3**

Greater Muscat joins Global Business Districts Innovation Club

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

The Greater Muscat Structure Plan has joined the Global Business Districts Innovation Club as its 15th international member and the first from the Middle East region. This new international accomplishment underscores the Sultanate of Oman’s growing presence on the global urban map. This membership marks a pivotal milestone, reflecting the advanced standing that Greater

Muscat has achieved as a promising urban model that strategically integrates master planning, quality of life, sustainability, and the capacity to attract future investments and projects.

It also cements Muscat’s position within a network that includes a selection of the world’s most prominent business districts and commercial hubs, such as Paris La Défense in France, Chicago Loop in the United States, Toronto Waterfront in Canada and Liverpool



BID in the United Kingdom.

This international recognition is a testament to the efforts led by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to develop the Greater Muscat Structure Plan as a long-term strategic framework to reshape the capital, enhance its global competitiveness, and improve the efficiency of its urban and economic infrastructure in alignment with national objectives.

The membership reflects the strategic direction championed by

the Greater Muscat Structure Plan towards building a more productive, connected and sustainable global city. This is being achieved through the development of an integrated economic ecosystem comprising 15 specialised economic clusters, strengthening the contribution of the non-oil economy, and establishing a modern urban transit network that supports sustainable mobility and quality of life — thereby reinforcing Muscat’s status as a competitive urban centre.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

SHURA TO HOST AGRICULTURE MINISTER



SHAIKH AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL NADABI

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash'shura will host Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, to deliver the ministry's statement at the council's 18th and 19th ordinary sessions. This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura, who explained that the council will hold three consecutive sessions. Two of these sessions will be dedicated to discussing the ministry's statement, while the 20th session will be dedicated to discussing legislative topics.

Al Nadabi said that the statement will include an evaluation of the ministry's performance during the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025), the programmes and projects overseen by the ministry during that plan, the ministry's strategic programmes and investment and development plans for the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), the ministry's contribution to the GDP during the upcoming plan, expected growth rates, the volume of local and foreign investments, the ministry's plan for managing financial and water resources, and the ministry's policies regarding a number of issues with local and international dimensions, including the volatility of global supply chains and their impact on food security.

HIGHLIGHTING DEVELOPING HALAL PRODUCTS SECTOR

MUSCAT: A workshop titled 'Developing the Halal Products Sector' was conducted on Tuesday via video conferencing.

The event reviewed growth opportunities within the global Halal market and highlighted the potential for Omani companies to enter this promising sector. Approximately 30 representatives from Omani companies and relevant stakeholders participated in the session.

The workshop featured several visual presentations addressing the Halal product framework and available opportunities in international markets. Participants also discussed cooperation mechanisms and ways to leverage supporting initiatives.

Huda al Hasani, Export Development Specialist at "Oman Exports" within the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, emphasised that organising this workshop is part of the efforts of "Oman Exports" to enable Omani companies to expand internationally. These efforts involve raising awareness of available export opportunities and enhancing the readiness of national products to compete in priority sectors.

— ONA

WORKSHOP ON URBAN STRATEGY HELD IN AL WUSTA



The workshop aimed to enhance integration among government departments.

— ONA

HAIMA: The Office of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit in Al Wusta Governorate on Tuesday organised a workshop titled 'Implementation and Follow-up of the Urban Strategy'. The workshop was held in partnership with the Urban Planning Department in Al Wusta Governorate.

The workshop aimed to enhance integration among government departments to ensure that its objectives are achieved efficiently. It discussed the procedures governing data entry and follow-up of development projects through the approved systems.

— ONA

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF PALESTINE



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Ahmed Mahmoud al Rowaidhi, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the strong bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Palestine. They also exchanged views and discussed a number of developments in the regional and international arenas.

— ONA

Social media addiction a concern among youth

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

AS DIGITAL connectivity continues to shape modern life, social media platforms have become an integral part of daily routines, particularly among young people. However, alongside their benefits, concerns are rising over excessive use and what experts increasingly describe as social media addiction.

Applications such as WhatsApp, X, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat have transformed how individuals communicate, share experiences and access information. While these platforms offer opportunities for creativity and connection, prolonged and unregulated use is beginning to impact mental well-being and productivity.

In Oman, officials and specialists are increasingly highlighting the importance of addressing this growing challenge.

From the education sector, Ahmed al Ghafri, a social specialist at a government school, said that teachers are reporting shorter attention spans and increased distraction among students.

This requires a collaborative response that includes families, schools and the wider



community to guide responsible technology use.

Meanwhile, technology expert Zayed al Rahbi said that as connectivity expands, so does the responsibility to ensure safe and balanced use.

Digital literacy today must include awareness of healthy online habits, not just technical skills.

Social media platforms are designed to maximise engagement, often encouraging prolonged usage through continuous content streams. This can contribute to behavioural patterns similar to dependency, particularly among adolescents.

Despite these concerns, officials stress that the solution is not to restrict technology,

but to manage its use effectively. Experts recommend practical steps such as setting screen-time limits, encouraging outdoor and social activities, and fostering open dialogue within families about digital habits.

Mazin al Riyami, a father of three, said his children spend long hours on their smartphones, noting that it has at times become difficult to capture their attention even during family conversations, which raises concern.

Fatma al Alawi, a mother of four, said she is keen to set clear rules for device use at home, explaining that she places phones in a single basket during family gatherings and returns them after the gathering ends.

In the same context, Maryam al Balushi, a mother of two, expressed concern about the psychological impact of excessive social media use on her children, particularly amid declining physical activity and reduced face-to-face social interaction.

As Oman continues its path towards digital transformation, balancing technological advancement with mental well-being remains a shared responsibility. Addressing social media addiction is not only a health concern, but also a societal priority that will shape the resilience and productivity of future generations.

Registration for 2026 Media Excellence Competition opens

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information has announced that nominations for participation in the 2026 Media Excellence Competition will open on Wednesday (today) and continue until May 31. The competition aims to stimulate national cadres towards media creativity and innovation, while raising professional quality standards within media institutions.

The competition also seeks to highlight national media talents and recognise their achievements, foster a spirit of positive competition among media institutions and individuals, support digital media and electronic content creation, and contribute to the documentation of winning works.

The competition encompasses a range of main fields, including Print Journalism, Radio and Television, and Digital Media. It targets three primary categories, namely media institutions, individuals (practitioners and media enthusiasts), and students majoring in media studies at academic institutions.

The award is granted exclusively to the first-place winner in each branch of the competition's fields, with each prize valued at RO 1,500.

The competition is distributed across four main areas. In Print Journalism, categories include the editorial article, journalistic interview, investigative report and press photography.

The award is granted exclusively to the first-place winner in each branch of the competition's fields, with each prize valued at RO 1,500.



The competition also seeks to highlight national media talents and recognise their achievements.

talk programmes, sports programmes, variety shows, documentary programmes and films, children's programmes and governorate reports.

Digital Media covers electronic broadcast channel programmes (for institutions), podcasts (for individuals), digital media campaigns (for institutions), electronic newspapers (for institutions), news accounts (for individuals), social media content creators (for individuals), as well as electronic content produced by media students in higher education institutions.

The competition is held biennially for several reasons,

including allowing time for the submission of distinguished works, creating competitive participation options, and ensuring adequate preparation and readiness.

The competition's terms and conditions, along with registration mechanisms, can be viewed via the following link: <https://www.omaninfo.om/moi/mec-registration-form.php>

The Media Excellence Competition, which held its first edition in 2004, is a national initiative aimed at enhancing media creativity and solidifying the role of media as an active partner in achieving the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

— ONA

SHORT TAKES



The applicants undergo various stages of evaluation in accordance with standard criteria. — ONA

MEDICAL CITY
BEGINS RECRUITMENT
PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: Acting in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, the Medical City for Military and Security Services recently began procedures to sort out the applications of candidates for medical and administrative jobs.

The applicants undergo various stages of evaluation in accordance with standard criteria that lead to the selection of qualified candidates for the job vacancies or positions made available for recruitment.

The procedures are in pursuance of efforts undertaken by the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security units.

The Medical City noted that “the procedures are in line with the plans and programmes set for the employment of national talents who merit the honour of contributing to the service of the homeland and its beloved leader”. — ONA

CIVILISATION
SEMINAR REVIEWS
OMANI HERITAGE

AL KAMIL W'AL WAFI: A seminar titled “Heritage and Civilisation” was held on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Al Kamil W'al Wafi, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court.

Organised by the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in the governorate, the event featured the participation of a group of specialists and individuals interested in cultural and heritage affairs.

Abdalmohsin bin Said al Marhoubi, Chairman of the Organising Committee for the seminar, stated that the event serves as an intellectual and cultural platform highlighting the role of society in shaping civilisation and preserving legacy.

He noted that it aims to build the future by linking the past with the present and envisioning the future, while working to enhance awareness of national identity and preserve the civilisational heritage, which is a fundamental pillar in building societies and sustaining their development.

The seminar aims to enhance awareness of authentic Omani heritage, work toward the cultural and intellectual empowerment of society, and transmit cultural legacy to future generations using modern methods.

It also seeks to highlight the historical and civilisational contributions of Omani society and strengthen the role of the media in disseminating awareness. — ONA

READING
INITIATIVE
BOOSTS
STUDENT
SKILLS



The event brought together students, teachers, parents and community members to promote reading culture.

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Education in Muscat Governorate organised the second edition of the ‘A Reading Community for a Conscious Future’ initiative.

The event brought together students, teachers, parents and community members as part of

efforts to promote reading culture and support Oman Vision 2040 goals in building knowledge-based skills.

The programme featured interactive stations covering reading, scientific research, innovation and technology.

Activities included spaces for young readers, Omani authors, student innovators and artificial intelligence, alongside workshops aimed at enhancing critical thinking and self-learning.

Organised by learning resource specialists under the supervision of Nasra bint Mohammed al Aufi, the initiative reflects ongoing efforts to create engaging learning environments and strengthen collaboration between schools and the wider community.

Officials said the initiative continues to record positive educational impact, helping develop a generation equipped with skills to meet future challenges.

Muscat ranks safest
city in the Arab world

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

MUSCAT HAS further strengthened its global standing as one of the most stable and safest cities in the world, securing the first place in the Arab world and 11th globally in the 2024/2025 Safe Cities Index issued by Numbeo. The achievement reflects the Sultanate of Oman's continued progress in enhancing community stability and improving quality of life indicators.

The index is widely regarded as a key international benchmark for measuring perceived safety and crime levels across cities worldwide. It is based primarily on residents’ assessments, covering crime rates, personal safety perceptions at different times of the day, and the prevalence of various types of crime, in addition to broader quality-of-life and social stability indicators.

Muscat's advancement in the ranking highlights growing international confidence in Oman as a secure destination for living, working, investing and tourism. This comes amid continuous development in infrastructure and public services, alongside the country's long-standing political and social stability, which remains one of its most distinctive strengths.

Specialists in social affairs note that the achievement is not incidental but rather the outcome of sustained institutional efforts and long-term strategic planning.

These efforts have focused on building a cohesive society grounded in values of tolerance, mutual respect, and the rule of law, in addition to the critical role played by security agencies in maintaining public safety and reinforcing a sense

The index is widely regarded as a key international benchmark for measuring perceived safety and crime levels across cities worldwide. It is based primarily on residents’ assessments, covering crime rates, personal safety perceptions at different times of the day, and the prevalence of various types of crime, in addition to broader quality-of-life and social stability indicators.



Muscat's advancement in the ranking highlights growing international confidence in Oman as a secure destination for living.

of reassurance across communities.

A social researcher commented that personal safety is one of the most significant indicators of urban quality of life, adding that Muscat's top regional ranking reflects the effectiveness of an integrated system combining security, development and community services. Salim al Maqbali said, “We live in an environment where people feel safe at all times, whether during the day or at night. This sense of security has become part of daily life in Muscat and is one of its most defining features compared to many cities I have visited.”

Meanwhile, Indian expatriate Prisha Das, who has lived in Muscat for several years, said, “What attracted me most to living here is the constant sense of safety.

I can move around freely at any time without concern. The respectful and kind nature of the community makes life here very comfortable and stable. Muscat is truly an ideal city for families.”

Muscat continues to enjoy a strong reputation among visitors and residents as a calm and secure city, with significantly low crime rates compared to many global urban centres. This allows residents

to move freely and confidently at all hours, positively reflecting on daily life as well as economic and social activity. The ranking comes as Oman continues to implement its national development agenda under Vision 2040, which places quality of life and community stability at the centre of its priorities. The vision focuses on urban development, improved public services, enhanced infrastructure efficiency and the creation of a more sustainable living environment.

Analysts expect this recognition to further support Oman's tourism sector, particularly as global travellers increasingly prioritise safe destinations.

It is also anticipated to strengthen the investment climate, as safety remains one of the most critical factors influencing business location decisions and corporate expansion strategies.

With this latest accomplishment, Muscat continues to consolidate its position as one of the leading Arab and global cities offering a secure and stable environment for both residents and visitors, reflecting the steady progress of Oman's broader development journey across multiple sectors.

Apricot season revitalises local economy, boosts tourism

RUQAYA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

Between the white blossoming of apricots in January and the short harvest season that begins in May — lasting approximately 10 days — Wakan village in the Wilayat of Nakhal celebrates its seasons. The small details of this experience attract visitors, revitalise the local economy, and carry the warmth of the place and its people.

“The number of apricot trees in Wakan village is estimated to be about 600, with each tree producing between 30 and 50 kilogrammes annually. The village has around 53 farmers,” said Abdullah al Salmi, Head of the Palm and Agricultural Production Department in Al

Batinah South.

The apricot season in the village begins as a quiet story told through sight rather than words. About 600 trees spread across the agricultural terraces, bare of leaves at the beginning of winter, as if in a long hibernation. While a visitor might assume they are lifeless, the village knows their secret well.

The trees slowly awaken at the start of January, with blossoms preceding their leaves, blanketing them in white thanks to their petals. This creates a scene reminiscent of snow or pristine white cotton – a rare sight in the Omani landscape, according to Al Salmi.

This spectacle lasts for about two weeks at the beginning of January, attracting visitors seeking



The apricot season in Wakan village begins like a quiet story told through sight rather than words.

a fleeting moment of beauty and photographers who capture the scene. With them, the village comes alive; guesthouses fill up, small businesses thrive, and conversations revolve around this eagerly awaited season. Then, in early May, the fruit ripens and the harvest begins,

lasting about 10 days, but its impact is profound.

Farmer Hamza al Mayahi stated, “The village eagerly awaits the harvest season because it is a vital source of income for us as farmers. With the influx of visitors, we benefit from selling apricots, which

are distinguished by their quality and scarcity elsewhere, along with other agricultural products such as garlic and dried beans.”

Around 53 farmers look forward to these days every year, as apricots transform from an aesthetic sight into a livelihood resource, sold fresh or dried. They remain present in the markets for a longer period, forming a source of income that extends beyond the season and making their way to nearby markets and digital platforms for promotion.

With its moderate climate in summer and severe cold in winter, Wakan remains a fertile environment for cultivating many Mediterranean-type trees such as olives, pomegranates, peaches and grapes.

SPOTLIGHT

COFFEE MOOD

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

IN A FAST-PACED world where quiet moments are increasingly rare, coffee is no longer just a quick morning fix. For today’s youth, it has evolved into a personal ritual — one that begins with aroma, unfolds through experience, and often sparks ideas that shape the day ahead. Coffee is no longer about caffeine alone; it is about feeling, identity, and the subtle art of slowing down. Step into any modern café and the shift is unmistakable. Young people gather around tables with laptops, exchange ideas about startups and ambitions, or carefully frame the perfect photograph of their coffee cup. Cafés have become more than social spaces — they are extensions of personality, where choices such as brew method or cup style quietly reflect individual taste.

For this generation, flavour alone is no longer enough. The experience matters just as much — sometimes more. From selecting the origin of beans to understanding roast profiles and experimenting with brewing methods such as filter, espresso, or cold brew, coffee has become a subject of curiosity and conversation. Ahmed Mubarak, 27, captures this shift: “Coffee is part of my daily rhythm now, but it’s not just about drinking it. I enjoy exploring different types and discovering the nuances. Each cup brings a different mood.” For him, visiting cafés is no longer routine — it is a social and sensory experience.

This growing interest has moved beyond consumption into creation. Many young people are now preparing their own coffee at home, transforming small corners into personal brewing stations. Hand grinders, precision scales, and glassware have become familiar features in everyday spaces. Sarah al Zadjali, 24, shares a similar perspective: “I learned to make coffee through online content, and now I have my own setup at home. It gives me a moment of calm in a busy day — and often helps me organise my thoughts.” For her, home brewing offers a sense of independence and satisfaction that rivals café visits. This shift has also opened doors for entrepreneurship. Youth-led coffee ventures are emerging with fresh concepts that prioritise quality, authenticity and experience. Success is no longer defined by location alone, but by the uniqueness of what is offered.

For some, coffee is a brief escape from daily pressures; for others, it is a tool for focus and productivity. It occupies a space between relaxation and motivation, offering both a pause and a push forward. It has also become closely tied to creativity. Many young people associate their most inspired moments with a warm cup in hand, as though the aroma itself unlocks ideas. It is no coincidence that discussions, writing sessions, and creative meetings often begin with coffee.

Social media has played a significant role in amplifying this culture. Images of carefully crafted cups, aesthetically designed cafés and intricate latte art dominate digital platforms, turning coffee into a visual language. Presentation now matters as much as taste. Lighting, angles, and backgrounds are carefully considered, transforming a simple cup into a curated moment worth sharing. Coffee is no longer just consumed — it is displayed, documented, and celebrated. Despite this evolution, coffee has not lost its traditional roots. In many cultures, particularly across the Arab world, it remains a symbol of hospitality and connection. This balance between heritage and modernity gives coffee its enduring depth.

Today’s youth embrace both ends of the spectrum. A speciality brew in a contemporary café may begin the day, while a traditional serving shared with family brings it to a close.

Ultimately, coffee remains a deeply personal experience. Each cup carries its own meaning, shaped by memory, and moment. In a world that rarely slows down, coffee offers a rare pause — a chance to reset, reflect, and reconnect. It may be just a cup — but for many, it holds something far greater: a space to think, to feel and simply to be.

CAFÉ CULTURE REFLECTS IDENTITY, CREATIVITY, AND SOCIAL CONNECTION AMONG YOUTH



SHORT TAKES



The exhibition also includes visual presentations about the virtues of Haj. — ONA

HAJ RITUALS EXHIBITION OPENS IN DHOFAR

SALALAH: A 3-day exhibition featuring the rituals of the Haj was opened at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The exhibition was organised by the Directorate-General of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in Dhofar Governorate.

The exhibition aims to spread awareness about Haj rituals, provide guidance to pilgrims about ways to protect their health while travelling around among holy places and outline the services offered to pilgrims by the Omani Haj Mission.

The exhibition also seeks to identify target Islamic values, offer general information and answer the queries of visitors. It comprises various sections, including one about the locations where Haj rituals are performed, a section that provides information about the Omani Haj Mission, a section for non-Arabic speaking communities and a section for offering advice about health matters.

Aflaj system endures as living water heritage

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

DESPITE RAPID urban expansion across Muscat Governorate, the traditional aflaj irrigation system continues to stand as a powerful testament to Omani ingenuity in water management and environmental adaptation.

Recognised as one of the world's oldest irrigation systems, aflaj remain vital for agriculture and domestic use, while increasingly gaining attention as cultural and tourism assets. The falaj system channels water from natural sources — groundwater, springs and surface runoff — through gently sloping channels that extend over long distances to farms and settlements.

Engineered with remarkable precision, these channels ensure a steady, gravity-driven flow without mechanical intervention, reflecting a sustainable and cost-efficient model of water management.

According to official data, Oman is home to approximately 4,112 aflaj, including 239 in Muscat Governorate. These systems are classified as either perennial or intermittent. Qurayat records the highest number, followed by



Oman is home to approximately 4,112 aflaj, including 239 in Muscat.

Aflaj are a symbol of Oman's cultural identity and engineering heritage, while increasingly attracting visitors interested in the country's historical relationship with water and landscape

Bausher, Al Amerat and Al Seeb, while Muscat and Muttrah have comparatively fewer.

Beyond their functional role, aflaj represent a well-organised social system, where water distribution is regulated through precise time-sharing arrangements. This structure prioritises domestic and agricultural needs, underscoring a long-standing culture of conservation within Omani society.

Aflaj are categorised into three main types. Dawoodi aflaj are the most complex, consisting of underground tunnels that can extend for kilometres and provide continuous water flow year-round. Aini aflaj depend on natural springs and are often characterised by warm or hot water, particularly

in mountainous areas. Ghaili aflaj rely on surface runoff and rainfall, making them more vulnerable to seasonal variability.

Qurayat alone hosts 117 aflaj, including 90 perennial and 27 intermittent systems, reflecting the wilayat's diverse water sources. These include 10 Dawoodi, 50 Aini and 57 Ghaili aflaj.

In Bausher, 52 aflaj have been recorded, of which 40 remain active. The area is particularly known for its Aini systems, numbering 47, some with naturally heated waters. Among the most notable are Al Hammam and Ghala, alongside mineral-rich springs valued for their therapeutic properties.

Al Hammam falaj stands out as one of the governorate's most prominent systems, with water temperatures ranging between 60°C and 65°C. Located within a historically rich setting surrounded by forts and mosques, it serves both agricultural and therapeutic purposes.

Al Amerat is home to 49 aflaj, including 30 active systems. These encompass all three types, with Al Aswad falaj — a Dawoodi system extending nearly 1,885 metres — among the most significant. Al Amerat falaj, an Aini type, also plays a key role in supporting local agriculture.



INNOVATION CAMPUS TO SUPPORT STARTUPS

TechOman, a leading community technology platform, officially announced the launch of its Innovation Campus, a bold initiative designed to empower startups, founders and the wider technology ecosystem across Oman.

As part of this launch, TechOman has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Desk Park, marking a significant step towards building a collaborative innovation infrastructure in Oman.

The TechOman Innovation Campus introduces a unique “campus without walls” model — an ecosystem-driven approach that connects entrepreneurs, innovators, and industry leaders through distributed physical and digital environments.

The initiative aims to accelerate the journey from idea to execution by providing access to mentorship, incubation programmes, workshops and community-driven engagement.

Nizwa’s ‘Cross Safely’ exhibition leaves lasting impact on road safety awareness

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MAY 5

The Traffic Safety Exhibition, held as part of the Gulf Traffic Week 2026 under the theme ‘Cross Safely’, concluded in Al Aqur, marking the end of three days of interactive awareness activities aimed at promoting road safety across the community.

Organised by the Royal Oman Police, represented by the Directorate-General of Traffic in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, the exhibition attracted a wide and diverse audience, including families, students, and members of the public.

The strong turnout reflected a growing public awareness of the importance of traffic safety and responsible road behaviour.

Throughout the exhibition, visitors engaged with a variety of educational and interactive corners designed to deliver impactful safety messages. These included traffic awareness booths, accident-simulation experiences demonstrating the consequences of reckless driving, and a dedicated



The Gulf Traffic Week continues to serve as a vital platform for reinforcing adherence to traffic laws.

children's corner focused on instilling safe road habits through simplified, engaging methods. Visual presentations and educational materials further reinforced key safety concepts.

Lieutenant Colonel Eng Saud bin Said al Hajri, Director of Traffic in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said, “Traffic safety does not begin with traffic signals alone, but rather stems from individual conscience and awareness. The slogan ‘Cross Safely’ embodies a firm conviction and a calm voice aimed at protecting lives and making the road a place

that respects everyone, far removed from the numbers and statistics that conceal human tragedies and dreams that were halted due to accidents that could have been avoided.”

A visitor, Ahmed al Hinai, described his experience at the exhibition as impactful. “The accident simulation was particularly striking. It made me realise how a single moment of distraction can lead to serious consequences. It's different when you see it and feel it, not just hear about it,” he said.

During the exhibition, a series of awareness initiatives were conducted across the governorate, including lectures and programmes at the University of Nizwa, Nizwa Hospital, and in the wilayats of Al Hamra and Bahla, ensuring that the campaign reached a broader segment of society. The Gulf Traffic Week continues to serve as a vital platform for reinforcing adherence to traffic laws and promoting safer road environments, thereby protecting lives and property and advancing a more responsible and aware community.



مجيس للخدمات الصناعية ش.م.ع.م
Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C

Tender Announcement

Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C is pleased to announce two public tenders, as per the details below:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Tender Fees OMR	Site Visit	Bid Submission Date
Majis/8/2026	Enhancement of Process Water Network in Sohar Industrial Port	NIL	7 th May 2026 11:00 AM	23 rd May 2026
Majis/9/2026	New 11KV Switchgear for Majis CCWS Electrical System	NIL	7 th May 2026 10:00 AM	31 st May 2026

The interested bidder/contractor may visit Majis Industrial Services SAOC e-tendering system website for more information www.majis.om (<http://tendering.majis.om/VendorLogin.aspx>). The bidder to make sure the registration of the company through the portal in not registered.

⌚ **For site visit:** the bidders shall maintain the minimum PPE (safety shoes, helmet, safety vest).

⌚ For gate pass the interested bidders shall apply their gate pass via Majis gate pass portal by contacting the Procurement Dept.

⌚ **For inquiries, please contact:**

 Email: issa@miscoman.com

 Phone: +968 99200321



المركز الوطني للإحصاء والمعلومات
والمعلومات
والمعلومات
والمعلومات
والمعلومات

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR STATISTICS & INFORMATION
Enhancing Knowledge
SULTANATE OF OMAN

National Center for Statistics and Information Electronic Public Auction Announcement

The National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) announces its intention to sell a number of electronic devices and various items through an electronic public auction via Mazad Oman website at www.mazad.om.

Bidding will commence on 17 May 2026 and will remain open for two (2) days. Interested participants are required to follow the procedures below:

- Participants must register and subscribe on the Mazad Oman website at www.mazad.om.
- A refundable security deposit of OMR 500 must be paid electronically through the website. The deposit shall be forfeited if the auction is awarded to the bidder and payment for the purchased items is not completed within the specified timeframe.
- The successful bidder must pay the full value of the awarded item(s) via electronic bank transfer within a maximum of three (3) working days after the auction closes.
- The successful bidder is required to collect and remove all purchased items, for which full payment has been made, within five (5) working days after the auction ends. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the security deposit, and NCSI shall not be responsible for any loss, damage, or deterioration of the items.
- The auction winner must sign a written undertaking not to dispose of the purchased movable assets in any manner that may harm the reputation of the National Center for Statistics and Information.
- NCSI and Mazad Oman reserve the right to confiscate the security deposit and re-auction the items at the purchaser's expense in either of the following cases:
 - Failure to settle the full purchase price within the stipulated payment period.
 - Failure to remove the purchased items within the specified timeframe for collection and site clearance.

Inspection of Items Offered for Sale:

- NCSI Building, Al Mawaleh: 12 May 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- NCSI Warehouse, Rusail Industrial Area: 13 May 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

For further details, please visit the auction website or contact:

National Center for Statistics and Information:

- Mr. Anwar Al Kuwaili - Tel: 98232826
- Mr. Khalfan Al Shukaili - Tel: 99435594
- Mazad Oman: Tel: 96568396



UAE DEALS WITH
MISSILE, DRONE
ATTACKS

The United Arab Emirates' defence ministry said on Tuesday that its air defences were dealing with missile and drone attacks from Iran.

ZELENSKY OFFERS
BAHRAIN DRONE DEAL

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky offered a drone deal to Bahrain saying that Ukraine is ready to share this security expertise.

US THREATENS
'DEVASTATING'
RESPONSE

The United States is "not looking for a fight" and its ceasefire with Iran still holds, but any attack on commercial shipping will be met with a "devastating" response, the Pentagon chief said.

IRAN 'NOT EVEN
STARTED'

Iran's chief negotiator in talks with the United States, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, warned that his country had "not even started".

STOCKS SINK ON
RISING TENSION

Stocks sank across Asian exchanges as a fresh spike in Middle East tensions fanned fears over the fragile US-Iran ceasefire.

MAERSK SAILS
THROUGH HORMUZ

Denmark's freight giant Maersk said one of its ships had sailed through Hormuz under US escort, adding the transit was completed "without incident".

BRITAIN CALLS FOR
DE-ESCALATION

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called for de-escalation in the Middle East after the United Arab Emirates reported attacks.

UAE RETURNS TO
REMOTE TEACHING

The United Arab Emirates's education ministry ordered all schools to return to remote teaching for the remainder of the week.

US SAYS DESTROYED
IRAN BOATS

A top US admiral said that forces had destroyed six Iranian boats and shot down missiles and drones fired at US Navy and commercial vessels.

TRUMP: 'NO DAMAGE'
IN HORMUZ

President Donald Trump played down tensions after US warships entered Hormuz, saying Iran had "taken some shots" but caused no harm.

MIDDLE EAST STABLE DESPITE EXCHANGE OF FIRE



Iranians drive past a huge billboard carrying the image of the late Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a street in Tehran. — AFP

PENTAGON CHIEF SAYS IRAN TRUCE STILL IN EFFECT



US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth holds a briefing on the Iran war, at the Pentagon in Washington, DC. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday that the ceasefire with Iran was not over, even as the US and Iran exchanged fire in the Gulf as they wrestled for control of the Strait of Hormuz. Hegseth said the US had successfully secured a path through the critical waterway and that hundreds of commercial ships were lining up to pass through, as Washington seeks to break a chokehold Iran has asserted on the Strait of Hormuz since the conflict

began on February 28. "We know the Iranians are embarrassed by this fact. They said they control the strait. They do not," Hegseth told a Pentagon news conference. The US military says it sank six Iranian small boats and intercepted Iranian cruise missiles and drones, after President Donald Trump sent the navy to escort stranded tankers through the Strait of Hormuz in a campaign he called "Project Freedom." — Reuters

US, BAHRAIN PUSH UN-BACKED ACTION FOR HORMUZ



A general view shows the United Nations Security Council meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. — Reuters file photo

PARIS: UN Security Council members will begin talks on a US- and Bahrain-backed draft resolution that could lead to sanctions against Iran, and potentially authorise force, if Tehran fails to halt attacks and threats to commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, three Western diplomats said. Fresh exchanges of fire underscored the stakes as the US and Iran struggle for control of the narrow waterway, a vital artery for global energy and trade, shaking a fragile four-week-old truce and reinforcing rival maritime blockades.

The US diplomatic push at the United Nations is in stark contrast to recent months during which it has largely acted outside the UN framework, launching military strikes against Iran without seeking council authorisation and pressing allies to join ad hoc naval patrols to enforce freedom of navigation. That approach drew resistance from partners wary of open-ended conflict and legal exposure, prompting sharp criticism from US President Donald Trump against countries he accused of failing to align with US-led efforts.

Against that backdrop, the draft resolution forms part of what the diplomats described as a strategy to pressure Iran diplomatically and plan for a post-conflict situation. Washington has also circulated a proposal to partners for a new multinational maritime coalition, the Maritime Freedom Construct (MFC), aimed at establishing a post-conflict security architecture for the Middle East and reopening the Strait once conditions stabilise. An earlier Bahraini resolution failed after Russia and China blocked it. — Reuters

BEIRUT WARTIME SHELTERS BECOME FLASHPOINT FOR SOCIETAL TENSIONS

BEIRUT: A private school in the heart of Beirut converted into a wartime shelter has become a flashpoint for social tensions brewing across Lebanon over the mass displacement caused by the war between Israel and Hezbollah. Since Israel invaded Lebanon in pursuit of Hezbollah who fired across the border in March, the Hariri School has been shut to students and converted to a collective shelter, with more than 1,500 displaced people living in its classrooms and tents in the school courtyard. In early May, parents of pupils - who have been taking classes online - protested against the indefinite closure and called for their children to be able to return to class.

In a statement, a representative of the school administration said it sympathised with the displaced. "But just as we are sympathising with them, there are also rights for our students to be at their premises," the statement said. The two-month war has displaced more than a million people in Lebanon. While most are staying with relatives or renting apartments, at least 124,000 are staying in government-run collective shelters.

The displaced mostly hail from Lebanon's Muslim community, from which Hezbollah draws most of its support. They have largely fled to areas predominantly inhabited by other sects, deepening sectarian tensions. The Rafic Hariri School is named after a former prime minister whose 2005 assassination triggered an era of instability in Lebanon. An international tribunal found members of Hezbollah responsible for his killing.



A child plays in the yard of Hariri High School II, used as a temporary shelter for displaced people, in Beirut, Lebanon. - Reuters

Since Israel invaded Lebanon in pursuit of Hezbollah who fired across the border in March, the Hariri School has been shut to students and converted to a collective shelter, with more than 1,500 displaced people living in its classrooms and tents in the school courtyard

This year, many of Hezbollah's critics have blamed the group for pulling Lebanon into another war by firing on Israel in support of Iran. As internal divisions simmer, many Lebanese see echoes of the country's 1975-1990 civil war. The representative of the Rafic Hariri School said she was worried history would repeat itself. She said that during a 2024 war between Israel and Hezbollah, displaced people broke into the school and damaged it, leaving the administration to foot the bill without state support. She said displaced families again entered the school this year without

administrators' permission. Mohammed Hammoud, 40, who supervises displaced families in the school and was himself displaced from southern Lebanon, said the families had been handed the keys and did not force their way in.

Lebanese Social Affairs Minister Haneen Sayed said that the government was working on plans to cope with long-term displacement.

For those staying at the school, returning home is not an option. Um Mahmoud's apartment was badly damaged in Israeli strikes, rendering it uninhabitable. — Reuters

SHORT TAKE



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near Bandar Abbas, Iran. — Reuters

SEOUL REVIEWS HORMUZ PLAN AFTER SHIP EXPLOSION

SEOUL: South Korea is reviewing whether to join US President Donald Trump's plan to help ships transit through the Strait of Hormuz, an official said on Tuesday, following an explosion and fire on a Korean-operated ship in the waterway. Trump blamed Monday's incident on an Iranian attack, while Korea's Foreign Ministry said the cause of the fire would only be confirmed after the vessel was towed back to port. The Panama-flagged cargo ship operated by South Korean shipper HMM was empty and at anchor when the explosion and fire occurred. The ministry said there were no casualties and the fire had been extinguished. The ship, called HMM Namu, would be towed to a nearby port for a damage assessment and repairs, it said.

South Korea believes the "safety of international maritime routes and freedom of navigation should be protected under international law," said Choi Soung-ah, a presidential secretary, noting Seoul's participation in international efforts to normalise global shipping chains. "In this context, we are watching President Trump's remark related to this," she said. A text message from the Blue House confirmed it was reviewing Trump's suggestion to participate in a plan to free up navigation in the strait. Trump said Iran fired shots at a Korean-operated ship and other targets as the US launched its operation to open the strait. He suggested that South Korea could join the effort. — Reuters

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

UAE restricts airspace after Iranian attacks



The United Arab Emirates restricted flights to a handful of approved routes until at least May 11 and activated emergency security protocols, according to Notices to Air Men (NOTAMs). The restrictions came two days after the UAE had lifted all precautionary airspace measures and said its airspace was clear. The NOTAMs stated "EMIRATES FIR PARTIALLY CLOSED", and adding that flights into and out of the UAE were permitted only via specific entry and exit points. — Reuters

ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS

Thailand to borrow \$12.2 bn over war crisis



Thailand approved a \$12.2 billion emergency borrowing package to cushion the economic impacts of the Middle East war, marking one of the country's largest borrowing plans in decades. The funding would be used to boost domestic spending and ease economic hardships as inflation rises and growth slows, with the finance ministry cutting its GDP growth forecast to 1.6 per cent, from 2.4 per cent last year. The loan of about 400 billion baht will be deployed from June to September. — AFP

CRUDE IMPORTS

First Russian oil arrives in Japan since war



Japan has taken delivery of its first shipment of oil from Russia since global supplies were choked off by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz at the start of the Iran war, reports said. A tanker carrying crude that was produced as part of a Sakhalin-2 natural gas development project reached the coast of Imabari in western Japan and started offloading to a refinery on Tuesday. Japan has tried to diversify its sources of energy since the outbreak of war. — AFP

When fear prevails, animals are left behind



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY, attention naturally turns towards survival. Safety becomes the priority, and decisions are often made hastily, sometimes under pressure and from a place of fear. Across parts of the region, as tensions rise and movement becomes uncertain, many families are making difficult choices about how to protect themselves, and those closest to them.

Within these moments, there is a quieter reality unfolding alongside the human experience.

Animals, particularly domestic pets, are being left behind. Recent reports across parts of the Gulf, including areas in Dubai, have highlighted a growing concern.

As families relocate, some animals are being abandoned, left to navigate environments they were never designed to survive in. These are not wild animals. They are pets who have known care, routine, and human connection. Their survival is not instinctive in the way many assume, as it has always been supported.

It is important to acknowledge the context in which these decisions are made. Fear changes how people think and act. In moments of perceived threat, the nervous system prioritises immediacy over reflection.

Decisions that would otherwise feel unthinkable can begin to feel justified in the

urgency of the moment. This does not make people uncaring. It reflects how quickly instinct can override intention.

Being human, however, also carries responsibility. The way we respond under pressure often reveals our deeper values, not when life is easy, but when it is not. Animals do not have the ability to make alternative arrangements. They do not understand why they have been left behind. What they experience instead is absence, confusion and distress without explanation.

This is where the conversation becomes uncomfortable, yet necessary. Fear may explain behaviour, yet it does not remove accountability.

Caring for a pet is not a temporary arrangement. It is a commitment that extends beyond convenience, beyond comfort, and especially beyond moments of uncertainty.

There are, fortunately, individuals and organisations stepping forward to respond to this growing issue. Local rescue groups, shelters, and volunteers are working tirelessly to provide food, medical care, and temporary homes for abandoned animals. Their work reflects compassion in action, often carried out without recognition.

This responsibility, however, cannot rest solely on their shoulders. There is a role for each of us, particularly within our own homes. Planning for pets can become part of

Fear changes how people think and act. In moments of perceived threat, the nervous system prioritises immediacy over reflection

any contingency plan, just as it is for other members of the family.

If relocation becomes necessary, options can be explored in advance. Trusted friends, neighbours, or foster care arrangements can be put in place. Even small steps create a bridge between uncertainty and responsibility.

For parents, there is also a deeper layer to consider. Children are always observing, not only how we respond to stress, but how we treat those who are more vulnerable than ourselves. The way we care for animals shapes a child's understanding of empathy, responsibility and integrity. These are not lessons taught through instruction alone; they are absorbed through lived experience.

Moments like these invite a broader reflection. In a world that can feel increasingly unpredictable, compassion remains one of the few things fully within our control. How it is extended, particularly when it is inconvenient or challenging, reveals something essential about who we are beneath the pressure.

The measure of care is not found in how we show up when life feels manageable. It is revealed in the choices we make when it does not. In the end, this is not only about the animals being left behind. It is about the values we choose to uphold within ourselves, even when fear makes them harder to live by.

‘SUPER EL NINO’ RAISES FEARS FOR ASIA REELING FROM MIDDLE EAST WAR

SARA HUSSEIN

Already reeling from the effects of conflict in the Middle East, Asia is now facing the prospect of strong El Nino conditions that could spike energy demand, sap hydropower and damage crops.

El Nino is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that brings worldwide changes in winds, air pressure and rainfall patterns.

Last week, the United Nations' weather and climate agency said El Nino conditions could develop as soon as May to July.

The World Meteorological Organization, meanwhile, said early signs indicated the event could be particularly strong, with some dubbing the impending event a “super El Nino”, although the term is not used by scientists. That is not good news for Asia, parts of which are traditionally heavily affected by the heatwaves, drought and heavy rains that El Nino can bring.

The phenomenon essentially shifts traditional weather patterns around, for example, moving rain that normally falls over Indonesia out to sea, leaving the country vulnerable to drought and wildfires. El Nino occurs around every two to seven years and is forecast based on sea temperatures.

“The subsurface anomaly that we’re seeing so far is pretty strong,” said Peter van Rensch, a climate scientist at Australia’s Monash University.

“It does look a little bit like what we saw in the 1997/98 event, and that was probably the strongest El Nino,” he said.

There are still plenty of uncertainties, and Van Rensch cautioned that it was possible an El Nino might not develop at all.

But the 1997 El Nino brought catastrophic impacts, including extreme drought and devastating wildfires in Indonesia that burned through millions of hectares and created regional air pollution.

Authorities there have already identified peatlands at risk, and warned the country could see its lowest rainfall in 30 years.

The warnings come with Asia buckling under the strain of an energy supply crunch and fears over shortages of fertiliser and other industrial and agricultural components which pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has effectively closed the strategic waterway since the United States and Israel launched attacks on the country on February 28, disrupting global fuel supplies. — AFP

Opportunities open up in education during war

EDUCATION DURING conflicts and wars is a critical yet often overlooked dimension of humanitarian response and long-term development.

Armed conflicts disrupt not only political and economic systems but also the fundamental structures that support learning, social cohesion, and human development.

According to (Unicef, 2023), education is a lifeline for children in crises. Conflicts and wars spare no children. Today, more children than ever are affected by crises, are not learning, and are out of school.

More countries are experiencing conflict than at any time in the past thirty years. Many of these crises span entire childhoods and the early years of adolescence.

In countries affected by emergencies, children may lose their loved ones and homes, and their childhoods are at risk of being marked by trauma. Without access to quality education, they risk losing their futures.

Globally, over 50 million children have been forcibly displaced, mostly due to armed conflict. Nearly half of all school-age refugee children are out of school.

Notably, conflicts and wars severely damage educational systems in multiple ways. Schools are often destroyed, repurposed for military use, or rendered unsafe due to ongoing violence.

According to the Unesco, millions of children worldwide are denied access to education because of armed conflict. Teachers may be displaced, injured, or killed, leading to a shortage of qualified personnel.

Additionally, families forced to flee their homes face instability that disrupts children's schooling. In such contexts, education becomes



Mohamad Khalil, 11, displaced from southern Lebanon, attends an online class in Hariri High School II, used as a temporary shelter for displaced people, in Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday. — Reuters



DR ZAINAB AL AJMI
zeinbf@moe.om

The writer is with the Ministry of Education

secondary to survival, increasing dropout rates and widening educational inequalities.

Despite these challenges, education during conflict is not merely a luxury — it is a necessity. Education provides a sense of normalcy, stability, and psychological support for children living in traumatic environments.

It can protect children from exploitation, child labour, and recruitment into armed groups. Research by Unicef highlights that schools can serve as safe spaces where children receive not only academic instruction but also emotional and social support.

Various strategies have been developed to ensure continuity of education in conflict zones. One

approach is the establishment of temporary learning spaces, such as tents or community centres, which provide flexible and accessible schooling options.

Distance learning and digital education have also gained prominence, especially in areas where physical attendance is unsafe.

Organisations such as Education Cannot Wait work to fund and coordinate educational responses in emergencies, ensuring that learning continues even in the most challenging circumstances.

Another important strategy is the integration of psychosocial support into educational programmes. Children affected by war often experience trauma, anxiety, and loss, which can hinder their ability to learn.

Teachers are increasingly trained to address these needs by creating supportive and inclusive classroom environments. Additionally, curricula may be adapted to promote peace education, conflict resolution, and resilience, helping students develop skills to navigate and overcome adversity.

In sum, significant challenges continue to affect education in conflict settings. Funding remains limited compared to other humanitarian priorities.

Ongoing violence and political instability further hinder programme implementation, while equitable access for marginalised groups, including girls and children with disabilities, remains a pressing concern.

Nevertheless, education in times of conflict is a fundamental human right and a vital tool for recovery, with sustained investment essential for fostering resilience and long-term peace.

Scaling up solutions to avert food crisis



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

DESPITE GLOBAL food security reaching its most critical level in years - particularly due to wartime disruptions in the region that could trigger a new food crisis — the Sultanate of Oman is reinforcing its role as a leader in food security through a comprehensive strategic plan focused on sustainability and boosting local production. Based on Oman Vision 2040, Oman has made remarkable progress in developing its agricultural and fisheries sectors to ensure food security and sustainability. This success is attributed to strategic planning, innovative technologies, and a strong commitment to long-term resilience. This is evident from government data showing particularly strong performance in fisheries, achieving self-sufficiency levels that exceed domestic demand and exporting to approximately 60 international markets. According to the data, the nation has achieved high levels of self-sufficiency in several key food commodities, including 146 per cent in fish, 99 per cent in dates, 96 per cent in fresh milk and 95 per cent in table eggs. Self-sufficiency rates stand at 79 per cent for vegetables, 62 per cent for poultry meat, 45 per cent for red meat and 24 per cent for fruits. Recently, coordinated by Invest Oman in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Oman has unveiled food security investment opportunities totalling over \$243 million.

The investment initiative is part of a broader regional shift towards food security-driven agricultural expansion, particularly among Gulf economies aiming to strengthen domestic production capabilities amid climate pressures, global supply chain disruptions, and growing concerns over import dependency. “The initiative reflects a shift toward attracting high-quality investments driven by advanced technologies and sustainable practices, while strengthening related industries and enhancing Oman’s position as a regional hub for food security and aquaculture,” the state-run Oman News Agency quoted officials as saying. According to reports, the initiative aligns with broader international collaboration efforts, including the 2026-2030 Country Programming Framework established with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. This framework aims to promote the development of robust and sustainable agrifood systems throughout Oman. “This initiative is part of Oman’s efforts to enhance food self-sufficiency, support resource sustainability, and increase the contribution of productive sectors to the national economy,” the news agency reported. The initiative’s strategy is reported to be based on several interrelated strategic priorities that align with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. Its primary focus is on implementing sustainable agriculture and fishing practices that can withstand climate change, utilising modern technologies and precision farming to

Based on Oman Vision 2040, Oman has made remarkable progress in developing its agricultural and fisheries sectors to ensure food security and sustainability

protect and enhance local genetic resources. The second priority focuses on enhancing the coordinated and efficient management of natural resources, with particular emphasis on the sustainability of land and water resources. The third priority centres on strengthening rural and coastal communities and improving their livelihoods by creating sustainable job opportunities, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and ensuring equitable access to markets and funding sources. Finally, it strengthens these efforts by fostering a supportive and inclusive national policy and institutional framework, thereby improving coordination efficiency through multi-stakeholder platforms and enhancing national statistical systems and data quality. As reported by the state news agency, the prospects are based on Oman’s competitive strengths, including rich agricultural land, abundant marine resources, a strategic geographic location, and well-developed infrastructure. It is also supported by a regulatory framework that encourages investments ranging from mid-scale projects starting at approximately \$4.2 million to major strategic ventures exceeding \$83 million, providing a variety of entry points and partnership opportunities for investors. Without a doubt, any observer would agree that, in a time of escalating climate threats and geopolitical conflicts, Oman’s cohesive and forward-thinking approach offers valuable insights for developing resilient and sustainable food systems.

MERZ’S STRUGGLES MOUNT AS HE MARKS A YEAR AS LEADER

PIERRICK YVON

Chancellor Friedrich Merz took power vowing to get Germany back on its feet politically after a turbulent period, boost the country’s international standing and kickstart a moribund economy. But after a year in office, his coalition is beset by infighting, Europe’s top economy is still weak - and some commentators are already predicting he will not see out a full term. “Who comes after Merz?”, “Is Merz on the brink?”, read recent headlines in the German press, while just 15 per cent of respondents quizzed in a recent Forsa poll said they were satisfied with his work. It is a heavy blow for the politician from the centre-right CDU party, who achieved a long-standing ambition when he was sworn in as chancellor on May 6 last year. Merz, now 70, first made a bid to lead the CDU in the early 2000s, but was beaten to the job by his longtime rival, Angela Merkel, who went on to lead Germany from 2005 to 2021. After taking time out and working in business, he launched a comeback, finally becoming chancellor after his party won last year’s elections, forming a coalition government with the centre-left SPD. But he got off to a rocky start when it took him two parliamentary votes to finally become chancellor - a first in post-war Germany. It proved to be a bad omen. Clashes between his CDU/CSU alliance and the SPD have escalated, evoking memories of the fractious three-party coalition under Merz’s predecessor, Olaf Scholz, which collapsed in 2024. Asked last month if he was counting on his own unwieldy coalition lasting until elections scheduled for 2029, Merz responded: “Nobody can guarantee anything”. Merz often adds to his own problems, critics contend, pointing to his sometimes forthright remarks and reportedly hot temper. He was forced to deny recently that he had shouted at his deputy, the SPD’s Lars Klingbeil, during tense negotiations over proposed reforms. Merz has also caused unease with other comments, such as accusing Germans of being workshy and claiming that migration had caused “problems in the urban landscape”. “It is a massive problem that he is so impulsive,” SPD parliamentary leader Matthias Miersch told the Bild newspaper. “You can’t manage the office of the chancellor like that.” His comments have also stoked tensions with US President Donald Trump. Merz last week provoked a serious spat with Trump, when he told school students that Iran was “humiliating” the United States in the Middle East war. Trump subsequently announced that the United States will withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany, although Berlin has attempted to downplay the move, insisting that it was expected. — AFP

Speculation, security and distrust...

THE REPORTED shooting at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner on April 25, an event attended by high-profile political figures including US President Donald Trump, his wife and Vice-President J D Vance, has sparked not only concern, but also a wave of speculation online. In today’s political climate, it is perhaps unsurprising that an incident like this would immediately be questioned. Was it a genuine attack, or something else entirely? While such questions reflect a broader crisis of trust, they also highlight how quickly uncertainty can turn into conjecture. One of the main reasons people are questioning the situation is the issue of security. The dinner was held at the Hilton hotel, a venue well known for hosting high-security events involving political leaders and international figures. These types of gatherings typically involve multiple layers of protection: Secret Service presence, surveillance systems, guest screening and coordination with local law enforcement. The idea that someone carrying a rifle could bypass all of these measures raises understandable questions. A weapon of that size is not easily concealed, and in a setting filled with cameras, staff and security personnel, it would likely attract attention. For many observers, this apparent breach does not seem to align with the expected level of security at such an event. At the same time, it is important to approach these concerns with caution. Security failures are not impossible. History has shown that even the most tightly controlled environments can be vulnerable under certain circumstances. Jumping immediately to the conclusion that an event was staged risks overlooking more plausible explanations, including human error or unforeseen lapses in coordination. Without verified evidence, speculation can



Cole Tomas Allen, a suspect in the White House Correspondents’ Association dinner shooting, sits in the courtroom during a hearing in Washington DC, US. — Reuters file photo



OMAN AL YAHYAI

The writer is a multilingual writer and media professional based in Paris. She specialises in human rights and immigration

quickly move from questioning to misinformation. Another factor fuelling public suspicion is the political context surrounding the incident. Trump has previously expressed interest in constructing a new ballroom at the White House, a project reportedly estimated at around \$400 million. In the wake of multiple assassination attempts in 2024, some Republican figures have pointed to heightened security concerns as a justification for expanding or upgrading facilities. For critics, this raises the possibility that security threats could be used to advance political or infrastructural agendas. However, linking a specific violent incident directly to policy goals requires a level of proof that, at present, does not exist. While it is reasonable to question how security narratives are used in political decision-making, it is equally important not to present speculation as fact. The danger lies in assuming intent without evidence, particularly in a highly polarised environment where narratives can quickly become entrenched. On the other side of the debate is a more grounded explanation: rising public frustration. Across

the United States, many citizens are expressing dissatisfaction with the current state of the country. Concerns about the job market, the cost of living and economic instability are widespread. Policies related to immigration enforcement, particularly the increased presence of ICE agents, have also contributed to tensions in certain communities. In such an environment, anger can escalate, and in certain cases, individuals may resort to violence. This broader context matters. Political violence does not occur in a vacuum, it is often a symptom of deeper societal divisions. While the vast majority of people do not support or engage in violence, heightened frustration and polarisation can increase the likelihood of extreme actions by individuals. In that sense, the incident may reflect a troubling shift in the political climate, where anger is becoming more visible and, in some cases, more dangerous. What makes this situation particularly complex is that both interpretations, suspicion of staging and concern about genuine violence, stem from the same underlying issue: a lack of trust. Many Americans no longer fully trust political institutions, media narratives or official explanations. This distrust creates a space where speculation thrives, often filling the gaps left by incomplete or delayed information. What this incident clearly reveals is not just a security concern, but a broader societal one. When people feel disconnected from political leadership, economically strained and uncertain about the future, trust erodes. And when trust erodes, every event becomes suspect. Whether the shooting was the result of a security failure or an isolated act of violence, its aftermath underscores a more pressing issue: a political environment where doubt is constant and certainty is increasingly hard to find.

SPORTS

24TEAMS



DIRIYAH TO HOST AFC ASIAN CUP 2027 DRAW

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbалuch

The eyes of Asia will turn on Saturday, May 9, to Diriyah, Saudi Arabia, which will host the official draw ceremony for the AFC Asian Cup 2027, one of the continent’s most prestigious football events, featuring top national teams aiming for continental glory.

The draw will take place at the historic Salwa Palace in the Al Turaif district, a Unesco World Heritage Site, combining Saudi Arabia’s rich heritage with a major continental sporting occasion and attracting wide media and public attention.

A total of 24 teams will participate in the tournament, with 23 teams already confirmed. The final spot will be decided in a playoff between Lebanon and Yemen in June, teams will be divided into four pots based on the latest Fifa rankings, before being drawn into six groups of four teams each.

Oman’s national team has been placed in Pot 2 alongside Qatar, Iraq, Jordan, the UAE and Syria, setting up the possibility of balanced yet competitive group stage matchups.

OMANI REFEREES

On another front highlighting Oman’s presence on the continental stage, an Omani refereeing team will officiate matches at the AFC Under-17 Asian Cup finals, taking place in Saudi Arabia from May 5 to 22.

The officiating team is led by international referee Yahya al Balushi, assisted by Mohammed al Ghazali and Hamood al Shaibi, reflecting the continued trust in Omani referees at the Asian level.

Yahya al Balushi, 36, is one of Oman’s leading referees. Yahya began his refereeing career in 2014 and officiated his first league match in 2016 and received the Fifa badge in 2021 and has since taken charge of several regional and continental tournaments, including the AFC Asian Cup, Gulf Cup competitions and World Cup qualifiers.

Yahya was also named Best Referee at the Gulf Cup 24, underlining his strong reputation across the region.

This dual presence of Oman through its national team and refereeing officials highlights the country’s growing status in Asian football, both competitively and technically, as it continues to pursue further success in upcoming tournaments.

AFC ASIAN CUP Saudi Arabia 2027™ OFFICIAL DRAW SUN, 10 JUNE 2025 - 01:00 UTC+7			
POT 1	POT 2	POT 3	POT 4
SAUDI ARABIA	QATAR	BAHRAIN	KYRGYZSTAN
JAPAN	IRAQ	THAILAND	NORTH KOREA
IRAN	JORDAN	CHINA	INDONESIA
SOUTH KOREA	UAE	PALESTINE	KUWAIT
AUSTRALIA	OMAN	VIETNAM	SINGAPORE
UZBEKISTAN	SYRIA	TAJIKISTAN	LEBANON / YEMEN

Al Rustaq relegated after defeat against Al Shabab

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

THE THIRD day of Round 23 in the Jindal League produced three significant outcomes, with Al Shabab securing a hard-fought win over Al Rustaq to consolidate second place, Al Khabourah and Saham playing out a goalless draw in a tense relegation battle and Al Nahda claimed a valuable away victory over Al Nasr.

At Seeb Stadium, Al Shabab overcame a struggling Al Rustaq 1-0 in a match that remained finely balanced until the closing stages. Al Rustaq showed attacking intent early on, while Al Shabab initially found it difficult to impose itself.

The first half was short on clear-cut chances, although the hosts came closest after being awarded a penalty following a VAR review when the ball struck Al Rustaq captain Yousuf al Maamari’s hand. Maliko Kinyan stepped up, but his effort flew wide, wasting a major opportunity for Al Shabab.

The home side continued to press, and Kinyan later sent a powerful shot over the bar, while Al Rustaq also threatened, with foreign player Jaira Jov missing a good chance late in the half. After the break, Al Shabab pushed harder, and Kinyan struck the post in the 47th minute as the pressure mounted. Al Rustaq, however, remained organised and nearly stole the lead through substitute Luqman al Jadidi, whose effort drifted just over in the 70th minute.

The breakthrough finally came in the 82nd minute when substitute Musaab al Maamari delivered a precise ball for Mahmood Mubarak, who rose well and headed into the net. After a VAR check, the goal was confirmed, giving Al Shabab a crucial victory. The win lifted them to 50 points in second place, while Al Rustaq remained bottom on 11 points and were officially relegated to the First Division.

AL KHABOURAH, SAHAM SHARE SPOILS

At Al Rustaq Sports Complex, Al Khabourah and Saham settled for a 0-0 draw in a match shaped by caution and tension, with both sides still looking over their shoulders in the relegation fight. Saham made the sharper start and threatened through Ali al Hashmi and Mohsin Jawhar, while Al Khabourah responded with chances for



Action from Al Nahda’s 1-0 win over Al Nasr in Round 23 of the Jindal League.



Al Shabab and Al Rustaq players during their Jindal League match at the Seeb Stadium.

Salem Habib and Salim Aal Abdulsalam, the latter striking the post in the first half.

The second half was slightly livelier, with Saham creating the better openings, including a clear chance for Mohammed al Maamari that Al Khabourah’s goalkeeper denied. Both coaches made attacking substitutions, but neither side could find the breakthrough. The draw moved

Saham to 22 points in 10th place, while Al Khabourah reached 21 points in 12th.

AL NAHDA EDGE AL NASR

At Al Saada Sports Complex, Al Nahda defeated Al Nasr 1-0 in another important result in the race for the upper positions. The two sides exchanged attacks in a cagey opening period before Al Nahda struck in the 36th minute on the counter through Jamal al Wahshi, with the goal confirmed after a VAR review.

Al Nasr improved after the interval and enjoyed more possession, but their final ball lacked precision despite several promising situations. Goalkeeper Fayeز al Rushaidi produced an important save to protect Al Nahda’s lead, while Awad al Shahri and Jasim al Nofli both went close for Al Nasr. The visitors held firm, and Al Nasr’s Joel Muziviko was sent off in stoppage time to compound a frustrating evening. The result lifted Al Nahda to 44 points in fourth place, while Al Nasr remained third on 46.

Hamood eyes final stage at Beach Handball Worlds

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

The experienced Oman head coach, Hamood al Hasani, voiced confidence that the national beach handball team will deliver a strong performance at the upcoming 2026 IHF Beach Handball World Championship which will take place from June 23 to 28, 2026 in Croatia.

Speaking to Oman Observer ahead of the global event, Al Hasani affirmed that the team is aiming to surpass its historic best finish and compete for a top position. “Our target is to achieve a better result than fourth place, which remains Oman’s best performance in the World Championship,” he said.

Oman have been drawn in Group D alongside France, Croatia and Australia, in what is widely considered a competitive group. The coach acknowledged the challenge ahead, noting that Croatia will enter the tournament as defending world champions and the hosts while France



Oman beach handball team during a training session.

represent a rapidly developing European side and Australia bring physical strength and regional experience.

“The group featured strong teams and we fully respect all the opponents. However, we are focused on our preparation and confident in our ability to compete at this level,” he added.

Al Hasani outlined a comprehensive preparation plan designed to ensure the team reaches peak readiness ahead of the global event.

The squad will begin a series of domestic training camps starting by a domestic preparatory camp next week and followed by an external camp in Croatia shortly before the global tournament.

As part of their build-up, Oman will also participate in a friendly international tournament in Zagreb, featuring several top teams including Denmark, Croatia, Spain and Italy. The event is expected to provide valuable match experience and help

fine-tune the team’s tactical and physical readiness.

“These matches will be very important for us. They will allow the players to gain confidence and adjust to high-level competition before the tournament’s begins,” Al Hasani explained.

Reflecting on the team’s recent performance at the Asian Games in Sanya 2026, where Oman exited in the preliminary stage, the coach admitted disappointment but stressed that the focus has shifted totally towards the World Championship.

“We were not satisfied with our result in Sanya, but we are determined to return stronger and show a different level at the World Championship,” he said.

Oman qualified for the global event after winning the Asian Beach Handball Championship in Muscat last year, defeating Iran 2-0 in the final to secure their second continental title and end a 21-year wait since their first triumph in 2004.

The upcoming championship will mark Oman’s ninth appearance on the world stage.

JUNIORTENNIS



In the Under-12 boys category, Adhiraj claimed the title after defeating Rayaan Tyagi 9-5 in the final.

AL RAHBI, BRODY
SET FOR U18 BOYS
TENNIS FINAL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 5

The Junior Tennis Championship will conclude on Wednesday at the tennis courts of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher after 10 days of competitive action across different age categories. Organised by the Oman Tennis Association (OTA), the championship brought together 70 boys and girls and provided an important platform for young players to gain match experience, improve their ranking points and strengthen their readiness for future domestic and international events. The closing ceremony will be held at 6 pm under the auspices of Munther al Barwani, OTA Secretary, with several final matches scheduled in different categories. The main match of the day will be the Under-18 boys final, which brings together Abdulrahman al Rahbi and Brodie Burgess.

Al Rahbi booked his place in the final after a commanding 6-1, 6-1 victory over Advay Kapoor, while Brodie advanced after defeating Vihaan 6-0, 6-2. Their meeting is expected to provide a strong finish to the championship, with both players showing consistent form in the previous rounds. Several titles have already been decided. In the Under-12 boys category, Adhiraj claimed the title after defeating Rayaan Tyagi 9-5 in the final. In the Under-12 girls competition, Serene recorded a clear 9-0 victory over Yara al Yafai. In another Under-12 girls match, Serena defeated Jocelyan 9-5 to reach the final, where she was joined by Salama, who advanced after beating Sarah al Maskari 9-0. The results reflected the strong level of competition among the girls, with a number of players showing steady technical progress throughout the tournament. Player Talia al Busaidy said the event offered an important opportunity for young players to develop their levels and remain active on court. “We are happy to take part in this championship, which helps us improve technically and prepare for upcoming external participations. The level of the competition was good across the different age groups, and all players benefited from it,” she said. Mohammed al Falahi, coach of the national tennis team, said the championship is part of a regular competition programme held during the year. “These tournaments give players the chance to compete, and through them we continue to discover new talents. We then work with them in training and help them develop until they are ready to reach the national teams,” he said. Faisal al Balushi, Tournament Director, said the championship achieved its main goals by giving players from different age groups valuable match exposure. “We were pleased with the commitment of the players and the cooperation of coaches and parents. The championship showed promising levels and will help us follow the progress of players through the ranking system,” he said.



Oman have 31 points from 28 matches, while the USA top the table with 36 from 24 games.

Nepal cruise to emphatic
81-run win over Oman

OMAN slumped to a second successive defeat to conclude a disappointing ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 tri-series in Nepal, going down by 81 runs as the hosts rode on a near-century from Aasif Sheikh and a devastating five-wicket burst from young pacer Gulshan Jha. Chasing 257, Oman never found sustained momentum and were bowled out for 175 in 39.5 overs, exposing the fragility that plagued the Sulakshan Kulkarni-coached side throughout the tour, where they managed just one win (against Nepal) in four outings. Jha began his devastating spell (5/38) with the wicket of debutant Hasnain Ul Wahab and then ripped through the middle order, sending back Aryan Bisht and Jiten Ramanandi before returning to remove Oman’s top scorer Vinayak Shukla and Hassnain Shah. Earlier, opener Aasif Sheikh laid the foundation of Nepal’s innings with a polished 94 off 97 balls, falling agonisingly short of a deserved hundred but setting the platform for a competitive 256. He stitched a crucial 123-run second-wicket stand with Arjun Kumal (48), steadying the innings after the hosts lost Binod Bhandari in the second over with Nepal yet to open their scoring. Though Oman kept things tight for long phases — with spinners Nadeem Khan (3/41) and Shakeel Ahmed (2/43) leading the effort — Nepal surged late. Aarif Sheikh’s explosive 43 off 24 balls,



Nepal’s Gulshan Jha took 5-38 as Oman were all out for 175 in 39.5 overs.

laced with four sixes, lifted the hosts past the 250-mark, with 70 runs coming in the final powerplay. In reply, Oman began briskly, reaching 50 inside the first nine overs, but early strikes derailed the chase. Captain Jatinder Singh fell cheaply for 12, and the run-out of Siddharth Bukkapatnam further dented momentum (42/2), leaving the middle order

with too much to do. Hammad Mirza (34) and Vinayak Shukla (36) attempted to rebuild, but wickets fell at regular intervals, preventing any meaningful partnership from taking shape. Jha’s fiery spell was supported by Sandeep Lamichhane, who kept things tight with 1/30, while Dipendra Singh Airee chipped in with a wicket as Oman’s resistance faded, sealing a comprehensive victory. The result underlined Oman’s inconsistency across the series — flashes of promise undone by batting collapses and an inability to close out key moments — leaving the team with plenty to reassess ahead of future assignments.

OMAN REMAIN THIRD
At the end of the tri-series, Oman remain third in the eight-nation table with the top four advancing to the World Cup Qualifiers. Oman have 31 points from 28 matches, while the USA top the table with 36 from 24 games. Scotland are second with 34 from 28 games while the Netherlands are closely behind Oman with 28 from 24 matches. Namibia (22 from 28 games), Canada (21 from 24), Nepal (18 from 24) and the UAE (14 from 24) round off the table. **Brief scores:** Nepal 256 in 49.5 overs (Aasif Sheikh 94, Arjun Kumal 48, Dipendra Singh Airee 33, Aarif Sheikh 43; Shakeel Ahmed 2/43, Nadeem Khan 3/41, Hassnain Shah 2/58) beat Oman 175 in 39.5 overs (Vinayak Shukla 36, Hammad Mirza 34, Hasnain Ul Wahab 29; Gulshan Jha 5/38).

Domino’s bounce back against Bisdak in OPBL tournament

MUSCAT: Domino’s Pizza/Barangay Ginebra Oman (BGO) staged a strong comeback following a heartbreaking loss in their previous outing against Team Excellence, edging out Team Bisdak Al Haseena Jewellers, 93–88, in the ongoing OPBL 6.0 Basketball Tournament at the Oman Club Basketball Court. Leading the charge was Ezekiel ‘Kiel’ Moralde, who delivered an all-around performance with 19 points, 3 rebounds, and 3 assists to earn Player of the Game honours. Moralde’s relentless drives and ability to penetrate the defence proved decisive, consistently putting pressure on Bisdak throughout the contest.



With the win, Domino’s BGO rebounded in the standings and move into solo-second place.

Despite missing key player Ayman al Shraiql, BGO showcased impressive depth and teamwork. Significant contributions came from Karl Lorian, Froilan Busquit, Garner Lazo, Joshua Alcarde, Gerald Alepio, Anton Tan, Luel Guloy, Benjie Oliveros, Ryan Janda, and Andrew

Tibayan, all of whom stepped up to keep the team competitive. Co-rookie sensation Mark Celiza provided a crucial boost, displaying energy and grit on both ends of the floor. He finished with 14 points, 10 rebounds, and 2 assists, highlighted by timely putbacks and tenacious defence that helped secure the victory. With the win, Domino’s BGO rebounded in the standings and move into solo-second place in the elimination round, trailing only the unbeaten Team Excellence led by Coach Del Upam. Team Manager/Coach, Allan Minoza stated that he is proud of the team and showed a lot of

resilience and composure in getting back on the winning track. He also expressed his thanks to playing coach Froilan Busquit for taking the added responsibility of leading the team and Team Manager Anwaar Razmi of Dominos Pizza, who always maintained his strong support for the team. In the earlier matchup, Team Excellence extended their undefeated run with a 93–87 victory over KFT/CCC Team. Rookie standout Dieter Amorin once again dazzled, erupting for 37 points in another dominant performance. His consistent scoring displays have energised supporters, firmly placing him on track for a potential MVP-caliber season.

SPORTS

MODERNHUB



OHA Chairman Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi.

OHA TO TAKE PART IN
OPENING OF NEW
IHF HEADQUARTERS
IN BASEL

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbhaluch

The Oman Handball Association (OHA) will participate on Thursday in the official opening ceremony of the new headquarters of the International Handball Federation (IHF) in Basel, Switzerland, marking a significant step in strengthening Oman's presence on the international sports stage.

Oman will be represented by Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, OHA Chairman, alongside presidents and representatives of member federations from around the world. The inauguration of the new headquarters represents a key milestone in the development of handball globally, The six story building, covering a total area of 4,869 square metres, will serve as a modern administrative hub to support the federation's operations and enhance coordination among continental and national bodies.

The facility has been designed according to the latest administrative and technical standards, keeping pace with the rapid growth of the sport and reinforcing a more integrated and professional approach to its global development.

Al Balushi departed for Basel on Tuesday to attend the opening events scheduled from May 6 to 8, during which he is also set to hold official meetings with IHF officials. These discussions will focus on Oman's bid to host the 2028 IHF Beach Handball World Championship for men and women, reflecting the Sultanate of Oman's ambitions to host major international sporting events. Oman's bid is supported by its advanced sports infrastructure and proven organisational capabilities in hosting regional and international competitions, strengthening its position as a competitive candidate.

In the coming days, an IHF delegation is expected to visit Oman to assess sports venues and logistical facilities as part of the evaluation process for the hosting bid, ahead of the final decision on the host nation.



Nottingham Forest's Igor Jesus celebrates scoring their second goal with Nicolas Dominguez and Taiwo Awoniyi. — Reuters

Advantage Arsenal as City held in Everton thriller

JEREMY Doku's stoppage-time strike salvaged Manchester City a 3-3 draw at Everton, but a second half collapse handed the destiny of the Premier League title back to Arsenal on Monday.

The Gunners now just need to win their final three games to end a 22-year wait to become the champions of England.

City remain five points adrift of Mikel Arteta's team, with a game in hand, and will struggle to recover from the manner of their implosion at the Hill Dickinson Stadium.

Pep Guardiola's side appeared to be cruising to victory when Doku opened the scoring at the end of a dominant first half.

However, an error-strewn second period was punished as Thierno Barry scored twice for the Toffees, either side of Jake O'Brien's header.

Erling Haaland and then a sensational effort from Doku in the 97th minute did however rescue a point which could ultimately keep City in the race.

"It's better than losing, it shows what type of team they are," said Guardiola on City's fightback.

"It's not in our hands. Before it was, now it's not. We have games left. We will see what happens."

Arsenal visit relegation-threatened West Ham on Sunday before hosting Burnley and visiting Crystal Palace on the final day of the campaign.

KEANE ESCAPES RED

Two Arsenal victories since City last played in the league had ramped up the pressure on Guardiola's side.

City's first team had gone the best part of two weeks without a proper outing after Guardiola heavily rotated for last weekend's FA Cup semifinal win over Southampton.

The visitors looked fresh rather than rusty as Everton were penned back inside their own box for practically the entire first half.

City's pressure finally found its reward two minutes before half-time when Rayan Cherki found Doku, who curled a shot into Jordan Pickford's top right-hand corner.

Things could have been even worse for the Toffees before the break as Michael Keane escaped with just a yellow card for a wild lunge on Doku.

That decision proved to be vital as City paid a heavy price for a serious of basic defensive errors.

Twice Guardiola's men did not heed a warning that an Everton equaliser was coming.

Gianluigi Donnarumma

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON MONDAY:
Chelsea 1 (Joao Pedro 90+3)
Nottingham Forest 3 (Awoniyi 2, 52, Jesus 15-pen)
Everton 3 (Barry 68, 81, O'Brien 73)
Manchester City 3 (Doku 43, 90+7, Haaland 83)
SUNDAY
Aston Villa 1 (Buendia 90+6)
Tottenham 2 (Gallagher 12, Richarlison 25)
Bournemouth 3 (Lerma 10-og, Kroupi 32-pen, Rayan 77) Crystal Palace 0
Manchester United 3 (Cunha 6, Sesko 14, Mainoo 77) Liverpool 2 (Szoboszlai 47, Gakpo 56)
SATURDAY
Newcastle 3 (Osula 12, Burn 24, Barnes 90+5) Brighton 1 (Hinshelwood 61)
Brentford 3 (Mavropanos 15-og, Thiago 54-pen, Damsgaard 82) West Ham 0
Wolves 1 (Bueno 54) Sunderland 1 (Mukiele 17)
Arsenal 3 (Gyokeres 9, 45+4, Saka 40) Fulham 0
FRIDAY
Leeds 3 (Stach 8, Okafor 52, Calvert-Lewin 56) Burnley 1 (Tchaouna 71)

parried Iliman Ndiaye's effort back into the danger area but Merlin Rohl was not alive to the rebound. Ndiaye then had a glorious chance after an error from Matheus Nunes but again could not beat the giant Italian in the City goal.

When the equaliser finally arrived, City were again architects of their own downfall.

Marc Guehi's underhit passback handed Barry the simple task of slotting past the stranded Donnarumma.

Another casual City mistake moments later led to Everton's second. This time Abdulkodir Khusanov was caught in possession by Ndiaye and bailed out by a last-ditch challenge from Guehi. But from the resulting corner, O'Brien rose highest to power home a header.

Barry prodded home a third for Everton from Rohl's deflected cross with City all at sea from a rapid counter-attack.

Within seconds they had a lifeline, though, as straight from kick-off Mateo Kovacic played in Haaland to halve the arrears.

Doku delivered a dagger to Everton's hopes of European football next season right at the death. But it may have come too little, too late to rescue City's chances of a seventh title in nine years. — AFP

Rohit returns in style, Rickelton shines as Mumbai beat Lucknow

MUMBAI: Former India captain Rohit Sharma made a triumphant return to the Mumbai Indians starting line-up, smashing 84 off 44 balls as he and fellow opener Ryan Rickelton set the platform for a six-wicket victory over Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League on Monday.

Rohit, back after missing five matches with a hamstring injury, was ably supported by Rickelton, whose explosive 83 off 32 balls laid the foundation for Mumbai's chase at the Wankhede Stadium.

Opting to bowl first after winning the toss, Mumbai were set a daunting target as Lucknow

posted 228 for five. Opener Mitchell Marsh made 44, while Nicholas Pooran produced a blistering 63 off just 21 balls. Himmat Singh added a valuable 40 to keep the pressure firmly on the home side.

Mumbai's response was immediate, as openers Rohit and Rickelton put on a commanding partnership. Rohit struck six fours and seven sixes, while South Africa wicketkeeper-batter Rickelton hit six fours and eight sixes, taking full advantage of the batting-friendly conditions.

Rickelton was dismissed by Mohsin Khan and Rohit fell to M Siddharth, but Mumbai never



Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma plays a shot against Lucknow Super Giants.

lost control. Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav steadied the innings, before late contributions from Naman Dhir and Will Jacks guided Mumbai home with eight deliveries to spare.

Yadav captained the side in the absence of regular skipper Hardik Pandya, who was sidelined after feeling unwell.

Rickelton was named Player of the Match and praised his opening partner.

"One of Mumbai's greatest, one of India's greatest. I have enjoyed batting with him. My game suits this ground," Rickelton said.

"Really enjoyed it — the ball really

flies here. Always looking to get better. The power we have is through the roof. With the class we have, it makes my role clearer." Mumbai had struggled in Rohit's absence, but his return proved transformative as the hosts completed their highest successful run chase in IPL history. Lucknow, meanwhile, slumped to a sixth straight defeat.

Five-time champions Mumbai remain ninth on the table with six points from 10 matches, while Lucknow are bottom with four points in the 10-team competition. The top four teams in the unified points table qualify for the playoffs.

— Reuters

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
8,391.673

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$106.16
BRENT \$113.51
LIGHT \$104.26



SHORT TAKES



Issuances included RO 15 million in 28-day bills.

TREASURY BILL ISSUANCES IN OMAN REACH 39.5 MILLION

MUSCAT: The total value of government treasury bills issued this week exceeded RO 39.5 million, according to the Central Bank of Oman, reflecting continued activity in the Sultanate of Oman's short-term debt market.

Issuances included RO 15 million in 28-day bills, which recorded an average accepted price of RO 99.721 per RO 100, with a minimum accepted price of RO 99.720. The average discount rate stood at 3.64131 per cent, while the average yield reached 3.65151 per cent.

Treasury bills with a 91-day maturity amounted to RO 13.5 million, with an average accepted price of RO 99.056 and a minimum of RO 99.050. These recorded an average discount rate of 3.78816 per cent and an average yield of 3.82428 per cent.

Meanwhile, 182-day bills totalled RO 11 million, with an average accepted price of RO 89.074 and a minimum of RO 89.065 per RO 100. The average discount rate for this tranche was 3.86240 per cent, with a corresponding average yield of 3.93825 per cent.

The central bank noted that the repo rate applicable to these treasury bills stands at 4.25 per cent, while the discount rate on treasury bill facilities is set at 4.75 per cent.

bill facilities is set at 4.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term government-backed instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance and administered by the Central Bank of Oman. They provide licensed commercial banks with a secure investment avenue while supporting liquidity management through discounting and repurchase agreements.

Beyond liquidity, treasury bills play a key role in establishing benchmark short-term interest rates in the domestic financial market and offer the government a flexible mechanism to finance expenditure requirements. — ONA

Oman signs deal for first advanced mining lab

MINERALS Development Oman (MDO) has signed a strategic agreement with Australian Laboratory Services (ALS) Arabia to establish the Sultanate of Oman's first advanced mineral testing facility, marking a shift towards localising critical mining services and strengthening in-country value.

The agreement, signed on the sidelines of the 10th "Rawabet" Forum organised by the Oman Investment Authority, sets out a phased plan to develop a state-of-the-art laboratory equipped with advanced analytical technologies. These include X-ray diffraction systems, high-precision elemental analysis tools and base metal testing capabilities, enabling comprehensive and reliable mineral assessments within Oman.

The facility will operate in line with internationally recognised standards and is expected to cut analysis turnaround times by between 30 and 60 per cent. This reduction is projected to accelerate mining project timelines across the value chain, from early-stage exploration to feasibility studies and eventual production.

Beyond mining, the laboratory will support a wider range of sectors, including oil and gas, environmental chemistry and industrial analysis. This broader scope is expected to enhance cross-sector efficiencies and contribute to economic diversification objectives.

The move comes amidst rising activity in Oman's mining sector, particularly within Concession Area 14, where MDO is currently advancing exploration and development programmes.

Increased fieldwork has driven demand for faster and more accurate laboratory testing to determine resource volumes, support feasibility assessments and improve investor confidence.

Engineer Matar bin Salim al



The agreement, signed on the sidelines of the 10th "Rawabet" Forum organised by the Oman Investment Authority, sets out a phased plan to develop a state-of-the-art laboratory equipped with advanced analytical technologies.

The agreement signals the start of a new phase for Oman's mining industry, positioning laboratory analysis as a core domestic capability. It also establishes a model for strategic partnerships that combine international expertise with localisation, supporting the sector's expansion and reinforcing its role in the Sultanate of Oman's economic diversification agenda.

Badi, Chief Executive Officer of MDO, described the agreement as a strategic milestone in the sector's development. He noted that Oman is transitioning from reliance on overseas laboratories to building domestic capabilities that meet global benchmarks.

Al Badi said the selection of ALS Arabia followed a rigorous evaluation process and aligns with MDO's priorities of safeguarding national geological data, maximising local added value and developing skilled Omani talent to enhance long-term competitiveness.

He added that between 2026 and 2028, the laboratory is expected to process at least 15,000 samples annually, including core, rock and wadi sediment samples.

Historically, the absence of an internationally accredited mining laboratory in Oman has created operational bottlenecks, reinforcing the need for a reliable, in-country solution.

Nasser bin Saif al Rashdi, General Manager of ALS Arabia, said the partnership represents a significant step towards localising laboratory services in the mining sector. He highlighted the shared objective of transferring global expertise while implementing the highest quality standards in

Oman. Al Rashdi emphasised that the project will include structured knowledge transfer and capacity-building initiatives, covering specialised technical training, laboratory management and quality control systems.

These efforts are expected to create high-value employment opportunities for Omanis and support the development of national expertise in laboratory sciences.

Previously, reliance on overseas laboratories posed several challenges, including delays in obtaining results, high logistics and customs costs, potential risks to sensitive geological data and limited local economic retention. By bringing testing capabilities onshore, the new facility is expected to address these constraints while improving efficiency and data security.

The agreement signals the start of a new phase for Oman's mining industry, positioning laboratory analysis as a core domestic capability. It also establishes a model for strategic partnerships that combine international expertise with localisation, supporting the sector's expansion and reinforcing its role in the Sultanate of Oman's economic diversification agenda. — ONA

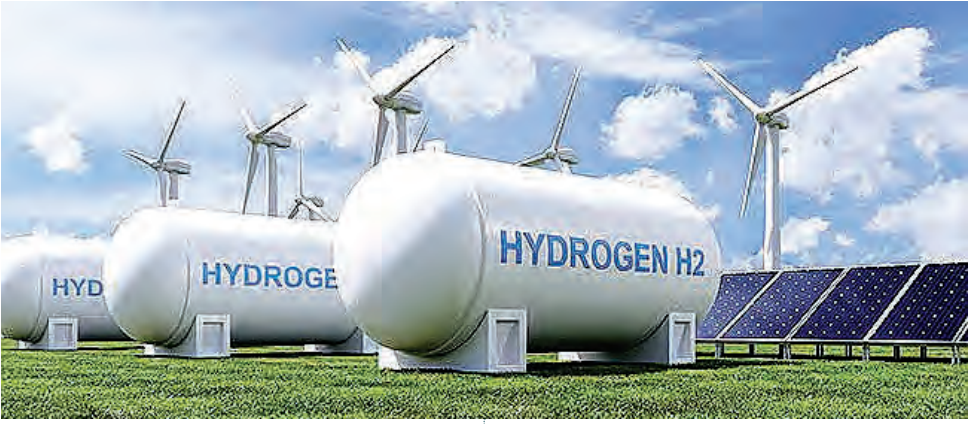
Oman launches study for large-scale hydrogen-to-power project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 5

In a move that could signal a significant evolution in Oman's energy transition strategy, Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP) has issued a tender seeking techno-economic consultancy services for the development of a large-scale power generation project fuelled by green hydrogen.

The tender calls for the appointment of a consultant to undertake an initial assessment for a new independent power project (IPP) capable of operating on up to 100 per cent hydrogen, with an indicative generation capacity in the range of 800 to 1,000 megawatts.

The study will evaluate the technical feasibility, cost structures and potential deployment pathways for integrating hydrogen-based generation into Oman's national grid. Significantly, Nama PWP's move represents one of the first



The proposed IPP will be capable of operating on up to 100 per cent hydrogen, with an indicative generation capacity in the range of 800 to 1,000 MW.

concrete steps by a Gulf utility off-taker to formally assess hydrogen-to-power at utility scale — an area that has so far remained largely conceptual across the region.

The initiative comes against the backdrop of Oman's ambitious green hydrogen programme, led by Hydrom, which has focused primarily on producing hydrogen for export and industrial use.

Traditionally, hydrogen has been viewed as an energy carrier rather than a direct input for domestic electricity generation, due to efficiency losses associated with converting it back into power, say experts.

However, growing renewable energy penetration — particularly solar and wind — has prompted utilities worldwide to explore hydrogen as a long-duration energy storage medium and

a potential clean fuel for dispatchable power. In Oman's case, where renewable capacity is expected to expand significantly under Oman Vision 2040, hydrogen could offer a pathway to balance intermittency while reducing reliance on natural gas.

According to market experts, the study is expected to examine whether hydrogen-fired generation can be economically competitive with existing gas-based plants, as well as the infrastructure requirements for storage, transport and fuel supply.

It will also assess integration challenges, including grid stability and dispatch dynamics, particularly in a system that is progressively incorporating variable renewable energy sources.

Regionally, the proposed project stands out as a potentially pioneering development. While several Gulf countries have announced hydrogen strategies, most have prioritised exports — particularly in the form of green

ammonia — over domestic power applications.

A successful hydrogen-to-power project in Oman could therefore position the Sultanate of Oman as an early mover in this emerging segment, with implications for regional energy markets.

At the same time, the initiative raises important policy considerations. "Current regulatory and planning frameworks in Oman — overseen by the Authority for Public Services Regulation and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals — do not explicitly provide for large-scale, grid-connected hydrogen-fired power generation.

Should the study demonstrate viability, it may necessitate updates to procurement strategies, tariff structures and fuel supply frameworks to accommodate hydrogen as a new generation fuel", an industry observer noted.

The deadline for the submission of proposals for techno-economic consultancy services is June 21, 2026.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The platform is designed to streamline and accelerate the entire recruitment lifecycle.

OETC launches unified digital recruitment platform, wins Elevatus Excellence Award 2026

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to advance digital transformation, automate processes and enhance employee experience, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has announced the launch of a unified digital platform for recruitment and onboarding, in line with global best practices in human capital management.

The platform is designed to streamline and accelerate the entire recruitment lifecycle through an integrated digital system that covers all stages from job posting and application management to screening, virtual interviews and assessments through to onboarding and initial orientation.

This end-to-end solution ensures a seamless, efficient and transparent experience for candidates, from the moment they apply until their first day at work.

This initiative aligns with OETC’s corporate strategy focused on driving digital transformation and adopting innovative solutions that reflect international standards and leading global practices. It aims to create a smart and sustainable work environment that supports the company’s long-term strategic objectives.

In recognition of its leadership in this area, OETC has been awarded the “Elevatus Excellence Award 2026” in the category of Leadership in Recruitment Transformation. The company is the first entity within Nama Group to successfully implement and operationalise this advanced digital recruitment ecosystem, demonstrating strong institutional readiness and a forward-looking approach to technological transformation in the energy sector.

Commenting on the launch, Ishaq al Harrasi, Acting General Manager of Human Resources at OETC, emphasised the company’s commitment to adopting innovative solutions and best practices to drive continuous improvement and organisational excellence. He further pointed out that this platform contributed to a paradigm shift in the employability mechanisms.

Al Harrasi stated: “Transitioning from traditional paper-based processes to a fully integrated digital platform has significantly enhanced the speed and transparency of candidate screening, evaluation and communication.

The platform has notably reduced the time required to hire new talent. Successful candidates now receive automated notifications with instructions to activate their corporate accounts within 24 hours of receiving the offer.

In addition, the platform provides onboarding materials and guidance to support smooth integration, along with direct access to e-learning platforms to kick-start their professional development from day one”.

NBO PARTNERS WITH ROP TO SPONSOR THE 38TH GULF TRAFFIC WEEK

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting community initiatives, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) is sponsoring the 38th Gulf Traffic Week, organised by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) under the theme “I Cross Safely”.The initiative aims to promote traffic awareness and enhance road safety standards. This support reflects the Bank’s commitment to raising road safety awareness and encouraging responsible behaviour, particularly



through collaboration with ROP to promote the use of designated pedestrian crossings and adherence to traffic signals.

These efforts help reduce accidents and injuries, especially in high-traffic areas and near schools and markets.

This sponsorship also underscores NBO’s dedication to its role in corporate social responsibility by supporting national initiatives that enhance quality of life and promote the safety of the community.

Chery Tiggo 7 Pro Max: Versatile compact SUV

THE Chery Tiggo 7 Pro Max continues to solidify its reputation across the Sultanate of Oman as the premier choice for those who demand more from a compact SUV.

Built around the philosophy of being “All the way with you”, the Tiggo 7 Pro Max remains a constant companion for young tech-savvy families and ambitious professionals, offering a seamless transition between the demands of the corporate world and the adventures of a modern lifestyle.

A DESIGN DEFINED BY ENERGY & ELEGANCE

The Tiggo 7 Pro Max stands out on Omani roads with a design language that is both sporty and classy.

The exterior is anchored by the signature All-New Diamond Front Grille, which creates a striking first impression of luxury and precision.

Its aerodynamic profile is further enhanced by the Suspended Sky Roof and a functional layered rear wing design, giving the vehicle a sense of motion even when at a standstill.

The Integrated Crescent-Shaped LED Tail Lamps provide a distinct night-time signature, while the ultra-large panoramic sunroof ensures the cabin feels spacious and connected to the surrounding landscape.



The Tiggo 7 Pro Max stands out on Omani roads with a design language that is both sporty and classy.

INTELLIGENCE MEETS HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENCE

The interior of the Tiggo 7 Pro Max is more than just a cabin; it is an Intelligent Entertainment Cockpit designed for a high-quality living experience. Every detail is curated to provide a tech-forward environment where connectivity is effortless.

The layout prioritises both the driver and passengers, offering a refined space that combines premium materials with intuitive digital interfaces.

This intelligent hub ensures that every

journey — from daily commutes in Muscat to weekend getaways — is defined by comfort and total control.

EXHILARATING PERFORMANCE WITH 1.6TGDI POWER

At the heart of the Tiggo 7 Pro Max is the 1.6TGDI Chery Power engine, a powertrain celebrated for delivering unmatched excellence and responsiveness.

This engine provides the robust performance needed to navigate urban environments and open highways with equal confidence.

Dhofar Islamic relocates Al Hambar branch in Suhar

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of BankDhofar, has announced the relocation of its Al Hambar branch to Al Ghail, adjacent to the car dealerships along the main road in the Wilayat of Suhar.

The move underscores the bank’s commitment to strengthening customer engagement and expanding access to Sharia-compliant banking services.

The relocation forms part of Dhofar Islamic’s broader strategy to enhance the customer experience by



The move underscores the bank’s commitment to strengthening customer engagement.

positioning its branches in more accessible and convenient locations. The new Al Ghail

branch offers a modern banking environment tailored to the needs of both individual and business customers, providing a comprehensive suite of Islamic banking products, including financing solutions, savings products; and retail and corporate banking services.

Khalil bin Juma al Maslihi, Head of Branch Network at Dhofar Islamic, said the relocation reflects the bank’s ongoing efforts to develop and optimise its branch network in line with its strategic vision to strengthen its footprint across the Sultanate of Oman.

He emphasised that Dhofar Islamic remains committed to delivering high-quality banking services grounded in reliability and full adherence to Islamic Sharia principles.

The new branch is staffed by a team of experienced professionals dedicated to offering tailored banking advice and services that meet evolving customer expectations.

It is designed to provide innovative, Sharia-compliant financial solutions while supporting economic and social development in the Wilayat of Suhar.

Al Dakhiliyah students showcase innovative ideas at Maliyat Challenge

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues its ongoing efforts to support community development and invest in the capabilities of younger generations by enhancing their skills in financial literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation.

In this context, the bank, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education represented by the “Khazna” project, organised the third edition of the Maliyat Challenge in the Wilayat of Nizwa in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, targeting Grade 9 and 10 students from schools across the governorate.

The event witnessed strong engagement and competition



The event was organised by Bank Muscat in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

through innovative educational experiences, with the participation of approximately 80 male and female students who had previously taken part in the “Maliyat Academy” initiative. At the end of the challenge, winning teams were honoured for presenting innovative ideas that met the evaluation criteria, which included feasibility, alignment with market needs and social and economic impact.

The proposed projects spanned various sectors, including tourism, trade, environment, transportation and society. The challenge focuses on building participants’ knowledge base in personal financial management and entrepreneurship, contributing to the preparation of a

well-informed generation capable of managing financial resources efficiently and responsibly.

It also aims to promote creativity, initiative and community engagement by introducing students to the fundamentals of business, financing mechanisms, budget management, understanding target audiences and effective marketing strategies, all delivered through interactive educational activities.

The initiative has provided a motivating platform for developing creative thinking, strengthening teamwork and encouraging students to design projects with economic impact, thereby fostering an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age.

SHORTTAKES



The programme highlights the role of internal audit and assurance in organisational sustainability.

OQ ROLLS OUT
AUDIT, ASSURANCE
AWARENESS DRIVE

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 5

OQ Group has launched its Internal Audit and Corporate Assurance Awareness Month for May, aligning with global observances and underlining a broader push to reinforce governance, transparency and risk management across the organisation.

The initiative reflects the group's intent to strengthen internal controls and embed a more proactive assurance culture that supports sustainable performance and long-term value creation.

Abdulrahman bin Ahmed al Harthy, Chief Internal Audit Officer at OQ, said corporate assurance within the group has evolved into a forward-looking discipline that informs decision-making, enhances accountability and builds trust at all levels. He described the awareness month as a milestone in translating these principles into consistent, group-wide practices.

As part of its outreach, OQ hosted an awareness programme for around 150 students from seven universities and colleges, aimed at highlighting the role of internal audit and assurance in organisational sustainability while nurturing specialised national talent in this field.

The group also introduced the 2026 Awareness Month Award to recognise high-impact initiatives across its subsidiaries that improve operational efficiency, strengthen oversight and advance governance and risk management practices.

The award is designed to encourage innovation among employees and promote initiatives that enhance system reliability and measurable value creation. Activities during the month include an open day showcasing best practices and practical experiences in audit and assurance, alongside discussions on their role in strengthening governance frameworks.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 5

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) on Tuesday announced the winners of the third edition of the “OIA Excellence Award”, which featured eight categories.

The award serves as a strategic tool aimed at fostering competitiveness among its portfolio companies through a rigorous, metrics-based approach that is closely aligned with national objectives.

OQ Group won the “Investment and Job Creation” category, while Omantel secured the “Performance and Financial Sustainability” award. Omran Group was recognised in the “Private Sector Engagement” category and Muscat International School project, affiliated with Oman and Brunei Investment Company, won the “Outstanding Project” category.

Nama Holding Group, represented by Nama Water Services and Nama Distribution, received the “Local Content and Innovation” award, while be'ah was honoured in the “SME and Startup Support” category.

Moreover, Omantel, represented by its “Maqroo” initiative, won the “Social Investment” category. Meanwhile, the newly introduced “Project Collaboration” category recognised two winning initiatives: the Activation of Economic Diplomacy project in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry and the Indirect Omanisation in the ICT Sector project in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour.

The winners were announced during the 10th edition of “Rawabet” Forum, organised by OIA and hosted this year by Omantel under the auspices



The winners were announced during the 10th edition of “Rawabet” Forum, organised by OIA.

OIA President Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi stated that OIA continues to translate the objectives of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan and Oman Vision 2040 into tangible outcomes by focusing on priority sectors such as tourism, the digital economy, and manufacturing

of Shaikh Ghuson bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution.

The event was attended by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), along with senior officials, board members of OIA companies and chief executive officers.

Notably, the forum serves as an annual platform to strengthen integration, align visions across OIA companies and showcase key achievements and joint initiatives.

Al Murshidi stated that OIA continues to translate the objectives of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan and Oman Vision 2040 into tangible outcomes by focusing on priority sectors such as tourism, the digital economy and manufacturing.

Through this approach, OIA aims to drive economic diversification and reinforce the developmental impact of OIA's investments. He emphasised that OIA companies play a central role in this direction by delivering high-quality projects that enhance value creation and achieve

sustainable growth.

He noted that these companies have demonstrated their ability to translate strategies into measurable achievements, whether through strengthening private sector partnerships, attracting foreign investments, or developing projects that stimulate economic activity and create employment opportunities.

He further noted that integration among OIA companies is no longer optional but essential to maximising economic returns and achieving the desired impact.

Accordingly, he called for building on existing achievements and accelerating efforts in the coming phase, particularly given the promising opportunities to enhance performance, improve efficiency and attract investment, while continuing to uphold the highest standards of excellence.

OQ Group won the “Investment and Job Creation” category for its (Ladayn Complex) project, which attracted nine investments worth RO 39 million and created 728 direct jobs, in addition to 500 indirect jobs.

SOHAR Port and Freezone unveils industrial energy efficiency guide

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 5

SOHAR Port and Freezone, in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, has launched an Energy Efficiency Guide for Industrial Buildings, aimed at improving operational performance and reducing costs across its industrial ecosystem.

Unveiled under the auspices of Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the guide provides a structured framework to help investors assess energy use, identify inefficiencies and implement targeted improvements at facility level.

It serves as a technical reference with defined methodologies and key performance indicators covering cooling efficiency, energy



The guide provides a structured framework to help investors assess energy use, identify inefficiencies and implement targeted improvements at facility level.

consumption, water heating intensity and the performance of lighting, air conditioning and ventilation systems.

These metrics are intended to support more informed operational and investment

decisions.

Al Hadhrami highlighted the importance of such practical tools in advancing the energy sector's transformation, noting their role in reducing consumption, improving efficiency and lowering

operating costs within industrial facilities.

Dr Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Abri, Vice President of Sustainability and Acting Director of Health, Safety, Security and Environment at SOHAR Port and Freezone, said buildings — including offices, warehouses and workshops — account for a significant share of industrial energy use and present clear opportunities for efficiency gains.

He added that the guide offers a unified framework that translates technical standards into measurable outcomes, reinforcing SOHAR's commitment to sustainable industrial growth.

Engineer Mohsin bin Sulaiman al Jabri, Director General of the Oman Zero Neutrality Centre, said the guide could deliver energy savings of 15 to 20 per cent within

relatively short payback periods, positioning it as a scalable solution to support the Sultanate of Oman's emissions reduction goals.

The framework draws on internationally recognised standards, including ASHRAE 90.1 and 105, the IPMVP protocol for performance measurement and ISO 6946 for thermal efficiency.

It also aligns with the Omani Building Code and occupational safety regulations under Ministerial Decision No 286/2008, while supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The initiative reinforces SOHAR Port and Freezone's broader strategy to promote sustainable industrial development, enhance competitiveness and attract investment aligned with low-emission market requirements.

ENERGY MARKETS

Brent holds near \$114 amidst tensions



Brent crude hovered near \$114 a barrel despite easing slightly, as renewed US-Iran hostilities kept markets volatile. Oil prices were supported by disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil route.

While a US-led operation aims to reopen shipping lanes, analysts say recent price dips reflect temporary relief rather than improved supply fundamentals. — Reuters

CURRENCY INDEX

Dollar firms as Yen stays stable



The yen steadied while the US dollar strengthened amidst heightened geopolitical tensions. Investor caution grew following renewed US-Iran strikes, supporting the greenback.

The Dollar Index held firm, while the euro and pound remained under pressure. The Australian dollar was little changed ahead of a widely expected interest rate hike by the Reserve Bank of Australia. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold edges higher on market caution



Gold prices rose modestly after rebounding from a one-month low, supported by cautious sentiment but capped by firm oil prices and a stronger dollar.

Investors reassessed expectations for US Federal Reserve policy, with rate cuts increasingly unlikely. Other precious metals, like silver, advanced, while markets awaited key US labour data for further direction. — Reuters

OPINION

Urea in 2026: An unfolding global crisis



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

WHILE oil price fluctuations amidst the volatile situation in the Strait of Hormuz make headlines, a quieter crisis is unfolding amidst geopolitical flux. The price of Urea has surged to \$700 per metric tonne, a 50 per cent increase due to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

Many countries are facing challenges due to disruptions in the supply of urea, a nitrogen-rich compound that is a core input for modern agriculture and industry. The world’s most widely used nitrogen fertiliser is urea.

It is essential for crops like wheat, rice and maize. It is cheap, easy to store and is used by many countries as a fertiliser mix. The supply disruptions are affecting even large, diversified economies like the United States.

Chemically, urea, also called carbamide, is an organic compound with the formula CO(NH2)2. Urea has the highest nitrogen content, making it an effective nitrogen fertiliser. More than 90% of global production is used in agriculture and disruptions to its supply could dramatically affect food output and security.

With an annual production of 50–60 million tonnes, or nearly one-third of the world’s total, China is the world’s biggest producer and consumer of urea. The global economy is immediately affected when Beijing tightens its export regulations. The gas-rich Middle East, particularly Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Oman,

accounts for a large portion of the exportable surplus outside of China.

Founded in 1969, Qatar Fertiliser Company (QAFCO) is the world’s largest single site urea producer and, in some years, has supplied around 14 to 15 per cent of globally traded urea. Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are among the region’s biggest producers, with the UAE and Oman adding significant additional capacity.

Russia is another major exporter, but its fertilisers now face heavy tariffs and de facto restrictions in markets such as the EU and the UK. India is one of the world’s largest urea producers, with annual output exceeding 20 million tonnes. Yet, it is also the largest importer, because domestic demand for subsidised fertiliser far exceeds domestic production. Even the resource-rich United States, which produces millions of tonnes annually, still imports urea. According to trade data, the United States buys more than half of its urea from Canada, Qatar and Russia combined.

Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Nigeria, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and a few smaller exporters provide additional substantial quantities. In other words, the same network of nitrogen supply that links Indian farmers to Gulf plants and Chinese policy decisions is also closely tied to American agriculture.

In China, agriculture accounts for 65 per cent of domestic use and 30 to 35 per cent is consumed in industry. Historically, China has been a major ‘swing’ producer because it can quickly increase or decrease its production

Chemically, urea, also called carbamide, is an organic compound with the formula CO(NH2)2. Urea has the highest nitrogen content, making it an effective nitrogen fertiliser. More than 90% of global production is used in agriculture and disruptions to its supply could dramatically affect food output and security.

at relatively low cost. Because of its stability and flexibility, its decision to curb exports could have either stabilising or destabilising effects on the market. China has recently reduced urea exports, mainly to protect its agricultural sector and ensure food security for its people amidst high energy costs and environmental pressures.

At the same time, the US-Iran war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz have choked fertiliser shipments as one-third of the world’s seaborne fertiliser and 40% of global urea exports pass through this single chokepoint.

The situation is further exacerbated by Qatar Energy’s decision to halt downstream production at the giant QAFCO complex. All these geopolitical and logistical escalations come at a time when import-dependent countries prepare for their peak planting season.

This is not a story of urea fertiliser, an obscure chemical; it is a story of the global food system, a critical industrial input and inflation. The entanglement of the narrow sea lanes in sanctions, tariffs and export bans reflects the global supply chain’s dependency, fragility and vulnerability.

It is projected that global urea consumption growth will outpace capacity growth in several years, keeping the supply-demand balance tight. In the future, the big importers must diversify their sources and invest in developing alternative fertilisers, or the fertiliser story will become a food security crisis for millions.

MINERS’ \$8 BILLION TIE-UP GRANTS GOLD PRICE RESISTANCE

ANTONY CURRIE

Regis Resources investors are too pessimistic about the Australian gold miner’s \$10.7 billion tie-up with local rival Vault Minerals. Shares in the acquirer dropped as much as 7% on Tuesday morning after the two companies unveiled their merger of equals.

The deal is short on cost cuts. But it’s a low-premium transaction that bulks up two mid-tier players and is insulated from gold price volatility.

Bullion hit a record high just shy of \$5300 an ounce in January and March, an almost 150% increase over two years. It has since traded sharply up and down and is currently around \$4500 an ounce. That has left plenty of miners flush with cash, which can lure executives into splurging on expensive acquisitions. Not so in this transaction. Regis is the official buyer, but it’s an all-stock deal, preserving liquidity for growth. And it’s only paying a premium of 11%, equal to \$500 million.

The two firms’ mines aren’t close enough to each other to warrant the kind of large cost cuts that might have come from marrying a different partner.

But tax breaks from the tie up match the premium. And if a mix of procurement and other savings could reduce the target’s expenses by, say 5%, that’d add another \$300 million, once taxed and capitalised, to the merger’s value to shareholders.

Meanwhile, the enlarged company would carry no debt and would generate \$1.7 billion a year in free cash flow. Combined with a war chest of \$1.9 billion, that’s a good base to develop current and new assets.

Governance issues appear to have been sorted out already, too. The premium means the combined company would be virtually equally owned by each side, with Regis investors holding 51%. Vault’s Russell Clark and Regis’ Jim Beyer would retain their roles in the new outfit as non-executive chair and CEO, respectively.

At some 700,000 ounces a year, the merged company would become a major gold producer Down Under, but be half the size of leader Northern Star Resources, ranked 10th globally.

The larger rival trades at 5 times forward EBITDA, more than twice the multiple for Regis and Vault. Just halving that gap would give the newly merged company’s market value a significant boost and a stronger currency for another deal — regardless which way the gold price goes. — Reuters

Balancing coordination and output sovereignty

IN energy markets, strength is not measured solely by the size of reserves, but by the ability of producers to coordinate their collective behaviour in a market defined by cycles and volatility. Opec was established and later expanded into Opec+, as a mechanism to manage supply and maintain a degree of price stability.

Current data indicate that Opec accounts for around 35–36% of global oil production, rising to approximately 46–47% when Opec+ is included, out of a total global supply of about 104–105 million barrels per day (mbpd). This gives the group meaningful influence over market direction, even if it no longer holds absolute control as it once did.

Membership in this framework is not merely institutional affiliation; it represents participation in a highly calibrated system of market management. When countries agree on production ceilings, they effectively reduce excess supply, support prices and limit sharp volatility that could disrupt long-term investment decisions.

Historically, the coordinated cuts of Opec+ in 2020, which exceeded 9 mbpd during the peak of the Covid-19 crisis, stand as one of the largest interventions in market history and played a critical role in restoring balance after the collapse in prices.

Even smaller adjustments, in the range of one to two mbpd, have often been sufficient to shift market sentiment and push prices upwards, highlighting the sensitivity of oil markets to coordinated supply changes.

However, this influence comes with a fundamental trade-off. Countries with higher production capacity are required to hold back part of their potential output, which represents a direct economic cost. This reveals the core paradox of quota systems: the greater a country’s production capacity, the higher the opportunity cost of compliance. In simple terms, membership enhances influence over price, but constrains production volume. Governments must therefore



A 3D printed oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed stock graph and Opec logo in this illustration picture. — Reuters



DR ZIAD ALZAIDI

The writer is a strategic management & organisational transformation consultant.

Current data indicate that Opec accounts for around 35–36% of global oil production, rising to approximately 46–47% when Opec+ is included, out of a total global supply of about 104–105 million barrels per day.

carefully balance price gains against foregone output.

By contrast, operating outside such a framework does not diminish production capability, but it does reduce collective influence. A country shifts from being part of a coordinated bloc to acting as an individual player in a competitive market.

In this setting, influence depends on scale, cost efficiency and operational flexibility rather than collective decisions.

For example, an increase of one million barrels per day represents roughly 1% of global supply — sufficient to exert noticeable downward pressure on prices in a market highly sensitive to marginal changes.

The oil market itself does not permanently favour either model. During relatively stable periods, coordination helps maintain a workable balance between supply and demand, with prices moving within predictable ranges, as seen between 2017 and 2019 when Brent crude fluctuated between \$60 and \$80 per barrel.

In contrast, during periods of structural change, tensions emerge between the objective of supporting prices and the drive to expand market share. At such times, competition intensifies and volatility increases rather than stabilises. These dynamics are

not limited to oil. They could be observed, in a different form, in global liquefied natural gas markets.

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum does not function as a traditional cartel, largely because gas markets are shaped by long-term contracts that can extend over 15 to 20 years, as well as infrastructure constraints that limit supply flexibility. Liquefied natural gas accounts for around 40% of global gas trade, much of it governed by long-term agreements linked to oil prices or regional benchmarks.

As a result, market influence in gas is exercised through contract structures and supply flows, rather than direct production quotas. This model offers insight into how energy markets more broadly may evolve over time.

Looking ahead, energy markets appear to be moving towards a hybrid model that combines coordination with competition. Opec and Opec+ remain central to market stability, but their role is no longer absolute. It now coexists with other forces, including rising output from non-member producers, particularly the United States, where production exceeds 12–13 million barrels per day and evolving demand patterns linked to the global energy transition.

At the same time, logistical factors have become increasingly important. Around 20% of global oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making any disruption there a critical variable that can, at these times, outweigh production decisions in determining prices.

In this environment, the definition of strength is changing. It is no longer determined solely by production volume, but by operational efficiency, cost competitiveness and the ability to access markets reliably.

Bilateral agreements are also gaining prominence, as major economies such as China and India seek to secure stable supplies through long-term contracts rather than relying entirely on spot markets.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

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

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499



Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]



Tel: 24787606, 24787503 Direct Line: 24786077 GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

LOGISTICS Indian male 24 years, graduate in BBA,PG diploma in logistics and SCM ,6 months of warehouse experience seeking a position in logistics and warehouse fields Contact: +96896161349 Mail: nadanmathew2000@gmail.com

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

FOR SALE

PEUGEOT Traveller, 2019 model, in excellent condition. Interested buyers may visit the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to inspect the vehicle and submit their offers. For inquiries, please contact: 95041480.

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com



FOR RENT

STORE, shop and studio room for immediate rent in Barka saqsuq. contact: 93368865 94900612

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for part time or full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

FOR RENT

- Permanent Building accommodation available for rent in Al Ansab with 600 nos bed space.
- Workers Shared accommodation with common toilet & bathroom.
- Two gates for Entry and Exit with 24/7 security guard.
- Parking area, open yard with compound wall.
- Under CCTV surveillance.
- Contact person –

Mr. Varzhdad - +968-99440860

Mr. Prince - +968-94762289



OMAN DAILY

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

* NOW **FREE** CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info

ازديهار
izdihar



ART/LIFE



B R E A K I N G B A R R I E R S



AHMED AL BUSAIDY

OMAN’S FIRST CHEF WITH DOWN SYNDROME

> 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

AN EXTENDED LIFELINE FOR EVERYONE



Yeru Ebuén
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

An expatriate in Muscat scrolls through their electricity statement, line by line, almost instinctively. Consumption. Meter readings. Tariff bands. And then, the number that matters most: the total. It is higher than it once was, yes, but not by the margin they had feared. Not in the way stories from elsewhere in the region might suggest. There is a structure to it, a logic that softens the impact. And embedded within that structure, though not always explicitly labelled, is the steady presence of subsidy.

Recent reporting from news outlets has made one point increasingly clear: Oman has not withdrawn electricity subsidies. Essential household consumption remains priced at a lower, supported rate, while higher usage gradually transitions into cost-reflective pricing.

On paper, the bill reflects this quietly. The first block of units, those that sustain daily life, from cooling a room to running essential appliances, sits within a more protected bracket.

For expatriates, who often fall outside the full scope of citizen-targeted support, the difference is still meaningful. The structure itself acts as a buffer. It prevents the kind of sudden, across-the-board increases seen in other markets, where subsidy removal has translated into immediate and sometimes dramatic spikes in monthly expenses. In Oman, the adjustment is felt, but not destabilising.

Over the course of a year, that distinction becomes significant. Electricity in Oman is not seasonal in the traditional sense, it intensifies. Summer stretches long and air conditioning is not a luxury but a necessity. A sharp rise in tariffs during these months would ripple through household budgets, compounding with rent, schooling and daily living costs. Instead, the current system ensures that even as usage climbs, a portion of consumption remains shielded.

This is where the subsidy reveals its true value, not as a headline figure, but as cumulative relief. Month after month, it absorbs pressure. It smooths out volatility. It allows households to plan, rather than react. In financial terms, the difference over a year can be substantial. In practical terms, it is the difference between manageable adjustment and sustained strain.

There is also a broader discipline at play. By tying higher costs to higher consumption, the policy subtly encourages efficiency without penalising necessity. It reflects a shift in thinking, away from blanket subsidy and towards targeted support with built-in responsibility. Yet crucially, it does so without abandoning the social contract that underpins such policies.

In a region where energy pricing is increasingly influenced by global dynamics, Oman’s approach stands out for its restraint. It acknowledges the need for reform, but resists the temptation for abrupt correction. Instead, it offers continuity, quiet, structured and deliberate.

So when that bill arrives each month, it tells more than a story of consumption. It reflects a system designed to hold steady in uncertain times. And over the course of a year, that steadiness is not just welcome, it is, for many, an extended lifeline.

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



CULTURE

A festival participant rests before spinning a lantern tower known as Manto through the streets of Fuchu during the Kurayami Matsuri, or “Festival of Darkness” in Tokyo. — **AFP**



MUSIC

A woman shows a Mexican flag next to a cardboard cutout of South Korean K-pop BTS singer J-Hope during a fan gathering in Mexico City. — **AFP**



FASHION

Singer-songwriter Janelle Monáe at 2026 Met Gala celebrating “Costume Art” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



The greenery in Al Rustaq region



Tiny Rock Semaphore Gecko

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

AUSTRALIA’S ‘MOST BEAUTIFUL’ STREET FED UP WITH VIRAL FAME



Viral social media posts have transformed a quiet seaside town into an overcrowded hotspot — much to the frustration of its residents. Just two hours south of Sydney, Gerringong is known for its scenic coastal views and upscale homes. But recent Instagram, TikTok and RedNote posts featuring Tasman Drive have drawn waves of tourists eager to capture the “most beautiful street in Australia”. Locals say the attention has become overwhelming. Residents complain of traffic disruptions, unsafe driving, littering and visitors standing in the middle of the road for photos. “It’s getting beyond a joke”, said 81-year-old Peter Hainsworth. Some have taken matters into their own hands, using garden sprinklers to deter tourists from stepping onto private lawns. Others are pushing for Tasman Drive to become a one-way street to ease congestion. One homeowner reportedly sold their property to

escape the chaos. While some locals appreciate that people enjoy the view, many feel the influx has gone too far. Linda Bruce, 76, described it as “weird” to see so many people travel long distances just for a quick photo. She noted a rise in visitors from across Asia, something previously uncommon in the area. Tourists, however, remain captivated. Sydney-based taxi driver Sagar Munjal said the view left him “totally stunned”, while Andy Liao, originally from China, made the trip after seeing it online. Both acknowledged the beauty — and the locals’ concerns. “If I lived here, I wouldn’t want too many people coming to my backyard”, Liao admitted. Not all visitors are sympathetic. Kevin Medina, a tourist from Colombia, argued that locals should be happy their town is gaining recognition. A major concern for residents is that many tourists don’t support local businesses.

BILLIE EILISH AND JAMES CAMERON TEAM UP FOR IMMERSIVE AND INTIMATE TOUR FILM



POP star Billie Eilish joined forces with famed filmmaker James Cameron to bring her “Hit Me Hard and Soft” tour to the big screen. Released theatrically by Paramount Pictures on May 8, “Billie Eilish — Hit Me Hard and Soft: The Tour (Live in 3D)” is co-directed by the multi-Grammy winner, 24 and the “Avatar” and “Titanic” filmmaker, 71. Shot mainly during the Manchester leg of the musician’s 2024-25 world tour, the film combines Eilish’s hit-packed performance with intimate and reflective moments off the stage. Cameron reached out with an “idea ready to go”, said Eilish, premiering the film in London on Tuesday and getting to work with him was “a complete dream”. “This is my favourite show that I’ve ever created and favourite tour I’ve ever been on. And the fact that it’s going to be captured forever and it’s also in 3D so everyone that didn’t get to see it can live it... I’m just so grateful”, she said. Cameras, at times operated by Cameron, capture Eilish as she prepares to take the stage, warming up her voice, getting her ankles taped and applying her make-up. In calmer moments, buoyed by the director, she opens up about the origins and the motivations of her performance style and attire. “It gets more into her heart and her mind and her kind of creative soul and into her relationship with the fans and what it means to them”, said Cameron. “I find it quite heartfelt, in addition to the music and the show being great”, he said. The candid behind-the-scenes moments were Cameron’s idea, Eilish said. “I wasn’t originally going to do that”, she said. “He was like, ‘People want to see it’ and I’m now really, really glad that is part of the movie



Released theatrically on May 8, Billie Eilish — Hit Me Hard and Soft: The Tour (Live in 3D) is co-directed by the multi-Grammy winner, and the Avatar and Titanic filmmaker

and I’m excited for people to see it”. The performance is brought to life with 17 cameras, said Cameron, many placed in the audience and catching raw emotions. This is Eilish’s second concert film and follows successful tour movies by superstars Taylor Swift and Beyonce, which topped the

box office and gave a boost to cinemas. “I think people like that communal experience. I think Billie’s fans like to go together, it creates not only a bond with Billie, but a bond with each other”, said Cameron. “They feel like it’s a shared emotional experience. I’d be surprised if they don’t sing back”. — Reuters

FEATURES



A H M E D A L B U S A I D Y

OMAN’S FIRST CHEF WITH DOWN SYNDROME



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

In a modest Omani kitchen, the most important ingredient is not sugar or spice, it is insistence.

For Ahmed al Busaidy, believed to be the first Omani chef with Down syndrome to share his culinary journey publicly, cooking did not begin with ambition. It began with curiosity. Food, to him, was never just sustenance, it was part of life's rhythm, as essential as sleep. As a child, he would taste something delicious and feel a quiet urge: I want to make this myself.

One Ramadhan, his mother handed him a simple, illustrated cookbook. That moment, small, almost ordinary, became a turning point. With the help of his sisters, Tasneem and Ilaf, Ahmed began recreating dishes, one recipe at a time. They would choose meals together, prepare ingredients and cook whenever time allowed. What started as a family activity slowly grew into something more personal, a space where Ahmed could experiment, express and belong.

Years later, social media widened his world. Recipes now found him before he even searched for them. When one caught his eye, he would

Ahmed al Busaidy doesn't just cook; he experiments, expresses and belongs. As one of the first Omani chefs with Down syndrome to share his journey publicly, he reminds us that the most important tool in any kitchen isn't a knife or a flame — it's the courage to try again.



check the ingredients, buy what was missing and begin. The results didn't stay in the kitchen for long; his dishes made their way to his sisters, his aunts and even into birthday celebrations, where his creations became gifts.

Be that as it may, Ahmed doesn't rush to call himself a chef. He prefers "a hobbyist who loves cooking". Yet behind that modest label is a quiet ambition, to one day train professionally and earn a certificate in culinary arts. For now, he is practicing his craft in full swing at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat, where he is learning and growing under the guidance of

seasoned chefs, especially the accomplished young Omani pastry chef Zahwa al Rahbi. Until then, his family and colleagues remain his strongest pillars, offering encouragement that fuels his persistence.

His favourite dish is Umm Ali, a dessert known for its warmth and simplicity. It reflects him well. Ahmed gravitates towards recipes that are uncomplicated, with few ingredients and quick preparation. "Maybe I'm a practical person", he says. In the kitchen, he values the process more than the result. Measurements are flexible, intuition takes over and outcomes vary, sometimes delightful, sometimes unusual. But for Ahmed, the joy lies in the making.

That joy, however, has not come without resistance.

"The biggest challenge", he admits, "is not being given trust". There have been moments when others doubted his abilities or struggled to accept that someone like him could succeed in the culinary world. But Ahmed meets doubt with repetition. He insists, tries again and continues, not loudly, but steadily, proving his worth through action.

Beyond cooking, another

form of expression found him during the stillness of the Covid-19 lockdown, painting. What began as experimentation at home, supported by his sister, evolved into participation in art competitions and collaborations with artists. One of his proudest works is a portrait of his mother, a subject that, like his cooking, comes from a place of closeness and care.

To Ahmed, cooking and painting are not so different. Both are forms of art. Both require patience. Both can be learned, shaped and refined through will.

On social media, he shares his journey with an audience that feels, to him, like an extended circle. Their encouragement matters. It motivates him to keep creating, to keep improving, to keep showing up.

And if there is one message Ahmed wants to leave behind, it is grounded and practical: success begins with discipline. "Where energy goes, achievement flows". In Ahmed's kitchen, recipes are more than instructions, they are acts of belief, shaped by persistence, carried by hope and made deeply human through every attempt.